

The Visions Edition

This has been a very inspiring issue to edit. We are so grateful for the chance to spend time with these beautiful submissions on Visions and are so grateful for the service of all the contributors. We had more submissions than we were able to include in this edition! Thank you to all our wonderful contributors for sharing your experience, strength and hope on the subject **Visions**. Please keep writing! Each one of us in our DA community has something to share, so please consider writing for our next edition.

Our next theme will be **Service**. Please start thinking about your submissions:

- Reflect on the service positions you have held and their impact on your recovery.
- How do you practice the principles of service in your life outside recovery?
- What is the value of service? What is the pay-off?
- How has your relationship to service changed over the course of being in DA?
- Is there something else you'd rather write about? Do it!

Please have your submissions to us by **Friday, May 31 2012**. Send us an email: editor.prosperitytimes@gmail.com

For local DA information, including meeting lists, visit www.ncdaweb.org

National DA information, visit www.debtorsanonymous.org

The *PROSPERITY TIMES* is a publication of the NCDA Intergroup, which meets on the 4th Saturday of each month at the SF Public Library at 10:15am, and all are welcome. Please visit www.ncdaweb.org/igmeetings for the latest information.

God's Plan is Unstoppable

I didn't know I could have a vision for my life until I entered DA. I gained a newfound hope entirely by doing the steps and using the tools I learned in this program. I bought my first condo in 1998, one year before I entered DA, which was one of the contributory factors that found me standing on the precipice when I began coming to meetings. My intention then was to live there for a few years and then rent it out and buy myself a "real house". Twelve years later, I was still living there.

My vision was to own a house of my own and to have the condo as rental property. The latter part of that vision has come true: I am now renting out the condo, and I am officially a landlord. I haven't bought another home yet, as my vision has taken a slight turn. After all these years I've gone back to school, which has actually never been on any of the vision boards I've created. I never thought I'd go back to school but during the course of my PRGs, I began to consider what it was I wanted to do when I grew up. ☺

When I turned 50 I began to think it was about time I come up with a plan! I have tried various careers over my lifetime, and I've been passionate about a few of them. For various reasons that

involve my debtor character defects, I never made a go of them. This time feels different. Through all the wonderful work I've done in DA, I have more confidence in myself today that I can realize my visions. As they talk about in the Visions Pamphlet, "it is important to be aware that as we progress in recovery our vision may change or expand." My vision certainly did change: I'm going to school to become a minister, and I never would have guessed that would be my path! The more I considered it, the more I decided I was too old. The older I got, the more I decided it would never come to be. As my sponsor reminded me, "how old will you be if you don't go to school?"

So here I am, following a vision that five years ago I never considered a possibility. And I am loving every minute of it!

Even though my path has taken many twists and turns, DA has helped me to climb a mountain. Staying abstinent for 12 years and getting solvent have been wonderful, but the greatest gift I have received from DA has been the culmination of this recent vision. I've learned it's not always apparent what God's plan may be, but when it does unveil itself, it becomes unstoppable. My goal is that this journey continue to graduation and eventually ordination WITHOUT debting! God willing. I'll let you know how it goes. ☺ ~ Jo G.

Somewhere Over the Rainbow: From Visions to Reality

One of the biggest gifts of BDA has been my Visions PRG. I have been blessed to have a round robin format with two incredible girlfriends in the program. In the round-robin format, we each have 30 minutes to share after a check-in. I consider my Visions PRG to be as important as my personal and business PRGs because it keeps me connected to the larger vision of why I am working this program, and provides inspiration when the inevitable challenges arise (and tremendously supportive program calls). They are also fun PRGs in beautiful cafes when we meet in person. When one of us is travelling the PRGs continue via Skype.

It has been miraculous to see my own progress, as well as the progress of the other members of the Visions PRG. Some of the visions I have achieved with God's help: 6 months in Bali, a new doctoral program, a housing situation that I love,

a blissful trip to Maui, and a new direction for my business. What's next? I'm dreaming up Cuba, a 6-figure business year, and maybe even a husband. (I was blessed to see two of my PRG members fulfill a vision of getting married during the time of our PRG.)

My deepest learning has been that my visions unfold sometimes slowly and sometimes quickly, and that I need to trust God's timing. God has 3 answers: yes, not now, or I have something better in mind for you! Working the steps and releasing character defects is what truly allows me to open to God's grace and vision for my life. I'm incredibly grateful that this program has connected me with my beautiful PRG partners and allowed me to continue to believe that dreams really do come true! ~ TC

Taking Responsibility for our Lives through our Visions

Our 11th Step states: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out."

Having been immersed in 12-step programs for over 23 years before joining BDA in 2010, I had been well-schooled in the belief that it was best to simply ask for knowledge of God's will for me, as opposed to asking for what I thought was best for me. I came to understand that I was often a poor judge of what was best! So instead, I worked the steps, did service, and kept doing the "next right thing." I understood God's will for me as simply whatever was currently happening. For many years this seemed to work pretty well.

When it came to finances, however, it became clear a few years ago that it wasn't working very well at all. So I entered BDA, bruised, battered and terrified, and dove headfirst into the steps. And my misery was transformed into a new way of life, even better than what I had found in my beloved earlier programs.

Many of BDA's suggestions were similar to those of these earlier programs, and the steps were essentially the same. However, I was confused by BDA's discussion of "visions" and "vision statements." Wouldn't this be telling God what I wanted, what I thought was best? Wasn't this control, not surrender?

However, after working the steps in BDA, I learned that one of my current character defects, the one that had in fact brought me to BDA in the first place, was a compulsive need to depend on someone outside myself for security, financial and otherwise. That could be God, my husband or my mother, and occasionally my sponsor or therapist, just as long as it wasn't me. Suddenly, I began to see that under the guise of "turning it over" I wasn't being responsible for my own life. Yes, we need to rely on HP and on others, but we also need to be able to rely on ourselves.

After listening in meetings and attending PRGs, my own and others', I began to see that having a vision might not be forcing my will, but rather giving the universe a chance to let me practice being responsible for myself. So now I could commit to what I want (my vision) and still be working the third step (turning over results, accepting what I am given). The simple phrase, "thy will not mine be done," tacked onto a vision statement, seems to serve the purpose of the 3rd step. I could trust that if my vision wasn't God's will, it wouldn't happen, or if it did, it wouldn't feel right. My intuition, vetted by my sponsor and other trusted folks, would be my guide.

And vision statements work! Spontaneously before a PRG one morning about a year ago, I wrote my first one. It really just flowed out of me, and my PRG was surprised to hear that I had just written it before our meeting, about 15 minutes earlier.

I had pretty much forgotten about it until recently when I came upon the file on my computer and opened it up. To my astonishment, many of the things I'd written a year ago had come to pass, almost to the letter, in some cases. For example, I had described envisioning the number of hours in my private therapy practice doubling, and even described a brand new office that better fit my personality than where I was practicing at that time.

And it has all happened! My practice had indeed doubled, due to a combination of step work, foot work and God's grace. As for my office, one of my favorite bits of wisdom overheard at a meeting in NYC was "an addict finds a rut and decorates". That's me. I didn't particularly like my old office but I wasn't going to go out and look for another one! Yet a short time after writing about a new space in my vision statement, I learned that my office building was closing and I needed to find new office space. I now believe God was doing for me what I couldn't do for myself, as happens so often in program. In this new space I can do better work, and better serve God and others.

Other things I had written in this vision statement have not come to pass, or at least not yet. I will trust that if it's in the best interests of all concerned, these things will happen, and if they don't, they weren't meant to be.

I am still powerless over results, but I am learning that I do have great power in my ability to create visions of what I think is best, even with my limited understanding, and then releasing them to HP.

~ Anonymous

Group Donations

It is suggested that each group, after meeting its own needs and establishing a prudent reserve, send a 7th Tradition donation:

- **45% to local Intergroup**

NCDCA Intergroup
PO Box 423058
San Francisco, CA 94142

- **45% to Gen. Service Office**

DA-GSB
PO Box 92088
Needham, MA 02492

- **10% to Gen. Service Rep**

NorCal DA GSR
PO Box 423136
San Francisco, CA 94142

NOTE: Individual members may also make donations to any of DAs service organizations. In fact, individual donations are welcome! Send your contributions to the above addresses.

The Upside Down Nature of Visions

Sometimes visions yield huge results in the long term but look anything but positive in the short haul. I entered DA as I was leaving a terrible relationship, and I moved back in with my parents at age 35.

I attended weekly meetings, got a sponsor, worked the steps, did service, gave and had regular PRGs. I got a fantastic job with benefits, and I prepared to move out of my parents' house; my sponsor suggested Vision Work to help me on my way.

I was amazed that my vision was of a tree-shrouded womb-like cottage, instead of a sunny, light airy, open space. I quickly found my home: a cottage with green leafy trees all around, beside a creek, with a large bathroom, a galley kitchen and a windowed loft bedroom. Sleeping in the loft was like sleeping in a treehouse – all I could see were leaves. I was so happy. I thought I had achieved my vision.

Two and a half years later, I began dating a long-time friend, and very shortly after that, I lost vision in my left eye. I had scars in my brain, and I lost my balance such that I would careen into walls at work. I was diagnosed with MS. I took this as a sign that I was not to go to medical school, as planned. Instead my friend and I got engaged, and I moved into his home. I fell out of program but my Higher Power was still serving me in ways I had yet to realize. A year after we married, I gave birth to a son.

A Step Six Prayer

Dear God,

Please take away the thousands of defects that stand in the way of your will for me. I know that you have given me a brain to use and abilities to use. Remove from me the liabilities and help me recognize my assets. I am a loving, caring part of you. I care about others and the world in general. Help me to recognize my gifts, my caring and love of others. Help me to be the vulnerable human being you would have me be.

Please take from me my pride, fear, anger, and judgment. For they do not serve me well. Replace them with humility, integrity and seeing the best in others and myself. Let me see your work in everything. Let me have patience and kindness for sick people. Let me have wisdom to do your will and rise to the battles that are put before me.

I stand in the way of those abilities that you have bestowed upon me by not owning them or thinking that they are not important and should be devalued. I put those talents on the shelf and wonder what am I to do, waiting for the ship to come in and my opportunity to shine. God, that opportunity is now.

Remind me daily of your will and your gifts that you have given me. Have me not waste the short time I have with petty fear and worry, and give me the strength to do the real work at hand, the work you have put me on this planet to do.

With sincerity and heartfelt love,

~ *Anonymous*

Then my health really crashed. I could barely care for our newborn. It took every ounce of my energy to get out of the house once a week. Our son was sick, too. We had huge medical bills. Our marriage crumbled. When our son was 5-1/2, I liquidated my 401k to fund an experimental treatment overseas. I recovered most of my health and my life. The killing blow in the development of my illness was the thing I least expected – mold in my sweet cottage. How could that be? Did my Higher Power not care for me? Was it *my* will to live there?

On the contrary, the process of recovering from illness has made my life rich beyond belief. Even in my program, I was so full of will and determination and had a hard time being receptive. It was only through illness that I was able to begin to embrace the humanity which unites us all. Only through illness did I discover that I could persevere to save my life. I allowed myself to learn from others, follow in their footsteps, and acknowledge that they had plenty to teach me, to give me.

I was helped to recognize the generosity of my husband, and that he was struggling with his own issues. I am not "well and wonderful." I'm just another human being, doing the best I can to learn and grow. And those are all things that bring me the most joy and fulfillment and they're things that money can't buy – a gift via a moldy cottage from a vision and my Higher Power.

~ *Denise S.*

Expanding the Possibility of a Vision

Creating a vision for myself and my business has been a core DA challenge for me. I have moments where I see myself living a self-actualized life of abundance, but these moments are fleeting; they are soon blurred by my misguided core beliefs and/or the time and energy demands of my daily life.

As I work Step 3, my capacity for the willingness to allow a vision for myself is expanding. I can see that it will take spiritual and emotional growth to overcome my self-limiting beliefs, along with use of the tools of the program to actually manifest my dreams. As the Big Book says "half measures availed us nothing."

Becoming conscious of when, where, and how Higher Power is present in my life is enabling me to slowly start believing that I deserve a vision and that I can create an abundant life. In fact, I already have one in so many ways, I just didn't notice! Gratitude and willingness are helping me see that more is possible.

~ *Pam, San Francisco*

"It is when we live our vision, aligning our will with that of our Higher Power's, that we attain the peace, joy, emotional balance, self-worth, and love that have been promised. By living our vision and doing God's will for us, we inspire others to do the same. And so the never-ending chain of recovery and growth continues."

~*From the Visions Pamphlet*

Returning to DA with a Humble Vision

I've been in DA for more than 17 years, some years more focused than others. When I came in I could not figure out how anyone could possibly generate more than \$30K per year. I just didn't see how any amount of talk or step work could translate into hard cash.

At some point I set a kind of fantasy goal of getting HP has a client (yes, it would have been as good or better if I was referring to Higher Power but this was the OTHER HP) and miraculously, within 7 months, I did get that client. I also as a joke went to look at a unit in a luxury apartment overlooking the bay. Within a year I was able to rent a \$2500 apartment with an even better bay view.

I went from zero to earning between 22-30K a month!

In 2004 my contracts expired and since that time I've been living on my savings with no particular vision except to find some kind of employment. It's been a difficult time. For the past 20 months I've been homeless—never living anyplace for longer than 11 weeks. Needless to say, this has been very difficult on my nervous system.

About 3 months ago I woke up with the idea that I was to start a decluttering business, and now, 4 months later, I just finished earning over \$4K in one month—more than I've earned for any project in 7 years.

It's clear that I'm meant to be an entrepreneur and to wait patiently for G.O.D.—good orderly direction. I'm not a patient person. I've returned to DA recently after some time away. I'm humbled, beyond humbled. If it weren't for God, God's representatives (in all of my 12 step meetings), and the gratitude I feel, I would have perished. I have also added a meditation practice—taking the 11th step to its furthest degree possible.

My vision now is less for travel and riches and more for a solid home where I can stay as long as I like and the income to support a small studio. This period of homelessness, and the 12,000 miles I've driven halfway across the country and back, have all taught me that I do get taken care of and that there must be a higher power.

In the future, I'd love to attend a writer's colony where I can write with insight, wisdom and humor about all I've learned. Thanks for letting me share. ~ MK

"In DA, discovering one's vision can come about in many ways. First, we must stop debting—as debting distracts us from self-knowledge and connecting to our Higher Power. Second, we must seek to know God's will for us by using prayer and meditation and working the Twelve Steps of Debtors Anonymous. It is through working the 12 Steps that our blocks and resistances are removed. Third, we use the Tools of DA to help clarify and support our vision..."

~From the Visions Pamphlet

Becoming Real

As a little girl I used to listen to the children's book *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams on tape over and over again to soothe me to sleep. I was enchanted and comforted by the story of the little boy who helped his toy rabbit become real simply by loving him. In the book, late one night the Velveteen Rabbit asks the wise old Skin Horse in the nursery "how does one become real?" His elder explains "becoming real is a process that takes time. It happens bit by bit, not all at once. One *becomes* real." The Velveteen Rabbit wanted so badly to become real, yet feared the process. Perhaps even then, as a little girl, my deep resonance with the Velveteen Rabbit's wish to become real was stirring around inside of me. Today, I can understand my own desire to become real as a deep yearning to become whole and to grow up completely.

I carried that desire with me for years.

When I found DA, I knew I had *finally*, after all those years, discovered where I belonged. At last, I was no longer alone. Perhaps my arrival to DA was, without knowing it yet, my first vision realized. And, while I came to DA on my knees, I met the program with outstretched arms. I knew the fellowship was exactly what I needed to regain my sanity. In just over one year in the program, I have received so many gifts. I can now see that there is a way I could have never imagined before DA. For so long, I pretended and hoped, avoided and manipulated the rules of the world, wishing somehow they would not apply to me. I got away with it for a while, but eventually it caught up with me. Now I am cleaning up the wreckage, bit by bit, and becoming ready for the next steps. I feel my self-esteem building and my maturity level gaining. I know that I am not in control of God's timing or when I am ready (even though I like to think I am!). So I trust that all I can do is keep showing up for my recovery. I know that when I am ready – the miracle will come. For now, I keep looking to my DA elders, like the old Skin Horse, for guidance. With my Higher Power, an abundant and loving fellowship, my sponsor, PRG and action buddy, I am wading through the waters of my wreckage with humility and faith.

While trusting in right timing and my HP, my vision for 2012 is to move from my present underearning positions into one healthy, well-paying job that will allow me to continue to be self-supporting, remain abstinent and meet my full spectrum of needs (and start having more fun!). I want to double my income this year while working for an employer who values me as an employee and in return for my hard work compensates me generously. I also hope to have the opportunity to be of more service in our fellowship.

In DA, I have the courage, love and support I need to finally grow up and for that I will forever be thankful.

I am finally *becoming real*.

~ Anonymous

God, grant me the wisdom to know and understand my visions, the serenity to accept them, and the courage to carry them out, one day at a time.
The Visions Prayer