

Are They Only Words?

By Ron B.

The other day a member of our fellowship mentioned to me that he had quit attending meetings at a certain location due to the propensity of vulgar language. It made me think back to my early days of sobriety when I used many “earthy” expletives, no doubt a byproduct of many years in the Navy where I learned to “cuss like a sailor”.

I just didn’t think I could get my point across without some strong language. A lot of it was a habit and even though I realized it was wrong, I wasn’t eager to change. Then along came Step Six, “Were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character”. I was ready but how does one break the habit?

“Addictions and coarse language seem to go hand in hand. Cursing is often present in those addicted to anger. Lewd speech, deception, and gossip are part of other dependencies. Sarcasm and belittling is characteristic of addiction to control. Sometimes these speech patterns are so ingrained in us that we are not even aware of how much we use them. When we become ready for God to change us, He will change not only our actions, but also our attitudes and words. This is often a bigger surprise and joy to those who know us than a change in our behavior. Programs and methods may bring certain behavior changes for a time, but only God can change our hearts so completely that every aspect of our lives becomes new.” Partly quoted from Serenity for Every Day.

The above writing opened my eyes because I had not considered that cursing could be a dependency. After all, aren’t they only words? Apparently not.

Gradually over the years I no longer found the need to express myself with strong language. I firmly believe it is a result of trying to live this program based on the principles laid forth in our Big Book, the Twelve & Twelve, and through a loving fellowship. Of course, admitting to these other defects of character played a huge role.

Does that mean I don’t use a choice word from time to time? Not at all. We never fully get rid of our defects of character. Mostly we simply replace them with positive attributes and attitudes. There are times when I get surprised and one of those old defects will pop up. This happens and though I usually recognize it quickly, I must take steps to resolve it. Maybe it won’t happen so suddenly next time.

How can we rid ourselves of these other dependencies? Revisiting Step Six is a good start. Asking God to help us remove our anger or addiction to

control in our daily prayers will certainly help. Maybe a good heart to heart with our sponsor will start us in the right direction. One day we'll discover that we don't find the need to use swear words to convey our message. What a joy to find this freedom.