

PERSONAL STORY



Fits and Starts

By Tom W.

My skewed attitude toward money began early. I grew up in a middle class home with very contradictory views of money. On the one hand, it was not okay to talk about things, but on the other hand it was admired too much. We had money but didn't. The underlying view was that money and related status was a good thing, but it was important to act as though it wasn't! The result was that I grew up with a sense of entitlement regarding money. Fortunately, that came with a strong work ethic—I began work when I was 13—but the contradictory, crazy attitude was still there. I learned far too easily how to spend more than I earned without batting an eye.

Somehow that attitude, a poor self-image, other factors resulted in my predilection for compulsive behavior. That behavior did not cause compulsive money making—I was reasonably prudent but did not worry much about money. During my late teens and early 20s I drank excessively. Later, I studied to an extreme degree—my compulsive energies went in that direction—followed by extreme work habits, followed by gambling, and excessive spending which meshed well with that addiction. I was then in my 40s, divorced, wanting to still be a good part-time parent, under pressure at a dysfunctional work environment,

and often lonesome. Not being responsible about my “money life” and imprudent spending became part of the sad picture.

Fortunately, I did begin a slow road to recovery when my debts and spending exceeded my income, and things were getting worse of course. At the urging of my soon-to-become spouse I stumbled across DA. In fits and starts I began attending meetings. I was very skeptical about the DA program. Frankly, I don't think I really wanted to recover. I certainly did not want to change my lifestyle to which I had become accustomed. And of course the addict in me did not want to face my debts or stop the debting.

That crazy thinking is part of the disease. However, by working the program, coming to meetings to hear and share experiences, support from friends and loved ones, a short term second job, and staying away from malls and other “triggering” environments. I was able to pay off my debts and stop incurring more debt. At this point in time, I am debt free and can live modestly and happily. I am content and no longer feel deprived or that I'm missing anything by not living a billionaire's life style!