Turning Point

I recently vacationed in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. I live in Florida, so there is something almost magical about watching the leaves turn brilliant shades of red, orange, and gold. The trees reminded me that change can be beautiful, even when it means letting go of what was.

It also reminded me of my own turning point.

It took me 35 years of drinking to get here. Thirty-five years of decorating my bottom, convincing myself things weren't that bad, thinking doctors were out of their mind for telling me I was living a highly unhealthy lifestyle, and finding new ways to make excuses. I had one bottom after another, and somehow, I kept digging. I would hit a low, pick myself up just enough to keep going, and then find another way to fall. Here is the catch… I did not even know I had hit my bottom so many times until I got sober and literally put my story on paper for the first time.

I thought I could manage it. I thought I could control it. I thought I could keep doing what I had always done and somehow expect a different outcome.

At one point my husband asked me when I was going to get a job. I replied I have a job I am a Real Estate Agent. He was quick to remind me I never sold a thing and made zero dollars in this profession.

Several doctors had already warned me that I was only moments away from cirrhosis of the liver. I had heard the warnings, but hearing something and understanding it are two very different things. Somehow, I had managed to keep moving forward without fully accepting what was happening to me.

Then came a phone call on October 24, 2022, to give me the results of my last blood test. I will never forget that call. I knew, even before I had a chance to process everything that was being said, that this was different. This was my last chance to change the outcome before the damage became irreversible. This is the life changing phone call:

Doctor: We have the results of your blood test, and we think you should quit drinking for 30 days. (Long Pause) On second thought we think you should quit drinking forever."

Me: (I have no idea what I said but I knew)

The gig was up.

There was no more decorating my bottom. No more bargaining with myself. No more pretending I could keep drinking and somehow escape the consequences.

For the first time, I knew I had to do something different.

On October 27, 2022, I stopped drinking for 30 days but at that time only to get the doctor off my back and clear up my test results. I tested again after 30 days.

Doctor: “We have your results and your fatty liver has cleared up but we do recommend you quit drinking permantly.”

Well, something happened to me during this 30 days. I found out what it was like to feel good and healthy every day. I literally thought, “This is what normal people feel like all of the time?” Because in my head, in my world, I assumed everyone got blackout drunk and threw up on a daily basis.

But stopping drinking and finding recovery turned out to be two hugely different things. From October 27 to January 1, 2023, I was what many of us call a dry drunk. I was not drinking, but I hadn't yet learned how to live differently. I had taken away the alcohol, but I hadn't found the connection, the support, or the tools that would help me build a new life.

Then came January 1, 2023.

I walked into an AA meeting.

Alone.

Nobody told me to go. Nobody dragged me through the door. Nobody made that decision for me. I knew I needed something more than what I had been doing, and I decided it was worth a try.

And I was absolutely terrified.

In fact, I was hoping I had stumbled into a book club and was simply at the wrong place.

But I walked in anyway.

And here is the part I will never forget: **I walked in alone, but I did not walk out alone.**

That was my first big turning point in recovery. It was not the end of my story. It was the beginning of a completely different one.

Since then, I have learned that turning points do not happen just once. Sometimes they arrive as a terrifying phone call. Sometimes they come when you finally ask for help. Sometimes they happen when you walk into a room full of strangers, even though every part of you wants to turn around and leave.

And sometimes, the turning point is much quieter. It is the day you realize you are no longer the person you used to be. The day you respond differently. The day you discover that you

can face something difficult without reaching for a drink. The day you begin to believe that maybe, just maybe, you deserve the life you are building.

The good news is that your first turning point is only the beginning.

If you stay the course, remain willing, and genuinely want a new life, more turning points will come. They won't all be easy. Recovery does not promise that every day will be beautiful or that every season will feel good. There will be challenges, losses, and days when you wonder whether you are making progress at all.

But keep going. Keep showing up. Keep doing the work.

Your life can change in ways you cannot yet imagine.

Just like those trees in the Adirondack Mountains, we go through seasons. Some seasons are full of color and possibility. Others feel bare, cold, and uncertain. Sometimes the changes are so gradual that we do not even notice them until we look back and realize how far we have come.

The trees don't turn brilliant shades of gold and red overnight. And we do not build a new life overnight, either. Change takes time. It takes patience, willingness, and courage to let go of what is no longer serving us.

But when we give ourselves that chance, something extraordinary can happen.

Thirty-five years of drinking brought me to a place I never wanted to be. One phone call forced me to face the truth. One decision helped me stop drinking. And one terrified walk into an AA meeting opened the door to a life I had not known was possible.

Today, I understand that my turning point was not simply the day I stopped drinking. It was the day I became willing to change.

Maybe you are standing at your own turning point right now. Maybe you are exhausted from decorating your bottom. Maybe you are frightened, uncertain, or convinced that you have gone too far to start over.

I want you to know something: **You are not required to have your whole new life figured out before you take the first step.**

You just have to be willing to take it.

Your turning point may not look like mine. It may not happen in a doctor's office or an AA meeting. But if you know deep down that something has to change, listen to that voice. Give yourself the chance to find out what comes next.

Because the most beautiful thing about a turning point is that it doesn't just change the direction you are going.

It opens the door to a life you never thought you could have.

And sometimes, the most beautiful colors come after the hardest seasons.

This could be your turning point.