

Feelings

by Jack Yanisch

So I'm several days into a six week stay at my first and only treatment center. On this day I'm sitting in a small room with about six or seven other addicts and alcoholics, my peer group. I think my counselors name is Joan. Some guy is going on and on about some tragic event in his life. I'm not listening, I have enough problems of my own. I've been high on Cocaine for the last five years solid. I'm a dealer only so I can afford my habit and that of my partner Debbie. We are messed up nine ways til Sunday. I had a Gran Mal seizure and we were busted on account of it. We're facing 35 years and 350,000. in fines.

This is the first time we've gotten in trouble and here I am with a lot on my mind. The words he's speaking are not bouncing off of me, they're going right through me and making a mess. Tears start running down my cheeks and I just lean over with my head pointing straight down so no one can see. I have no idea what is going on, I haven't cried forever. Pretty soon the tears start to drop from my face and hit the floor. I'm coming unglued. I can't hide this any longer. I know this guy is talking but I can feel everyone looking at me. Joan says "Jack, how do you feel?" Now it's been a long, long time since I've felt anything, so I didn't know what to say.

When you're a drug addict and strung out for years and years your emotional vocabulary disappears. There are two feelings a drug addict can have. One is the feeling we're all searching for and that comes sometime during a normal run of two to four days for me. You really have to be there to understand it but imagine I'm sitting on the couch for about three days and I'm so drunk and stoned and high that I'm absolutely zoned, gone, eyes at half mast with a blank stare. Someone says "Jack, are you OK?" they might have to ask a couple of times before I answer. I pick my head up real slow and open my eyes to make contact and mutter "Yea, yea man I'm

alright". And there it is, everything I could hope for. All I can achieve is to feel OK or alright.

The other feeling is the complete opposite. I've crashed and slept for the last 24 hours and I wake up and things are different. I have to do things now, I have to go out. I'm out of drugs and liquor and pot. I need to reload. The phone starts ringing and it's people who depend on me to supply them also. I haven't eaten in a few days so I need to take care of that too. Sometime in those 4 days my Mom left a message on my machine asking me to come over and fix something. The Sun is out and I have to go outside, people will see me and I'm paranoid as hell.

There is a name for this situation, it's a pain based word and it took me a lot of thought to come up with it. The word is (reality), it sucks. It hurts!

So there I am without the vocabulary to express myself. I couldn't say, "Well Joan, I'm feeling a little frightened, and scared. There seems to be an undercurrent of anger. A little perturbed you're letting this guy go on and on. Desperate, yea desperate. Embarrassed, remorseful, ashamed? None of these words came to my mind. So I looked up at Joan and said "I feel like shit."

