

Serenity

By: Christopher Guardino, LMHC

I have heard the serenity prayer many times since I was very young.

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen.

Since I am agnostic I struggled to put this into a context I could use. About ten years ago I was in a bad place and struggling with some problems and getting help at a treatment center. The focus of the day's group was about surrendering to God. Don't get me wrong, I respect every person's beliefs but I wanted a way to change it myself. I questioned this and met some resistance from the group leader who was having difficulty explaining it without a strong belief in God being a necessary component. Luckily another group member slipped me a small piece of paper that would solve the riddle once and for all. It said three words. Good. Orderly. Direction. In those three words I had transcended the need for God and also found my own version of G O D. I had been taught a way to believe in my own power to change my thoughts, my feelings. I no longer needed someone or something else to save me as long as I could live by those three simple words. Good orderly direction. So what does that even mean? I guess to me it meant taking more time to consider. It meant making more choices that were right and not what I wanted. It meant choosing more facts over feelings. And, most of all, it meant I finally believed that I could get myself to peace of mind if I just worked at it a little every day. Some people find salvation in their faith I'm the type of person that is trying to find salvation in my thoughts and behaviors.

Christopher Guardino, LMHC, is a licensed mental health counselor (NYS) specializing in anxiety and mood disorders. He has been affiliated with Freedom From Fear since 1994. He offers a free session to individuals, via his E-Therapy practice, who are seeking this type of service. Visit Chris at <http://treatmentmadesimple.com/>