



Alligator Fever

When reading the following story you may find yourself thinking “What does this have to do with substance use?” Or, perhaps if you have been around the treatment community for a while, you may find this updated old story strangely familiar. Either way, once you have completed reading the story below, follow the simple directions and then process its meaning as a group. Afterwards find out what the real meaning of the story is how it applies to the process of positive change.

Abby and Greg first met 3 years ago and a strong loving bond bloomed almost immediately. After 2 years of dating they became engaged and had set a date for marriage. Abby and Greg’s relationship was loving, faithful and true and as a result they were the envy of all of their friends because of how close and inseparable they appeared to be. They were in love and the future looked bright.

Then one day tragedy suddenly struck. Greg worked as an importer/exporter which on occasion required travel to some exotic places. While visiting an obscure country far, far away Greg contracted Alligator fever, an extremely rare disease that put its victims in to a deep coma-like sleep. Greg was quickly flown back to the US to meet with the best doctors but none could awaken Greg from his viral-induced state of comatose. Abby was desperate and refused to give up on Greg so she did extensive research and found a retired old doctor living overseas who was the only person in the world to have successfully ever brought anyone out of the slumber caused by Alligator fever by performing a simple but controversial surgical procedure. His name was Dr. Sinbad. Abby right away had Dr. Sinbad flown in to do a medical consultation about Greg’s desperate condition.

When Dr. Sinbad saw Abby he was immediately taken aback by her appearance. Abby was extremely beautiful and miraculously she was the spitting image Dr. Sinbad’s long lost love who had died over 30 years ago. Dr. Sinbad was very blunt with Abby. He told her that the controversial surgery was not covered by insurance and it cost over \$250,000 to perform, however if she spent one night alone in a hotel with him, he would perform the procedure on Greg at no financial cost.

Abby was disgusted at Dr. Sinbad’s indecent proposal so she went off to find the money herself. Dr. Sinbad said she had 24 hours to think about it before he flew back to his home country leaving Greg in his current state of unconsciousness. Due to the time shortage, Abby went to the only person she could think of who could come up with that kind of money right away, and that was Greg’s brother Ivan. There was one catch however, Greg and Ivan hadn’t talked in years. It turned out that Abby had dated Ivan briefly prior to meeting Greg and when she met Greg it was love at first sight so she left Ivan for Greg three years ago. Ivan hadn’t spoken to either one of them since. Still, Abby turned to Ivan in desperation and she apologized for how things had turned out and for hurting him in the past. She begged Ivan for help. She pleaded with Ivan reminding him that Greg is family. Ivan, who was wealthy, had the money and at one time loved his brother Greg dearly, however he refused to help out Abby and Greg in spite of the seriousness of the situation with Greg his only brother. He couldn’t get beyond the past betrayal and rejection and left Abby to fend for herself.

Abby then felt like she had no choice. She reluctantly consented to Dr. Sinbad’s proposition so that Dr. Sinbad could save Greg’s life. Dr Sinbad kept his end of the bargain and the next day he successfully performed his controversial but effective surgery on Greg to cure him of the coma induced by Alligator fever. Greg woke up and Dr Sinbad then left and went back from where he came from.



When Greg awoke fully and came to his senses he was ecstatic and he and Abby were full of joy to be back together. They were again looking forward to their bright future together. However, not too long after, Greg started asking some questions and he soon discovered that his lifesaving medical procedure was very expensive and not covered by insurance. He pressed Abby to find out how she paid for everything with no money. Abby eventually admitted to Greg what had transpired with Dr. Sinbad as part of their “deal” to cover the cost of his treatment. Abby swore that everything she did was only motivated by her deep love for Greg. Immediately Greg was shocked, infuriated and outraged. He called Abby every hurtful name that he could think of and then he cancelled the engagement. Abby pleaded with Greg to try to get him to understand but he cast her aside with anger and disdain, insisting that she never speak with him ever again.

Abby fell into a deep depression. Abby turned to an old friend Gus for comfort. Gus had been Greg’s best friend for years which is why Abby went to him, thinking he would understand and perhaps he would be able to talk some sense to Greg. When Gus heard the story, he was sickened and he insisted that he and Abby go have a talk with Greg together which they then did. As soon as Gus saw Greg and witnessed his callous attitude he was overcome with anger and he attacked Greg with a baseball bat and beat him brutally, sending Greg back bruised, broken and unconscious to the hospital. Abby tried unsuccessfully to stop the attack but couldn’t. Afterward, however, inside herself she actually felt a little satisfied that Greg got his due for mercilessly rejecting her after all that she did and she even cracked a little smile as Greg was taken away in the ambulance.

Your assignment now is to rank all five characters in order from who you thought was the worst, to the one you thought did the least wrong. The character you rate with a 1 is the worst in your opinion, 2- the second worst, 3 the third, and so on up to 5:

Abby	_____
Greg	_____
Dr. Sinbad	_____
Ivan	_____
Gus	_____

Discuss your answers as a group and include your rationale for your choices

*“If you are going to keep your mouth open,
make sure that you are thick-skinned” - Al Ligator*





Process:

So the question remains: *What's the point of the story?* The answer is that the story itself is not all that meaningful. There are really no right or wrong answers to the follow up discussion on who people thought the worst characters were. The goal of this story is to get people thinking about and then discussing **VALUES**

Values is a crucial topic that should never get old. ***What we think about, how we feel, and what we choose to do all starts with our own personal set of values – What is most important to us***

Consider some of the commonly esteemed values that the ***Alligator Fever*** story touched upon:

- ♥ Family -
- ♥ Friendship -
- ♥ Faithfulness -
- ♥ Trust -
- ♥ Money -
- ♥ Health -
- ♥ Loyalty -
- ♥ Respect –
- ♥ Love -
- ♥ Life -
- ♥ Other? -

So in essence, as you discussed the characters in the *Alligator Fever* story whom you barely even know, you were not judging them as individuals, but rather you were prioritizing which values stood out the most to you based on your own priorities.

Closing Exercise & Discussion: *Go back through the list of values above and starting at the top with Family, go through each value one by one and complete the following sentence:*

“When it comes to (Value from the list – starting with Family) the kind of person I used to be when I was getting high was _____ (Describe). But today as I am changing for the better, my goal in this area is _____.”

Do this for each of the values above: *Family, Friendship, Faithfulness, Trust, Money, Health, and so on – discussing your answers as a group*

“Values are the definition of our actions in life”

— Armin Houman