DROP THE ROCK

The following story was told during a talk by Sandy B. During a 1976 AA convention. It has become famous in recovery circles the world over due to its ring of authenticity. It is a parable of redemption, forgiveness, fellowship, and recovery. It is presented in its entirety as quoted in the book, “Drop the Rock.”

“Seems there was this group of twelve-step members taking a boat ride to this island called *Serenity*, and it was truly a happy bunch of people. As the boat pulled away from the dock a few on board noticed Mary running down the street trying to catch up with the boat. One member said, “Darn, she’s missed the boat.” Another said, “Maybe not. Come on, Mary! Jump in the water! Swim! Swim! You can make it! You can catch up with us!”

So Mary jumped into the water and started to swim for all she was worth. She swam for quite a while and then started to sink. The members on board, now all aware that Mary was struggling, shouted, “come on, Mary! Don’t give up! Drop the rock!” With that encouragement, Mary started swimming again, only to start sinking again shortly afterward. She was going under when she heard all those voices shouting to her, “Mary, drop the rock! Let go and drop the rock.”

Mary was vaguely aware of something around her neck, but she couldn’t quite figure out what it was. Once more, she gathered her strength and started swimming. She was doing quite well, even gaining a little on the boat, but then she felt this heaviness pulling her under again. She saw all those people on the boat holding out their hands and hollering for her to keep swimming and shouting, “don’t be an idiot, Mary! Drop the rock!”

Then she understood, when she was going down for the third time:, *this* was why she kept sinking when she really *wanted* to catch the boat. This thing was the “rock” they were all shouting about: resentments, fear, dishonesty, self-pity, intolerance, [unforgiveness], and anger were just some of the things her “rock” was made of. “God help me get rid of the rock,” she prayed. “Now! Get rid of it!”

Mary managed to stay afloat long enough to untangle a few of the strings holding that rock around her neck, realizing as she did that her load was easing up. Then, with another burst of energy, *she let go*. She tore the other strings off and *dropped the rock*.

Once free of the rock, she was amazed how easy it was to swim, and she soon caught up with the boat. Those on board were cheering for her and applauding and telling her how great she was, and how it was so good having her with them again, and how now they could get on with the boat ride and have a nice time.

Mary felt great and was just about to indulge in a little rest and relaxation when she glanced back to shore. There, a ways back, she thought she saw something bobbing in the water so she pointed it out to some others. Sure enough, someone was trying to catch the boat, swimming for dear life but not making much headway. In fact, it looked like the person was going under.

Mary looked around and saw the concern on the faces of the other members. She was the first to lean over the rail and shout, “Hey, friend! Drop the rock!”

Although the original audience for this story was a gathering of recovering alcoholics, its universality is apparent. We all have a backpack of the assorted rocks of anger, hurt feelings, missed opportunities, broken relationships, disappointments, insults, and damage done to our physical, emotional, and spiritual bodies.

We have carried them long enough. They have tried to hold us back and drag us under. But, we are all children of God. We are all going to make it to *Serenity Island* because God is teaching us how to love, through the lessons that life is giving us. And the greatest and most valuable lesson is how to forgive.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Drop The Rock [↑](#footnote-ref-1)