Relapse Scenario-Betty

Betty is a 60 year old Caucasian woman attending intensive outpatient treatment (IOP) for her alcoholism. Betty also has diabetes and a diagnosis of bi-polar disorder. Betty has episodes of binge drinking when in a period of mania. Betty struggled to get her blood sugar and her mood disorder under control the first three months of IOP. She finally, after trying a lot of different medications has stabilized. She has two months clean and has started to benefit from the feedback the group has given her on using her past losses to shield her from doing any work on issues.

Recently, she has started to talk about her grief and loss in individual sessions with her counselor and to recognize when she is using it as a shield to not feel. She is beginning to see that she never really processed her grief after her baby was stillborn because she drank instead. She tells her counselor and the group it feels good to finally not feel stuck all the time.

Betty decided to visit a friend who recently became a grandmother. When she arrived the baby was there and she held her. She felt happy for her friend but after she left she started to feel a deep sadness that she would never experience being a grandmother. She hadn’t thought about that before. This realization meant not only would she never be a mother but now she was an age where she should be a grandmother and this too had been taken from her!!

She tried to call her sponsor but it went to voicemail. She didn’t leave a message. She went downtown and started to walk while the voices in her head were railing about the unfairness of it all. At times she was cussing out loud. She walked and walked. She missed dinner, her medication, and the fact that her blood sugar was falling. She walked by the grocery store and thought I better get a protein bar. She went in the store and without what seemed as any thought at all headed for the wine section. She picked up one of those big boxes of white wine, paid for it, and was walking out of the store with it without any thought of what she was doing. She went home and her first thought was well, I guess I will celebrate not being a mother or a grandmother, who the hell cares! She was well in to the box of wine and feeling pretty swimmy headed when her phone rang. She answered and it was her sponsor calling her back. She started to cry uncontrollably and in between gasps she told her she was drunk and scared.

Her sponsor came right over to make sure she was alright. The EMT’s were called and she was taken to the hospital as her blood sugar levels were very low and she had not taken her insulin. Her sponsor picked her up the next day and took her to a meeting. She was crying and upset that she had “wasted all the progress she had made.” She stated she felt ashamed and she didn’t deserve to be a mother much less a grandmother.

She went to her individual session before her next IOP group and confessed to her counselor that she had relapsed, how ashamed she was, and how she scared she would never have complete control over her use.