

Old-Time Minneapolis A.A. Beginners Classes

Instructor's Outline

This mimeographed Instructor's Outline from Minneapolis, Minnesota, was written by Pat Cronin for use in teaching the beginners classes which he gave at 2218 First Avenue South, where the first A.A. group in that city began meeting in 1940. There is still an Alano Society clubhouse there today. It comes from the collection of Jack H. (Scottsdale, Arizona), who also has all of Ed Webster's papers. This is the earliest known material for A.A. beginners lessons. It is the ancestor in a sense of **The Little Red Book** (*An Interpretation of the Twelve Steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous Program*) which Ed Webster wrote after he had begun giving A.A. beginners classes in Minneapolis in December 1943. Ed began rewriting the Instructor's Outline as soon as he became involved in teaching the classes. *The Little Red Book* was published in 1946 with Dr. Bob's help and support. -- Glenn C., South Bend IN

Instructor's Outline for Class #1

[Step 1]

- (1) Duration -- From 45 to 50 minutes
- (2) Welcome of applicant members, stressing their *voluntary action* in *asking* for help and their honest admission that they have a major drinking problem.
- (3) Brief history of AA movement (not to exceed 2 or 3 minutes), stressing the success of the movement, the founding by Bill Wilson and Dr. Smith and the effectiveness because it is carried out by those who have been through the mill.
- (4) Recite briefly one or two of your own or some other AA's experience in *screwy thinking* and failure to be *honest with yourself*, which will add a little humor and at the same time, make the applicant member feel at home and have confidence.
- (5) Bring out the basic importance of honesty and point out how easy it is to be dishonest with ourselves. Sincerity.

(5a) Alcoholics have a high intelligence -- keenly reactive nervous systems -- tell Dr. Schneider's story -- 400 families -- Johns Hopkins.

(6) Bring out that AA has all the facilities -- friendship, faith building, recreation, advice and sponsorship to give to the new members but that above all, each must do the job for *himself* and must *reach for all parts* of this program and for the *changes in thinking* and in *association*, which are essential. -- AA served cafeteria style -- May help yourself liberally to everything on the menu -- Your attitude must be dynamic -- not static --

(6a) Bring out anonymity.

(7) Proceed with explanation of the great importance of Step 1 -- "We admit that our lives have become unmanageable over alcohol." Elaborate on how easy it is to cheat ourselves in this all-important admission.

(8) In addition to complete honesty being necessary, the new member must have an *open mind* and not only a willingness, but a *desire* to learn new things. He must forget many ideas or notions he already has and be willing to set a number of his opinions aside. He must look for the *constructive* and *good* things rather than try to *pick the program apart*.

(9) Tactfully explain that it has been found a help to those coming in to review some of the controlling reasons that we find causes a person to become an alcoholic. In other words, some of the reasons why an alcoholic drinks.

(a) As an escape from situations of life he cannot face.

(b) As a symptom of constitutional inferiority.

(c) A self-pampering tendency which often refuses to tolerate, even temporarily, such things as boredom, sorrow, anger, disappointment, worry, self-pity and feelings of inferiority.

(10) Proceed to explain that in deciding whether or not you are alcoholic, it will help to consider some of the carefully formulated questions which have been scientifically compiled by Johns Hopkins University as a test basis. Read them:

1. Do you require a drink the next morning?
2. Do you lose time from work due to drinking? Is it jeopardizing business?
3. Has your drinking, over a period of time, harmed your family?

4. Do you get the inner shakes unless you continue drinking?
5. Has drinking over a period of time, made you irritable?
6. Has drinking changed your personality?
7. Does drinking make you restless or have difficulty in sleeping?
8. Have you less self-control since drinking over a period of time?
9. Has your ambition decreased since drinking?
10. Do you drink to relieve marked feelings of inadequacy?
11. Do you drink for self-encouragement or to attain social ease?
12. Has your sexual potency suffered since drinking over a period of time?
13. Do you show marked dislikes, self-pities and jealousy, since drinking?
14. Has drinking made you more sensitive?
15. Do you turn to an inferior surrounding since drinking?
16. Is drinking affecting your peace of mind?
17. Is drinking affecting your reputation?
18. Has it made your home life unhappy?

-- If your answer is "YES" to three or more of the above questions, Johns Hopkins University states that you are definitely an alcoholic.

(11) Bring out again here that we in AA do *not* attempt to classify you, but that you must classify yourself by courageously and honestly considering your situation, experiences, and facts. In this connection, as well as the best means of learning this program, the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," written and edited by a number of our brilliant early members, is valuable. *We suggest that you obtain a book from your sponsor or one of your friends in AA immediately, and read it.*

(12) Comment on the spiritual phase of the program as the underlying foundation for all -- Explain we simply learn to have our own conception of a Power greater than ourselves which *will guide and help us*. All we ask is that you definitely keep an open mind for this part of the program and that you look for *manifestations* of that Power rather than look for *things to discredit it*. Suggest that, as we did, you try a simple prayer -- ask that you be given the ability to help someone else, and the strength to stay dry for 24 hours.

(13) Brief statement on the importance of sponsorship and the most *receptive attitude* for a new member to have, to get the most from sponsorship, to wit.

(a) Willingness and desire to learn and take suggestions.

(b) Absolute honesty with one's self and others.

(c) Humility. (Here, carefully explain what we mean by "humility" -- not the idea of humbling one's self, but the idea of judging ourselves with respect to others, as we believe God would judge us in such comparison.)

(14) Leave these important suggestions with new members:

(a) Don't put yourself in the company or environment which is most conducive to drinking. Don't lead with your chin! (Explain three slogans, i.e., "First things first" "Easy does it" and "Live and let Live")

(b) Drive some stakes. In other words, tell your closest friends what you have done about AA. Tell others and acquaintances when they ask you to drink, that you have found you cannot drink half-way and you have eliminated it completely.

(c) Live 24 four hour program. (Explain in detail what this means)

(d) Decide on a few elemental changes you must make in your thinking and do something about it.

(e) Take the aggressive and reach for this. Call your sponsor and *talk frequently* and *freely* of your problems TO OTHER SINCERE MEMBERS OF AA.

(f) Use our fine club and meet as many members as possible.

(g) Don't overlook the importance of the physical side. In this connection, many of you today, probably feel a bit jittery and would like to get some relief from this and to sleep better. See your doctor, and ask him to give you some concentrated nerve food, not medicine or drugs. You may also purchase B1 pills at the desk in the lobby. These will be a big help.

(15) Briefly state in conclusion that in this first class, we are attempting to show our confidence and interest in you who have decided you need our help and this in turn helps all of us. We have particularly tonight, pointed out how important your first decision is, -- "*That your life has become, to a considerable extent, unmanageable over alcohol.*" Unless you ARE CONVINCED OF THIS, YOU ARE NOT READY FOR IT!

A week from tomorrow night, the second instruction class will take up several of the very vital steps of this program and give you an understanding of just what they are and how to carry them

out. These steps are the very crux of your ability to recover and you will, of course, want to attend Class 2.

Instructor's Outline for Class #2

[Steps 4, 5, 8, and 9]

Brief review of the subject matter of the previous Class 1 -- summarizing the importance of Step 1 -- "We fearlessly admit that our lives have become unmanageable over alcohol" -- realization that most alcoholics have an intelligence and reactive nervous system developed beyond the normal -- realization and understanding that helping the new members is the life blood of A.A. and keeps us dry -- and lastly, the explanation of several important elemental precautions and helps, including:

- (1) The 24 hour program
- (2) Breaking off certain associations and places frequented which have caused us trouble in the past
- (3) Living the three slogans of A.A. "FIRST THINGS FIRST" -- "EASY DOES IT" -- "LIVE AND LET LIVE"
- (4) Drive some stakes -- explain
- (5) Using the facilities of our fine Club and talking to older members frequently during the next few weeks
- (6) Recognizing the importance of the physical side and obtaining vitamin treatment regularly if you are nervous

Introduce the subject matter of tonight's class with our fine prayer -- "God grant us the serenity to accept those things we cannot change, the courage to change those things which must be changed and the wisdom to know the difference." Explain the meaning of the three parts of the prayer and particularly, bring out that we often deceive ourselves as to what may be changed, using defense mechanism to say -- "Well, that's me, I cannot change that characteristic -- that resentment or that selfishness" -- then point out that the subject matter in general in tonight's class will be the

second part of this prayer -- the making of changes which must be made to win a victory.

In other words, tonight, we will discuss the four steps of the A.A. program which deal with cleaning up or purging our lives so that we may have a fresh starting point. *Read the four steps* involved, to wit: steps 4, 5, 8 and 9.

Then explain that steps 4 and 9, the making of the fearless moral inventory and the making of a list of those we have harmed can logically be considered together and carried out at the same time.

Proceed to explain what this moral inventory consists in -- it must be fearless. We prefer to do it in written form and take adequate time to fearlessly and honestly list all those things, good and bad, which make up our personality, our life, our troubles and our wrongs when we entered A.A. Then by actual illustration on a large poster or sheet of paper, making a list of some of the more important headings which may include, at the lefthand side of the sheet, the following:

- (1) Resentments -- against whom and why.
- (2) Self pities -- specify.
- (3) Personality phases.
- (4) Dishonesties, large and small, naming the persons involved and the actual natures.
- (5) Selfish inclinations -- specify.
- (6) Sex situations.
- (7) Wrongs to family and relatives.
- (8) Wrongs and misunderstandings with close friends.
- (9) Financial debts -- specify.
- (10) Procrastinations -- emphasize the importance of this. It is the curse of all alcoholics. We must get into action. We must not put things off.
- (11) Fears.

Point out the necessity of looking at ourselves in an absolutely fearless and honest manner as we are -- in making this inventory and list of those whom we have wronged.

Explain that while this is to be kept strictly in our own possession, that we will benefit materially by going to our sponsor and others who are close to us to get their advice and opinions on certain of the evaluations and appraisals we have made.

Explain that this inventory will take a matter of some time but *that action*, above all, is what is required of the new member at this time, and that for assured success, it must be started now and continued until completed.

Now, explain the step 5 -- admitting to God and to another human being the exact nature of your wrongs and the obtaining from that other human being, of advice and assistance -- the purging effect this obtains for us -- the clearing of all matters which we have confined to our own heart and soul.

Explain that one person in whom we place absolute confidence, should be selected -- that person may be a clergyman, a close interested friend or relative outside of A.A. who has deep understanding of life, or it may be some thoroughly trusted member of A.A. The written inventory should be shown to that person and thoroughly discussed and on the right side of the inventory should be marked down -- the changes which you, with the help of the person in whom you confide, decide to make.

Read Step 9 again and explain how we make, where we can, restitution for our wrongs and reach understanding with those we have harmed. Give some examples such as one involving a personal friendship -- one involving moral or financial dishonesty.

Conclude by an inspirational summary of the crucial value of going through and fulfilling the four steps and again, point out the wonderful peace of mind and advantages which are obtained.

Announce that the next instruction class 3 will deal with meat of the remaining steps of this program which fall into a general subject matter as important and vital to permanent recovery as the steps which have been discussed tonight.

Class #3 will be held one week from tomorrow night. We urge you all to be present.

Instructor's Outline for Class #3

[Steps 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11]

1. The Spiritual Phase.

A. Review briefly the major points stressed in two previous instruction classes.

1. First Class based on Step One -- The admission that we are powerless over alcohol.

2. Second Class in which we stressed:

(a) Step Four -- Moral inventory (self-analysis to determine your defects as well as your strong points of character).

(b) Step Five -- Honest admission to God, ourselves and another human being of the exact nature of our wrongs.

(c) Step Eight -- Willingness to make amends to all persons we have harmed as a result of our drinking.

(d) Step Nine -- To make direct amends to all such persons whenever possible except when doing so would injure them or others.

B. *Successful application of A.A. philosophy to one's life requires:*

1. A strong effort to *understand* steps outlined in two previous classes, the present class and final class.

2. Actual application of all the principles to your way of living must begin at once.

3. Avoid making exceptions on the presumption this or that "does not apply to me."

4. A.A. way to sobriety proven successful -- "your way" has failed on countless previous occasions.

C. *Step Two*: "Came to the realization that only a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

1. Difference between A.A. philosophy and religion.

2. Define power greater than ourselves.

(a) Mysterious power of electricity.

(b) God, the Creator of the universe.

3. Subordination of self will to will of God.

(a) Restoration of spiritual values -- subordination of the material.

(b) Power greater than human power needed to restore normal thinking and resultant normal living.

D. *Steps Three and Five* -- Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him and admitted to God and to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

1. We had lost power of choice as admitted in Step One.

2. God, as we understand Him, is now to guide our lives.

(a) Life run on self-will cannot be a success.

3. In admitting our wrongs to God, admit all negative faults -- selfishness, arrogance, false pride, egotism, resentments, self-pity, etc.

(a) Alcohol breeds and nurtures these defects which lead to defeat, despair, inner-turbulence, external violence.

(b) Their elimination with God's help brings equableness of life and spiritual serenity.

E. Admission that certain defects exist and reliance on a greater power to assist in removing them requires a state of mental and spiritual humility.

1. When we, in Steps Six and Seven, are ready to have God remove these defects of character and humbly ask him to remove them, we are taking the first step toward acquiring true humility.

(a) Drop all pretense, face reality with an Open mind.

(b) Cultivate truth and honesty.

(c) Think generously -- drop the critical attitude.

F. Step Eleven -- "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

1. Contact with a power greater than ourself is made through

(a) Prayer

(b) Meditation

2. Medium of contact with God is the inner self or spiritual self.

(a) Spiritual self consists of soul and intellect of which conscience is a part.

(b) The spiritual self is the coordinator between thought and action.

(c) The spiritual self has been suppressed by alcoholics in favor of self will and self propulsion fed by alcoholic indulgence.

3. The inner or spiritual self must answer life's most probing question "will you or will you not have it so" many times every waking hour of every day.

(a) The heroic spirit meets all of these questions honestly and answers them to the best of his ability.

(b) The weak man evades answering the perplexing questions -- flees to alcohol for

refuge and creates the vicious psychological circle by piling up unanswered questions, unmade decisions.

4. Recognize the existence of the spiritual self and the purpose of its functions.

(a) Use it consciously to contact God through prayer and meditation.

(b) Use it to meet your daily problems -- to answer your questions and clear your doubts.

(c) Through recognition and use of your spiritual self you will ultimately eliminate defects of character which contribute to alcoholism and acquire a new mental and spiritual power heretofore latent within you.

5. Prayer.

(a) Pray with daily regularity.

(b) Pray for power to do God's will -- not our own.

(c) Pray for knowledge, strength and courage to do the right thing -- not for material advantages.

G. Conclusion.

1. If a man or woman is possessed with a burning and passionate desire to quit the drinking habit, he will make an all-out effort to apply the foregoing principles to his way of life.

2. Do not look for immediate and complete change because you have attained a month or a few weeks of sobriety -- the process will be gradual over many months in most instances.

(a) Work at this program in some way every day.

(b) Protect your state of dryness with constant vigilance "Be on your guard always."

3. No man has a stronger battle than he who uses force to overcome himself.

(a) It should be our occupation to overcome ourselves every day until our new way of life becomes habitual.

- 4.
- Habitual evils seldom change too soon,
But many days must pass and many sorrows:
To curb desire, to break "the stubborn will,"
And work a second nature in the soul,
Ere virtue can resume the place she lost.

Instructor's Outline for Class #4

[Steps 10 and 12]

(1) Briefly review subject matter of first three classes.

(a) First class primarily devoted to explaining step 1 "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol," and the importance of this first hurdle and complete surrender throughout our life in AA. In addition, first class stressed importance of immediate and continued practice of elemental things -- "Don't lead with your chin!" -- "Drive some stakes"; "Live 24 hour program"; live three AA slogans -- (quote slogans) "Anonymity"; "Physical Side."

(b) Second covered the moral housecleaning steps, four, five, eight and nine. Inventory and restitution. (Comment briefly.)

(c) Third Class covered the all-important spiritual phase of our program as progressively exemplified in steps two, three and again, five, six, seven and eleven. Suggest we here read at least steps two, three (God's will be done), seven (humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings) -- (Prayer, humility) and eleven. (Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our contact with God as we understand Him -- emphasize the importance of honestly working out our own conception of a power greater than ourselves.)

(2) The subject matter of the first three classes covers all the steps of the program with the exception of steps 10 and 12 -- the purpose of this fourth class is to review at large, the subject matter of the program and to cover these additional steps 10 and 12 and to further explain the various facilities of the AA organization of Minneapolis, its adjuncts, clubhouse and general set-up.

In addition, in this last instruction class, we wish to point out the great value of certain necessary, vital interests in conjunction with the AA program which must become important in your daily life to fill the void caused by elimination of drinking and the activities surrounding drinking.

(3) Vital interests.

(a) Great value of real friendships -- to have a friend -- must be a good friend. Requires thoughtfulness and action.

(b) Family ties -- tenderness.

(c) Recreational interests such as hobbies -- music -- art -- athletics -- reading, etc.

- (d) Vital interest in helping others which is the life blood of AA and constitutes step 12 of the AA program.
- (4) Active work -- step 12 "Having had a spiritual experience as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

(a) What helping others means to you. Takes your mind away from your own troubles -- Gives you a glow in being a part of someone else's recovery -- Causes you to see new members in a condition which you never care to be in again.

(b) Your duties as a sponsor -- Show true charity and humility (explain these words) Follow through contact often -- see that the new member meets others and has the help and activities necessary to his recovery.

(c) In this work with others, we perhaps, more than in any other way, see visible evidence of the guidance and reconstruction from a Power greater than ourselves. You will see changes in personality, in thinking and in living, which if you have a fair mind, you will know were caused by some great intelligence, far beyond human power.

- (5) Explanation of the various activities, functions and set-up of Minneapolis AA-Alano and our general set-up.

Explain squad system and definitely ascertain whether every new member has been assigned to a squad.

Explain Saturday General Meetings -- Sunday open house -- Use of the club house and finances.

- (6) Step No. 10 -- "Continue to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it."

Bring out here emphatically, the great value of the first inventory and our confiding in another human being -- the moral housecleaning steps. Point out that in leaving the class of instruction, they should continue their original inventory, and should be prepared to continue with taking personal inventory and to promptly admit our wrongs. Many members like to make a resume inventory in our meditation before retiring each evening.

Close with an enthusiastic inter-linking of the moral housecleaning steps with the spiritual phase of this program and with the ever-present admission of step 1, that our lives become unmanageable over liquor and that we have a sickness which may be arrested but like tuberculosis or diabetes, -- never cured. Close with the fine prayer -- "God grant us the serenity to accept those things which cannot be changed -- the courage to change those things which can be changed and the wisdom to know the difference." Explain the meaning and the application to all of the principles of the AA program.

Watch Yourself

Any man can spoil himself for himself. He can allow himself to grow so sensitive that he lives in constant pain. He can nurse his grudges until they are an intolerable burden. He can think himself insulted until he is apt to be. He can believe the world is against him until it is. He can imagine troubles until they are real. He can hold so many under suspicion that no one believes in him. He can insult his friends until they are no longer friends. He can think himself so important that no one else does. He can have such a good opinion of himself that no one else enjoys his friendship. He can become so wrapped up in himself that he becomes very small.

- Anon. -

Take One Day at a Time

It has been well said, that no man ever sank under the burden of the day.

It is when tomorrow's burden is added to the burden of today that the weight is more than one can bear.

- MacDonald.



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