

## Step 1

***We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.***

**Page and paragraph from the first edition of Alcoholics Anonymous in parentheses.**

(xxv) WE, OF Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book. For them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary. We think this account of our experiences will help everyone to better understand the alcoholic. Many do not comprehend that the alcoholic is a very sick person. And besides, we are sure that our way of living has its advantages for all.

### **THE DOCTOR'S OPINION**

In late 1934 I attended a patient who, though he had been a competent businessman of good earning capacity, was an alcoholic of a type I had come to regard as hopeless.

In the course of his third treatment he acquired certain ideas concerning a possible means of recovery. As part of his rehabilitation he commenced to present his conceptions to other alcoholics, impressing upon them that they must do likewise with still others. This has become the basis of a rapidly growing fellowship of these men and their families. This man and over one hundred others appear to have recovered.

I personally know scores of cases who were of the type with whom **other methods had failed completely**. You may rely absolutely on anything they say about themselves.

Very truly yours,

William D. Silkworth, M.D.

The physician who, at our request, gave us this letter, has been kind enough to enlarge upon his views in another statement which follows. In this statement he confirms what we who have suffered alcoholic torture must believe —that the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind. It did not satisfy us to be told that

we could not control our drinking just because we were maladjusted to life, that we were in full flight from reality, or were outright mental defectives. These things were true to some extent, in fact, to a considerable extent with some of us. But we are sure that our bodies were sickened as well. In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.

The doctor's theory that we have an allergy to alcohol interests us. As laymen, our opinion as to its soundness may, of course, mean little. But as ex-problem drinkers, we can say that his explanation makes good sense. It explains many things for which we cannot otherwise account.

**The doctor writes:**

We doctors have realized for a long time that some form of moral psychology was of urgent importance to alcoholics, but its application presented difficulties beyond our conception. What with our ultra-modern standards, our scientific approach to everything, we are perhaps not well equipped to apply the powers of good that lie outside our synthetic knowledge.

Many years ago one of the leading contributors to this book came under our care in this hospital and while here he acquired some ideas which he put into practical application at once.

Later, he requested the privilege of being allowed to tell his story to other patients here and with some misgiving, we consented. The cases we have followed through have been most interesting; in fact, many of them are amazing. The unselfishness of these men as we have come to know them, the entire absence of profit motive, and their community spirit, is indeed inspiring to one who has labored long and wearily in this alcoholic field. They believe in themselves, and still more in the Power which pulls chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death.

Of course an alcoholic ought to be freed from his physical craving for liquor, and this often requires a definite hospital procedure, before psychological measures can be of maximum benefit. We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.

Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices. The message which can interest and

hold these alcoholic people must have depth and weight. In nearly all cases, their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives.

Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.

On the other hand—and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—**once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules.**

Men have cried out to me in sincere and despairing appeal: "Doctor, I cannot go on like this! I have everything to live for! I must stop, but I cannot! You must help me!" Faced with this problem, if a doctor is honest with himself, he must sometimes feel his own inadequacy. Although he gives all that is in him, it often is not enough. One feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change. Though the aggregate of recoveries resulting from psychiatric effort is considerable, we physicians must admit we have made little impression upon the problem as a whole. Many types do not respond to the ordinary psychological approach.

I do not hold with those who believe that alcoholism is entirely a problem of mental control. I have had many men who had, for example, worked a period of months on some problem or business deal which was to be settled on a certain date, favorably to them. They took a drink a day or so prior to the date, and then the phenomenon of craving at once became paramount to all other interests so that the important appointment was not met. These men were not drinking to escape; they were drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control.

There are many situations which arise out of the phenomenon of craving which cause men to make the supreme sacrifice rather than continue to fight. The

classification of alcoholics seems most difficult, and in much detail is outside the scope of this book. There are, of course, the psychopaths who are emotionally unstable. We are all familiar with this type. They are always "going on the wagon for keeps." They are over-remorseful and make many resolutions, but never a decision.

There is the type of man who is unwilling to admit that he cannot take a drink. He plans various ways of drinking. He changes his brand or his environment. There is the type who always believes that after being entirely free from alcohol for a period of time he can take a drink without danger. There is the manic-depressive type, who is, perhaps, the least understood by his friends, and about whom a whole chapter could be written.

Then there are types entirely normal in every respect except in the effect alcohol has upon them. They are often able, intelligent, friendly people. All these, and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence.

This immediately precipitates us into a seething cauldron of debate. Much has been written pro and con, but among physicians, the general opinion seems to be that most chronic alcoholics are doomed.

What is the solution? Perhaps I can best answer this by relating one of my experiences.

About one year prior to this experience a man was brought in to be treated for chronic alcoholism. He had but partially recovered from a gastric hemorrhage and seemed to be a case of pathological mental deterioration. He had lost everything worthwhile in life and was only living, one might say, to drink. He frankly admitted and believed that for him there was no hope. Following the elimination of alcohol, there was found to be no permanent brain injury. He accepted the plan outlined in this book. One year later he called to see me, and I experienced a very strange sensation. I knew the man by name, and partly recognized his features, but there all resemblance ended. From a trembling, despairing, nervous wreck, had emerged a man brimming over with self-reliance and contentment. I talked with him for some time, but was not able to bring myself to feel that I had known him before. To me he was a stranger, and so he left me. A long time has passed with no return to alcohol.

When I need a mental uplift, I often think of another case brought in by a physician prominent in New York. The patient had made his own diagnosis, and deciding his situation hopeless, had hidden in a deserted barn determined to die. He

was rescued by a searching party, and, in desperate condition, brought to me. Following his physical rehabilitation, he had a talk with me in which he frankly stated he thought the treatment a waste of effort, unless I could assure him, which no one ever had, that in the future he would have the "will power" to resist the impulse to drink.

His alcoholic problem was so complex, and his depression so great, that we felt his only hope would be through what we then called "moral psychology," and we doubted if even that would have any effect. However, he did become "sold" on the ideas contained in this book. He has not had a drink for a great many years. I see him now and then and he is as fine a specimen of manhood as one could wish to meet.

I earnestly advise every alcoholic to read this book through, and though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray.

William D. Silkworth, M.D.

(30:1) Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

(30:2) We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

(30:3) We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals - usually brief - were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better.

(30:4) We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of our kind like other men. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.

(34:2) For those who are unable to drink moderately the question is how to stop altogether. We are assuming, of course, that the reader desires to stop. Whether such a person can quit upon a nonspiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power to choose whether he will drink or not. Many of us felt that we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it - this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish.

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## **Taking Step 1**

**Do you concede to your innermost self that you are an alcoholic?**

**If you can answer yes, you have taken Step 1.**

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Step 2 only asks of us to believe or to be willing to believe in a power greater than ourselves. This is a higher power of our own understanding. Developing and deepening our understanding of a Higher Power is what the remaining steps will accomplish.

The simple recognition that we are a group of alcoholics who are now sober, is, for many, a demonstration of a power “greater than ourselves.” Remember that we are seeking a spiritual solution, not a religious solution.

If you do not now believe in a power greater than your self, are you willing to change your mind? This is all Step 2 asks of us.

## Step 2

***Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.***

(8:1) (From Bills Story) No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master.

(8:2) Trembling, I stepped from the hospital a broken man. Fear sobered me for a bit. Then came the insidious insanity of that first drink, and on Armistice Day 1934, I was off again. Everyone became resigned to the certainty that I would have to be shut up somewhere, or would stumble along to a miserable end. How dark it is before the dawn! In reality that was the beginning of my last debauch. I was soon to be catapulted into what I like to call the fourth dimension of existence. I was to know happiness, peace, and usefulness, in a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes.

(8:3) Near the end of that bleak November, I sat drinking in my kitchen. With a certain satisfaction I reflected there was enough gin concealed about the house to carry me through that night and the next day. My wife was at work. I wondered whether I dared hide a full bottle of gin near the head of our bed. I would need it before daylight.

(8:4) My musing was interrupted by the telephone. The cheery voice of an old school friend asked if he might come over. He was sober. It was years since I could remember his coming to New York in that condition. I was amazed. Rumor had it that he had been committed for alcoholic insanity. I wondered how he had escaped. Of course he would have dinner, and then I could drink openly with him. Unmindful of his welfare, I thought only of recapturing the spirit of other days. There was that time we had chartered an airplane to complete a jag! His coming was an oasis in this dreary desert of futility. The very thing - an oasis! Drinkers are like that.

(9:1) The door opened and he stood there, fresh-skinned and glowing. There was something about his eyes. He was inexplicably different. What had happened?

(9:2) I pushed a drink across the table. He refused it. Disappointed but curious, I wondered what had got into the fellow. He wasn't himself.

(9:3) "Come, what's this all about?" I queried.

(9:4) He looked straight at me. Simply, but smilingly, he said, "I've got religion."

(9:5) I was aghast. So that was it - last summer an alcoholic crackpot; now, I suspected, a little cracked about religion. He had that starry-eyed look. Yes, the old boy was on fire all right. But bless his heart, let him rant! Besides, my gin would last longer than his preaching.

(9:6) But he did no ranting. In a matter of fact way he told how two men had appeared in court, persuading the judge to suspend his commitment. They had told of a simple religious idea and a practical program of action. That was two months ago and the result was self-evident. It worked!

(9:7) He had come to pass his experience along to me - if I cared to have it. I was shocked, but interested. Certainly I was interested. I had to be, for I was hopeless.

(10:1) He talked for hours. Childhood memories rose before me. I could almost hear the sound of the preacher's voice as I sat, on still Sundays, way over there on the hillside; there was that proffered temperance pledge I never signed; my grandfather's good natured contempt of some church folk and their doings; his insistence that the spheres really had their music; but his denial of the preacher's right to tell him how he must listen; his fearlessness as he spoke of these things just before he died; these recollections welled up from the past. They made me swallow hard.

(10:2) That war-time day in old Winchester Cathedral came back again.

(10:3) I had always believed in a Power greater than myself. I had often pondered these things. I was not an atheist. Few people really are, for that means blind faith in the strange proposition that this universe originated in a cipher and aimlessly rushes nowhere. My intellectual heroes, the chemists, the astronomers, even the evolutionists, suggested vast laws and forces at work. Despite contrary indications, I had little doubt that a mighty purpose and rhythm underlay all. How could there be so much of precise and immutable law, and no intelligence? I simply had to believe in a Spirit of the Universe, who knew neither time nor limitation. But that was as far as I had gone.

(10:4) With ministers, and the world's religions, I parted right there. When they talked of a God personal to me, who was love, superhuman strength and direction, I became irritated and my mind snapped shut against such a theory.

(11:1) To Christ I conceded the certainty of a great man, not too closely followed by those who claimed Him. His moral teaching - most excellent. For myself, I had adopted those parts which seemed convenient and not too difficult; the rest I disregarded.

(11:2) The wars which had been fought, the burnings and chicanery that religious

dispute had facilitated, made me sick. I honestly doubted whether, on balance, the religions of mankind had done any good. Judging from what I had seen in Europe and since, the power of God in human affairs was negligible, the Brotherhood of Man a grim jest. If there was a Devil, he seemed the Boss Universal, and he certainly had me.

(11:3) But my friend sat before me, and he made the point-blank declaration that God had done for him what he could not do for himself. His human will had failed. Doctors had pronounced him incurable. Society was about to lock him up. Like myself, he had admitted complete defeat. Then he had, in effect, been raised from the dead, suddenly taken from the scrap heap to a level of life better than the best he had ever known!

(11:4) Had this power originated in him? Obviously it had not. There had been no more power in him than there was in me at the minute; and this was none at all.

(11:5) That floored me. It began to look as though religious people were right after all. Here was something at work in a human heart which had done the impossible. My ideas about miracles were drastically revised right then. Never mind the musty past; here sat a miracle directly across the kitchen table. He shouted great tidings.

(11:6) I saw that my friend was much more than inwardly reorganized. He was on a different footing. His roots grasped a new soil.

(12:1) Despite the living example of my friend there remained in me the vestiges of my old prejudice. The word God still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed that there might be a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn't like the idea. I could go for such conceptions as Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit of Nature but I resisted the thought of a Czar of the Heavens, however loving His sway might be. I have since talked with scores of men who felt the same way.

(12:2) My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, "Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"

(12:3) That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last.

(12:4) **It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.** I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!

(12:5) Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we

want Him enough. At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

(12:6) The real significance of my experience in the Cathedral burst upon me. For a brief moment, I had needed and wanted God. There had been a humble willingness to have Him with me - and He came. But soon the sense of His presence had been blotted out by worldly clamors, mostly those within myself. And so it had been ever since. How blind I had been.

(46:1) Yes, we of agnostic temperament have had these thoughts and experiences. Let us make haste to reassure you. We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.

(46:2) Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps. We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men.

(47:1) When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere. So we used our own conception, however limited it was.

(47:2) We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.

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## **Taking Step 2:**

**Do you now believe, or are you even willing to believe  
in a power greater than yourself?**

**If you can answer yes, you have taken Step 2.**

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Now that we have accepted that a power greater than ourselves can and will restore us to sanity, it makes sense (a little sanity already!) to have that higher power do exactly that: to restore us to sanity and to relieve our alcoholism. The third step is simply a sincere prayer acknowledging that we are willing to have a higher power to guide our recovery and our lives.

### Step 3

#### ***Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.***

(13:1) At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for the last time. Treatment seemed wise, for I showed signs of delirium tremens.

(13:2) There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since.

(44:4) If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago. But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us, no matter how much we tried. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn't there. Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.

(53:2) When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?

(53:3) Arrived at this point, we were squarely confronted with the question of faith. We couldn't duck the issue. Some of us had already walked far over the Bridge of Reason toward the desired shore of faith. The outlines and the promise of the New Land had brought luster to tired eyes and fresh courage to flagging spirits. Friendly hands had stretched out in welcome. We were grateful that Reason had brought us so far. But somehow, we couldn't quite step ashore. Perhaps we had been leaning too heavily on Reason that last mile and we did not like to lose our support.

(53:4) That was natural, but let us think a little more closely. Without knowing it, had we not been brought to where we stood by a certain kind of faith? For did we not believe in our own reasoning? Did we not have confidence in our ability to think? What was that but a sort of faith? Yes, we had been faithful, abjectly faithful to the God of Reason. So, in one way or another, we discovered that faith had been involved all the time!

(55:5) In this book you will read the experience of a man who thought he was an

atheist. His story is so interesting that some of it should be told now. His change of heart was dramatic, convincing, and moving.

(56:2) One night, when confined in a hospital, he was approached by an alcoholic who had known a spiritual experience. Our friend's gorge rose as he bitterly cried out: "If there is a God, He certainly hasn't done anything for me!" But later, alone in his room, he asked himself this question: "Is it possible that all the religious people I have known are wrong?" While pondering the answer he felt as though he lived in hell. Then, like a thunderbolt, a great thought came. It crowded out all else:

(56:3) "Who are you to say there is no God?"

(56:4) This man recounts that he tumbled out of bed to his knees. In a few seconds he was overwhelmed by a conviction of the Presence of God. It poured over and through him with the certainty and majesty of a great tide at flood. The barriers he had built through the years were swept away. He stood in the Presence of Infinite Power and Love. He had stepped from bridge to shore. For the first time, he lived in conscious companionship with his Creator.

(56:5) Thus was our friend's cornerstone fixed in place. No later vicissitude has shaken it. His alcoholic problem was taken away. That very night, years ago, it disappeared.

(57:0) Save for a few brief moments of temptation the thought of drink has never returned; and at such times a great revulsion has risen up in him. Seemingly he could not drink even if he would. God had restored his sanity.

(57:1) What is this but a miracle of healing? Yet its elements are simple. Circumstances made him willing to believe. He humbly offered himself to his Maker - then he knew.

(57:2) Even so has God restored us all to our right minds. To this man, the revelation was sudden. Some of us grow into it more slowly. But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him.

(57:3) When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us!

(60:3) Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood Him. Just what do we mean by that, and just what do we do?

(60:4) The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is

forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful. In trying to make these arrangements our actor may sometimes be quite virtuous. He may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self-sacrificing. On the other hand, he may be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest. But, as with most humans, he is more likely to have varied traits.

(61:1) What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. He begins to think life doesn't treat him right. He decides to exert himself more. He becomes, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit him. Admitting he may be somewhat at fault, he is sure that other people are more to blame. He becomes angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is his basic trouble? Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Is he not a victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if he only manages well? Is it not evident to all the rest of the players that these are the things he wants? And do not his actions make each of them wish to retaliate, snatching all they can get out of the show? Is he not, even in his best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?

(61:2) Our actor is self-centered - ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays. He is like the retired business man who lolls in the Florida sunshine in the winter complaining of the sad state of the nation; the minister who sighs over the sins of the twentieth century; politicians and reformers who are sure all would be utopia if the rest of the world would only behave; the outlaw safe cracker who thinks society has wronged him; and the alcoholic who has lost all and is locked up. Whatever our protestations, are not most of us concerned with ourselves, our resentments, or our self-pity?

(62:1) Selfishness - self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

(62:2) So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and

philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help.

(62:3) This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

(63:1) When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.

(63:2) We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him: "God, I offer myself to Thee-to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

Please remember that our understanding of a higher power will develop and deepen as we take the remaining steps.

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### **Taking Step 3:**

**God, I offer myself to thee, to do with me as Thou wilt, relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy Love, and Thy Way Of Life. May I do Thy will always.**

**When you can sincerely say this prayer, you have  
taken Step 3.**

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## **Steps 4 and 5 Introduction**

As a result of simply not following the directions in The Big Book, step 4 is probably the most misinterpreted, misunderstood and the most embellished step. Many AA members have great confusion and fear about step 4, all based on a misunderstanding as to what step 4 is meant to accomplish and how to exactly take step 4.

Most of the methods used today to "work" step 4 make this simple step much more complicated than ever intended. This has led a great number of alcoholics to get bogged down in extraneous details and never gain the insight necessary for an effective step 4.

The 12 steps are intended to provide the spiritual solution to alcoholism. The step 4 inventory as presented in The Big Book is a detailed list of self-centered character defects. It is these character defects that block alcoholics from the spiritual solution and connecting to a higher power that will relieve their alcoholism. As stated in The Big Book on page 62, first paragraph: "Selfishness - self-centeredness! That we think is the root of our troubles" as far as alcoholism is concerned. In the next paragraph The Big Book Authors write: "above EVERYTHING we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness."

Step 4 is not intended to be an examination or analysis of deep-seated trauma or the effects of long suppressed misdeeds. On page 64, paragraph 2: "We searched out the flaws in our make-up." Examination or analysis of deep-seated emotional or psychological problems is beyond the intention and scope of a step 4 inventory and beyond the intention and scope of the 12 steps.

Hopefully, a qualified sponsor or sharing partner will recognize this and direct the individual to someone who is qualified to assist with these issues. Step 4 is very effective in identifying what self-centered character defects are an underlying part of any of these issues, which is precisely what step 4 is designed to do. It is not intended to be a psychological exercise or therapy of any kind. Becoming sidetracked into other issues will reduce or negate the effectiveness of step 4.

Sponsors should be clear that an inventory is not an in-depth detailed analysis of every incident of antisocial behavior. This results in complicating a simple process and will often prevent sponsees from a direct and effective way of relieving their alcoholism.

For example, for the purposes of a 4th step, it is not important to describe in detail physical or sexual abuse. Simply using the word "abuse" is enough to then identify the underlying self-centered character defect. If harm has been done to the individual, fear may be an overriding emotion, and as fear is identified in the inventory, the individual

will know that faith and love will aid in relieving the fear. If a long held resentment is present, it is instantly apparent that forgiveness is called for, with the help of a higher power.

Remember, we are not looking for justice for harms done to us or for justification for our own actions.

If the person taking step 4 has stolen property, they may be reluctant for many reasons to initially admit to something that may cause further legal issues. Of primary importance is to examine the self-centered flaws in one's character in order to achieve permanent sobriety, in this case selfishness and dishonesty.

More involved issues can and should be dealt with when the new AA member is in a stronger and more stable position and with qualified people. This is particularly important to the newcomer or anyone who has been avoiding taking an inventory due to fear or embarrassment.

Again, step 4 is not concerned with details of events as much as identifying self-centered character defects. In order to progress to the point where the alcoholic is able to address these much deeper issues, they must stay sober, and by addressing the self-centered character defects immediately, the new member is in a much stronger position to stay sober.

Step 4 is not intended to uncover some hidden cause to our actions. Step 4 is solely used to identify self-centered patterns of behavior so that we know what to bring to our higher power in step 7. In step 7 it is these character defects that we take to our higher power, not the details of our troubles.

The details of our past are unimportant and distracting as far as step 4 is concerned. We cannot change our past actions. Our higher power cannot change our past actions. We can only change, with a higher power's help, our current behavior. Identifying what character defects are part of our pattern of behavior in the present time, and the harms they have caused, is the sole purpose of the 4th step.

Step 4 was never meant to be anything more than a LIST of character defects. In fact, from pages 64 to 70 in The Big Book, the word list or listed is used five times along with the phrases "we put them (our character defects) down on paper" and again "we got this all down on paper", referring to the specific character defects we are instructed to be looking for: resentment, fear, selfishness, dishonesty, pride, jealousy and bitterness (envy).

The inventory example in The Big Book has a list of names that one is resentful at, the cause, (the nature of the resentment) and what the character defect affected, (how did the character defect manifest?) with the understanding that we would do exactly the same thing with the other defects we are instructed to look for.

In Bills Story, Bill describes taking step 4 with his sponsor, while still in a hospital; Bill states he and Ebby "made a **list** of the people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment".

The Big Book also states: "we treat sex as we would any other problem". We do not add a special category for sex; we simply find where the seven character defects have impacted our sexual relationships just as they have our other relationships.

Nowhere are we instructed to use worksheets attempting to identify an almost endless list of questionable behavior, which if looked at closely, are simply manifestations of the seven already mentioned. We are also not instructed to give a written narrative of our entire drinking history or every incidence of unpleasant or anti-social behavior. These are methods used by many people today and encouraged by many treatment centers, with the misguided notion that more is better. No wonder these complicated and distracting methods appeal to the alcoholic ego. The sorry results of using these other methods is that very few alcoholics are ever able to achieve the comfortable, contented, useful and permanent sobriety that most AA members enjoyed 65 years ago.

Many in AA do not want to believe that step 4 could be as simple as making a list of the names of people that we have harmed or had been resentful, fearful, selfish, dishonest, prideful, jealous, or envious with, but this is EXACTLY what The Big Book is directing us to do. Nothing more. In the checklist we use in this workshop, we have also added laziness, as laziness was included in the checklist that Dr. Bob used in taking over 5000 alcoholics through the steps. After all, weren't most of us lazy (procrastinating) when faced with taking responsibility for our actions?

As stated earlier, when we have used the checklist method rather than a written narrative, we achieve a success rate of alcoholics maintaining their sobriety of over 50%. A once simple step is now complicated. In our attempts to mimic a psychological model, we have become less successful. Alcoholics, who were at one time offered a clear path to sobriety, now struggle to stay sober, and many die.

The simple and straightforward method of taking step 4 described in The Big Book and used in the Spiritual Solution workshops is a proven and highly effective way of identifying what character defects have held us in bondage to self and to active addiction. These are precisely the character defects that hinder our recovery as they block us from a

relationship with a higher power of our understanding, a higher or greater power that can relieve our alcoholism.

By identifying these specific character defects, we overcome the effects of self-centeredness leading to the alcoholic's devastating ability to remain blind to the effects of their behavior. This new-found awareness of these selfish patterns of behavior will finally provide us with the ability to identify how, when, and where they manifest in our lives. With this awareness we have a clear understanding of what we ask our higher power to alleviate in prayer. We also will have a clear understanding of what to include in our daily 10th step inventories.

The 5th step asks us to admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact NATURE of our wrongs; what specific character defect is at the root of our aberrant behavior? On page 62, paragraph 1, The Big Book authors write: "Selfishness, self-centeredness! That we think is the root of our troubles." On page 72, paragraph 1 they write "we have admitted CERTAIN defects". What certain defects? The eight previously mentioned, including laziness.

The Big Book Authors are certainly not directing us to write endlessly about the minute details of our lives. The nature of our wrongs is what we have identified in step 4, our character defects, and when step 4 is taken with a sponsor or other sharing partner, we are taking step 5, admitting our wrongs to another human being at the same time. Note that we are directed to take step 5 with another human being, not necessarily our sponsor. If we do not actually take step 4 with our sponsor, it is best to review the step 4 list with them.

This is precisely how early members took newcomers through steps 4 and 5. Newcomers were not directed to go off by themselves, still sick from the effects of alcoholism, and told to write their drunk-a-log or life story or every incidence of unpleasant or anti-social behavior. As sponsors we sat down with our sponsee and assisted them in completing their checklist, asking the appropriate questions as we went along. In this way, we are able to keep their focus on step 4, on uncovering their defects of character, without getting bogged down in the details of their lives.

As our co-founder Dr. Bob Smith instructed: **Keep It Simple.**

## Step 4

### ***Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.***

(Steps 4 and 5 instructions begin after step 5 readings)

(13:3) My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We **made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment**. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.

(63:4) Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.

(64:1) Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values.

(64:2) We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.

(64:3) Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. **We listed people, institutions or principles** with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were "burned up."

(65:3) We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and

honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully. The first thing apparent was that this world and its people were often quite wrong. To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed sore. Sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got. As in war, the victor only seemed to win. Our moments of triumph were short-lived.

(66:1) It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while. But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die.

(66:2) If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of normal men, but for alcoholics these things are poison.

(66:3) **We turned back to the list, for it held the key to the future.** We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than alcohol.

(67:0) Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."

(67:1) We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.

(67:2) **Referring to our list again.** Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. **When we saw our faults we**

**listed them.** We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.

(68:1) We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.

(68:2) Perhaps there is a better way - we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.

(68:3) We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.

(69:1) We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. **Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness?** Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? **We got this all down on paper and looked at it.**

## Step 5

### ***Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.***

(72:1) Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path. We have admitted **certain defects; we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory.** Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects. This brings us to the Fifth Step in the program of recovery mentioned in the preceding chapter.

(72:2) This is perhaps difficult - especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further. We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods.

(73:0) Almost invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story.

(73:1) More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He is very much the actor. To the outer world he presents his stage character. This is the one he likes his fellows to see. He wants to enjoy a certain reputation, but knows in his heart he doesn't deserve it.

(73:2) The inconsistency is made worse by the things he does on his sprees. Coming to his senses, he is revolted at certain episodes he vaguely remembers.

These memories are a nightmare. He trembles to think someone might have observed him. As fast as he can, he pushes these memories far inside himself. He hopes they will never see the light of day. He is under constant fear and tension - that makes for more drinking.

(73:3) Psychologists are inclined to agree with us. We have spent thousands of dollars for examinations. We know but few instances where we have given these doctors a fair break. We have seldom told them the whole truth nor have we followed their advice. Unwilling to be honest with these sympathetic men, we were honest with no one else. Small wonder many in the medical profession have a low opinion of alcoholics and their chance for recovery!

(73:4) We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion. We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem. Of course, we sometimes encounter people who do not understand alcoholics.

(75:1) When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.

(75:2) We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

(75:3) Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk

a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

(164:3) Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

## Steps 4 and 5 Instructions

The step 4 inventory list will clearly show the aspects of our personality that *at this point in our lives* block us from a manageable life and from loving relationships with those around us. Most importantly, these “character defects” (listed on pages 65 to 71 as resentment, fear, dishonesty, inconsideration (pride), jealousy, bitterness (envy), and laziness) block us from a relationship to a higher power of our understanding. As aforementioned, step 4 is not meant to be a drunk-a-log or an exhaustive list of every incidence of unpleasant behavior over the course of our lives. It is about establishing a pattern of self-centered behavior that we as alcoholics adopted to enable us to live lives as active alcoholics and keep us isolated from others and a higher power.

The Big Book authors use as an analogy a business taking an inventory. When a business performs an inventory they are concerned with their assets and liabilities **at the present moment**. It does them no good to recollect what was on hand twenty years prior. Also, the CEO does not invite all the employees to stay late for pizza so that he can relate the entire history of the company. This would be a waste of time and effort, and ultimately, a distraction from what they are trying to accomplish: identifying their liabilities so that they can let them go, and as important, identifying their assets so that they know what they have to build their future on.

We are doing the same thing. We want to identify our liabilities so that we can give them to our higher power, and we want to discover what our assets are so that with our higher power’s assistance we can use them as the foundation for our sober lives.

Identifying these defects and the harms we have caused is the **SOLE** purpose of the 4th step. It is a fearless and thorough moral **INVENTORY** - what is our behavior right now, who have we harmed, what are our fears, and how do these character defects manifest in our lives. The definition of inventory is "a detailed list". By listing our self-centered character defects we are finally able to overcome the alcoholics devastating ability to remain blind to patterns of behavior which would otherwise lead back to active alcoholism. This new awareness of self is the beginning of God-consciousness.

We will use the guide provided and we will each have a sharing partner to review this step with. If you are more comfortable being “generic” regarding specific people, institutions, etc., simply use first names or initials. What is most important is to establish a pattern of behavior and harms done.

The sponsor or sharing partner does the writing, asking the appropriate questions and filling in the inventory checklist. A good way to start is to list all people that are most

important to you and that you interact with on a daily basis including immediate family, co-workers and close friends, whether you have “resentments” or not with these people. Then ask yourself who would you not want to walk into this room and sit down next to you. Who do you avoid facing? List these people. Next list who you have strong negative feelings about and what people or situations are occupying much of your thinking. Do the same with businesses and/or institutions.

Once you have created your list of people, review the explanation of terms.

Beginning with the first person on your list, the sponsor or sharing partner asks if there is any resentment in the relationship. If not, move on to fear, etc.

Notice that a resentment is a “hostile, indignant, or contemptuous attitude” we are holding against someone. It is important to be clear that what we are harboring is in fact resentment and not just some vague feeling of disappointment with someone. The point is that our resentment has actually affected the relationship in some negative way.

If there are resentments affecting this relationship, put a check in the appropriate box. Then the sponsor/sharing partner will ask “what is the nature of the resentment, how has the resentment manifested in this relationship and how has it affected the relationship? Has a harm been done?”

If a harm has been done, cross the check as an indication that an amends needs to be made. A harm is something that has caused someone actual suffering or loss, something that we have done that has had a negative effect on another.

Once you have looked at resentment, move on to fear, again asking what is the nature of the fear, how did it manifest in the relationship and how has it affected the relationship? Was any harm done?

Continue with the rest of the checklist putting a check as appropriate until you have completed the inventory for the first person. Do the same with the remaining people and institutions on the list. Not everyone on the list will have checks and in some cases there may be very few “liabilities”. Many people realize after an inventory has been completed that things are not as bad as we thought. We are not bad people trying to be good, we are sick people trying to get well.

Taking an extremely harsh view of ourselves, thinking that we are worse than we really are, and that our behavior has had a deep and profound effect on others can also be characteristic of self-centeredness and false pride. None of us are unique in our behavior or in our drinking.

Once the inventory is complete, you will have a clear picture of your patterns of behavior and harms done, and a clear understanding of what you will seek a higher power's assistance with in step 7.

Remember that you are also making your 8th step list at this time.

The assets that are on the bottom of the 10 columns are what we are striving to incorporate into our new personalities, and when we act in this way, we are acting in accordance with God's will for us. If we have resentments in our lives, we will strive for forgiveness. If we find we have fear in our lives, it is clear that we need to ask God for faith, if we are acting in a dishonest way, we strive for honesty, etc.

When you have completed the list and discussed the list with your sharing partner, take time to quietly review the list with your higher power and thank your higher power for your sobriety and their support in developing comfortable and contented sobriety and for fitting yourself to be of service to others with this disease.

Upon completion of your written inventory, sharing with your sponsor or sharing partner, and having reviewed your list with your higher power, you have completed Steps 4 and 5. Once you have completed this, reverse roles with the sharing partner (now taking this step with the one who has just taken the 4th and 5th step doing the writing and acting as sharing partner).

Remember, that this will not be your last 4th and 5th step. Hopefully taking the steps and taking others through the steps will become a regular part of your sobriety.

## Step 4 Inventory Explanation of Terms

### *Liabilities (Self Will)*

**Resentment:** a feeling of deep and bitter anger and ill-will, a feeling of anger or displeasure stemming from belief that others have engaged in wrongdoing or mistreatment; dismissive, contemptuous; a hostile or indignant attitude. Resentment directed at self is remorse.

**Fear:** anxiety or apprehension about a possible or probable situation or event, fear is an emotional response to a perceived threat, afraid of losing something we have or not getting something we want. Phobia, panic, terror, anxiety and worry are all manifestations of fear. Fear is finding fault with the future.

**Selfishness:** placing one's own needs or desires above the needs or well being of others, an excessive concern for your own welfare and a disregard of others.

**Dishonesty:** acts of lying, cheating or stealing, being deliberately deceptive, lacking in integrity, taking what does not belong to us.

**Pride/False Pride:** Pride is thinking that one is superior to others in some way. Pride is presenting yourself to others (and yourself) as something you are not - a person without flaws, prejudice, arrogance. Feeling less than others is false pride as it arises from a pre-occupation with self, as does dwelling on self pity and self doubt and maintaining a lack of self worth. Both extremes of pride/false pride are rooted in a lack of humility - knowing who you truly are.

**Jealousy:** negative thoughts and feelings of insecurity, suspicion, fear and anxiety over an anticipated loss of something that you value, such as a relationship, friendship or love.

**Envy:** spite and resentment at seeing the success of another, Wanting another's possessions.

**Laziness:** inactivity resulting from a dislike of work or accomplishment, procrastination is a form of laziness, not doing what is in one's best interest or what is expected of us.

## Step 4 Inventory Explanation Of Terms

## ***Assets (God's Will)***

**Forgiveness:** complete acceptance of another's perceived faults or wrongdoings, being free of judgments.

**Faith/Love:** a sincere belief in God's will, an unselfish and benevolent concern for another's well-being, love extends oneself for the purpose of nurturing another's spiritual growth.

**Unselfishness:** a strong intention to serve, generousness, generosity of spirit, to give freely.

**Honesty:** adherence to the truth.

**Humility:** acceptance of self as one is, being modest, down to earth, equal to all others.

**Trust:** confidence, faith in other's intentions.

**Contentment:** being at peace with the people and events of one's life, a deep satisfaction with one's life as it is.

**Action:** doing what is needed or indicated without delay.

## Liabilities (self-will)

Name	Resentment	Fear	Selfishness	Dishonesty	Pride/False Pride	Jealousy	Envy	Laziness
Higher Power								
Self								
AA								
	Forgiveness	Faith/Love	Unselfishness	Honesty	Humility	Trust	Contentment	Action

## Assets (God's Will)

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## Step 6

***Were entirely ready to have God remove  
all these defects of character.***

(75:3) Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

(76:1) If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all - every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

Step 6 asks us if we are ready to have the God of our understanding remove those character defects that we developed as active alcoholics, and if not removed, will lead back to drinking.

If you think you are not “entirely” ready, when will you be? Some of us will be hung up on the words “entirely ready” and feel the need to analyze the word “entirely”. The only meaningful question is if you are not ready for comfortable, contented sobriety now, when will you be?

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### **Taking Step 6:**

**Are you now ready to let God remove from you all the things which you have admitted are objectionable?**

**If you can answer yes, you have taken Step 6.**

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## Step 7

### ***Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.***

(76:2) When ready, we say something like this: "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen." We have then completed Step Seven.

Step 7 is an affirming prayer. We have now identified those aspects of our character, our "defects", which have kept us addicted to alcohol and dis-connected from a higher power. More than likely, some of our poor behavior will remain for some time. Taking step 7 will bring a new awareness of how these character defects manifest in our lives.

Through continuing to incorporate the remaining 5 steps, making amends where needed, taking a daily inventory, daily prayer and meditation, and working with others, our very lives will become the answer to the seventh step prayer. We will have a new awareness of self and our place in the world. This new awareness is the beginning of God-consciousness.

We will now have the ability to make more skillful decisions and take more appropriate actions. Our higher power will use this new awareness of self as the means for healing. We will soon be able to experience the release from bondage of self and the realization of the promises of sobriety!

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### **Taking Step 7:**

**"My creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen."**

**When you have sincerely said this prayer, you have  
taken Step 7.**

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## Step 8

***Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.***

(69:3) Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.

(76:3) Now we need more action, without which we find that "Faith without works is dead." Let's look at Steps Eight and Nine. **We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory.** We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning *we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.*

We have a step 8 amends list from step 4. If you are not now willing to continue and follow through with your amends, again ask your self when will you be ready for comfortable, contented sobriety and continued growth along spiritual lines. Using the 3rd and 7th steps prayers are a good way of reinforcing our willingness to continue with the program of recovery.

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**Taking Step 8: You made a list when you wrote your 4th step inventory and beginning your 9th step amends signifies your continued willingness!**

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## Step 9

***Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.***

(76:3) Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning *we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.*

(76:4) Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of business acquaintances and friends we have hurt, we may feel diffident about going to some of them on a spiritual basis. Let us be reassured. To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach.

(77:0) We might prejudice them. At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. ***Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.*** It is seldom wise to approach an individual, who still smarts from our injustice to him, and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But our man is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. He is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.

(77:1) We don't use this as an excuse for shying away from the subject of God. When it will serve any good purpose, we are willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense. The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. It may be he has done us more harm than we have done him and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.

(77:2) Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply we tell him that we will never get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worth while can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell him what he

should do. His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.

(78:1) In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens. Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own fault, so feuds of years' standing melt away in an hour. Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well. Occasionally, they will offer assistance. It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam.

(78:2) Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our drinking; they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our alcoholism on the theory it may cause financial harm. Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can we let these people know we are sorry. Our drinking has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them.

(78:3) Perhaps we have committed a criminal offense which might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities. We may be short in our accounts and unable to make good. We have already admitted this in confidence to another person, but we are sure we would be imprisoned or lose our job if it were known. Maybe it's only a petty offense such as padding the expense account. Most of us have done that sort of thing.

(79:0) Maybe we are divorced, and have remarried but haven't kept up the alimony to number one. She is indignant about it, and has a warrant out for our arrest. That's a common form of trouble too.

(79:1) Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.

(79:2) Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit. A man we know had remarried. Because of resentment and drinking, he had not paid alimony to his first wife. She was furious. She went to court and got an order for his arrest. He had commenced our way of life, had secured a position, and was getting his head above water. It would have been impressive

heroics if he had walked up to the Judge and said, "Here I am."

(79:3) We thought he ought to be willing to do that if necessary, but if he were in jail he could provide nothing for either family. We suggested he write his first wife admitting his faults and asking forgiveness. He did, and also sent a small amount of money. He told her what he would try to do in the future. He said he was perfectly willing to go to jail if she insisted. Of course she did not, and the whole situation has long since been adjusted.

(80:1) Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink.

(80:2) This brings to mind a story about one of our friends. While drinking, he accepted a sum of money from a bitterly-hated business rival, giving him no receipt for it. He subsequently denied having received the money and used the incident as a basis for discrediting the man. He thus used his own wrong-doing as a means of destroying the reputation of another. In fact, his rival was ruined.

(80:3) He felt that he had done a wrong he could not possibly make right. If he opened that old affair, he was afraid it would destroy the reputation of his partner, disgrace his family and take away his means of livelihood. What right had he to involve those dependent upon him? How could he possibly make a public statement exonerating his rival?

(80:4) After consulting with his wife and partner he came to the conclusion that it was better to take those risks than to stand before his Creator guilty of such ruinous slander. He saw that he had to place the outcome in God's hands or he would soon start drinking again, and all would be lost anyhow. He attended church for the first time in many years. After the sermon, he quietly got up and made an explanation. His action met wide-spread approval, and today he is one of the most trusted citizens of his town. This all happened years ago.

(80:5) The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, alcoholics are fundamentally much worse than other people. But drinking does complicate sex relations in the home. After a few years with an alcoholic, a wife gets worn out, resentful and uncommunicative. How could she be anything else? The husband begins to feel lonely, sorry for himself. He commences to look around in the night clubs, or their equivalent, for something besides liquor. Perhaps he is having a secret and exciting affair with "the girl who understands." In fairness we must say that she may understand, but what are we going to do about a thing like that? A man so involved often feels very remorseful at times, especially if he is

married to a loyal and courageous girl who has literally gone through hell for him.

(81:1) Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. If we are sure our wife does not know, should we tell her? Not always, we think. If she knows in a general way that we have been wild, should we tell her in detail? Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. She may insist on knowing all the particulars. She will want to know who the woman is and where she is. We feel we ought to say to her that we have no right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated. More than that we cannot do; we have no right to go further. Though there may be justifiable exceptions, and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found this the best course to take.

(81:2) Our design for living is not a one-way street. It is as good for the wife as for the husband. If we can forget, so can she. It is better, however, that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom she can vent jealousy.

(82:1) Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let bygones be bygones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind. Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion-jealousy. Good generalship may decide that the problem be attacked on the flank rather than risk a face-to-face combat.

(82:2) If we have no such complication, there is plenty we should do at home. Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing he needs to do is to keep sober. Certainly he must keep sober, for there will be no home if he doesn't. But he is yet a long way from making good to the wife or parents whom for years he has so shockingly treated. Passing all understanding is the patience mothers and wives have had with alcoholics. Had this not been so, many of us would have no homes today, would perhaps be dead.

(82:3) The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough. He is like the farmer who came up out of his cyclone cellar to find his home ruined. To his wife, he remarked, "Don't see anything the matter here, Ma. Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowin'?"

(83:1) Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that

our own actions are partly responsible. So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.

(83:2) **The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.** Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we think we ought not to urge them. We should not talk incessantly to them about spiritual matters. They will change in time. Our behavior will convince them more than our words. We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone.

(83:3) There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen - we send them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone.

(83:4) **If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.**

(84:1) Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

(156:1) (From Dr. Bob's story) One morning he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received, and learned that many knew of his drinking. Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business.

(156:2) At midnight he came home exhausted, but very happy. **He has not had a drink since.** As we shall see, he now means a great deal to his community, and the major liabilities of thirty years of hard drinking have been repaired in four.

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**Commit to begin making amends immediately with the support of your sponsor based on the guidelines that we have reviewed. Steps 10, 11 and 12 will offer much support and guidance while continuing to make amends.**

**Taking Step 9:**

**Will you begin to make amends this coming week?**

**If you answer yes you have begun to take Step 9.**

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## Step 10

### ***Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.***

(84:1) Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

(84:2) This thought brings us to ***Step Ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along.*** We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.

(84:3) And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone - even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality - safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.

(85:1) It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. "How can I best serve Thee - Thy will (not mine) be done." These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.

(85:2) Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and

direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense.

(86:1) When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others.

The tenth step inventory and the prayer and meditation of the eleventh step are meant to be a part of our daily spiritual practice as our way of keeping in fit spiritual condition.

The 4th step inventory guide we used is very useful for conducting the daily 10th step inventory. Discuss your inventories with your sponsor. Don't forget to list all of the positive aspects of your behavior and your life as well. By doing this daily, you are continuing to take this step.

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### **Taking Step 10:**

**Will you continue to take a personal inventory and  
continue to set right any new mistakes as you go  
along?**

**If you can answer yes, you have now begun taking  
Step 10.**

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## Step 11

***Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.***

(85:3) Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it. It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.

(86:1) After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.

(86:2) On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.

(86:3) In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.

(87:0) What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.

(87:1) We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why.

(87:2) If circumstances warrant, we ask our wives or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also. If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minister, or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.

(87:3) As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done." We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.

(88:1) It works - it really does. We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined. But this is not all. There is action and more action. "Faith without works is dead."

Set aside time every day, twice a day, for a period of prayer and mediation. In prayer ask for the knowledge of your higher power's will for you and the power to carry that out. Review your daily behavior seeking assistance as needed.

Take time in quiet solitude, focusing on your breath, allowing your self to settle in the presence of your true self/higher power. Do not be engaged by your thoughts during your meditation. As thoughts arise, simply and gently let your thoughts go and return your attention to your breath.

By doing this daily, you are taking steps 10 and 11. There are many informative books on meditation, and many effective teachers as well. You may want to further your spiritual practice by reading additional material and finding a teacher or spiritual advisor.

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## **Taking Step 11:**

**Will you pray and meditate daily?**

**If you answer yes, you have begun taking Step 11.**

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## Step 12

***Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.***

(89:1) Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our *twelfth suggestion*: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.

(89:2) Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends - this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

(91:3) See your man alone, if possible. At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell him enough about your drinking habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage him to speak of himself. If he wishes to talk, let him do so. You will thus get a better idea of how you ought to proceed. If he is not communicative, give him a sketch of your drinking career up to the time you quit. But say nothing, for the moment, of how that was accomplished. If he is in a serious mood dwell on the troubles liquor has caused you, being careful not to moralize or lecture. If his mood is light, tell him humorous stories of your escapades. Get him to tell some of his.

(91:4) When he sees you know all about the drinking game, commence to describe yourself as an alcoholic.

(92:0) Tell him how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give him an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show him the mental twist which leads to the first drink of a spree. We suggest you do this as we have done it in the chapter on alcoholism. If he is alcoholic, he will understand you at once. He will match your mental inconsistencies with some of his own.

(92:1) If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady. Show him, from your own experience, how the queer mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will

power. Don't, at this stage, refer to this book, unless he has seen it and wishes to discuss it. And be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion. If he sticks to the idea that he can still control his drinking, tell him that possibly he can - if he is not too alcoholic. But insist that if he is severely afflicted, there may be little chance he can recover by himself.

(92:2) Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal malady. Talk about the conditions of body and mind which accompany it. Keep his attention focused mainly on your personal experience. Explain that many are doomed who never realize their predicament. Doctors are rightly loath to tell alcoholic patients the whole story unless it will serve some good purpose. But you may talk to him about the hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a solution. You will soon have your friend admitting he has many, if not all, of the traits of the alcoholic. If his own doctor is willing to tell him that he is alcoholic, so much the better. Even though your protégé may not have entirely admitted his condition, he has become very curious to know how you got well. Let him ask you that question, if he will. Tell him exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely. If the man be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that he does not have to agree with your conception of God. He can choose any conception he likes, provided it makes sense to him. The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.

(94:1) Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to him. It is important for him to realize that your attempt to pass this on to him plays a vital part in your own recovery. Actually, he may be helping you more than you are helping him. Make it plain he is under no obligation to you, that you hope only that he will try to help other alcoholics when he escapes his own difficulties. Suggest how important it is that he place the welfare of other people ahead of his own. Make it clear that he is not under pressure, that he needn't see you again if he doesn't want to. You should not be offended if he wants to call it off, for he has helped you more than you have helped him. If your talk has been sane, quiet and full of human understanding, you have perhaps made a friend. Maybe you have disturbed him about the question of alcoholism. This is all to the good. The more hopeless he feels, the better. He will be more likely to follow your suggestions.

(94:2) Your candidate may give reasons why he need not follow all of the program. He may rebel at the thought of a drastic housecleaning which requires discussion with other people. Do not contradict such views. Tell him you once felt as he does, but you doubt whether you would have made much progress had you not taken action. On your first visit tell him about the Fellowship of Alcoholics

Anonymous. If he shows interest, lend him your copy of this book.

(95:1) Unless your friend wants to talk further about himself, do not wear out your welcome. Give him a chance to think it over. If you do stay, let him steer the conversation in any direction he likes. Sometimes a new man is anxious to proceed at once. And you may be tempted to let him do so. This is sometimes a mistake. If he has trouble later, he is likely to say you rushed him. You will be most successful with alcoholics if you do not exhibit any passion for crusade or reform. Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection. Show him how they worked with you. Offer him friendship and fellowship. Tell him that if he wants to get well you will do anything to help.

(95:4) If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us. But point out that we alcoholics have much in common and that you would like, in any case, to be friendly. Let it go at that.

(96:1) Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy. One of our Fellowship failed entirely with his first half dozen prospects. He often says that if he had continued to work on them, he might have deprived many others, who have since recovered, of their chance.

(96:2) Suppose now you are making your second visit to a man. He has read this volume and says he is prepared to go through with the Twelve Steps of the program of recovery. Having had the experience yourself, you can give him much practical advice. Let him know you are available if he wishes to make a decision and tell his story, but do not insist upon it if he prefers to consult someone else.

(96:3) He may be broke and homeless. If he is, you might try to help him about getting a job, or give him a little financial assistance. But you should not deprive your family or creditors of money they should have. Perhaps you will want to take the man into your home for a few days. But be sure you use discretion. Be certain he will be welcomed by your family, and that he is not trying to impose upon you for money, connections, or shelter. Permit that and you only harm him. You will be making it possible for him to be insincere.

(97:0) You may be aiding in his destruction rather than his recovery.

(97:1) Never avoid these responsibilities, but be sure you are doing the right thing if you assume them. Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights' sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic wives and relatives, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums, hospitals, jails and asylums. Your telephone may jangle at any time of the day or night. Your wife may sometimes say she is neglected. A drunk may smash the furniture in your home, or burn a mattress. You may have to fight with him if he is violent. Sometimes you will have to call a doctor and administer sedatives under his direction. Another time you may have to send for the police or an ambulance. Occasionally you will have to meet such conditions.

(97:4) For the type of alcoholic who is able and willing to get well, little charity, in the ordinary sense of the word, is needed or wanted. The men who cry for money and shelter before conquering alcohol, are on the wrong track. Yet we do go to great extremes to provide each other with these very things, when such action is warranted. This may seem inconsistent, but we think it is not.

(98:1) It is not the matter of giving that is in question, but when and how to give. That often makes the difference between failure and success. The minute we put our work on a service plane, the alcoholic commences to rely upon our assistance rather than upon God. He clamors for this or that, claiming he cannot master alcohol until his material needs are cared for. Nonsense. Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job - wife or no wife - we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God.

(98:2) Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. ***The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house.***

(102:2) Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.

(163:4) So our fellow worker will soon have friends galore. Some of them may sink and perhaps never get up, but if our experience is a criterion, more than half of those approached will become fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. When a few men in this city have found themselves, and have discovered the joy of helping others to face life again, there will be no stopping until everyone in that town has had his opportunity to recover - if he can and will.

(164:1) Still you may say: "But I will not have the benefit of contact with you who write this book." We cannot be sure. God will determine that, so you must remember that your real reliance is always upon Him. He will show you how to create the fellowship you crave.

(164:2) Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.

(164:3) Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

(164:4) May God bless you and keep you – until then.

If you have sincerely taken the previous eleven steps to the best of your ability, step 12 states that you have had a spiritual awakening as a direct result of taking the first eleven steps! You have now made yourself fit to be of service to God and those about you! We express our spiritual awakening on a daily basis by practicing the principles of unselfishness, honesty, purity (integrity) and love in all of our affairs.

How does this “spiritual awakening” manifest in our lives? Most importantly we are not drinking. We have found the spiritual solution to our drinking problem. Many of us are now aware of a new “God consciousness”. Our thoughts are more loving, honest, tolerant and kind. We are more peaceful with ourselves and others. These are all attributes of a spiritual awakening.

A caution from page 85 in The Big Book:

“It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action (the steps) and rest on our laurels. We are, headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day we must carry the vision of God’s will for us into all of our activities”.

And again from page 89 in The Big Book:

“ Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure *IMMUNITY FROM DRINKING* as will intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when all others fail.

This is our twelfth suggestion: *Carry this message to other alcoholics!*”

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### **Taking Step 12:**

**Will you carry this message to other alcoholics, and  
practice these principles in all your affairs?**

**If you answer yes, you have begun taking Step 12.**

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**This document is part of the book  
The Spiritual Solution - Simple and Effective Recovery  
Through The Taking and Teaching Of The 12 Steps**

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