


ES&F 12 STEPS IN 1 HOUR SESSIONS STEP 1 FORMAT

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless
over alcohol -- that our lives had become
unmanageable.



Principal: honesty

Process: Admission & surrender

Practice: Tend your own garden

Experience: Powerlessness & hopelessness

*I am going to know a new freedom &
a new happiness.*

Hi Everyone!

For the longest time I wanted to write a personal format for each step. My hope was that the process would help me to understand and then to teach the steps better. If nothing else, I would become more familiar with the AA Big Book, our basic text.

The written comment by Edith reminded me that everything we do needs to be done with the awareness that God is working through us so that we can be of service to Him and other people.

The AA Big Book reminds us that we can ask God to give us whatever we need to take care of every situation. And, that we need to pray especially for freedom from self-will. We may never pray for our own selfish ends. We may ask for ourselves, however, only if others will be helped. (AA BB: 87:2)

It is my hope that others will be helped by this format. I pray that it will clarify what it means to be powerless over our addictions and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The quotes are actually taken from The Original Manuscript, which was written in 1938. The page numbers refer to the 4th edition of the AA Big Book. There may be some differences, but I really enjoy the power of the language used in the Original Manuscript.



Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable

Principle: Honesty and surrender

Problem: Dishonesty & denial

Process: Admission & surrender: am I powerless over my addiction? Is there any hope for me?

Practice: ego deflation: “abandon yourself to God.”

Promise: Recovery – There is a solution!

Proposal: Have I learned and have I fully conceded to my innermost self that I am an addict?

I am going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.



First Step Prayer: Dear God, I admit that I am powerless over my addiction. I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it. Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness. Please remove me from all denial of my addiction.



Step 0

Do you want to quit? Are you willing to go to any lengths to stop? Do you want to work the steps together?

Step 1 Identifies the Problem

The very first thing we have to do to solve a problem is to find out what that problem is.

According to the AA Big Book, our problem is that we are powerless over our substance or behavior of choice and our lives have become unmanageable.

The challenge of addiction is that we have to make our own diagnosis. But, denial – “I don’t have a problem, I am fine” is one of the defining characteristics of an addict.

By taking Step 1, we can come out of denial and accept that we are suffering from a disease that has affected us mentally, and physically and over which we have lost control. It is the acknowledgement and acceptance of this truth that will help to motivate us to look for a solution outside ourselves.



4 fundamental criteria to work the 12 Steps more effectively to achieve recovery:

13:5 My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of life which answered

all my problems. Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things, were the essential requirements.

Belief in a Power greater than ourselves: On our own, we are unable to fix our problem. Relying on a Power greater than ourselves will help us look for a solution outside ourselves, while relieving us of the burden of trying to find a solution on our own for this disease. Our Higher Power can be a power of our own choosing, just so long as it is not ourselves.

Honesty: Honesty in the context of the 12 Steps means having the courage to see the truth about our condition. It is the honest admission that we have a disease over which we have lost control and power.

Open-mindedness: Open-mindedness allows new solutions to emerge and helps to overcome the grandiosity of our ego and our stubborn, self-defeating attitudes. To be open-minded means to admit that we are not all-knowing. When we practice being open-minded, we become willing to listen or accept different ideas and opinions. This helps us to avoid as much as possible the kind of thinking that shuts us off from solutions.

Willingness: The role of willingness is subtle. It's basically an open-mindedness, humility and cheerfulness – a willing, cheerful consenting as opposed to will power and trying to control ourselves. "Will I?" compared to "I will!"

Practice of these criteria demonstrates our humility and desperation to go to any length to recover.

Purpose: To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered

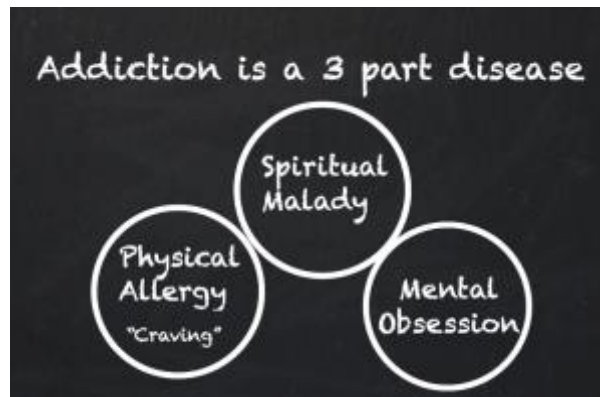
xiii:1 We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics PRECISELY HOW THEY CAN RECOVER is the main purpose of this book. For them, we think these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary and that they'll understand that every alcoholic has a serious illness.

Introduction: What is AA?

xiii:5 – xiv:0 We are not an organization in the conventional sense of the word. There are no fees or dues whatsoever. The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination, nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted.

What do we have to offer?

17: 3 The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution.~ We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer alcoholism.



Physical Symptoms

xxvi:1 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 anyone who has suffered alcoholic torture must believe – that the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind. It does not satisfy us to be told that we cannot 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.

xxx:5 All these, and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This (is) phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, 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.

Physical Allergy

(xxviii:1) 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.

Admission: Am I an addict?

44:1 In the preceding chapters, you have learned something of alcoholism. We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic. If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if, when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.

The mental obsession & the physical allergy

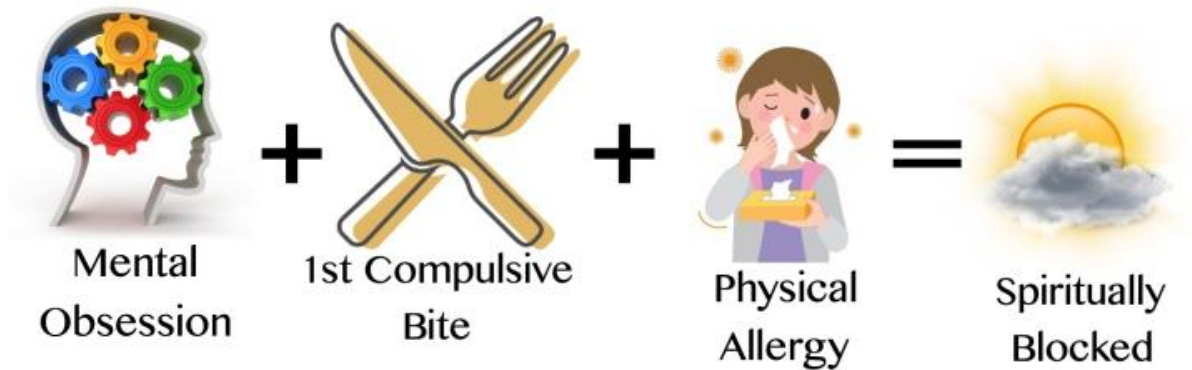


Mental Symptoms

This is how the mental obsession and the physical allergy work together.

xxviii:4 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.

Unrecovered – Spiritual Malady



Recovered - Spiritual Solution



Before the first drink – Mental Obsession. (Problem of the mind)

After the first drink – Physical allergy – Never goes away. (Problem of the body)

23:1 These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the real problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body. If you ask him why he started on that last bender, the chances are he will offer you any one of a hundred alibis. Sometimes these excuses have a certain plausibility, but none of them really make sense in the light of the havoc an alcoholic's drinking bout creates. They sound to you like the philosophy of the man who, having a headache, beat himself on the head with a hammer so that he couldn't feel the ache. If you draw this fallacious reasoning to the attention of an alcoholic, he will laugh it off, or become irritated and refuse to talk.

This is where the mental obsession lives. The main problem is in the mind, and before the first drink.

The physical allergy is NOT the main problem. It is in the body and is after the first drink. It is like an allergy to peanuts. If you don't eat peanuts, your allergy to them will never break out. Instead of breaking out in a rash, we break out in a craving.

23:2 Once in a while he may tell you the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is usually that he has no more idea why he took that first drink than you have. Some drinkers have excuses with which they are satisfied part of the time. But in their hearts they really do not know why they do it. Once this malady has a real hold, they are a baffled lot. There is the obsession that somehow, some day, they will beat the game. But they often suspect they are down for the count.

30:1 Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to 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 liquor 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.

Will-power and self-knowledge fail us. The real addict cannot use self-will or self-knowledge like other people.

39:1 But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge. This is a point we wish to emphasize and reemphasize, to smash home upon our alcoholic readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience.

42:0 I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental blank spots. I had never been able to understand people who said that a problem had them hopelessly defeated.

43:3 Once more: the alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a higher Power.

Powerlessness

24:1 The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically non-existent. We are unable at certain times, no matter how well we understand ourselves, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.

24: 2 The almost certain consequences that follow taking even a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind to deter us. If these thoughts occur, they are hazy, and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove.

24:3 The alcoholic may say to himself in the most casual way, "It won't burn me this time, so here's how!" Or perhaps he doesn't think at all. How often have some of us begun to drink in this nonchalant way, and after the third or fourth, pounded on the bar and said to ourselves, "For God's sake, how did I ever get started again?" Only to have that thought supplanted by "Well, I'll stop with the sixth drink." Or "What's the use anyhow?"

24:4 When this sort of thinking is fully established in an individual with alcoholic tendencies, he has probably placed himself beyond all human aid, and unless locked up, is certain to

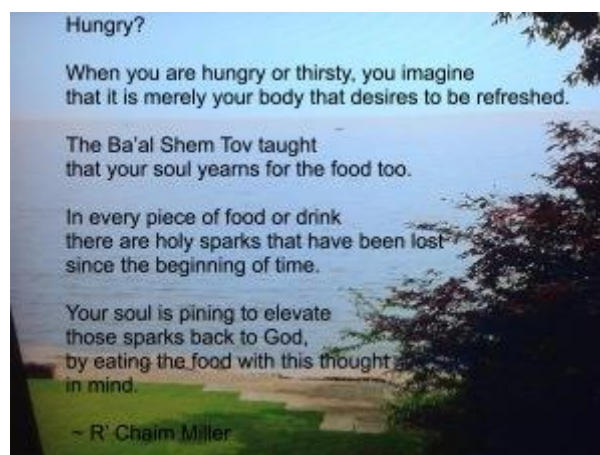
die, or go permanently insane. These stark and ugly facts have been confirmed by legions of alcoholics throughout history. But for the grace of God, there would have been one hundred more convincing demonstrations. So many want to stop, but cannot.

Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic

30:3 We alcoholics are men and women who had lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovered this 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.

30:4-31:0 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 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 evidently hasn't done so yet.

If you doubt that you are an addict, then pray to your HP each day, "Please give me honesty about my condition." Until we know the truth about our addiction, we cannot proceed. It is good to pray daily for honesty, open-mindedness, willingness and humility.



Psychic Change

xxx:1 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.

Unmanageability: this is a restatement of our powerlessness. Because we are powerless (affect, or to influence something) the outcome (effect of our powerlessness) is unmanageability. Our relationship with food (or alcohol) mirrors our relationship with everything. Even though we might think that in every other area of our lives, we are fine, that is part of our delusion and the lie that we tell ourselves. Because, "how we do ANYTHING is how we do EVERYTHING." And, "we take ourselves with us wherever we go."



55:2 We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn't apply to our human problems this same readiness to change the point of view. We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn't make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people – was not a basic solution of this bedevilment more important than whether we should see newsreels of lunar flight? Of course it was.

151:1 For most normal folks, drinking means conviviality, companionship, and colorful imagination. It means release from care, boredom, and worry. It is joyous intimacy with friends, and a feeling that life is good. But not so with us in those last days of heavy drinking. The old pleasures were gone. They were but memories. Never could we recapture the great moments of the past. There was an insistent yearning to enjoy as we once did and a heartbreaking obsession that some new miracle of control would enable us to do it. There was always one more attempt – and one more failure.

151:2 The less people tolerated us, the more we withdrew from society, from life itself. As we became subjects of King Alcohol, shivering denizens of his mad realm, the chilling vapor that is loneliness settled down. It thickened, ever becoming blacker. Some of us sought out sordid places, hoping to find understanding companionship and approval. Momentarily we did – then would come oblivion and the awful awakening to face the hideous Four Horsemen – Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair. Unhappy drinkers who see this page will understand!

151:3 – 152:0 Now and then a serious drinker, being dry at the moment says, "I don't miss it at all. Feel better. Work better. Having a better time." As ex-alcoholics, we smile at such a sally. We know our friend is like a boy whistling in the dark to keep up his spirits. He fools himself. Inwardly he would give anything to take half a dozen drinks and get away with them. He will presently try the old game again, for he isn't happy about his sobriety. He cannot picture life without alcohol. Some day he will be unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it. Then he will know loneliness such as few do. He will be at the jumping-off place. He will wish for the end.

First Step Questions

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, had to be smashed.

Have you learned and have you fully conceded to your innermost self that you are an alcoholic? Yes/No

Do you have any reservations or lingering ideas that one day you will be immune to or UNAFFECTED by drinking alcohol? Yes/No

Are you willing to go to any lengths to recover?



Reference:

[ORIGINAL-MANUSCRIPT-OF-THE-BIG-BOOK](#)

[Big Book Original Manuscript-](#)

Any feedback and suggestions are welcome!

In love & service,

Shira