

Third Step Exercise:

The following is taken from the Big Book, and phrased in the first person. Read this out loud to someone each day for a week, and then decide if:

- a. It applies to you.
- b. You are ready to quit living like this.
- c. You are ready to accept living on Gods terms.

The first requirement for Step Three is that I be convinced that my life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis I am almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though my motives are good. I try to live by self-propulsion. I am like an actor who wants to run the whole show; I am forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in my own way. If my arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as I wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including myself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful. In trying to make these arrangements I may sometimes be quite virtuous. I may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self-sacrificing. On the other hand, I may be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest. But, as with most humans, I am more likely to have varied traits.

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

I am self-centered - ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays. I am like the retired businessman 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 my protestations, am I not concerned with myself, my resentments, and my self-pity?

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

So my troubles, I think, are basically of my own making. They arise out of myself, and I am an extreme example of self-will run riot, though I usually don't think so. Above everything, I, as an alcoholic, must be rid of this selfishness. I must, or it will kill me! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. I had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but I could not live up to them even though I would have liked to. Neither could I reduce my self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on my own power. I have to have God's help.

This is the how and the why of it. First of all, I have to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, I will decide that hereafter in this drama of life, God is going to be my Director. He is the Principal; I am His agent. He is the

Father, and I am His child. Most Good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which I will pass to freedom.

When I sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. I have a new Employer. Being all powerful, He will provide what I need, if I keep close to Him and perform His work well. Established on such a footing I'll become less and less interested myself, my little plans and designs. More and More, I will become interested in seeing what I can contribute to life. As I feel new power flow in, as I enjoy peace of mind, as I discover I can face life successfully, as I become conscious of His presence, I begin to lose my fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. I will be reborn.

I am now at Step Three. I said to my Maker, as I 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!" I thought well before taking this step making sure I was ready; that I could at last abandon myself utterly to Him.

I'll find it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as my wife, best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as I expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, will be felt at once.

1. Does this description fit you? How?
2. Are you convinced that your life, job, relationships, marriage, friendships and everything else in your life run on self-will is going to be a failure?
3. What meaning does this have in your life today?
4. Are you willing to follow up this decision with the action required of me in Steps Four through Nine?

If you are ready, do the Third Step Prayer (Page 63)

"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!"

Homework and to be done together:

After reading the original excerpt from page 61 of the AA Big Book, write your name in the blanks of the "Personal Version" below. Cut and paste the personal version into your AA Big Book. Read it daily for 1 week.

What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. I, _____ begin to think life doesn't treat me _____ right. I _____ decide to exert myself _____ more. I _____ become, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit me _____. Admitting I _____ may be somewhat at fault, I _____ am sure that other people are more to blame. I _____ become angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is my _____ basic trouble? Am I _____ not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Am I _____ not a victim of the delusion that I _____ can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if I _____ only manage well? Is it not evident to all the rest of the players that these are the things I _____ want? And do not my _____'s actions make each of them wish to retaliate, snatching all they can get out of the show? Am I _____ not, even in my _____'s best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?

Answer the following questions:

- Does this description fit you? How?
- Are you convinced that your life, job, relationships, marriage, friendships and everything else in your life run on self-will is going to be a failure?
- What meaning does this have in your life today?
- Are you willing to follow up this decision with the action required of me in Steps Four through Nine?

Taking Step 3:

"Do you now decide to take the actions necessary to turn your will and your life over to the care of God as you understand Him?"

Please answer yes or no. Thank you.

Taking Step 3:

If you are ready, do the Third Step Prayer (Page 63)

"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!" Say prayer. Comment but do not explain absence of "amen."

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

1. Go through the prayer sentence by sentence, and describe what each sentence means to them.
2. Now, write a letter to God, asking Him to help you. Be very specific about what you would like Him to help you do.

Dear God:

I need you in my life. Please help me to: _____

3. Now, write your own Formal Terms of Surrender.

What are you willing to do to connect to your Higher Power? Again, be very specific.

Dear God:

I will _____ Signed and date:

Afterthought: