

## **Newcomers Step Workshop “Minneapolis Format”**

### **Session #1 -- Overview and Step 1**

**There was a period in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous when the program produced a 50 to 75 percent recovery rate from Alcoholism. So, how can we as food addicts get reconnected with this miraculous piece of A.A.'s glorious past? We need to take a trip back in time. OK, let's go.**

**It is the fall of 1946. You have a drinking problem and you telephone Alcoholics Anonymous for help. A.A. responds by sending two people out to see you.**

**These ex-problem drinkers talk about their personal experiences with alcohol and how they found a way out. They tell you that, as part of their recovery, they try to be of service to others.**

**After listening to their stories, you agree to be hospitalized. They take you to local sanatoriums where you are withdrawn from alcohol. The process takes three days. During this period of time, you are visited by many of the members of the local A.A. group.**

**Upon your release, you are assigned a sponsor or sharing partner whose responsibility it is to accompany you to the Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners' Meetings. You take all Twelve Steps in one month. Your life changes -- you never drink again.**

**Sounds incredibly simple, doesn't it? Well, it was simple and it worked! A.A.'s remarkable recovery rate during the 1940s was due, in large part, to these Beginners Meetings. For many thousands of alcoholics, the Beginners' Meetings became "the foundation stone of (their) recovery."**

**So, let's imagine it is early evening on a weeknight in a Midwest city. You are sitting at a table in the meeting room of a local church. You have a copy of the book titled *Alcoholics Anonymous* with you, along with a pencil and paper. The first of the four one-hour sessions is about to begin.**

**This meeting is hosted by one of the local A.A. groups. The leaders are members of the group who have taken the Steps and have helped others through them. It is now their turn to conduct the Beginners' Meetings.**

The only changes we've made to this 1946 A.A. meeting format is to use the page numbers from a later edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, rather than the page numbers from the First Edition, which was in use at that time.

As food addicts, we are using this format to recover from food addiction. In certain places, we have substituted the word "food" for "drink," the word "food addiction" for "alcoholism" and "OA" for "A.A." In other places, where the history of A.A. is discussed, we stick with the original language.

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**WELCOME** to the first of four one-hour Newcomers Step Workshops that will change your life! During the next several weeks, you will learn how to recover from the affliction of food addiction by taking the Twelve Steps as described in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Our fellowship has found an answer to this insidious illness. As members of OA, we are here to share our solution with you -- a spiritually based "program of action" that will remove your compulsion to compulsively eating food and provide you with a new way of living without flour & sugar.

Our names are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and we are members of OA. We lead these meetings to help insure our sobriety. We receive no financial compensation for this service. Our reward is to watch people recover and see them work with others.

We will begin this session by reading a statement from the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, found on Roman numeral page 13 (xiii), in the fifth paragraph, starting on the first line:

"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 compulsive eating and become abstinent. 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."

The book we are reading from is the A.A. textbook for recovery. This is the only book we will use during these sessions, except for an occasional reference to an A.A. pamphlet, newsletter article, or source material used to write the "Big Book."

What we just read sums up the OA fellowship quite well. We are not a religion, and we don't get involved in politics, psychology or medicine.

As the title of the book implies, we are an anonymous society. You can be assured we will protect your anonymity at this and all other meetings of Overeaters Anonymous. We ask that you do the same for us and for everyone else who is here today.

The "Big Book" was first published in April 1939. It was written by several of the first 100 men and women to recover from alcoholism. Since then addicts all over the world have used the book as the basis for a program of recovery.

So we can complete each session within an hour and still have ample time for questions, we request that you write down anything you do not understand or need clarified and save it until the end of the session. We will answer questions at that time.

If you cannot find something we say in the "Big Book," consider it to be our point of view rather than fact. We will do our best to keep our personal opinions out of these presentations. We are here to pass on the A.A. program as written and practiced by the early members. We are NOT here to provide you with our interpretation of their program.

The Beginners' Meetings began in the early 1940s when A.A. started growing so rapidly it became impossible for the older members to individually take new prospects through the Steps. The sessions were formalized in a September 1944 pamphlet titled, "Alcoholics Anonymous -- An Interpretation of our Twelve Steps," published by the Washington, D.C. Group. Since 1944, this pamphlet has been reprinted throughout the United States. The preface to the pamphlet contains the following statement:

"These meetings are held for the purpose of acquainting both the old and new members with the Twelve Steps upon which our program is based. So that all Twelve Steps may be covered in a minimum amount of time, they are divided into four classifications, and one evening each week will be devoted to each of the four subdivisions."

In 1945, The Grapevine, which is a newsletter published by A.A.'s New York City headquarters, devoted three articles to the Beginners' Meetings. These articles described the sessions in St. Louis, Missouri; Rochester, New York; and St. Paul, Minnesota.

Each group has developed its own guidelines for conducting the Beginners' Meetings. However, all these groups have a common purpose: to provide a safe, structured environment where newcomers learn the principles of A.A. and OA, take the Twelve Steps, and have life-changing spiritual experiences. In addition, these meetings give those who have taken the Steps the opportunity to help those who are new to the program.

In order for the process to work, newcomers need to be matched up with OA members who are willing to guide them through the four one-hour sessions. Newcomers do not attend Beginners' Meetings alone. They are accompanied by their sponsors or sharing partners.

So that everyone can better understand what is expected of them, we are going to present some of the guidelines for the Beginners' Meetings:

**For the Newcomer:**

**1. Your primary obligation is to attend all four sessions. If you need assistance with transportation, your sponsor or sharing partner will help you make the necessary arrangements.**

**2. We will read the appropriate parts of the "Big Book" to you, specifically those passages that relate to taking the Twelve Steps. If you have brought a "Big Book" and are able to follow along, please do so. We will announce each passage by page number and paragraph before we read it. If you don't have a book, we ask that you participate by listening. We will guide you through all Twelve Steps as written by the "Big Book" authors. Please follow their directions, as we read them to you, and you too will recover from food addiction.**

**3. Although a written inventory is part of the process, this doesn't mean you have to do the writing. The person who is sponsoring you through these sessions can help you write your inventory, or he or she can write it for you.**

**For the Sponsor or Sharing Partner:**

**1. Your time commitment to the newcomer is approximately four weeks. After that, both you and the newcomer will be expected to assist others through the Twelve Steps.**

- 2. During the next month, call or visit the newcomer frequently to offer encouragement and moral support.**
- 3. Attend the weekly Beginners' Meetings with the newcomer.**
- 4. Offer to help the newcomer with his or her inventory. If necessary, fill out the checklist based on what the newcomer tells you. Keep in mind, the newcomer may not be able to complete the inventory without your help.**
- 5. Share your guidance with the newcomer so he or she can see how two-way prayer is working in your life.**
- 6. Based on your personal experience, answer any questions the newcomer may have about the OA program or the OA way of life.**

**It is time to assign sponsors or sharing partners to those who need them. Will the newcomers please stand. These are the people who are here to take the Twelve Steps.**

**If you have a sponsor or sharing partner that is with you tonight please be seated. If you don't have a sponsor or sharing partner, or he or she is not at this meeting, please remain standing. We need to assign someone to help you during these sessions.**

**This is a WE program. We attend the Beginners' Meetings together, we read the "Big Book" together, we take the Steps together, and we recover together.**

**[Ask for volunteers to assist those who are standing.]**

**Thank you. Please be seated. Now that everyone has a sponsor or sharing partner, we can proceed.**

**Let's start on Roman numeral page 13 (xiii). The first paragraph states:**

**"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 (or, in our case, food addicts) precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book."**

**So, the "Big Book" authors immediately tell us that the purpose of this book is to show us how to recover from food addiction. This is a revolutionary statement, because before the "Big Book" was written, there was no hope for food addicts -- or alcoholics. Now, anyone who is willing to follow the directions THEY have provided, can recover.**

This message of hope is expressed again on page 17 -- regular number 17, not Roman numeral 17 -- in the third paragraph:

"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 from food addiction."

On page 25, in the third paragraph, the authors explain that, for us, there is no middle ground. We will either find a "new way of living" or else succumb to the ravages of food addiction:

"If you are as seriously addicted to food as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help."

In the first paragraph on page 44, the authors describe the food addict and then tell us what it is going to take to recover. Starting with the fourth line, they write:

"If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when compulsive eating, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably addicted to food. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer."

To make sure everyone understands what we just read, we are going to read the last line again:

**"If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which ONLY a spiritual experience will conquer"**

We now know what we have to do in order to recover from food addiction. We must undergo a life-changing, spiritual transformation.

We realize this is not the answer many of you expected to find in *Overeaters Anonymous*. But, please keep in mind that food addiction is a fatal illness. Recovery requires "revolutionary and drastic proposals," because prior to OA, most food addicts either died of compulsive eating or were locked up in jails or insane asylums.

On page 44, in the second paragraph, the authors once again inform us of our options:

**"To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as he is means disaster, especially if he is a food addict of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to a food addict's death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face."**

Not only is a spiritual experience possible, it is a guarantee. Just keep an open mind and take the Steps as described in the "Big Book."

In the third paragraph on page 44, they disclose that, no matter what our present beliefs, there is hope for us:

**"But it isn't so difficult. About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type. At first some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true food addicts. But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life or else. Perhaps it is going to be that way with you. But cheer up, something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics. Our experience shows that you need not be disconcerted."**

We find it amazing that the newcomer can start the OA program without any specific beliefs or, for that matter, without any beliefs whatsoever. All a person needs is the "willingness, honesty and open mindedness" to believe that WE BELIEVE this program works.

Let us assure you, we do believe. The Twelve Steps have changed our lives and the lives of countless other food addicts. This program will change your life too, if you honestly want to recover from this deadly affliction.

Let's see what we can learn about this spiritual solution. In the first paragraph on page 45, the "Big Book" authors state:

"Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power? Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God."

On page 46, in the second paragraph, the authors ask us to develop our own concept of God. In other words, they want us to find a God of *our* understanding:

"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."

The "Big Book" authors have just told us we are going to take some actions that will lead us into the "realm of the spirit." Our personalities will change from self-directed to God directed. Our "attitude and outlook upon life will change" from "self-sufficiency" to "God-sufficiency."

As we said earlier, Overeaters Anonymous is not a religious program. We're free to call this Power by any name we wish, as long as it is a "Power greater than ourselves." The ""Big Book" authors use many different names for this Power including "Creative Intelligence," "Universal Mind," "Spirit of the Universe," "Creator," and "Great Reality," among others. Quite a few times they call this Power, "God," but they use the word God merely for convenience rather than for any religious purpose. Please refer to this Power by any name you believe in or feel comfortable with.

So, in order to recover from food addiction, we have to find a "Power greater than ourselves." But where are we going to find this Power? The authors answer this question on page 55, in the second and third paragraphs:

"Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there. For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself. We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found."

These are dramatic and for some of us revolutionary concepts. Let us summarize them for you. First, the authors of the "Big Book" announce that they have found a way to free us from the bondage of food addiction. Next, they describe the solution as a "Power greater than ourselves." Then, they tell us where to find this Power -- right inside each and every one of us.

Now we know WHERE to find the Power to overcome our compulsive eating problem. Much of the rest of the "Big Book" is devoted to the question of HOW to find the Power.

Basically, we find the Power by taking the Twelve Steps. These Steps are listed on pages 59 and 60. We will now read the Twelve Steps. You can find the Steps in your handout, along with the page numbers where each Step is located in the book.

*1. We admitted we were powerless over food -- that our lives had become unmanageable.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*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.*

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

Let's begin with the First Step.

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

Surrender is essential in order to recover from food addiction. The "Big Book" authors devote 51 pages of the book to the first part of the surrender process, which is to admit we have a problem.

The authors begin by describing the physical and mental symptoms of food addiction. Later they ask us to acknowledge that we are Food Addicts. Before we can do this, we need to know what a Food Addict is.

To do this, we'll look at how the Big Book talks about what an alcoholic is.

Much of the first chapter of the "Big Book" is based on two letters written by Dr. William D. Silkworth, a physician at Towns Hospital in New York City. In the late 1930s, very little was known about alcoholism, but much of what Dr. Silkworth wrote then is still relevant today.

On Roman numeral page 25 (xxv), in the first paragraph, Dr. Silkworth describes how Bill W., one of the cofounders of Alcoholics Anonymous, recovered from alcoholism. Bill had once been a well-respected Wall Street stock analyst, but he lost everything because of his drinking:

"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."

For several years prior to 1934, Dr. Silkworth had been treating alcoholics at Towns Hospital with very little success. Then, during his fourth trip to the hospital, Bill discovers the spiritual solution to alcoholism, which he helps develop into the A.A. program.

One of the things Bill is told while in Towns Hospital is that he has to work with other alcoholics in order to stay sober himself. He also learns that alcoholism is a physical and a mental illness, which only a spiritual experience can conquer.

On Roman numeral page 26 (xxvi), in the first paragraph, the authors confirm that Dr. Silkworth is well aware of the physical symptoms of alcoholism:

"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."

Let's look at this abnormal physical reaction to alcohol -- or in our case, food.

Alcohol and flour/sugar are poisons. The normal response to alcohol and flour/sugar is to have one or two drinks and stop. But, the alcoholic and Food Addict's reaction is much different. We have one or two drinks just to get started.

On Roman numeral page 30 (xxx), in the fifth paragraph, Dr. Silkworth tells us that, because of this abnormal reaction, we must refrain from drinking -- or in our case, compulsive eating:

"All these, and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon ... 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."

So much for Food Addicts ever becoming social eaters again.

Abstinence might work if alcoholism and food addiction were only PHYSICAL illnesses, but Dr. Silkworth found that they have a MENTAL component as well. In addition to an abnormal physical reaction, we have a mental obsession. Our mind tells us we are OK even as alcohol or food is bringing us closer and closer to death. No matter how much we may want to stop, sooner or later we will return to drinking or compulsive eating.

Dr. Silkworth describes this mental obsession on Roman numeral page 28 (xxviii). Please keep in mind Dr. Silkworth is talking about alcoholics when he writes in the fourth paragraph:

"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."

On page 30, in the first paragraph, starting with the fourth line, the "Big Book" authors describe how this mental obsession kills so many of us:

"Therefore, it is not surprising that our compulsive eating careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could eat food like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his eating is the great obsession of every abnormal eater. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death."

The authors further emphasize the mental obsession on page 34, in the second paragraph. They state that, no matter how strong our willpower or conviction, we cannot stop compulsive eating on our own:

"For those who are unable to eat 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 eat compulsively 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 food addiction as we know it -- this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish."

You see, if our mind didn't deceive us into thinking it's OK to compulsively overeat, we would never trigger the physical craving for more and more food. So, we have an abnormal reaction of the body and an obsession of the mind, which dooms us to a Food Addict's death. On Roman numeral page 29 (xxix), Dr. Silkworth tells us our only hope is a life-changing, conversion experience. Starting with the third line from the top of the page, he writes:

"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 compulsively overeat 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."

So, a prominent doctor in the field of alcoholism -- or, in our case, food addiction - states that the medical community cannot help us. Our only hope is a spiritual awakening.

The next chapter of the "Big Book" deals with Bill W., A.A.'s New Your City cofounder, and how he overcame his alcoholism. Some people have difficulty identifying with Bill because he was such a low-bottom alcoholic. Here, as else where in the book, we ask that you look for similarities rather than differences. See where you can identify with Bill as he continues to use alcohol long after it has become a problem.

In the first seven pages of his story, Bill describes the progressive nature of his drinking. In the 1920's, he was a successful Wall Street stock analyst. In a few short years he loses everything. He becomes an unemployed, hopeless alcoholic.

On page 8, in the first paragraph, Bill has a moment of clarity. He realizes he is powerless over alcohol. He is licked -- defeated:

**"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."**

Bill cannot stop drinking on this admission alone. In late November 1934, an old high school friend, Ebby T., visits him. Bill is drunk. Ebby has been sober for several months. When Bill asks Ebby how he stopped drinking, Ebby tells him, "I've got religion." Bill is shocked but he lets Ebby continue because, as he writes, "my gin would last longer than his preaching."

But, Ebby doesn't preach to Bill. Instead, he describes a group of people he has recently met who have found a spiritual solution to many of the world's difficulties, including alcoholism. They taught Ebby how to recover from his "alcoholic illness" by practicing Four Spiritual Activities -- activities that later became the foundation of the A.A. program:

- 1. SURRENDER -- A.A.'s First, Second and Third Steps.**
- 2. SHARING -- A.A.'s Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Steps.**
- 3. RESTITUTION -- A.A.'s Eighth and Ninth Steps.**
- 4. GUIDANCE -- A.A.'s Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Steps.**

Soon after Ebby's visit, Bill checks into Towns Hospital. There, under the direction of Dr. Silkworth, Bill is physically withdrawn from alcohol for the fourth time. While in the hospital, Bill applies the Four Spiritual Activities to his drinking problem.

On page 13, in the second paragraph, Bill makes a complete SURRENDER:

"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."

Immediately after his surrender, Bill begins SHARING his shortcomings with Ebby.

On page 13, in the second paragraph, starting with the second line, Bill writes:

"I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new found Friend take them away, root and branch. My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies."

Together, Bill and Ebby identify the blocks that were preventing Bill from tapping into the Power greater than human power -- the Power that would solve his problem.

Then, on page 13, in the third paragraph, starting with the second line, Bill learns how to remove the blocks by making RESTITUTION:

"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."

On page 13, in the fourth paragraph, Bill gets quiet, listens to the God of his understanding, and follows GUIDANCE. These actions are essential for establishing a two-way relationship with the "One who has all power":

"I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me."

On page 14, in the sixth paragraph, starting with the second line, Ebby explains the necessity of working with others:

"Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that."

With Ebby as his guide, Bill takes the Steps and has a sudden conversion experience. He has the "entire psychic change" Dr. Silkworth talks about in his letters.

On page 14, in the second paragraph, Bill describes his spiritual awakening:

"These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountaintop blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound."

Bill makes direct contact with the "Spirit of the Universe" and recovers from alcoholism. He hasn't had a drink since.

There is additional material within these 51 pages of the "Big Book" that further explains the physical and mental symptoms of food addiction and how our lives have become unmanageable as the result of our compulsive eating. All we've done is highlight some of the more important passages. However, we hope we've shown you enough for you to proceed.

Now, it's time for us to begin our journey toward the spiritual awakening that will change our lives. Let's see who is ready to take the First Step.

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

The "Big Book" authors tell us exactly what we have to do. On page 30, in the second paragraph, they write:

"We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were Food Addicts. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed."

In order to smash the delusion that you're not a Food Addict, we are going to ask you to answer a simple question: "Are you ready to concede to your innermost self that you are powerless over food?" In other words, "Are you a Food Addict?" All that is required is a "yes" or "no" answer.

If you have reservations about taking the First Step, please let us know. Your sponsor or sharing partner is willing to spend time with you this week to discuss your uncertainty. We want to give you every opportunity to comprehend the devastating consequences of this terrible affliction.

Maybe you don't believe you are a Food Addict. Maybe you think you're here by mistake. We just want you to know we'd rather be inside the fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous by mistake than outside the fellowship compulsive eating and dying by mistake. It's something to think about.

Now, will those who are ready to take the First Step, please stand.

This is the First Step question: "Do you concede to your innermost self that you are an food addict?"

Please answer, one at a time, "yes" or "no." After you have answered, please be seated.

[Have each newcomer answer the question.]

Thank you. According to the "Big Book" authors, those who answered "yes" to this question have taken Step One.

That's enough for today. In the past hour, we have covered 51 pages of the "Big Book" and taken the First Step. This is a remarkable accomplishment. Congratulations.

Next week we will present Steps Two, Three and Four. We will take the Second and Third Steps during the meeting, and we will provide you with guidelines for taking the Fourth Step. You will share your Fourth Step inventory with another person or persons between the second and the third sessions. Are there any questions?