

A Day at a time



Chapter Five

HOW IT WORKS

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our directions. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a way of life, which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it -- then you are ready to follow directions.

At some of these you may balk. You may think you can find an easier, softer way. We doubt if you can. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that you are dealing with alcohol -- cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for you. But there is One who has all power -- That One is God. You must find Him now!

Half measures will avail you nothing. You stand at the turning point. Throw yourself under His protection and care with complete abandon.

Now we think you can take it! Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as your Program of Recovery:

1. Admitted we were powerless over alcohol -- 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 and direction 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.

INTRODUCTION

This introduction to the Twelve Steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous program is offered to all alcoholic men and women whose "lives have become unmanageable" because of their powerlessness over alcohol.

The purpose of this interpretation is to help members quickly work out an acceptable 24-hour schedule of A.A. living. This subject matter is founded on basic information from the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

All supplementary matter is based on practical experience from the lives of fellow alcoholics who have found peace of mind and contented sobriety by a planned way of spiritual life set forth in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

We too often fail to realize the extent to which we are physically, mentally, and spiritually ill. Through ignorance we dwarf parts of our program to suit our distorted viewpoint.

It is obvious that much good can be accomplished by sharing with others the fund of knowledge that successful older members have gained by experience. The purpose of this introduction and the objective of this interpretation are toward that end.

As uncontrolled drinkers, few of us realized the danger of our position or how much alcoholism had damaged and deterio-

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rated our minds and bodies. We didn't realize the full significance and effectiveness of our simple program without the help and cooperation of understanding members who had arrested their alcoholism.

Recovery through the A.A. program is simple. It needs little interpretation in itself. It will work if we live it. The barriers to success are ignorance of our illness, reservations, indifference, dishonesty, and brain damage.

A.A. is not a religion. It is not accountable to organized religion, medicine, or psychology. A.A. has, however, drawn therapeutic virtues from these disciplines, molding them into a "design for living" by which we can live in contented sobriety and be restored to service and respect in society.

The A.A. program is designed for uncontrolled drinkers who sincerely desire sobriety and are willing to go to any length to get it. But the program invariably fails alcoholics who merely seek knowledge to control their drinking.

Stringent honesty is an absolute requirement of rehabilitation. An urgent desire to get well and a belief in a Power greater than ourselves are also essential to success.

Spiritual concepts must be embraced, but these do not involve organized religion. Although we must believe in this *Higher Power*, it is our privilege to interpret it

according to our understanding.*

The alcoholics who have recovered through the Alcoholics Anonymous fellowship internationally disprove the age-old conviction that all alcoholics are untrustworthy and destined to remain hopeless drunken sots. Hundreds of thousands have disproved this, and thousands of new alcoholics are daily proving that by living the A.A. philosophy, alcoholism can be arrested.

Daily sobriety is the simple aim of A.A. But plain sobriety is not enough. We must acquire honesty, humility, appreciation, and kill self-centeredness to keep sober.

For those who are willing to accept the A.A. program as a means of recovery from alcoholism, we recommend a close study of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Study it repeatedly.

Alcoholics Anonymous has all our answers; it was written by alcoholics for alcoholics and is based on the trials and experiences of the first 100 Alcoholics Anonymous members. They worked out a recovery program that has proved to be sound and effective in the lives of millions of alcoholics.

*Read *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Chapter Four, pages 46-47.

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By using this as our textbook, regularly attending A.A. meetings, and referring to the interpretations of the Twelve Steps as we progress, we will lay a strong foundation upon which we can rehabilitate our lives.

We are not disturbed by the realization that strict adherence to this program demands perfection. We know perfection is impossible. We merely strive toward perfecting ourselves in a way of life that is necessary to bring contented sobriety, health, and sane behavior to alcoholics who wish to recover from the fatal and incurable illness, alcoholism.

Aids to Contented Sobriety

Vital factors contributing to the long records of contented sobriety in the lives of thousands of A.A. members are their humility, honesty, faith, courage, gratitude, and service. The following A.A. definitions will be helpful in working out an acceptable understanding of these vital factors.

Humility

A true evaluation of conditions as they are; willingness to face facts; recognition of our alcoholic status; freedom from false pride and arrogance; understanding of the proper relationship between ourselves and a Higher Power, between ourselves and fellow human beings; acceptance and practice

of this relationship throughout every 24-hour period.

Honesty

Freedom from self-deception; trustworthiness in thought and action; sincerity in our desire to recover from alcoholism; willingness to admit a wrong; fairness in all our dealings with others; refusal to sneak that first drink.

Faith

Reliance, hope, and trust in the A.A. Program; belief that we can recover as other members are doing and that practice of the Twelve Steps is necessary to happy, contented sobriety; willingness to draw on help from a Higher Power.

Courage

A quality of mind which enables us to deal with the problems and realities of life without reliance on alcohol; fortitude to endure the things we cannot change; a determination to stand our ground asking God's help with all issues, pleasant or otherwise, that might return us to drinking; fearlessness in the practice of faith, humility, honesty, and self-denial.

Gratitude

Gratitude continues the miracle of our sobriety. Gratitude is a healthy mental atti-

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tude; as we develop gratitude we enlarge our capacity for happiness, service, and contented sobriety. A lack of gratitude may lead to that first drink; gratitude and sobriety go hand in hand.

Service

Service to God and our fellow human beings is the key to A.A. success. Helping other alcoholics who need and want help gives us the tolerance and humility necessary to contented sobriety. Service combats self-centeredness. It reminds us of our powerlessness over alcohol. Intelligent, unselfish service is the lifeblood of the A.A. fellowship.

THE TWELVE STEPS*

STEP ONE. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

STEP TWO. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

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

STEP FOUR. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

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

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

STEP SEVEN. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

STEP EIGHT. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make

*The Twelve Steps are taken from *Alcoholics Anonymous*, published by A.A. World Services, Inc., New York, NY, pp. 59-60. Reprinted with permission. See Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

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amends to them all.

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

STEP TEN. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

STEP ELEVEN. 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.

STEP TWELVE. 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.

12 STEP WORKSHOP 1ST STEP

1. READ BIG BOOK (DOCTOR'S OPINION)
2. ANSWER QUESTION SHEET BY HIGHLIGHTING ANSWERS IN YOUR BIG BOOK.
3. READ DOCTOR'S OPINION IN GROUP AND DISCUSS.
4. FILL OUT POWERLESS AND UNMAGABILITY WORK SHEET.
5. DISCUSS IN DETAIL LOSS OF.....
6. IDENTIFY PROBLEM (LACK OF POWER).
7. READ FROM 12 STEP AND 12 TRADITION'S FORWARD AND STEP 1
8. DO EXPECTATION'S AND GOALS FOR WORKSHOP / RECOVERY.
9. FROM WORKSHOP BOOK (BLACK BINDER) INTRODUCTION IN GROUP.
10. STEP I, HONESTY, NEED, FONDATION, RESISTANCE, COMPLIANCE
AKNOWLEDGEMENT, ACCEPTANCE, WILLINGNESS.
11. READ FIRST STEP IN BLACK BINDER (SUMMARY)
12. SPIRITUAL PRINCIPAL OF THE FIRST STEP

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The 12 Steps

EXAMPLES OF BEING POWERLESS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

EXAMPLES OF UNMANAGEABILITY

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 0.

ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LIST ON POWERLESSNESS AND UNMANAGEABILITY WRITE OUT IN YOUR OWN WORDS YOUR DEFINITION OF BOTH.

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The 12 Steps



STEP ONE

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

Men and women who are allergic to alcohol and who compulsively persist in drinking eventually become sick from a unique illness. This illness is known to medicine as alcoholism; it is unique in that it adversely affects us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Step One briefly portrays the pathetic enigma of uncontrolled drinkers who have acquired this illness over which they are entirely powerless.

Drinkers of this type consider alcohol a physical requirement; they gradually increase its consumption at the expense of proper intake of nutritious foods. This practice induces physical and nervous disorders decidedly detrimental to their comfort and health.

The study of Step One will be largely devoted to the physical illness of alcoholism.*

*Read "The Doctor's Opinion," page xxiv in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. For 31 daily health suggestions, read *Stools and Bottles*. Available through Hazelden Educational Materials.

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Few alcoholics have given their drinking problem much intelligent study. They reluctantly agree they must quit but keep right on drinking.

Severe hangovers make them realize that physical illness plays a part in their discomfort, but they resort to a little "hair off the dog that bit them" and continue into a new binge or finally taper off, suffering much physical and mental anguish.

The alcoholic lives in compulsive slavery. Alcohol is the only means that makes life bearable and quiets the alcoholic's jittery nerves. Existence under such circumstances soon makes the alcoholic's life unmanageable.

Correction of this condition is a serious problem of immediate concern. Recovery is possible for alcoholics who honestly want to stop drinking. "Unmanageable lives" and the physical illness induced by compulsive drinking can be arrested. We must have only a conscious need and desire for help.

The founders of Alcoholics Anonymous identified the physical factor as a part of their powerlessness over alcohol. This physical factor was given first consideration in their new recovery program. In twelve simple Steps they outlined a way of life for daily practice that restored them to physical health and contented sobriety. Daily practice was the key to their success.

Step One

By trial and error they designed a simple philosophy to arrest alcoholism. It embraced knowledge of many vital facts. Recovery is possible, but a cure cannot be effected. The man or woman who has become an alcoholic cannot become a controlled drinker. They have developed a serious illness, and their lowered physical and mental resistance is powerless. Control over alcohol is gone. Continued drinking now brings only physical illness and insane behavior. They are truly sick people.

Experience has proved that recovery from alcoholism is contingent on

1. Having a sincere desire to stop drinking.
2. Admitting and believing in our innermost hearts that we are powerless over alcohol.
3. Looking upon alcoholism as a fatal and incurable illness involving the body, mind, and spirit.
4. Considering ourselves as patients in A.A. for treatment.
5. Identifying alcohol as a poison rather than a beverage for us.
6. Making it our business to understand how alcohol affects us.
7. Realizing we are alcoholics.
8. Learning, practicing, and having faith in the Twelve Steps of the A.A. program.

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9. Believing we can arrest our alcoholism, but we can never drink normally again.
10. Gaining a lay person's knowledge of how alcoholism affects our health and well-being.
11. Using this knowledge and understanding of our illness not only to gain sobriety but to guard against the danger of a return to drinking.
12. Doing this partially by keeping in our minds a mental picture of the unmanageable life alcohol demands from us and our powerlessness over it.

The layperson's view and understanding of alcoholism are simple ones based on known facts and backed up with his or her experiences and the knowledge gained from other alcoholics. The following discussion of alcoholism briefly covers the facts necessary to a beginner; the beginner's understanding will naturally increase as he or she makes the Alcoholics Anonymous program a way or life.

Nature has provided each normal man and woman with a physical body designed to withstand the rigors of a strenuous daily life.

A healthy person can endure great hardships under most unfavorable circumstances as long as he or she receives oxygen,

water, balanced nutrition, regular elimination, proper rest, and relaxation. The human tenacity to retain that spark of life is persistent as long as we follow these standards.

When one of these factors is permanently neglected, deficiencies will eventually occur, such as physical problems, nervous tension, and neurotic conditions. Our nervous systems will upset mental balance, and we will eventually die from lack of rest and nourishment.

Alcoholism stimulates such a condition and further complicates it by a daily intake of toxic poison — alcohol.

The blood stream and body cells are first affected, then the brain, as we compulsively substitute the poison alcohol for the nutrition necessary to normal health.

This poison irritates the brain and finally breaks down nature's defensive barriers. Physical deterioration is sometimes rapid, but, in most alcoholics, addiction is acquired over a period of years, so it is only in the later stages of the illness that acute physical breakdown is apparent.

This breakdown is not apparent to the alcoholic, who is unable to visualize the hazards of his or her mental or physical condition. Alcoholism has gradually inhibited the alcoholic's power to discern between social and pathological drinking. A

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marked personality change, influenced chiefly by negative thinking, now drives the alcoholic to heavier drinking.

Friends and relatives become concerned over this change in personality. But, the alcoholic precludes self-criticism and becomes at odds with a normal environment.

Recovery from alcoholism, the illness which was responsible for our unmanageable lives, can only be accomplished when we stop drinking and return to a permanent, regular, balanced diet that completely eliminates alcohol. There is no shortcut, no substitute, no other way out for the alcoholic.

Controlled drinkers have no trouble conforming to this procedure, but alcoholics, who have lowered their physical resistance and exhausted their nervous system, should have medical help in starting rehabilitation.

Many members who ignore the importance of their physical well-being as an asset to recovery will fail to arrest their alcoholism. Some may recover, but they slow the process if they do not feel well physically.

We believe all alcoholics should be hospitalized upon request for help with the Alcoholics Anonymous program. This is not presently possible in all cases, so the members who cannot receive hospital care should consult a doctor who is skilled in the diagnosis and treatment of alcoholism.

Step One

The importance of this advice cannot be overemphasized. The alcoholic is a sick person who does not realize it and wishes to minimize his or her physical condition. This should not be allowed by the older members; they should point out the need for a complete physical checkup and see that the new member gets it.

Those who neglect the simple precaution of receiving ethical medical care are less apt to effect a speedy recovery from alcoholism.

The alcoholic whose life has become unmanageable from uncontrolled drinking is taking a serious step in identifying with our program and attempting to make it a way of life. The alcoholic's future security depends on the successful attainment of A.A. as a way of life. Alcoholics cannot allow impaired physical well-being to detract from chances of recovery; therefore, they must safeguard their health, as poor health may return them to drinking.

New members will benefit by investigating the various phases of alcoholism that apply to their cases; they must admit they are alcoholics and discuss their problems with older members who are always willing to offer advice and help.

Learn to see in alcoholism a diseased condition of the nervous system due to the excessive use of alcohol. Reflect upon your powerlessness over this sickness. Learn a

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number of the tests in the medical and psychological field that identify alcoholics. Admit you "can't take it." Consider your inability to take it or leave it alone; remember your inability to leave alcohol alone in the face of impending disaster. If you drink, it definitely marks you as an alcoholic. The necessity of a drink "the morning after" is common to most alcoholics. There are many other identifications of the alcoholic; make it your business to learn some of them.

The founders of Alcoholics Anonymous understood that members have to realize their physical illness and receive medical help before they can concentrate on the spiritual requirements necessary in recovery. Physical health is a necessity, but it is only the first step in recovery from our alcoholic illness.

SUMMARIZATION. Recovery from alcoholism first involves a layperson's knowledge of this illness and a conscious need for its treatment. There is no mystery about it. Addiction to alcohol has set up a poisoning within our bodies. Compulsive drinking, over which we are powerless, naturally follows. Our lives become unmanageable. The First Step of recovery is to recognize our alcoholism and admit our physical illness.

WHY DOES THIS HELP? It makes us honest in evaluating our true physical con-

dition. It makes us humble and willing to stop alcoholic rationalization. It awakens us to our need for hospitalization before entering A.A. and for medical care afterwards.

WHY ARE WE SICK? CAN WE BE CURED? Real alcoholics are sick from poisoning acquired by substituting alcohol for food and rest. Physical health can be restored, but no cure will permit us to become controlled drinkers.

TREATMENT. Admitting our alcoholism. Willingness to accept medical treatment. Proper diet and relaxation. Belief we can recover. Daily practice of our A.A. program.

Drugs

Occasionally, some of us have resorted to drugs for physical comfort or to induce sleep. This practice is *out* for all alcoholics, except those rare cases where an ethical medical practitioner, skilled in the treatment of alcoholism, prescribes and supervises such treatment.

We live the A.A. program to develop normal, well-integrated personalities that exclude the use of the narcotic, alcohol. Drugs prevent this change in personality. They warp our thinking. They too quickly become a substitute for alcohol and are decidedly habit forming for most of us.

There Is A Solution

Step 1 pages 17-29

Big Book

Highlight the answers in your big book

1. What are the two common bonds that recovering alcoholics have that transcend political, economical, social or religious backgrounds? P17 2nd & 3rd paragraph.
2. Do most people feel for the alcoholic as they feel for say, the cancer victim? P18 1st paragraph.
3. What understanding must be reached before anything can be accomplished with a suffering alcoholic? P18 L20
4. What is the approach that works? P18 L25
5. Is the elimination of drinking all there is? P19 L5
6. What attitude do we take that allows us not to argue about things medical, psychiatric, social and religious? P19 L31
7. If you are convinced that those you see in AA are recovering from a hopeless condition of mind and body and you say, "What do I have to do?" What answer does the book give? P20 L11
8. According to the book, does the moderate drinker need AA? P20 L28
9. How about the hard drinker? P20 L31
10. What is the difference between the alcoholic and the above two types of drinkers? P21 L8
11. Why does the book conclude that the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than in his body? P22 L28 P23
12. After reading Page 23 Line 7 to 26, do you see why we alcoholics are great alibiers and rationalizers?

My First Step: Knowing My Problem

There are three basic questions that you, while using the Big Book as your guide, must answer to have a program of recovery from alcoholism or other addictions. They are

1. What is the problem?
2. What is the solution?
3. What can I do to use that solution in my own life?

This means that the first thing you have to do is find out what the problem is.

An alcoholic or other addict usually says, "I haven't got a problem. I'm fine." He or she will *deny* there's a problem at all. But in the Big Book we learn that for an alcoholic the problem is *powerlessness* over alcohol; thus, his or her life is out of control.

Here is the First Step in the AA Twelve Step program: "**We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.**"

Let's start by looking at what it means to be powerless.

Exercise 1

BEING OUT OF CONTROL: HOW DID IT FEEL?

Think of a time when your life has been out of control. Maybe your car hit a slick or icy spot in the road, or a thunderstorm ruined a family picnic. Maybe you were called for jury duty when you wanted to do something else, or an illness or injury made it impossible for you to carry on with your life as usual. Whatever it was, think about it and then write or draw what happened in the space below. Be sure your words or drawing show how you *felt* when you were out of control.

The Big Book tells us that alcoholics are out of control—powerless—over alcohol, but as we've learned, they will usually say, "I'm fine."

✍ Exercise 2

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE EXCUSES?

What are some things you've said or thought to explain your use of alcohol or other drugs? Try to give at least two examples for each category.

1. To relatives:

2. To people at work:

3. To friends at a party or other social event:

4. To a girlfriend, boyfriend, or spouse:

5. To yourself:

Here are some things alcoholics and other addicts typically say to convince others and themselves that they can control their drinking or using. Perhaps some of these were on your list.

- "I can stop anytime I want to."
- "I only get high to have a good time [or to loosen up, or for a release, or . . .]."
- "I can drink [or use] and drive."
- "You'd get high too if you had my problems."
- "Everyone drinks [or smokes pot or crack, or gets high . . .]."
- "You can't get addicted to grass [or beer, or . . .]."
- "I'd know it if I was an addict [or a drunk]."
- "I can hold my liquor."
- "If I were a drunk [or an addict] I'd be on skid row [or in jail, or on welfare, or . . .]."

If any of this fits you, you now know some of your favorite excuses for continuing to drink alcohol or use other drugs. It is important that you also know that these excuses are not the truth. They are just ways you may have unknowingly tricked yourself and tried to convince others into thinking you were in control and not powerless over alcohol or other drugs. It is more likely that *alcohol or other drugs have power over you*.

Exercise 3

A PROBLEM OF THE BODY: A PHYSICAL ALLERGY

Now turn to page xxiii in the *Big Book* and read "The Doctor's Opinion" on page xxiii through page xxx.

On lines 10-23 of page xxiv is a description of how alcohol controls the alcoholic. Dr. William D. Silkworth, who treated alcoholics in the early days of AA, says that two parts of the alcoholic are controlled by alcohol. They are

1. _____

2. _____

First, let's look at how alcohol (and other drugs) affects the body. Dr. Silkworth explains that alcoholism is an *allergy* to alcohol. What does the word *allergy* mean to you? (Feel free to use a dictionary or ask others for help in writing your definition.)

An allergy is _____

Alcoholics have an allergy to alcohol because their bodies can't handle it in a normal way. The same is true when someone is addicted to another mood-altering drug. A lot of research is showing that the brain chemistry of alcoholics and addicts eventually changes, so that alcohol and other drugs affect these people differently than non-alcoholics or non-addicts.

This allergic reaction to alcohol or other drugs means that alcoholics or addicts will at some point not be able to control their use after taking the first drink or hit, no matter what problems result or what they promised or decided otherwise. They are powerless over their use of alcohol or other drugs.

Exercise 4

GOING TO THE ROOTS OF POWERLESSNESS

An alcoholic's or addict's powerlessness over mood-altering drugs shows itself in many ways. No two people react exactly the same, although there are often similar patterns. What all alcoholics and other addicts do have in common is that their use of mood-altering drugs is out of control, and they will continue to drink or use in spite of all the bad things that happen to them and others because of it.

Some of the different but equally out-of-control ways that alcoholics and addicts use mood-altering drugs are listed below. Put a check mark next to the ways that describe (or are close to describing) how you used alcohol or other drugs. If some ways of using mood-altering drugs that pertain to you are not listed here, add them at the end of this list.

Alcoholics or addicts . . .

- _____ will often drink or use when no one else is.
- _____ may drink or use any time of the day or night.
- _____ hide the amount consumed or used.
- _____ will use a drug of an unknown source or quality to get higher.
- _____ bring their own booze or stash to a party when they know none will be there.

- _____ will spend money that is needed for essentials (such as food) on alcohol or other drugs.
- _____ will continue to drink or use when they're already drunk or high.
- _____ will put themselves (or others) in danger by driving when high or drunk.
- _____ will later deny their foolish or dangerous behavior when they were drinking or high.
- _____ will lie to friends and loved ones to protect their drinking or using.
- _____ will continue to drink or use even though friends and loved ones are asking them to stop because of the harmful results.

List ways (that aren't on the list) you use alcohol or other drugs.

Now, looking at the lists, write how your behavior may show that you are powerless over alcohol or drugs.

It is the allergy, described by Dr. Silkworth in the Big Book, that brings alcoholics or addicts to eventually crave and use more alcohol or other drugs after the first drink (or snort or hit), in spite of their sincere conviction that this time they'll be able to drink or use like normal people. That is why the well-meaning advice to "just use more willpower" to quit drinking or using won't work.

Exercise 5

SITUATIONS

List three situations in which your drinking or other drug use was different from that of other people you were with. Tell where you were, who you were with, and how your behavior was different from that of the other people who were with you.

Situation #1

Where you were:

Who you were with:

How was your behavior different from others'?

Situation #2

Where you were:

Who you were with:

How was your behavior different from others'?

Situation #3

Where you were:

Who you were with:

How was your behavior different from others'?

At the time each of these situations was happening, what were you thinking about the people who were *not* using drugs or drinking as you were?

How are you different from these people?

In the Big Book, the word *craving* always refers to your body—the physical craving that comes *after* you've taken a drink or used another mood-altering drug.

✍ Exercise 6

PATTERNS

1. What was your drinking or using pattern? (For example, "I drank frequently after work.")

Did you drink alcohol or use other drugs every day to maintain a certain feeling?

Did you binge, going out certain times of the week to get high or drunk?

Or did you do something other than binge? (Explain)

2. Now compare your use of alcohol or other drugs to your use of a favorite (non-alcoholic) beverage or healthy snack that *doesn't* alter your mood. How is it different?

Whether or not the uncontrolled drinking and drug use is happening every day or every so often, alcoholics and other addicts have a craving that cannot be filled. It's a craving that kicks in *after* alcohol or other drugs are put into their body.

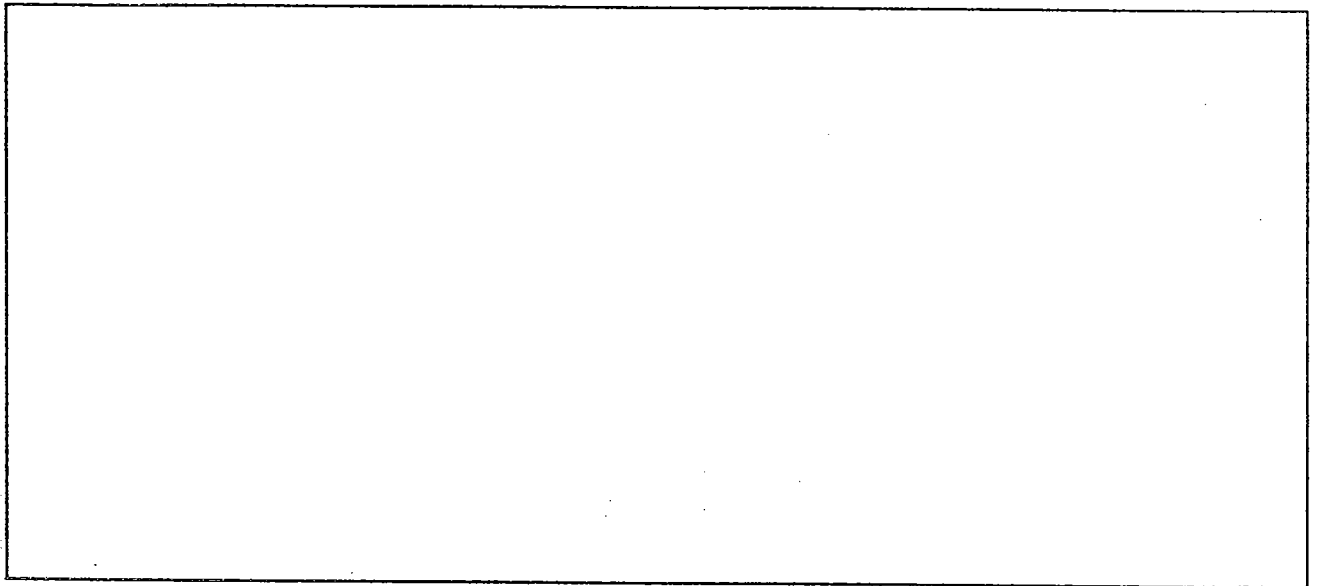
People with a normal—not better, just different—reaction to alcohol or other drugs can stop drinking or using when they feel like it. An alcoholic or addict cannot. That's craving.

In the Big Book, Dr. Silkworth says that there are many different types of alcoholics, meaning there are many different ways they typically behave when they're drunk. Some people want to fight or argue; some start feeling sorry for themselves; some blame others for their problems. Some people withdraw and go off by themselves, sometimes abandoning their family and friends. Others act out sexually, or act like a clown.

✍ Exercise 7

VIDEO SCREEN

Pretend you're watching a videotape of some of the times you got drunk or high. Pretend that the box below is the video screen. Write in words, or draw on the screen what your drinking or using behavior would look like.



Is this—what you've written or drawn on the screen—how you behave when you *choose* your behavior, that is, when you're in control?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you believe you had the ability to make a choice about stopping drinking or using before you reached this stage as you've shown on the screen?

Yes _____ No _____

Regardless of how alcoholics and addicts act when they're drunk or high, all of them share one thing: Once they start drinking alcohol or using other drugs, it will eventually lead to more drinking or using until they are drunk, high, sick, or in trouble.

Look at lines 30-31 on page xxviii of the Big Book. The only relief or answer to the problem is entire_____.

All successful alcohol and other drug treatment programs are based on the idea of *abstinence*. As an alcoholic or addict, you'll never be able to drink or use other mood-altering drugs safely for as long as you live.

Exercise 8

A PROBLEM OF THE MIND: A MENTAL OBSESSION

Can you remember a time when you talked yourself into thinking you could drink alcohol or use drugs safely even after you'd repeatedly created serious problems due to your drinking or other drug use?_____

What happened?

If alcoholics or addicts know they can't drink or use safely, why do they take the first drink, the first snort, the first hit? Dr. Silkworth tells us that part of it is in the *mind*. Alcoholics or addicts remember the good feelings they had the last time they used their drug of choice. Look at lines 30-31 on page xxvi of the Big Book. Dr. Silkworth says, "Men and women drink essentially because _____

_____."

RECOGNIZING THE GOOD AND BAD FEELINGS

What feelings (good and bad) do you remember getting from using alcohol or other drugs?

Good Feelings

(For example: sexy, confident, relaxed, in control)

Bad Feelings

(For example: scared, ashamed, lonely, foolish)

Sometimes people's experiences with alcohol or other drugs can be very painful. There are lots of bad feelings, but alcoholics or addicts usually remember only the good feelings. It is important to be aware of what these good feelings are because the delusion that you can have them again, but without the harmful consequences this time, is how your mind gets you to take the first drink or drug. After that, craving takes over.

Exercise 10

TEMPTATIONS

Let's take this a step further. In addition to remembering only the good feelings that came from past drinking or other drug use, there are other things that might encourage alcoholics or addicts to think they need to drink alcohol or use other drugs.

Describe briefly how each of the following items might play a part in getting you to think you need to drink alcohol or use other drugs.

Being with certain people:

Being at a certain place:

Hearing a special song or music:

Eating certain types of food:

Time of day:

Participating in certain activities:

Having something happen (name this) that always causes stress:

Other:

These people, places, events, activities, situations, and special feelings that you just described are especially appealing to you as an alcoholic or addict. In the Big Book on page xxvi, lines 34-35, Dr. Silkworth says when practicing alcoholics are not drinking, they feel _____, _____, and _____.

Exercise 11

RESTLESS, IRRITABLE, DISCONTENTED

Think about some typical situations where you have been restless. What kinds of thoughts did you have in these situations? What feelings usually arose from these thoughts? What were some of the behaviors that regularly resulted from these thoughts and feelings?

Follow the same thought process for when you were irritable and discontented, and write down some examples of regular patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that have led you to wanting to drink or use, or to actual alcohol or other drug use.

Restless

Thoughts:

Feelings:

Behaviors:

Irritable

Thoughts:

Feelings:

Behaviors:

Discontented

Thoughts:

Feelings:

Behaviors

It can work like this:

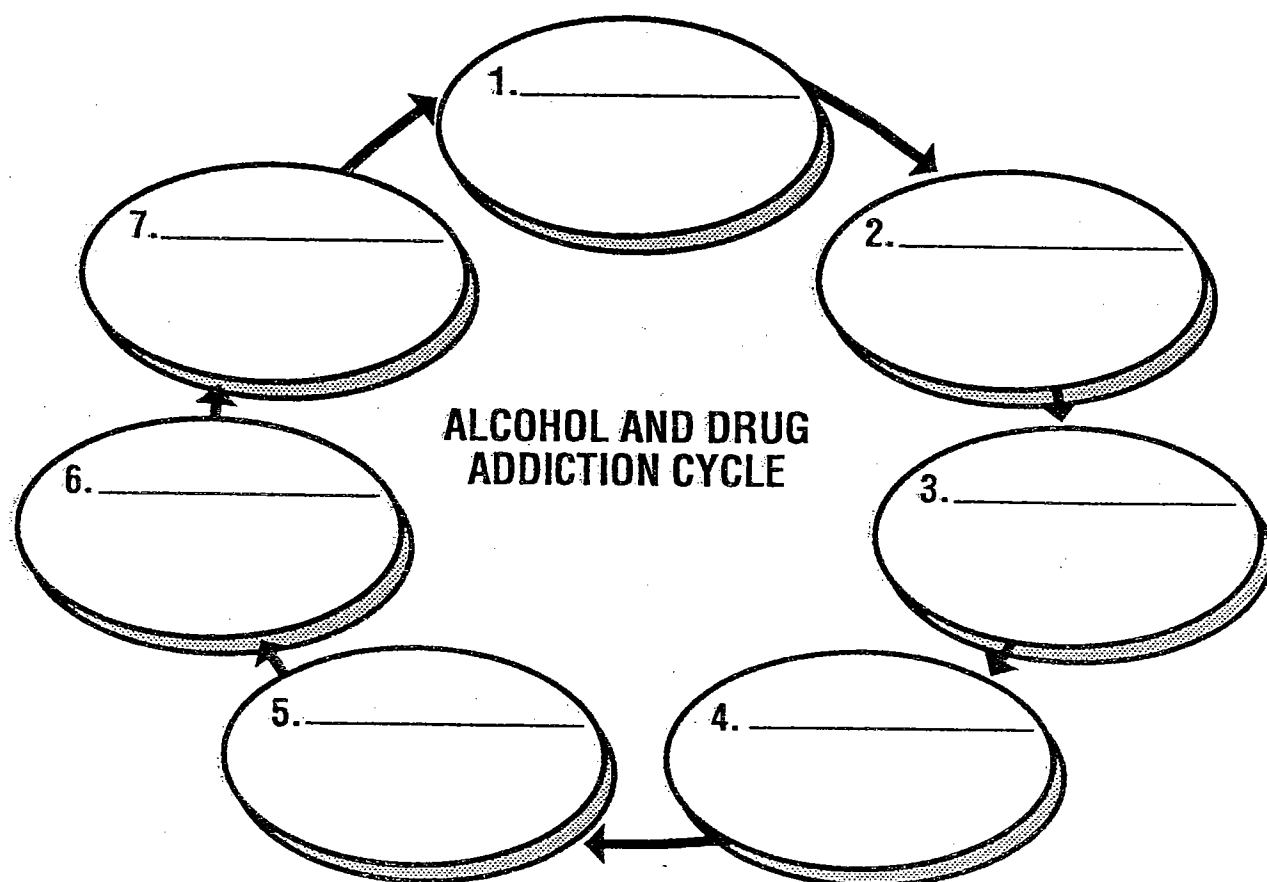
1. You feel restless, irritable, or discontented.
2. You remember the good feelings alcohol or drugs brought in the past. The thought that you can drink or use like normal people becomes an obsession.
3. This overpowering idea (obsession) leads you to take a drink or use other drugs in spite of past problems related to your drug use.
4. You take a drink or use drugs. At that point, because of the allergic reaction, you crave more drinks or drugs. So you continue drinking or using drugs.
5. What follows is a drug or drinking spree that causes your behavior to go out of control.
6. Afterward, you feel sorry (remorseful).
7. You make a promise (resolution) never to drink alcohol or use other drugs again.

When this happens repeatedly, it becomes the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Cycle.

 Exercise 12

THE ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION CYCLE

Look at the seven numbered items you just read above, and use the underlined words to fill in the seven stages of the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Cycle on the diagram below.



PERSONAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION CYCLE

Now you're ready to complete a *personal* Alcohol and Drug Addiction Cycle diagram. Using the same seven categories as in the previous diagram, add examples from your life to show how the cycle could work to make you drink or use other drugs. Use what you have learned about your drinking and using behavior in the previous exercises to help you complete the diagram below.



Now look at page xxvii, lines 7-9, of the Big Book. Dr. Silkworth states that the drinking cycle of the alcoholic is repeated over and over, unless this person "can experience an _____." Since alcoholics and addicts can't do anything about their allergy to alcohol or other drugs—which is their illness of the body, their craving—recovery will have to come *through the mind*. But before we move ahead with the Steps, let's take a moment to review some key terms.

✍ Exercise 14

DEFINITIONS

Define in your own words:

1. *Obsession*
2. *Allergy*
3. *Craving*
4. *Unmanageability*
5. *Remorse*
6. *Powerlessness*
7. *Choice*

Chapter 1 of the Big Book tells Bill W.'s story. Bill W.'s experience tells the alcoholic that the problem of alcoholism has a practical solution that can be used by ordinary people.

Read Bill W.'s story (pages 1-16 of the Big Book). Pay special attention to the first part, where he describes the misery and hopelessness of his situation. Notice also how Bill's experiences demonstrate that his illness was one of both body and mind. It is easy for most alcoholics and other addicts to identify with some part of Bill's story.

Exercise 15

HOW IS BILL W.'S STORY LIKE YOURS?

Describe how Bill W.'s story is like, or not like, your own experience with alcohol or other drugs.

Bill's Experience

Drinking

With money

With family

On the job

With friends

Your Experience

Drinking (or using)

With money

With family

On the job

With friends

THE BIG BOOK'S DESCRIPTION OF AN ALCOHOLIC

Take the Big Book and read the description of an alcoholic, beginning on line 8 of page 21 through line 3 of page 25.

List each part of that description that applies to your own alcohol or drug use. (Examples: "I eventually lost all control of my liquor or drug consumption." "Even my most powerful desire to stop drinking or using didn't work." "I also thought, *This time it won't burn me.*")

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(List as many more as needed on a separate sheet.)

The real alcoholic or addict will inevitably reach a point of no return:

CAN'T USE, CAN'T QUIT.

If it is clear to you now, both by your thoughts and by your feelings, that you cannot stop drinking or using by your willpower alone—and you've tried everything in your power to change your life, but it is still out of control—then you have taken the First Step in your program of recovery.

If you are still unsure that you have taken a First Step, go back to "The Doctor's Opinion" beginning on page xxiii of the Big Book and read it again, slowly and carefully, continuing through Bill W.'s story to the end of page 16. As you read, review what you've written or drawn in the previous exercises, and make changes and additions as needed.

12 STEP WORKSHOP 2nd STEP

1. READ BIG BOOK CHAPTER'S "THERE IS A SOLUTION" AND "MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM"
2. ANSWER QUESTION SHEET BY HIGHLIGHTING ANSWERS IN YOUR BIG BOOK.
3. READ STEP TWO-IN THE 12/12.
4. FILL OUT DEFICIENCIES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WORK SHEET.
5. DISCUSS IN DETAIL FEAR OF.....
6. IDENTIFY SOLUTION (POWER).
7. READ FROM 12 STEP AND 12 TRADITION'S FORWARD AND STEP 2
8. REVIEW WHERE STEPS 1, 2, & 3 ARE LOCATED IN BIG BOOK
9. FROM WORKSHOP BOOK (BLACK BINDER) STEP TWO IN GROUP. STEP 2, WHAT IS THE SOLUTION ?
10. LIST YOUR FEARS 10 EACH THEN LIST YOUR REASON FOR YOUR FEAR (RESISTANCE) THEN LIST SOLUTION (ACTION TO TAKE).
11. COMPLETE WORKSHEET ON STEP TWO. WHAT ARE THE FOUR MAIN IDEAS IN OUR SOLUTION 1.....2.....3.....4.....
12. SPIRITUAL PRINCIPAL OF THE SECOND STEP.

REREAD SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE PAGE 503

A Day at a time

Little River 79th Street
12 Step Workshop
AA Principles of
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STEP TWO

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

Step Two deals with mental illness. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, wherever alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It's strong language, but isn't it true? **

No alcoholic acts sanely while drinking. Chronic poisoning from alcohol results in compulsive drinking and insane behavior. Willpower is not a factor in recovery until the compulsion has been removed. Since reservations defeat any honest attempt to stop drinking, we find it necessary to recognize our mental instability. Dodging the truth only results in distorted thinking and opposition to help from a Power greater than ourselves.

Those of us who have had an honest desire to recover from the mental sickness that alcoholism has imposed upon us have successfully used this Power. Our sick per-

*Before studying Step Two, read pages 36-39 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

**Read page 33 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (New York, A.A. World Services, Inc., 1953). Available through Hazelden Educational Materials, Center City, MN.

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sonalities find a sure source of power and healing in *God, as we understand Him*. God renews our minds and straightens our thinking.

Step Two opens a vista of new hope, when based on willingness and faith. What we call this Power is a matter of choice. Call It what we will. Naming It is unimportant. The important thing is that we believe in It, that we use It to restore us to mental health and fitness.

Faith in a Higher Power is a basic law of recovery. It is always evident in the lives of successful members. What they have done, we can do. By practicing the Twelve Steps we gain a conscious contact with this Power to live in contented sobriety.

Mental handicaps stand between us and recovery. Our lack of self-criticism defeats an honest evaluation of our alcoholism. Use of the word *sanity* offends our false pride. We admit our illness but rebel against questions of mental soundness. This partial acceptance is a hazard to our sobriety. We benefit most from accepting Step Two with no reservations.

As a beginner, you will avoid confusion in the interpretation of this Step if you approach it with a sincere desire for the accepted A.A. meaning. Remind yourself that you are making the A.A. recovery program your way of life because it is essential to

Step Two

your recovery from alcoholism. Your life depends on this program along with your mental and physical well-being, your happiness, and the security of your home — your very life. It might be suicidal to disagree with any part of it, so resolve to be open-minded and accept the Twelve Steps in their entirety.

Some members have eventually arrived at the true meaning of Step Two by temporarily rephrasing it to read, "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sane behavior."

The truth is most members have only acted insane during periods of intoxication. This is common practice for all drinkers who get "tight," but to the alcoholic who shortens the intervals between periods of intoxication and finally merges them into one long "drunk," it becomes a serious matter. Insane behavior because of an evening's drinking is generally excused, but when carried on for weeks and months that lengthen into years, it becomes a pattern that is fixed in the brain.

We cannot overlook the harmful effect of the prolonged use of alcohol or its unhealthy mental condition which results in complacent disregard of sane thought or normal behavior. Using alcoholics cannot control their impulses; they lack mental coordination. Continued use of alcohol

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damages the brain and sometimes causes insanity.

Signs of such injury seem to exist in all alcoholics in proportion to their physical resistance to alcohol poisoning and to the length of time involved in abnormal drinking.

Alcoholics who cling to the illusion that they exercise sanity in their drinking are invited to prove their case against the accepted definition of insanity.

A simple definition of insanity is a disorder of behavior that occurs when the body impulses no longer find in the brain a coordinating center for the conditioning of behavior. When this condition arises, the person's behavior is unpredictable and he or she becomes legally insane.

The conduct of the uncontrolled drinker who has become alcoholic is likewise unpredictable. The alcoholic's friends and relatives take on long faces as alcoholism perverts the power of reason, dulls talent, and limits self-preservation, making the alcoholic irresponsible and a menace to society.

How is the alcoholic to account for the insane impulse that prompts him or her to reach for that first drink that starts another binge?

Is it a sane act? Is the alcoholic obsessed? Is it the result of irrational thinking? Does it involve thinking? Does sanity in an alco-

holic imply the power to accept or reject that first drink?

We think it does; we do not believe the alcoholic can help him- or herself. We believe and know from experience that a Power greater than ourselves can remove this obsession, straighten the twisted thinking, and restore the alcoholic to sane thought and behavior.

Those who disapprove of the word *sanity* in Step Two are usually alcoholics who have been fortunate enough to escape the more serious aspects of alcoholism. They reason they were perfectly normal between drinking bouts.*

Alcoholics who did themselves no serious damage during their drinking careers should find solace in that fact. They should take a broad view of the insanity of alcoholism, since most of us were surely deranged over varying periods of time.

We must also remember in the progressive development of alcoholism the power of reasoning is slowly deteriorated. This encourages deception over our real mental health and fitness; it breeds a superior feeling of false security.

Evidence to support this fact is found in the following danger symptoms commonly

*Read pages 36-43 in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Twelve Steps

seen in alcoholics:

1. Taking that first drink with the idea that "this time I'll control it."
2. The continued use of alcohol and reliance upon it for physical and mental power to meet our daily responsibilities.
3. The necessity of the drink "the morning after."
4. Our inability to be self-critical of the sanity of our behavior over prolonged years of drinking — our refusal to consider the harm we have done to ourselves and others.
5. The faith we placed in childish excuses for our drinking and the stupid alibis we thought we were getting away with.
6. The reckless abandon we displayed in drunken driving — the argument that we drive better while drunk than while sober, and our resentment toward those who differed from this opinion.
7. The critical physical condition we reach and the continued suffering we endure from uncontrolled drinking.
8. The financial risks taken — the shame, sorrow, and often poverty that we inflict upon our families.
9. The asinine resentments that clogged our minds. Our loss of responsibility.

Getting ourselves drunk to spite or injure others. The erroneous assumption that we can "take it or leave it alone." Our unnecessary squandering of money.

10. Blackouts.

11. Contemplated or attempted suicide.

These are a few symptoms, common to alcoholics, that indicate mental illness. They justify our deduction that alcohol, in large or small doses, has become a poison that induces unpredictable behavior and limits mental coordination.

There is no point in deceiving ourselves over the fate of the alcoholic who continues to use alcohol. There are just two escapes from drinking: one is insanity; the other is alcoholic death. The purpose of the A.A. program as a way of life is to avoid both by arresting the illness, alcoholism.

As alcoholics we cannot undo our past behavior; we can, however, use the knowledge of our escape from insanity and alcoholic death as an incentive to contact God for help in keeping us from future drinking.

It is now our privilege to draw on the help of a Power greater than ourselves to arrest our alcoholism. The alcoholic record of our past life is not the basis that our future will be judged on. We have a new page before us; we are invited to "write our own ticket." Sobriety, sanity, security, and

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peace of mind are within our reach.

The future, with the A.A. program as our way of life, will bring us sane, useful, happy lives. We have learned our lesson: alcohol is poison that causes mental illness and insane behavior.

Surely, with this knowledge, we can never lay claim to sanity if we again take that first drink.

Mental Drunkenness

In spite of all knowledge some of us willfully continue in self-centeredness. We ignore our mental illness. Alcoholic thinking displaces humility, and we return to physical drunkenness through lack of spiritual growth and understanding.

Looking at our failure, we discover we have built up resentment, self-pity, and physical or mental exhaustion, and our faith in a Power greater than ourselves was inadequate.

We should never forget physical drunkenness is always preceded by mental binges that end in spiritual blackouts. They leave us blind and helpless, insulating us from the Power that our sanity and sobriety depend on. We can detect them if we will observe the danger signals so apparent during the buildup of the mental binge.

SUMMARIZATION. Mental illness is understandable when we first concede our

physical illness. Sick bodies do not house healthy minds. As alcoholics, we cannot think or act sanely while drinking or sobering up. Our wills work subject to alcoholic poisoning. Remove the poisoning and free will is restored. It is not dependable, however, so we turn it over to God for help. These are the basic recovery fundamentals of Step Two.

SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL ILLNESS. Continued drinking. Blackouts. Mental drunkenness. Avoiding self-criticism. Emotional instability. Stinking thinking. Deep resentments. Fits of anger. Planned or attempted suicide. Delusions.

TREATMENT. Honest evaluation of our sick personalities and of the inadequacy of the human will to remedy them. Conscious need for treatment. Willingness to recover from our illness. Belief that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sane thought and behavior. Dependence upon a Higher Power for recovery from our mental illness.

RECOVERY. We attain spiritual strength, understanding, humility, emotional stability, peace of mind, and contented sobriety.

More About Alcoholism
Step 1&2 Page 30-43
Big Book
Highlight the answers in your big book

1. What is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker? P30 L1-10
2. What is the first step in recovery? P30 L11
3. Does an alcoholic ever recover control? P30 L15-24
4. Based on your own experience without going into much detail, do you feel your drinking got progressively worse? P30
5. Can you identify with the description of the alcoholic as appears on page 31?
6. If one is not sure he or she is an alcoholic what does the book suggest we do to find out? P31 L30
7. Does the story on page 32-33 convince you that you can not drink normally even after a long stretch of being sober?
8. Does the length of time or the quantity we drank have anything to do with becoming an alcoholic? P33 L25
9. Assuming that one wishes to stop drinking whether we need spiritual help or not? P34 L16
10. What is baffling feature of alcoholism? P34 L24
11. Do you agree that the "mental state that proceeds a relapse into drinking" to be the crux of the problem? P34 L27
12. Does the story of Jim on page 35, 36, and 37 give us a good illustration of the insane thinking that preceeds a drink?
13. Does the story of the Jaywalker sound like anybody you know?

We Agnostics
Steps 1&2 Page 44-57
Big Book
Highlight the answers in your big book

1. If you can't quit entirely and you've lost control over the amount you drink, what are you probably? P44 L4
2. Is an atheist or agnostic a rare thing in AA? P44 L16-24
3. What is the alcoholics real dilemma? P45 L9
4. Where can we find the power that will solve our problem? P45 L13
5. According to the Big Book, when we speak of God, what do we mean? P47 L1
6. What happens to one who says, "I do believe or I am willing to believe that there is a power greater than myself." P47 L14
7. Do you see that the acquisition of faith can begin on very simple terms? P47 L30
8. What are the attitudes which are a handicap to obtaining a belief in a power greater than ourselves? P48 L1
9. What is another good argument for believing in a Power greater than one's self? P448 L117 to P49 L14
10. Why should we not even have prejudice against organized religion? P49 L21
11. What is the one proposition that most recovering alcoholics seem to agree on? P50 L16
12. Even though the level of intelligence is about the same, why was ancient man so slow to make progress compared to the progress man has made in the last 50 years? P51 L10

Your Second Step: The Solution

The important thing about Bill W.'s story, about *your* story, is that, like Bill, you don't have to remain helpless and miserable. What happened to Bill can happen to you. Awareness of what the problem is can lead to the solution, and Step Two is that solution.

Here is the Second Step in the AA Twelve Step program: **"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."**

In order to understand Step Two, you must first understand these four ideas:

1. Spiritual experience
2. Sanity and insanity
3. Higher Power
4. Belief and faith

First, let's discuss *spiritual experience*. This idea is central to your recovery.

Stop now and read Chapter 2 of the Big Book, "There Is a Solution," pages 17-29, and read Appendix II, pages 569-570.

The phrase "spiritual experiences" is first mentioned on page 25 of the Big Book and is explained in detail in Appendix II.

Exercise 1

TRUE OR FALSE?

After reading the descriptions of "spiritual experience" in the Big Book, circle either true or false after each of the following statements.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. A spiritual experience must be sudden and spectacular. | T | F |
| 2. By using self-discipline, an alcoholic can get the same results that a spiritual experience will give. | T | F |
| 3. For many, having a spiritual experience means tapping inner resources, which they think of as a Power greater than themselves. | T | F |
| 4. Even if you close your mind to spiritual ideas, you can recover from alcoholism. | T | F |
| 5. <i>Change</i> is what a spiritual experience is all about. | T | F |

Now look at your answers to the true-false statements. Explain here why you think statements 1, 2, and 4 would not be true.

The Big Book contains many stories about the insanity alcoholics experience. Remember, Step Two says "that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to *sanity*." (Italics added.) This Step clearly says that sanity is something alcoholics and other addicts (who are not in recovery) are missing. That can only mean that what you experience, as a practicing alcoholic or addict, is *insanity*.

✍ Exercise 2

A PICTURE OF INSANITY

Describe in words or draw a picture to show what you think of when you hear the word *insanity*.

The author of the Big Book, Bill W., may have been thinking about insanity in just a little different way. The Big Book describes the insanity that takes place *before* an alcoholic takes a drink or the addict uses drugs.

Now stop and read Chapter 3, "More About Alcoholism," pages 30-43 of the Big Book.

Exercise 3

THE BIG LIE

Look again at page 30 of the Big Book. What is The Big Lie that alcoholics tell themselves, described in paragraph 1?

This Big Lie becomes our *obsession*, or the idea that replaces all others.

Acting on that lie ("I'll be able to drink alcohol or use drugs like other people") is the root of the alcoholic's and addict's insane thinking. The lie comes into our mind *not* while we are drinking alcohol or using drugs and are controlled by our allergy. The lie is the part of our illness that's in our mind when we're *not using*.

To avoid facing the fact that we can't drink alcohol or use drugs like other people, we'll inevitably try to come up with ways to do so.

Exercise 4

TRICKS—OR, INSANE LIES

Take the Big Book and read the second paragraph (beginning on line 17) of page 31. There you'll find a list of tricks alcoholics typically use to try to control their drinking on their own—such as drinking beer only, and so on. Once you've read the entire list, write some methods you've tried. If your favorite methods are

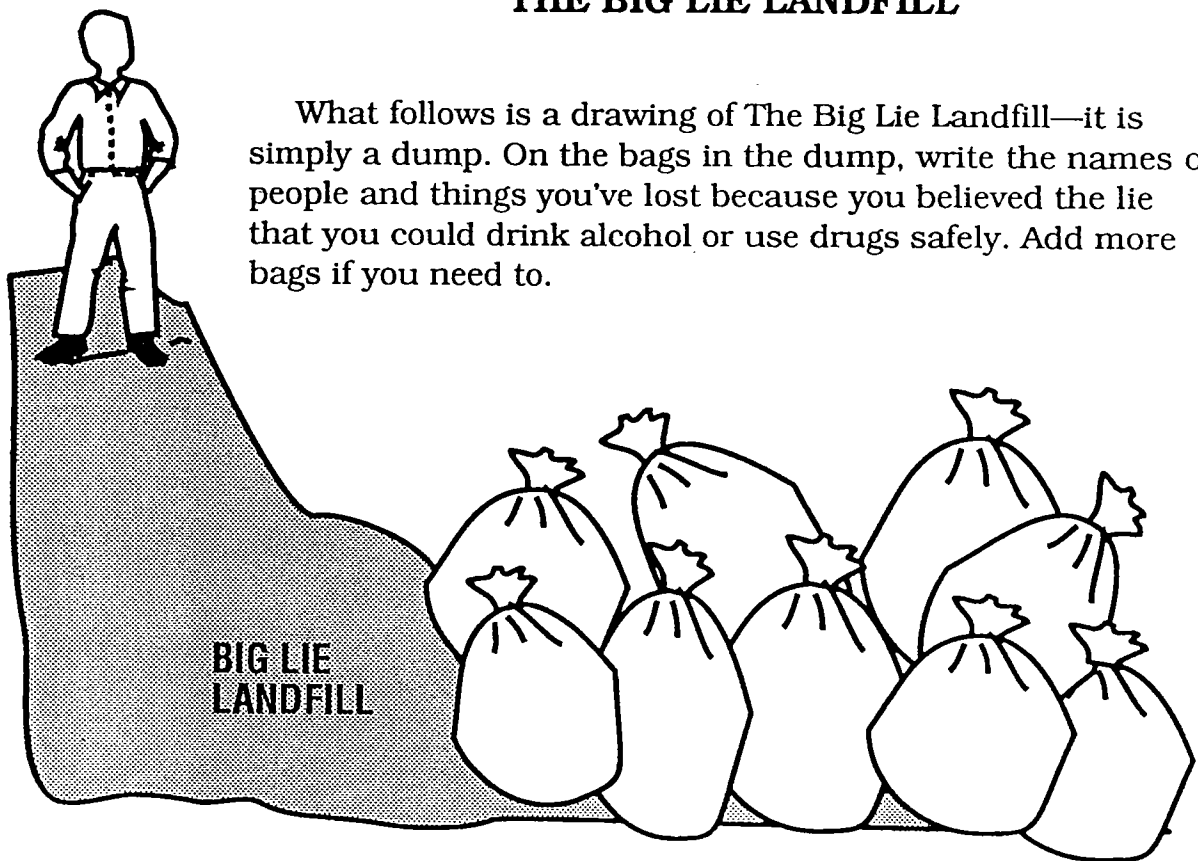
not listed on page 31 of the Big Book, add your own as you make a list below. (If alcohol isn't your drug of choice, consider your behavior with other drugs—such as smoking pot only, and so on.)

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

Remember, acting on these insane lies is what leads to trouble for the alcoholic or other drug user. As an alcoholic or addict, you've more than likely lost things that are important to you: family, job, driver's license, and more.

✍ Exercise 5

THE BIG LIE LANDFILL



What follows is a drawing of The Big Lie Landfill—it is simply a dump. On the bags in the dump, write the names of people and things you've lost because you believed the lie that you could drink alcohol or use drugs safely. Add more bags if you need to.

Believing The Big Lie that you can drink alcohol or use drugs like other people is your insanity. And the Big Book makes it clear on page 39, lines 7-9, that as an alcoholic, you *"will be absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of _____"*

The Big Book states at the bottom of page 43 that "the alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. . . . His defense must come from a Higher Power."

 Exercise 6

WHY IT'S ESSENTIAL TO BELIEVE IN A HIGHER POWER

Whether or not you're a religious person, you probably have an idea of what "Higher Power" means. Draw or write below what you imagine when you think about a Higher Power.

Now stop and read Chapter 4 of the Big Book, "We Agnostics," pages 44-57. Chapter 4 explains why a spiritual experience can happen even to an atheist or agnostic or someone with little or no religious experience. Chapter 4 goes on to say that it isn't hard or unusual to believe in a Higher Power. In fact, Chapter 4 makes it clear that in order to recover you must believe in a Higher Power and have a spiritual experience.

Exercise 7

COMING TO TERMS WITH A HIGHER POWER

Every person has a different image of a Higher Power, and every person has his or her own experience with religion or spiritual ideas. If there are things in your past or things you believe that make you think it would be hard (or even impossible) for you to believe in a Higher Power, write them here.

Did reading Chapter 4 of the Big Book change your feelings at all? _____

How?

How does the Big Book define *Higher Power*? Put it in your own words.

BELIEF AND FAITH

The Big Book states on page 45, lines 13-15, that its “main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” On page 47, lines 14-16, what is the important question you need to ask yourself?

Copy it here: _____

For some of us, there is confusion about the idea of “belief” and “faith.” The Big Book asks you to believe in a Power greater than yourself.

Belief comes *before* an action or decision; faith comes afterward, as the result of an action or decision.

Suppose you’ve just moved to a new town where you don’t know anyone. One day your car begins to give you trouble, so you decide you’d better get it fixed. You knock on your neighbor’s door, introduce yourself, and ask her, “Do you know of a good mechanic in town?”

She recommends a fellow named Mel and tells you, “Mel does good work. I’ve been taking my car to him for years.” So you decide to take your car to Mel.

Now you’ve never met Mel before, and you’ve only known the person who recommended him for about five minutes. But you decide to take your car to Mel because you believe that your neighbor is telling the truth and that she has reasonably good judgment when it comes to car mechanics. For the moment, at least, you also believe that Mel probably does do good work. You don’t have any faith in Mel yet, only *belief*. But this belief is enough for you to make a decision and take action.

Let’s say that Mel works on your car, fixes it correctly and promptly, and charges a fair price. You are pleased with his work, so when you have another problem with your car a year or so later, you take it back to him for repair. This time, though, you’re going back to Mel on *faith* that he can fix your car well, based on your actual experience. This could only happen because of your initial *willingness* to believe and the action you took based on that belief.

Write an example from your own life of some person, idea, or thing that you first believed in, and later had *faith* in.

First the belief, then the action, then faith. There are many different ways faith can be acquired. The Big Book is clear about this: People of just about all religions and spiritual affiliations will find nothing in the AA fellowship that contradicts their own beliefs. Deep down in every person is a basic idea of a Higher Power. Your belief that this Higher Power can restore you to sanity will be the foundation for your plan of action for recovery that is contained in Steps Three through Twelve. *Putting that plan into practice will bring you the spiritual experience that changes your belief to faith.*

✍ Exercise 9

THREE PERTINENT IDEAS

Now slowly and carefully read and reread the beginning of Chapter 5, "How it Works," from page 58 through line 20 on page 60.

Look again at lines 13-20 on page 60 of the Big Book. Write down the three pertinent ideas that the Big Book says should be clear to you at this point. (Substitute "addicts" for "alcoholics" and "addiction" for "alcoholism" as needed.)

(a)

(b)

(c)

If you're convinced that these three ideas apply to you so far, proceed with Step Three. If not, go back to the Big Book and reread whatever you're not convinced of and, if need be, add to or change what you've written so far.

12 STEP WORKSHOP 3rd STEP

1. READ BIG BOOK (WE AGNOSTICS)
2. ANSWER QUESTION SHEET BY HIGHLIGHTING ANSWERS IN YOUR BIG BOOK.
3. READ "BEGINNING MY PLAN OF ACTION" IN GROUP AND DISCUSS.
4. FILL OUT 3RD STEP PLAN OF ACTION WORK SHEET.
5. DISCUSS IN DETAIL YOUR VALUE SYSTEM / BELIEF SYSTEM
6. IDENTIFY GOAL OR MAIN IDEA IN THE THIRD STEP
7. READ FROM 12 STEP AND 12 TRADITION'S STEP 3
8. DO EXPECTATION'S AND GOALS FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD "AS YOU UNDERSTAND HIM" WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES
9. FROM WORKSHOP BOOK (BLACK BINDER) STEP 3 IN GROUP.
10. STEP 3 PRAYER IS LOCATED WHERE ?
11. LIST AREAS IN LIFE WHICH SEEM DIFFICULT TO TURN OVER.
12. SPIRITUAL PRINCIPAL OF THE THIRD STEP

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

A Day at a time

STEP THREE
FAITH

Little River 79th Street
12 Step Workshop
AA Principles of
The 12 Steps



STEP THREE

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

Step Three identifies the spiritual illness of alcoholism and suggests a simple, effective remedy. Success with this or other Steps is not a matter of chance but of right thought and motive practiced daily.

Knowledge and treatment of our physical and mental health are vitally important to alcoholics, but lasting, contented sobriety is maintained only by surrender of our lives and will to God as we understand Him.

The first three Steps are a composite A.A. package. Conceived of meditation and experience, they are a basic recovery prescription. Taken with proper timing and in correct proportion they immediately arrest our alcoholic illness. These Steps complement each other, but they fail to work if any of them are omitted.

Steps One and Two are the premise upon which we decide to surrender our alcoholic lives to God. Step Three calls for this decision. Honesty, faith, and prayer spark our success.

A complete knowledge of the physical, mental, and spiritual injury we have suffered at the hands of "John Barleycorn" is indispensable to the honest, far-reaching

Twelve Steps

decision we wish to make. Deliberation born of necessity and a desperate need for help will inspire us to seek our understanding of God.

Our great need is loss of self-centeredness and alcoholic obsession. A.A. pioneers discovered their answers to these problems as they developed spiritual understanding and relied upon God's help for recovery. Each of us has the same possibilities if we are honest, humble, and willing enough to work them out.

Step Three offers no compromise for reservation or delay. It calls for a decision, here and now. How we surrender our alcoholic personality defects to God is of no immediate concern. The important point is our willingness to try. Faith in practice of the Twelve Steps opens the way to understanding of God and provides ways of giving our lives to Him.

When we have made this crucial decision, our attitude changes rapidly from negative to wholesome, constructive thinking. We lose our uncertainty and fear. Strife and rebellion disappear. Somehow, we seem to gain a vague understanding of God's will for us. This understanding may be small, but it is all we need to start with. It comes slowly at first.

Members who have accepted and practiced Step Three know the value of turning

the defects of their alcoholic lives over to the care of God as they understand Him. Faith in His help and willingness to try A.A. spiritual practices will convert our weaknesses to great spiritual strength and understanding. Contented sobriety, the central purpose in our lives, is not earned without self-sacrifice and God's help.

If fear of public opinion, spiritual bias, or hypocritical ideas stand in our way, we learn to overcome them. We have no other choice. It is a small price to pay for life and sanity, particularly when we learn our prejudice is but preconceived judgment inspired by ill health, ignorance, and false pride.

Public opinion is for, not against, us. Spiritual bias is but self-will that does not yield to reason. Trying to understand God's will for us is not hypocritical. It is a basic recovery principle for alcoholics. It never fails those who sincerely use it.

A.A. is an anonymous fellowship that will shield us from publicity, "a place where we escape the doom of alcoholic death by life on a spiritual basis."* The public's only knowledge of our lives is that we no longer drink. They did not approve of our drinking, but they honor and receive us when we

*Read pages 44-45 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

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stop. This is plain, unmistakable evidence of spiritual progress.

After making our decision to live on a moral, spiritual basis, many perplexities arise. How are we to understand God? How are we to submit our will and our lives to Him?

We are advised the A.A. program is simple, and we should keep it as simple as possible. Yet in Step Three we are confronted with the age-old mystery of humankind's relativity to God. Our natural inclination is to duck the issue entirely. Surely there must be some easier way out. There is. Given a chance, our alcoholic minds will find it. It leads back to drinking.

We know what should be done about this matter, but we are not being honest with ourselves when we refuse to seek an understanding of God or to draw upon His help and power. We still reason through alcoholic thinking. It is hard to surrender the rationalization and alibis of our alcoholic personalities. Also while seeking a tangible God we miss the service that leads to Him.

After groping around in the murky fog of rebellion, stinking thinking, and despair, we will come up with our answers. Honest and sincere as we try to make them, they are usually most confusing. When we overlook the fact that we are ill, it is easy to see only moral offense in our conduct and

decide religion is the answer to our problems. But those of us who have tried to exclude A.A. generally end up drunk.

We should not confuse organized religion with A.A. We can keep our religion separate and not substitute it for A.A. philosophy. Honest clergy members expedite spiritual attainment but usually lack understanding of the physical and mental illness of alcoholism. If your priest, minister, or rabbi is interested in A.A., he or she can undoubtedly help you. Regardless of such support, join an A.A. group.

Obviously, religious creeds must be dealt with outside of A.A. Our concept of God as we understand Him and our belief in a Higher Power that can restore spiritual health are all our Program requires. We find it most adequate.

A great barrier in finding God is impatience. We soon learn spiritual attainment must be earned. Understanding of God constantly enlarges so we never reach perfection.

Since this is no overnight process, we suggest thought and prayer in the matter. At the start we make separate approaches to surrendering our willful lives and reaching our concept of God. By first deciding what isolates us from Him we reach a spiritual awakening as we eliminate these isolating factors or character defects.

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We deal with God in the abstract; thus our contacts must be on a mental plane. We believe acts of drunkenness, dishonesty, envy, self-pity, spite, hatred, resentment, malice, and injustice injure us; they are the acts of depraved people in the eyes of society and are opposed to all spiritual virtues known to A.A. members who are spiritually awakened.

If this is true and we can accept it, as a majority of our membership have, then the matter of what we turn over to God's care is no longer a problem. We find all of these traits in our unmanageable alcoholic lives. If these are spiritual debits, most of us have drunk ourselves into spiritual bankruptcy.

Step Three should not confuse us. It calls for a decision to correct our character defects under spiritual supervision. The common cause of failure is time and effort spent in visualizing God or vaguely trying to reach Him before we make a decision to surrender and change our insane, unmanageable lives.

We demand maturity without the pains of experience and growth. This is both unreasonable and impossible. By such method we would have a program of three Steps, rather than twelve. It is the practice of Steps Four through Twelve that teaches us our understanding of God. This understanding starts with blind faith; through conviction

it steadily grows into conscious contact with God — personal contact. *Spiritual growth is our goal.* We are wise to avoid all concepts of God opposed to that goal.

Lack of faith arrests our progress. Procrastination and skepticism are enemies of spiritual attainment. Skepticism demands evidence of God's help. Procrastination prevents it. Faith, willingness, and prayer overcome all obstacles and provide ample evidence of His help in our happy, sober lives.

We usually experience our best understanding of God when we humbly admit our alcoholic illness and sincerely lose ourselves in the A.A. way of life. Friendly acts of service, forgiveness, and amends help our understanding.

God speaks to us in as many ways as we find to contact Him. His answers, abstract as they may be, are detected in mind, emotion, and in the new conscience we have developed. We are inspired in accordance with our thought and conduct, either with feelings of faith, accomplishment, and serenity, or with confusion, self-pity, and fear.

Few alcoholics need introduction to the idea of a Divine Being. Most of us were taught this in our youth. We have all seen evidence of a Power greater than ourselves in our well-regulated world of seasons, day

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and night, heat and moisture, human reproduction, and love and tolerance.

Most of us have appreciated the perfection of the universe, the animation of living things, the action of the human mind, and the power of love. These things all seem to denote a dynamic life force that surges through everything around us. This force appears to direct all things harmoniously but irresistibly toward a natural, definite, useful conclusion.

Is it hard to recognize in this life force a Power greater than ourselves? Do we not sense Its creative energy, intelligence, and power? Are human beings not weak and unimportant apart from God's power?

Our founders discovered, by trial and error, that spiritual contact with God as they understood Him was the alcoholic's only assurance of a normal, sober life.

Self-preservation urges that we find this companionship and try to understand God's help.

Understanding comes slowly from practice of the Twelve Steps. From simple acts, such as

1. Humbly admitting our alcoholism. Desiring to stop drinking and treat our illness.
2. Honest effort to lose alcoholic skepticism. Faith in God and the A.A. program.

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must work it out alone.

We should avoid the common mistake of confusing our minds with anxious thoughts regarding the time and manner God will manifest Himself to us. Our understanding will come gradually as we earn and develop it.

It is uncommon for a member to have a drastic spiritual upheaval. Spiritual awakening or experience comes slowly, and often in strange ways. It does come, however, but so naturally we often fail to recognize it.

Our job is to be ready and willing for these experiences, find incentive in the examples of fellow members who are living the A.A. program, be open-minded in our endeavor to understand God and realize that it is not made up of one big accomplishment but gained bit by bit, and remember our inspiration will be influenced by our attitude and action.* The active members who take the program seriously are slowly but surely laying the groundwork for close personal contacts with God — by applying it in their home life, in their business, and in the treatment of new members; by admitting wrongs; and by making amends.

Quiet periods of relaxation and prayer

*Our recovery from alcoholism is dependent on humility, honesty, faith in God, appreciation, and service to other alcoholics.

are necessary to achieve this Step. The alcoholic should also keep in mind the value of relaxation aside from prayer. We should not overlook the fact that all alcoholics are of restless disposition, that restlessness and tension are a part of our trouble, that we once appeased this condition with alcohol, and that we now seek to correct it under God's supervision.

Alcoholics must learn to relax when they become upset, angry, impatient, resentful, bored, or exhausted.

Relaxation helps us maintain physical, mental, and spiritual balance. It aids clear thinking which keeps us out of the "driver's seat." It permits conscious contact with God — our only hope for recovery from alcoholism.

We regard the outcome of this Step in complete confidence, as we know from the example of other members that God's will can be understood and that our understanding of His care will give us new personalities that exclude alcohol — personalities that happily relate us to God, to a conventional world, and to others.

SUMMARIZATION. The confusing ills of alcoholism need no longer frustrate the alcoholic who wants to get well. Steps One and Two clearly reveal alcoholism as a sickness — a fatal, incurable malady.

Chronic alcohol poisoning induced by

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addiction to alcohol accounts for our physical and mental illness. This illness is the premise that we base our decision on — to seek God's help for recovery.

Spiritual illness loses its mystery and vagueness when we concede the anesthetic role alcohol has played in our lives. It explains the mental paralysis and moral deviations associated with compulsive drinking. We come to know that self-pity, fear, intolerance, resentment, belligerency, vindictiveness, and dishonesty have insulated us from God. They have calloused our consciences. They have bred spiritual illness.

Step Three confuses us only when we reverse its suggested application. The Step has three parts: first, a decision; second, we try to determine what constitutes our will and our life; and third, we seek an understanding of God by placing our will and our life in His care.

TREATMENT. We stop playing God. We surrender our self-centeredness to Him. We relax. We avoid confusing A.A. with religion. We do not try to define God. We recognize and attempt to develop our spiritual possibilities. We seek a personal contact with God, practicing thought and action with moral values that help us develop a better conscience. We plan and try to live daily lives that embrace sobriety, faith, honesty, prayer, tolerance, forgiveness, ser-

vice to others, and amends where they should be made.

Spiritual upheavals and overnight personality changes are not for most of us. We come to know God from living the Twelve Steps. If we wish to have God's help in our hour of need, let's get out our pencils and paper now and list the things that Step Four identifies as barriers to His help in our recovery from alcoholism.

How It Works
Step 3 Page 58-64
Big Book
Highlight the answers in your big book

1. Is your chance of success very good if you thoroughly follow the path? P58 L1
2. Who is apt to fail? P58 L2
3. If you decide you want it and are willing to go to any length to get it -- What then? P58 L16
4. Is there an easier, softer way? P58 L19
5. What if I go at it half heartedly? P59 L4
6. After we review the description of the alcoholic and review the chapter to the agnostic, and we reflect on our relationship with alcohol-what is the conclusion or pertinent ideas? P60 L13
7. If we are convinced of the pertinent ideas what do we do then? P60 L21
8. Why is life run on self will a failure? P60 L25 to P61 L10
9. What is the root or our trouble? P62 L6
10. Who makes it possible for us to rid ourselves of this selfishness? P62 L18
11. How does this work? P62 L26
12. What happens when we take this vital step? P63 L1-12
13. Read the third step prayer so we can all see the simplicity of the step. P63 L13
14. Should we take this step with someone or alone? Explain. P63 L23-31

Step Three: Beginning My Plan of Action

Here is the Third Step in the AA Twelve Step program: **"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."***

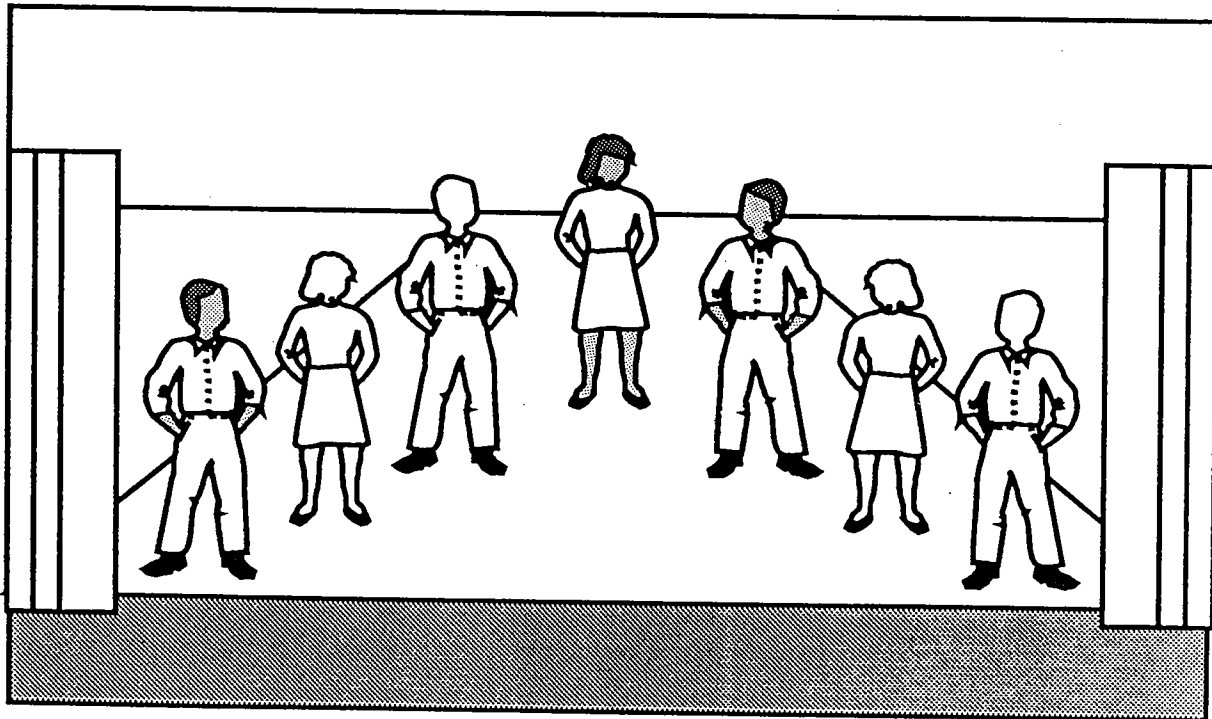
Stop now and read the Big Book from page 60, line 21, through the next-to-the-last paragraph (line 31) on page 63. This section of the Big Book describes Step Three.

Exercise 1

"SELF-WILL RUN RIOT"

Fill in the blank: Near the bottom of page 60 (last paragraph), the Big Book says that until we're convinced that a life run on _____ won't be a success, we're like an actor who wants to run the whole show.

Who are the people whom you have tried to control and who play the other characters in your "show"? Write a name above each figure below. (Add more as needed.)



* Although the Big Book, written in the late 1930s, refers to "God" as "Him," no deliberate gender preference was intended by the author. The words "Her" or simply "God," depending on your preference, can be substituted for "Him."

Now take a separate sheet of paper, and write each person's name across the top of the page. Beneath each person's name, write what you tried to get him or her to do. In other words, how have you tried to run each person's life?



Fill in the blanks: Near the top of page 62 in the Big Book, we are told that _____ is at the root of our problems, and that "driven by a hundreds forms of _____, _____, _____, and _____," we hurt others.

We are also told near the bottom of page 62 (last paragraph) that in order to reduce this self-centeredness, we must quit playing _____, and let _____ be the Director.

In other words, God, as you understand God, is the real Director of your life and your recovery. What gets in the way is *self-will*. Will is nothing more than your mind and your thinking. Your will is the thing up in your head that tells you what to do and, properly used, is aligned with God's will so that God can be your Director.

On the middle of page 62, the Big Book says that an alcoholic or other addict "is an extreme example of *self-will run riot*." (Italics added.) This means we're so driven by self-will that even though we have "moral and philosophical convictions galore," we can't live up to them—we continue to hurt ourselves and others.

Exercise 2

WHEN BEHAVIOR CONFLICTS WITH VALUES

Think of an incident directly related to your drinking or drug use when your behavior was in conflict with your values, and answer these questions:

What did you do that was in conflict with your values?

Which of your values did you go against?

What was your explanation then?

How do you explain it now?

How might you act differently now if God—your Higher Power—were your guide?

Exercise 3

TURNING IT OVER . . . AND WHAT'S AHEAD?

The idea of turning over your will and life to a Higher Power can be a very frightening one. Think about what areas of your life will be the hardest to turn over to a Higher Power.

In the list that follows, put a "1" by the most difficult thing to turn over, and then number the rest of the items to 10, which will be the least difficult thing to turn over. If there is something (or things) in your life more difficult to turn over than what's listed here, you may add to or substitute for the items below.

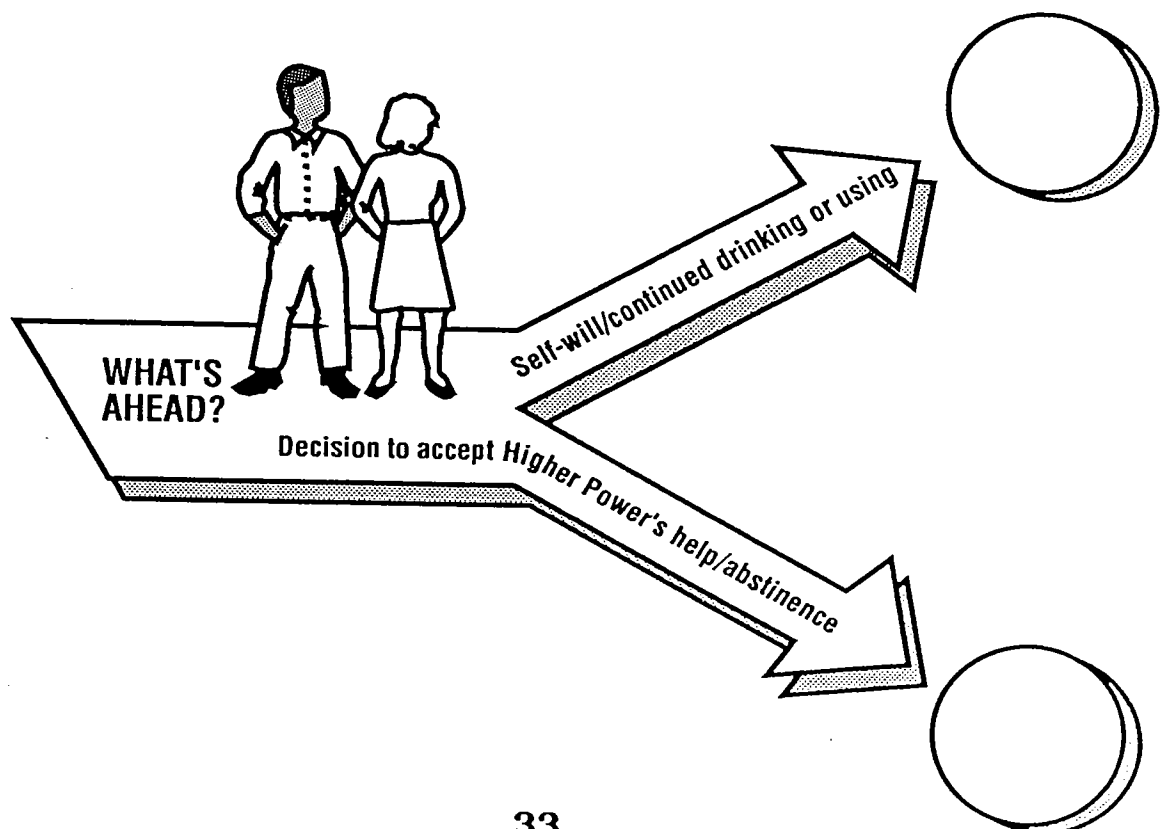
- | | |
|--|--|
| _____ self-serving sexual gratification | _____ idea that I can drink or use other drugs normally |
| _____ need to be different (special) | _____ self-pity |
| _____ friends who drink and use | _____ resentments over past harm |
| _____ need to be nothing but the best | _____ need for control over family members, co-workers, or friends |
| _____ need to have things always go my way | _____ the high and all the rituals for getting there |
| _____ (other) | _____ (other) |

Now starting with the areas of your life (from the preceding list) that you think will be the hardest to turn over to a Higher Power, describe below in a few words what you're afraid will happen if you turn each of these over.

This fear of giving your will and life to a Higher Power is not unusual. Yet as alcoholics or addicts, we've already given our will and lives to something—alcohol or another drug. It often determined where we went, with whom we associated, who we slept with, and how we spent our money. We have a disease of the body and mind that will end in insanity or death unless we make the decision required in Step Three.

Compared to turning our lives over to alcohol or another drug, deciding to turn our will and life over to a Higher Power should be far less frightening. And Step Three only asks us to *make the decision* to turn our will and life over to our Higher Power. The actual turning over of our will and life occurs naturally in the course of working the next eight Steps.

Turn in the Big Book to page 25, lines 25-32, and read this passage. What are your choices? Write them in the circles on the diagram below.



WHAT'S AHEAD?

Read the prayer on page 63, lines 13-20, in your Big Book.

Write out in your own words what this prayer means to you.

If possible, share what you've written aloud with someone you trust; for example, your sponsor, counselor, or a close friend or relative who understands. Otherwise, say what you've written to yourself and your Higher Power.

In taking the Third Step, as the Big Book says on page 62, lines 32-33, you put in place "*the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which [you will pass] to freedom.*" (Italics added.)

You are now ready for your Fourth Step.

The Twelve Steps Of Alcoholics Anonymous*

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—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 alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

*The Twelve Steps of AA are taken from *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd ed., published by A.A. World Services, Inc., New York, N.Y., 59-60. Reprinted with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous*

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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