

AN UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATION FOR LIFE

A Retreat on Steps 10 & 11

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"There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life." - 12&12, page 98.

Concentration: Principles and practices of Steps 10 & 11
from the Big Book, 12 & 12 and other spiritual literature.

Topics: Self examination, meditation, prayer, love and forgiveness, staying
in the moment, the Serenity Prayer, the Prayer of St. Francis & more.

The Retreat will not be about teaching and learning, but
rather about participating and having a new experience.

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Prayers in the Big Book Prior to the Stories

page:paragraph

- 12:6 For a brief moment, I had needed and wanted God. There had been a humble willingness to have Him with me - and He came.
- 13:2 There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost.
- 13:4 I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others.
- 63:2 God, I offer myself to thee - to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!
- 67:0 We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."
- 68:3 We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be.
- 69:2 We ask God to mold our (sex) ideals and help us to live up to them.
- 69:3 In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter (sex harms).
- 70:2 We earnestly pray for the right (sex) ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity and for the strength to do the right thing.
- 75:3 We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better.
- 75:3 Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?
- 76:1 If we still cling to something we will not let go (shortcomings), we ask God to help us be willing.
- 76:2 My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding. Amen.
- 76:3 We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes (making amends).
- 79:1 Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be (making amends).
- 82:1 It may be that both (you & you significant other) will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let by-gones be by-gones (no direct amends). Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind.
- 83:1 So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.
- 84:2 When these crop up (selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear), we ask God at once to remove them.
- 85:1 How can I best serve Thee - Thy will (not mine) be done.
- 86:1 After making our (nightly) review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.
- 86:2 Before we begin (meditation), we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.
- 86:3 (Facing indecision) Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle.
- 87:1 We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends.
- 87:3 As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day, "Thy will be done."
- 158:2 On the third day the lawyer gave his life to the care and direction of his Creator, and said he was perfectly willing to do anything necessary.
- 164:2 Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick.

The Morning Meditation & Throughout the Day:

- 1) Say the following prayer ASAP upon waking: “God, please direct my thoughts and actions today, especially divorcing them from self-pitying, dishonest, and self-seeking motives. Lord, please help me employ the mental faculties you have so graciously given me, and place my thought-life on the plane of inspiration” [86:2]
- 2) Think about the 24 hours ahead – I consider my plans for the day, starting first with last night’s amends. I then ask God what he would have me do today to be a better Spouse, Parent, AA Member, Worker, Child, Friend, Citizen, etc. I conclude by asking the broad question “God what else would you have me do today?” Sit quietly and wait for direction. (Tip: Use a 3 x 5 index card or personal organizer to write down what comes to you in your meditation. Carry it with you throughout the day. As you complete tasks, cross them off. Each time you look at the list contemplate about any non-task oriented items like “be more patient with my son” or “practice the presence of God.”)

| God’s Will for Me Today (EXAMPLE) |
|---|
| - Apologize to co-worker for dominating meeting |
| - Call Aunt in hospital to offer support |
| - Put down toilet seat for my wife |
| - Practice the presence of God throughout the day |
| - Sign up for weekend retreat |
| - Reach out to Bob Smith |
| - Be more patient with my son |
| |

*** REMEMBER *** in thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may be unable to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don’t struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.[86:3]

- 3) Conclude this period of meditation with a prayer [87:1] “God, please show me all through the day what me next step is to be, and give me whatever I need to take care of each task. Lord, please free me from self will, and show me how I may be of service to others. Amen”
- 4) Other suggestions [87:2]
- Ask friends or wives to join us in Morning Meditation
 - Attend to any morning devotions required by our particular faith
 - Select and memorize a few set prayers that emphasize these principles
 - Read one of the many helpful books available
- 5) Throughout the day: As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. [87:3] We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day “Thy will be done.” [88:0] It works – It really does. [88:1] We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the way we have just outlined. [88:2] But that is not all. There is action and more action. “Faith without works is dead.” [88:3]

10th/ 11th Step

Date: ____/____/____

| The Twelve Nightly Questions [86:1] | Chronology of today's events: |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. How was I resentful? (if so, do 4-column inventory) | |
| | |
| | |
| 2. How was I selfish (i.e. egotistical, self-seeking)? | |
| | |
| | |
| 3. How was I dishonest? | |
| | |
| | |
| 4. How was I afraid? | |
| | |
| | |
| 5. Do I owe an apology? | <u>Who did I help today?</u> |
| | |
| | |
| 6. What have I wrongly kept secret? | |
| | |
| | |
| 7. Was I unkind (i.e. cruel, harsh, unfeeling)? | <u>What did I accomplish today?</u> |
| | |
| | |
| 8. Was I unloving (i.e. cold, unresponsive, indifferent)? | |
| | |
| | |
| 9. What could I have done better? | <u>What I am grateful for today?</u> |
| | |
| | |
| 10. Was I thinking of myself most of the time? | |
| | |
| | |
| 11. Was I thinking of what I could do for others? | <u>Who needs my prayers today?</u> |
| | |
| | |
| 12. Was I thinking what I could pack into the stream of life? | |
| | |
| | |

But we are careful not to drift into worry, remorse, or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken

We say a Prayer: "God, please forgive me for my failings today. I know that because of my failings I was not able to be as effective as I could have been for You. Please forgive me and help me live Thy will better tomorrow. Father, I ask that You now show me how to correct the errors I have just outlined. Guide me and direct me. Please remove my arrogance and my fear. Show me how to make my relationships right, and grant me the humility and strength to do Thy will. Amen."

| <u>Reflections on the day</u> |
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A Prayer to Start the Day

God, please guide and direct me today. Please divorce my thinking from excitement, fear, anger, worry, foolish decisions, self-pity, and dishonest or self-seeking motives. Please clear my thinking of these wrong motives so my thought-life will be placed on the higher plane of inspiration. Please grant me the Power to align my will with Your Will, for after all You gave me brains to use.

Show me how to pause, when I face agitation, doubt or indecision today. If I'm not able to determine which action to take, let me remember to ask You for inspiration, an intuitive thought or decision. Help me to relax and take it easy and not struggle, knowing that the right answers will come with practice, patience, and diligence.

Let me be mindful today that my function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness; and that this is not an overnight matter -- it should continue for my lifetime. Help me to continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear; and when these crop up let me ask You at once to remove them. Grant me courage to discuss my defects and shortcomings with someone immediately and to make amends quickly if I've harmed someone. Let me then turn my thoughts to someone I can help, reminding myself that love and tolerance of others is my code.

Let me be mindful, that if my thoughts and actions are in accordance with Your Will, inspiration and intuition will gradually become a working part of my mind.

Please show me all through the day what my next step is to be, that I be given whatever I need to take care of any problems. I ask especially for freedom from self-will, and to never put myself ahead of other people. Help me to be quick to see where spiritual people are right, and to make use of what they offer.

Let me constantly remind myself that I am no longer running the show, humbly saying to myself many times throughout this day "Thy will, not mine, be done." Show me how I can be most efficient today, so I don't tire so easily by burning up energy foolishly like I do when I try to arrange life to suit myself.

I ask for the strength to fit myself today, so I can be of maximum service to You and my fellow man. Amen.

(Thoughts from pages 84 - 88 of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*)

Tips for Steps 10 & 11 in the Big Book, "Alcoholics Anonymous"

Step 10

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

"...Step Ten... suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past." (page 84)

"We have entered the world of the Spirit." (page 84)

"Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime." (page 84)

"Directions for a Daily Moment-to-Moment 10th Step":

"Continue to watch for:

- 1.) selfishness,
- 2.) dishonesty,
- 3.) resentment,
- 4.) and fear.
- 5.) When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.
- 6.) We discuss them with someone immediately
- 7.) and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone.
- 8.) Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.
- 9.) Love and tolerance of others is our code." (page 84)

"10th Step Promises":

"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone - even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed

in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.” (pages 84 & 85)

“Warning”:

“It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” (page 85)

“Prayer”:

“Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities. “How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done.” These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.” (page 85)

“Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action.” (page 85)

Step 11

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

“Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn’t be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it. It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.” (pages 85 & 86)

“Definite & Valuable Suggestions for an Evening Review”

“When we retire at night, we constructively review our day.”

“Were we:

- 1.) resentful,
- 2.) selfish,
- 3.) dishonest
- 4.) or afraid?
- 5.) Do we owe an apology?
- 6.) Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once?
- 7.) Were we kind and loving toward all?
- 8.) What could we have done better?
- 9.) Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time?
- 10.) Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?
- 11.) But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others.
- 12.) After making our review we ask God’s forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.” (page 86)

“Definite & Valuable Suggestions for a Morning Practice”

“On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day.” (page 86)

“On Awakening Prayer”:

Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.” (page 86)

“Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.” (page 86)

“A Prayer for Inspiration and Intuition When Faced with Indecision”:

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

“An 11th Step Promise”:

“What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind.” (page 87)

“Warning”:

“Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.” (page 87)

“Prayers for Concluding Morning Meditation”:

“We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no

request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why." (page 87)

"Sharing Your Morning Practice with Others":

"If circumstances warrant, we ask our wives or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also." (page 87)

"Additional Morning Suggestions":

"If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minister, or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer." (page 87)

"Definite & Valuable Suggestions for Throughout the Day"

"Pausing Throughout the Day":

"As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action." (page 87)

"Constant Reminder & Another Prayer":

"We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done." (pages 87 & 88)

"More 11th Step Promises":

"We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves. It works—it really does." (page 88)

"We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined. But this is not all. There is action and more action. "Faith without works is dead." The next chapter [**and the rest of our life**] is entirely devoted to Step Twelve. (page 88)

Tips & Principles for Steps 10 & 11 in the "Twelve & Twelve"

Step 10

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

"...commence to put our A.A. way of living to practical use, day by day, in fair weather or foul." (page 88)

"The acid test: to sober, keep in emotional balance, and live to good purpose under all conditions." (page 88)

"A continuous look at our assets and liabilities, and a real desire to learn and grow by this means, are necessities for us." (page 88)

"...no one can make much of his life until self-searching becomes a regular habit, until he is able to admit and accept what he finds, and until he patiently and persistently tries to correct what is wrong." (page 88)

"If we would live serenely today and tomorrow, we certainly need to eliminate [emotional] hangovers." (page 88)

"...admission and correction of errors now." (page 89)

Different kinds of inventories:

- "There's the **spot-check inventory**, taken at any time of the day, whenever we find ourselves getting tangled up."
- There's the one we take at **day's end**, when we review the happenings of the hours just past. Here we cast up a **balance sheet**, crediting ourselves with things well done, and chalking up debits where due.
- Then there are those occasions when alone, or in the company of our sponsor or spiritual adviser, we make a **careful review of our progress since the last time**. Many A.A.'s go in for annual or semiannual housecleanings. Many of us also like the experience of an occasional retreat from the outside world where we can quiet down for an undisturbed day or so of self-overhaul and meditation." (page 89)

"And at length our inventories become a regular part of everyday living, rather than something unusual or set apart." (page 90)

"It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us. If somebody hurts us and we are sore, we are in the wrong also. But are there no exceptions to this rule? What about "justifiable" anger? ...We have found that justified anger ought to be left to those better qualified to handle it." (page 90)

"Anger, that occasional luxury of more balanced people, could keep us on an emotional jag indefinitely. These emotional "dry benders" often led straight to the bottle. Other kinds of disturbances - jealousy, envy, self-pity, or hurt pride - did the same thing." (page 90)

"A **spot-check inventory** taken in the midst of such disturbances can be of very great help in quieting stormy emotions. ...The quick inventory is aimed at our daily ups and downs, especially those where people or new events throw us off balance and tempt us to make mistakes." (page 90)

"In all these situations we need self-restraint, honest analysis of what is involved, a willingness to admit when the fault is ours, and an equal willingness to forgive when the fault is elsewhere." (page 91)

"We need not be discouraged when we fall into the error of our old ways, for these disciplines are not easy. We shall look for progress, not for perfection." (page 91)

"Our first objective will be the development of self-restraint." (page 91)

"Nothing pays off like restraint of tongue and pen." (page 91)

"We must avoid quick-tempered criticism and furious, power-driven argument. The same goes for sulking or silent scorn. These are emotional booby traps baited with pride and vengefulness. Our first job is to sidestep the traps. When we are tempted by the bait, we should train ourselves to step back and think. For we can neither think nor act to good purpose until the habit of self-restraint has become automatic." (page 91)

"We must be quite as careful when we begin to achieve some measure of importance and material success." (page 91)

"Now that we're in A.A. and sober, and winning back the esteem of our friends and business associates, we find that we still need to exercise special vigilance. As an insurance against "big-shot-ism" we can often check ourselves by remembering that we are today sober only by the grace of God and that any success we may be having is far more His success than ours." (page 92)

"Finally, we begin to see that all people, including ourselves, are to some extent emotionally ill as well as frequently wrong, and then we approach true tolerance and see what real love for our fellows actually means." (page 92)

"It will become more and more evident as we go forward that it is pointless to become angry, or to get hurt by people who, like us, are suffering from the pains of growing up." (page 92)

"Such a radical change in our outlook will take time, maybe a lot of time." (page 92)

"The idea that we can be possessively loving of a few, can ignore the many, and can continue to fear or hate anybody, has to be abandoned, if only a little at a time." (pages 92 & 93)

"We can try to stop making unreasonable demands upon those we love. We can show kindness where we had shown none. With those we dislike we can begin to practice justice and courtesy, perhaps going out of our way to understand and help them. Whenever we fail any of these people, we can promptly admit it - to ourselves always, and to them also, when the admission would be helpful." (page 93)

"**Courtesy, kindness, justice, and love are the keynotes by which we may come into harmony with practically anybody.** When in doubt we can always pause, saying, "Not my will, but Thine, be done." And we can often ask ourselves, "Am I doing to others as I would have them do to me - today?" (page 93)

"When evening comes, perhaps just before going to sleep, many of us draw up a **balance sheet for the day.** This is a good place to remember that inventory-taking is not always done in red ink. It's a poor day indeed when we haven't done something right. As a matter of fact, the waking hours are usually well filled with things that are constructive. Good intentions, good thoughts, and good acts are there for us to see. Even when we have tried hard and failed, we may chalk that up as one of the greatest credits of all. Under these conditions, the pains of failure are converted into assets. Out of them we receive the stimulation we need to go forward. Someone who knew what he was talking about once remarked that **pain was the touchstone of all spiritual progress.** How heartily we A.A.'s can agree with him, for we know that the pains of drinking had to come before sobriety, and emotional turmoil before serenity. (pages 93 & 94)

"As we glance down the debit side of the day's ledger, we should carefully examine our motives in each thought or act that appears to be wrong. In most cases our motives won't be hard to see and understand. When prideful, angry, jealous, anxious, or fearful, we acted accordingly, and that was that. Here we need only recognize that we did act or think badly, try to visualize how we might have done better, and resolve with God's help to carry these lessons over into tomorrow, making, of course, any amends still neglected." (page 94)

"But in other instances only the closest scrutiny will reveal what our true motives were. There are cases where our ancient enemy, rationalization, has stepped in and has justified conduct which was really wrong. The temptation here is to imagine that we had good motives and reasons when we really didn't. We "constructively criticized" someone who needed it, when our real motive was to win a useless argument. Or, the person concerned not being present, we thought we were helping others to understand him, when in actuality our true motive was to feel superior by pulling him down. We sometimes hurt those we love because they need to be "taught a lesson," when we really want to punish. We were depressed and complained we felt bad, when in fact we were mainly asking for sympathy and attention. This odd trait of mind and emotion, this perverse wish to hide a bad motive underneath a good one, permeates human affairs from top to bottom. This subtle and elusive kind of self-righteousness can underlie the smallest act or thought. (pages 94 & 95)

"Learning daily to **spot** (Step 4), **admit** (Step 5), and **correct** (Steps 6 - 9) these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek." (page 95)

"Having so considered our day, not omitting to take due note of things well done, and having searched our hearts with neither fear nor favor, we can truly thank God for the blessings we have received and sleep in good conscience." (page 95)

Step 11

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

"Prayer and meditation are our principal means of conscious contact with God." (page 96)

"It has been well said that "almost the only scoffers at prayer are those who never tried it enough."" (page 97)

"Those of us who have come to make regular use of prayer would no more do without it than we would refuse air, food, or sunshine. And for the same reason. When we refuse air, light, or food, the body suffers. And when we turn away from meditation and prayer, we likewise deprive our minds, our emotions, and our intuitions of vitally needed support. As the body can fail its purpose for lack of nourishment, so can the soul. We all need the light of God's reality, the nourishment of His strength, and the atmosphere of His grace. To an amazing extent the facts of A.A. Life confirm this ageless truth." (pages 97 & 98)

"**There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life.** Now and

then we may be granted a glimpse of that ultimate reality which is God's kingdom. And we will be comforted and assured that our own destiny in that realm will be secure for so long as we try, however falteringly, to find and do the will of our own Creator." (page 98)

"As we have seen, self-searching is the means by which we bring new vision, action, and grace to bear upon the dark and negative side of our natures. It is a step in the development of that kind of humility that makes it possible for us to receive God's help. Yet it is only a step. We will want to go further." (page 98)

"We will want the good that is in us all, even in the worst of us, to flower and to grow. Most certainly we shall need bracing air and an abundance of food. But first of all we shall want sunlight; nothing much can grow in the dark. Meditation is our step out into the sun." (page 98)

Tips on Meditation

"It is to be hoped that every A.A. who has a religious connection which emphasizes meditation will return to the practice of that devotion as never before." (page 98)

"But what about the rest of us who, less fortunate, don't even know how to begin? Well, we might start like this. First let's look at a really good prayer. We won't have far to seek; the great men and women of all religions have left us a wonderful supply. Here let us consider one that is a classic."

"Lord, make me a channel of thy peace

- that where there is hatred, I may bring love
- that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness
- that where there is discord, I may bring harmony
- that where there is error, I may bring truth
- that where there is doubt, I may bring faith
- that where there is despair, I may bring hope
- that where there are shadows, I may bring light
- that where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted

- to understand, than to be understood
- to love, than to be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.

It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.

It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen." (page 99)

"As beginners in meditation, we might now reread this prayer several times very slowly, savoring every word and trying to take in the deep meaning of each phrase and idea." (page 99)

"It will help if we can drop all resistance to what our friend says. For in meditation, debate has no place. We rest quietly with the thoughts of someone who knows, so that we may experience and learn." (page 100)

"...Perhaps our trouble was not that we used our imagination. Perhaps the real trouble was our almost total inability to point imagination toward the right objectives. There's nothing the matter with constructive imagination; all sound achievement rests upon it. After all, no man can build a house until he first envisions a plan for it. Well, meditation is like that, too; it helps to envision our spiritual objective before we try to move toward it." (page 100)

"Once more we read our prayer, and again try to see what its inner essence is. We'll think now about the man who first uttered the prayer. First of all, he wanted to become a "channel." Then he asked for the grace to bring love, forgiveness, harmony, truth, faith, hope, light, and joy to every human being he could. Next came the expression of an aspiration and a hope for himself. He hoped, God willing, that he might be able to find some of these treasures, too. This he would try to do by what he called self-forgetting. What did he mean by "self-forgetting," and how did he propose to accomplish that? He thought it better to give comfort than to receive it; better to understand than to be understood; better to forgive than to be forgiven." (page 101)

"This much could be a fragment of what is called meditation, perhaps our very first attempt at a mood, a flier into the realm of spirit, if you like. It ought to be followed by a good look at where we stand now, and a further look at what might happen in our lives were we able to move closer to the ideal we have been trying to glimpse." (page 101)

"Meditation is something which can always be further developed. It has no boundaries, either of width or height. Aided by such instruction and example as we can find, it is essentially an individual adventure, something which each one of us works out in his own way. But its object is always the same: to improve our conscious contact with God, with His grace, wisdom, and love. And let's always remember that meditation is in reality intensely practical. One of its first fruits is emotional balance. With it we can broaden and deepen the channel between ourselves and God as we understand Him." (pages 101 & 102)

Tips on Prayer

"Now, what of prayer? Prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God - and in this sense it includes meditation. How may we go about it? And how does it fit in with meditation?" (page 102)

"Prayer, as commonly understood, is a petition to God. Having opened our channel as best we can, we try to ask for those right things of which we and others are in the greatest need. And we think that the whole range of our needs is well defined by that part of Step Eleven which says:

". . . knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." A request for this fits in any part of our day." (page 102)

Suggestions for the Morning (see also the "Big Book", pages 86 & 87):

"In the morning we think of the hours to come. Perhaps we think of our day's work and the chances it may afford us to be useful and helpful, or of some special problem that it may bring. Possibly today will see a continuation of a serious and as yet unresolved problem left over from yesterday. Our immediate temptation will be to ask for specific solutions to specific problems, and for the ability to help other people as we have already thought they should be helped. In that case, we are asking God to do it our way. Therefore, we ought to consider each request carefully to see what its real merit is. Even so, when making specific requests, it will be well to add to each one of them this qualification: ". . . if it be Thy will." We ask simply that throughout the day God place in us the best understanding of His will that we can have for that day, and that we be given the grace by which we may carry it out." (page 102)

Suggestions for Throughout the Day (see also the "Big Book", pages 87 & 88):

"As the day goes on, we can pause where situations must be met and decisions made, and renew the simple request: "Thy will, not mine, be done." If at these points our emotional disturbance happens to be great, we will more surely keep our balance, provided we remember, and repeat to ourselves, a particular prayer or phrase that has appealed to us in our reading or meditation. Just saying it over and over will often enable us to clear a channel choked up with anger, fear, frustration, or misunderstanding, and permit us to return to the surest help of all - our search for God's will, not our own, in the moment of stress. At these critical moments, if we remind ourselves that "it is better to comfort than to be comforted, to understand than to be understood, to love than to be loved," we will be following the intent of Step Eleven." (pages 102 & 103)

Warnings:

"Of course, it is reasonable and understandable that the question is often asked: "Why can't we take a specific and troubling dilemma straight to God, and in prayer secure from Him sure and definite answers to our requests?" This can be done, but it has hazards. We have seen A.A.'s ask with much earnestness and faith for God's explicit guidance on matters ranging all the way from a shattering domestic or financial crisis to correcting a minor personal fault, like tardiness. Quite often, however, the thoughts that seem to come from God are not answers at all. They prove to be well-intentioned unconscious rationalizations. The A.A., or indeed any man, who tries to run his life rigidly by this kind of prayer, by this self-serving demand of God for replies, is a particularly disconcerting individual. To any questioning or criticism of his actions he instantly proffers his reliance upon prayer for guidance in all matters great or small. He may have forgotten the possibility that his own wishful thinking and the human tendency to rationalize have distorted his so-called guidance. With the best of intentions, he tends to force his own will into all sorts of situations and problems with the comfortable assurance that he is acting under God's specific direction. Under such an illusion, he can of course create great havoc without in the least intending it." (pages 103 & 104)

"We also fall into another similar temptation. We form ideas as to what we think God's will is for other people. We say to ourselves, "This one ought to be cured of his fatal malady," or "That one ought to be relieved of his emotional pain," and we pray for these specific things. Such prayers, of course, are fundamentally good acts, but often they are based upon a supposition that we know God's will for the person for whom we pray. This means that side by side with an earnest prayer there can be a certain amount of presumption and conceit in us. It is A.A.'s experience that particularly in these cases we ought to pray that God's will, whatever it is, be done for others as well as for ourselves." (page 104)

Promises:

"In A.A. we have found that the actual good results of prayer are beyond question. They are matters of knowledge and experience. All those who have persisted have found strength not ordinarily their own. They have found wisdom beyond their usual capability. And they have increasingly found a peace of mind which can stand firm in the face of difficult circumstances." (page 104)

"We discover that we do receive guidance for our lives to just about the extent that we stop making demands upon God to give it to us on order and on our terms. Almost any experienced A.A. will tell how his affairs have taken remarkable and unexpected turns for the better as he tried to improve his conscious contact with God. He will also report that out of every season of grief or suffering, when the hand of God seemed heavy or even unjust, new lessons for living were learned, new resources of courage were uncovered, and that finally, inescapably, the conviction came that God does "move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."" (pages 104 & 105)

Encouragement:

"All this should be very encouraging news for those who recoil from prayer because they don't believe in it, or because they feel themselves cut off from God's help and direction. All of us, without exception, pass through times when we can pray only with the greatest exertion of will. Occasionally we go even further than this. We are seized with a rebellion so sickening that we simply won't pray. When these things happen we should not think too ill of ourselves. We should simply resume prayer as soon as we can, doing what we know to be good for us." (page 105)

More Promises:

"Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of belonging that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of God's will, the moment we begin to see truth, justice, and love as the real and eternal things in life, we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs. We know that God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to Him, all will be well with us, here and hereafter." (page 105)

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

by Gail Gupton

Our Father, who art within me: Holy is the name "I am". Thy kingdom is here. When I realize heaven and the kingdom thereof is within me, I realize it is on earth, also, because I am.

Reveal to me spiritual understanding. That alone sustains me today.
In proportion that I forgive others, only in that proportion can I expect to be forgiven of You.
Let me not be tempted to believe in anything but You, God. Let me not be tempted to believe in a power other than Yours.
God, You are the kingdom in which I live. God, You are the only power I recognize. God, You are the glory of all being. All is eternal and immortal.

Thoughts on Meditation

Generally, we waste our lives, distracted from our true selves, in endless activity. Meditation, on the other hand, is the way to bring us back to ourselves where we can really experience and taste our full being, beyond all habitual patterns. To meditate is to make a complete break with how we normally operate, for it is a state free of all cares and concerns in which there is no competition, no desire to possess or grasp at anything, no intense and anxious struggle, and where there is neither acceptance nor rejection, hope nor fear, a state in which we slowly begin to release all those emotions and concepts that have imprisoned us into the space of natural simplicity. The meditation masters know how flexible and workable the mind is. If we train it, anything is possible. With time, patience, discipline, and the right training, our mind will begin to unknot itself and know its essential bliss and clarity. - Sogyal Rinpoche

A “Halo” Meditation

When: Every night, last thing before going to sleep. First thing in the morning.

Duration: 4-5 minutes.

Step 1: Imagine a Halo

“Sit on your bed and imagine an aura around your body, just six inches away from your body, the same shape as the body...surrounding you, protecting you. It will become a shield. Still feeling this, go to sleep, fall into sleep imagining that aura like a blanket around you, which protects you from any tension entering from outside, from any thought entering you from outside. No outside vibration can enter you. You fall asleep but that imagination will enter the unconscious and becomes a tremendous force and energy.

Step 2: In the Morning...

“In the morning, the moment you feel that now sleep is gone, don’t open your eyes: just feel your aura all over the body protecting you. Do it for four to five minutes and then get up.

Step 3: All the Time...

“Taking your bath, having tea, go on remembering it. Any other time during the day when you remember - sitting in a car or train or in the office doing nothing - just relax into it again.

“This [exhaustion] happens to many people because we don’t know how to protect ourselves. Others are not only there but broadcasting their being continuously in subtle vibrations. Somebody passes by and throws something [energy] at you: if you are receptive and you don’t have a protective aura...and meditation makes one very receptive.

“So if you are alone, it is good; when you are surrounded by meditative people, very good. But when you are in the world, the marketplace and people are not meditative but very tense and anxious, you start getting that energy. After meditation one has to create a protective aura. Sometimes it happens automatically, sometimes it doesn’t. If it is not happening automatically to you, you have to work for it. It will be coming within three months. Anytime between three weeks and three months, you will start feeling very powerful.”

Dance Your Way to God

I often compare the mind in meditation to a jar of muddy water: the more we leave the water without interfering or stirring it, the more the particles of dirt will sink to the bottom, letting the natural clarity of the water shine through. - Sogyal Rinpoche

12 Step Prayers

First Step Prayer

Dear Lord, I admit that I am powerless over my addiction. I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it. Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness. Remove from me all denial of my addiction.

Second Step Prayer

Heavenly Father, I know in my heart that only you can restore me to sanity. I humbly ask that you remove all twisted thought and addictive behavior from me this day. Heal my spirit and restore in me a clear mind.

Third Step Prayer (Page 63 - A. A. Big Book)

God, I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!

Fourth Step Prayer

Dear God, it is I who have made my life a mess. I have done it, but I cannot undo it. My mistakes are mine, and I will begin a searching and fearless moral inventory. I will write down my wrongs, but I will also include that which is good. I pray for the strength to complete the task.

Fifth Step Prayer

Higher Power, my inventory has shown me who I am, yet I ask for Your help in admitting my wrongs to another person and to You. Assure me, and be with me, in this Step, for without this Step I cannot progress in my recovery. With Your help, I can do this, and I do it.

Sixth Step Prayer

Dear God, I am ready for Your help in removing from me the defects of character which I now realize are an obstacle to my recovery. Help me to continue being honest with myself and guide me toward spiritual and mental health.

Seventh Step Prayer (Page 76 - A. A. Big Book)

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

Eighth Step Prayer

Higher Power, I ask Your help in making my list of all those I have harmed. I will take responsibility for my mistakes, and be forgiving to others as You are forgiving to me. Grant me the willingness to begin my restitution. This I pray.

Ninth Step Prayer

Higher Power, I pray for the right attitude to make my amends, being ever mindful not to harm others in the process. I ask for Your guidance in making indirect amends. Most important, I will continue to make amends by staying abstinent, helping others, and growing in spiritual progress.

Tenth Step Prayer

I pray I may continue:

To grow in understanding and effectiveness; to take daily spot check inventories of myself; to correct mistakes when I make them; to take responsibility for my actions; to be ever aware of my negative and self-defeating attitudes and behaviors; to keep my willfulness in check; to always remember I need Your help; to keep love and tolerance of others as my code; and to continue in daily prayer how I can best serve You, my Higher Power.

Eleventh Step Prayer

Higher Power, as I understand You, I pray to keep my connection with You open and clear from the confusion of daily life. Through my prayers and meditation I ask especially for freedom from self-will, rationalization, and wishful thinking. I pray for the guidance of correct thought and positive action. Your will Higher Power, not mine, be done.

Twelfth Step Prayer

Dear God, my spiritual awakening continues to unfold. The help I have received I shall pass on and give to others, both in and out of the Fellowship. For this opportunity I am grateful. I pray most humbly to continue walking day by day on the road of spiritual progress. I pray for the inner strength and wisdom to practice the principles of his way of life in all I do and say. I need You, my friends, and the Program every hour of every day. This is a better way to live.

A Personal Inventory

This little moral inventory brings me once again to think about my own progress and my own shortcomings - and I do fall short. There is no right or wrong score. It is just an indicator of where you think you are in your recovery program and where you would like to be. You can rate yourself 1 - 10 for each, 1 representing no success in that area and 10 means that you are having habitual success. - Barefoot Bob

Here are some things we can ask ourselves. How am I doing in each of the following virtues:

1. Thankfulness: It is the habit of my life to thank my higher power and others for what they have done...I can honestly say that I am a thankful person and often express my gratitude.
2. Gentleness: My life is free from all outbursts of selfish anger or rage. I am approachable, quiet in spirit, open to criticism, and don't get defensive when I am corrected or rebuked.
3. Humility: I do not have an inflated self-opinion and consistently consider others as equal with myself. I have a teachable spirit and avoid all bragging, name-dropping and spiritual pride.
4. Pure Attitudes: My lifestyle is one of the right relationships, not just outwardly but inwardly too. I have no hate, ill will, malice or bitterness toward any other person anywhere on this earth.
5. Acceptance: I refuse to fight back when people criticize, condemn, reject or complain against me, even if they do it with wrong motives. I practice giving a soft answer to turn away their wrath.
6. Peacemaking: It is my practice to try to bring peace between others who are at odds. I don't just stand by and allow division to fester without trying to get involved to bring peace.
7. Boldness: I have been able to launch out and take risks for my recovery and beliefs, keeping fear under control and taking risks when my higher power calls to me to do something. There is nothing now that My Higher Power is asking me to do which I'm resisting because of fear.

8. Trust: I not only believe, but "act as if" my higher power is guiding my life and situations. My life is one of simple reliance on my Higher Power. I'm free from fretting, worry or anxiety about the future.
9. Persistence: It is normal for me to hang in there, when I am acting in healthy ways, when things get difficult, stressful and unrewarding, even if I must face suffering difficulty and persecution. My persistence keeps me from giving up too easily and I just keep on keeping on.
10. Harmony: I'm not a participant in any group evil like quarreling, dissension, fighting or factions in my family or in my place of worship, fellowship or work.
11. Submission/Surrender: I do not resist those placed in authority over me, even if they're less competent or gifted. When I "turn my will and life over" to the care of my Higher Power, it means I follow my H.P.'s direction even if I question it at first.
12. Right Relationships: Reflecting on all my relationships past and present, I'm able to say there are no broken relationships with anybody, anywhere, which I have not attempted to straighten out.
13. Giving Living: I regularly practice generous giving to my family, place of worship, AA/NA, and homeless, helpless, widows, orphans, and other needy folk. Generosity is a normal behavior to me.
14. Family Time: It is the routine of my life to control the amount of time I spend in work, pleasure or other activities which take too much time from my family. I obey my spiritual leading and make my Family time the top priority of my relationship life.
15. Forgiveness: If there is an individual or group of people who have hurt me in the past, I release my resentment, bitterness or grudge against them. I have fully forgiven everyone who has ever hurt me.
16. Restoring others: I hurt when temptation overtakes a brother or sister in the fellowship or elsewhere in my life, so I do not avoid or exclude them; rather I often get involved, humbly coming alongside to help them back to their feet spiritually.
17. Restitution: If I've ever taken things which do not belong to me, or hurt people by what I said or did, I have gone back and made restitution for everything my Higher Power has prompted me about so far (knowing that my H.P. would not prompt me to do so if it would cause harm to me or another person).
18. Resisting Materialism: I resist the grasping materialistic lifestyle of my culture, choosing rather to live a life of contentment and satisfaction with what I have. I'm not always "wanting more".
19. Selfish Ambition: I have laid aside all envy and selfish ambition. I have no jealousy of another's success. I do not eagerly hunger to climb the ladder to gain personal power and position.
20. Spiritual Intimacy: It is the routine of my life to spend time alone with my Higher Power each day to read spiritual books, meditate and pray...and beyond that I "practice the presence" of my Higher Power all day long. I'm constantly sensing my Higher Power's surrounding presence in my life like the air I breath, consciously abiding in His Grace as if enfolded within a warm fuzzy shawl.
21. Thought Life: My thought life is absolutely free from all impure thoughts. I have habitual victory over all tempting sexual fantasies, daydreams, or other selfish thoughts. I never get high on "old highs".
22. Living Above Reproach: I painstakingly avoid situations which could feed lustful or selfish desires or even tempt others to gossip about me. I have no dangerous emotional bonds, which could lead to trouble. I carefully attend to all my relationships so that not even the hint of impropriety exists.
23. Truthfulness: My yes is yes, my 200 is 200, my five-point buck is a five-point buck, and the fish is whatever size it is. I totally avoid half-truths, white lies, flattery or exaggeration. I practice absolute honesty both in my relationships with others and myself. I do not lie in order to allow myself or others to avoid unpleasant emotions.
24. Tongue Stewardship: I abstain from slander, gossip, harshness, unkindness, biting criticism, caustic remarks, obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking. Instead I use my tongue to build others up, giving words of encouragement, comfort, help, inspiration, and challenge. My tongue is completely under my Higher Power's control.
25. Living my Recovery: I typically share my recovery with both straight and chemically dependent people every time my Higher Power prompts me to do it. Twelfth stepping is a habit of my life.
26. Spiritual Passion: I hunger to become more spiritual and take my spiritual growth seriously. I do not ignore, dismiss or excuse areas where I fall short, even those I have listed above, since I have a spiritual passion for becoming more like my Higher Power would have me be, the I AM of Him.

Step 10 – Not Just Done At Night

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

In the 12 & 12, there are three different types of inventories mentioned in Step Ten. The moment by moment/spot-check inventory is mentioned 15 times (underlined), the day's end inventory is mentioned twice, and the monthly/annual inventory is mentioned four times.

In the Big Book, there are two different types of inventories mentioned in Step Ten and Step Eleven. The moment by moment/spot-check inventory is mentioned 6 times (underlined), and the day's end inventory is mentioned once (only in Step Eleven).

Given this information, can anyone explain to me why it is generally stated at discussion meetings that Step Ten is only done at the end of the day? - Barefoot Bill

12 & 12:

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

2) Page 89:0 - It requires an admission and correction of errors now.

3) Page 89:1 - There's the spot-check inventory, taken at any time of the day, whenever we find ourselves getting tangled up.

- 4) Page 89:1 - There's the one we take at day's end, when we review the happenings of the hours just past.
- 5) Page 89:1 - Then there are those occasions when alone, or in the company of our sponsor or spiritual adviser, we make a careful review of our progress since the last time.
- 6) Page 89:1 - Many A.A.'s go in for annual or semiannual housecleanings.
- 7) Page 89:1 - Many of us also like the experience of an occasional retreat from the outside world where we can quiet down for an undisturbed day or so of self-overhaul and meditation.
- 8) Page 90:1 - ...a spot-check inventory...
- 9) Page 90:4 - A spot-check inventory...
- 10) Page 90:4 - Today's spot check finds its chief application to situations which arise in each day's march.
- 11) Page 90:4 - The consideration of long-standing difficulties had better be postponed, when possible, to times deliberately set aside for that purpose.
- 12) Page 91:0 - The quick inventory is aimed at our daily ups and downs, especially those where people or new events throw us off balance and tempt us to make mistakes.
- 13) Page 91:2 - Our first objective will be the development of self-restraint. This carries a top priority rating. When we speak or act hastily or rashly, the ability to be fair-minded and tolerant evaporates on the spot. One unkind tirade or one willful snap judgment can ruin our relation with another person for a whole day, or maybe a whole year. Nothing pays off like restraint of tongue and pen. We must avoid quick-tempered criticism and furious, power-driven argument. The same goes for sulking or silent scorn. These are emotional booby traps baited with pride and vengefulness. Our first job is to sidestep the traps. When we are tempted by the bait, we should train ourselves to step back and think. For we can neither think nor act to good purpose until the habit of self-restraint has become automatic.
- 14) Page 91:3 - Disagreeable or unexpected problems are not the only ones that call for self-control.
- 15) Page 92:1 - Now that we're in A.A. and sober, and winning back the esteem of our friends and business associates, we find that we still need to exercise special vigilance. As an insurance against "big-shot-ism" we can often check ourselves by remembering that we are today sober only by the grace of God and that any success we may be having is far more His success than ours.
- 16) Page 92:2 - Finally, we begin to see that all people, including ourselves, are to some extent emotionally ill as well as frequently wrong, and then we approach true tolerance and see what real love for our fellows actually means. It will become more and more evident as we go forward that it is pointless to become angry, or to get hurt by people who, like us, are suffering from the pains of growing up.
- 17) Page 93:2 - Whenever we fail any of these people, we can promptly admit it - to ourselves always, and to them also, when the admission would be helpful. Courtesy, kindness, justice, and love are the keynotes by which we may come into harmony with practically anybody.
- 18) Page 93:2 - When in doubt we can always pause, saying, "Not my will, but Thine, be done."
- 19) Page 93:2 - And we can often ask ourselves, "Am I doing to others as I would have them do to me - today?"
- 20) Page 93:3 - When evening comes, perhaps just before going to sleep, many of us draw up a balance sheet for the day. This is a good place to remember that inventory-taking is not always done in red ink. It's a poor day indeed when we haven't done something right. As a matter of fact, the waking hours are usually well filled with things that are constructive. Good intentions, good thoughts, and good acts are there for us to see. Even when we have tried hard and failed, we may chalk that up as one of the greatest credits of all. Under these conditions, the pains of failure are converted into assets. Out of them we receive the stimulation we need to go forward. Someone who knew what he was talking about once remarked that pain was the touchstone of all spiritual progress. How heartily we A.A.'s can agree with him, for we know that the pains of drinking had to come before sobriety, and emotional turmoil before serenity.

As we glance down the debit side of the day's ledger, we should carefully examine our motives in each thought or act that appears to be wrong. In most cases our motives won't be hard to see and understand. When prideful, angry, jealous, anxious, or fearful, we acted accordingly, and that was that. Here we need only recognize that we did act or think badly, try to visualize how we might have done better, and resolve with God's help to carry these lessons over into tomorrow, making, of course, any amends still neglected.

But in other instances only the closest scrutiny will reveal what our true motives were. There are cases where our ancient enemy, rationalization, has stepped in and has justified conduct which was really wrong. The temptation here is to imagine that we had good motives and reasons when we really didn't.

We "constructively criticized" someone who needed it, when our real motive was to win a useless argument. Or, the person concerned not being present, we thought we were helping others to understand him, when in actuality our true motive was to feel superior by pulling him down. We sometimes hurt those we love because they need to be "taught a lesson," when we really want to punish. We were depressed and complained we felt bad, when in fact we were mainly asking for sympathy and attention. This odd trait of mind and emotion, this perverse wish to hide a bad motive underneath a good one, permeates human affairs from top to bottom. This subtle and elusive kind of self-righteousness can underlie the smallest act or thought. Learning daily to spot, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek.

Having so considered our day, not omitting to take due note of things well done, and having searched our hearts with neither fear nor favor, we can truly thank God for the blessings we have received and sleep in good conscience.

Big Book:

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

2) Page 84:2 - This thought brings us to *Step Ten*, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along.

3) Page 84:2 - Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.

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

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

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

7) Page 87:3 - As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done."

"How To Listen To God"

By John E. Batterson

(An Oxford Group pamphlet/technique used by early A.A. members)

These are a few simple suggestions for people who are willing to make an experiment. You can discover for yourself the most important and practical thing any human being can ever learn - how to be in touch with God.

All that is needed is the willingness to try it honestly. Every person who has done this consistently and sincerely has found that it really works.

Before you begin, look over these fundamental points. They are true and are based on the experience of thousands of people.

1 - God is alive. He always has been and He always will be.

2 - God knows everything.

3 - God can do anything.

4 - God can be everywhere - all at the same time. (These are the important differences between God and us human beings).

5 - God is invisible - we can't see Him or touch Him - but, God is here. He is with you now. He is beside you. He surrounds you. He fills the room or the whole place where you are right now. He is in you now. He is in your heart.

6 - God cares very much for you. He is interested in you. He has a plan for your life. He has an answer for every need and problem you face.

7 - God will tell you all that you need to know. He will not always tell you all that you want to know.

8 - God will help you do anything that He asks you to do.

9 - Anyone can be in touch with God, anywhere and at any time, if the conditions are obeyed.

These are the conditions:

To be quiet and still

To listen

To be honest about every thought that comes

To test the thoughts to be sure that they come from God

To obey

So, with these basic elements as a background, here are specific suggestions on How to Listen to God:

1 - TAKE TIME

Find some place and time where you can be alone, quiet and undisturbed. Most people have found that the early morning is the best time. Have with you some paper and pen or pencil.

2 - RELAX

Sit in a comfortable position. Consciously relax all your muscles. Be loose. There is no hurry. There needs to be no strain during these minutes. God cannot get through to us if we are tense and anxious about later responsibilities.

3 - TUNE IN

Open your heart to God. Either silently or aloud, just say to God in a natural way that you would like to find His plan for your life - you want His answer to the problem or situation that you are facing just now. Be definite and specific in your request.

4 - LISTEN

Just be still, quiet, relaxed and open. Let your mind go "loose." Let God do the talking. Thoughts, ideas and impressions will begin to come into your mind and heart. Be alert and aware and open to every one.

5 - WRITE!

Here is the important key to the whole process. Write down everything that comes into your mind. Everything. Writing is simply a means of recording so that you can remember later. Don't sort out or edit your thoughts at this point.

Don't say to yourself:

This thought isn't important
This is just an ordinary thought
This can't be guidance
This isn't nice
This can't be from God
This is just me thinking..., etc.

Write down everything that passes through your mind:

Names of people
Things to do
Things to say
Things that are wrong and need to be made right

Write down everything:

Good thoughts - bad thoughts
Comfortable thoughts - uncomfortable thoughts
"Holy" thoughts - "unholy" thoughts
Sensible thoughts - "crazy" thoughts

Be honest! Write down everything! A thought comes quickly, and it escapes even more quickly unless it is captured and put down.

6 - TEST

When the flow of thoughts slows down, stop. Take a good look at what you have written. Not every thought we have comes from God. So we need to test our thoughts. Here is where the written record helps us to be able to look at them.

- Are these thoughts completely honest, pure, unselfish and loving?
- Are these thoughts in line with our duties to our family - to our country?
- Are these thoughts in line with our understanding of the teachings found in our spiritual literature?

7 - CHECK

When in doubt and when it is important, what does another person who is living two-way prayer think about this thought or action? More light comes in through two windows than one. Someone else who also wants God's plan for our lives may help us to see more clearly.

Talk over together what you have written. Many people do this. They tell each other what guidance has come. This is the secret of unity. There are always three sides to every question - your side, my side, and the right side. Guidance shows us which is the right side - not who is right, but what is right.

8 - OBEY

Carry out the thoughts that have come. You will only be sure of guidance as you go through with it. A rudder will not guide a boat until the boat is moving. As you obey, very often the results will convince you that you are on the right track.

9 - BLOCKS?

"What if I don't seem to get any definite thought?" God's guidance is as freely available as the air we breathe. If I am not receiving thoughts when I listen, the fault is not God's.

Usually it is because there is something I will not do:

Something wrong in my life that I will not face and make right
A habit or indulgence I will not give up
A person I will not forgive
A wrong relationship in my life I will not give up
A restitution I will not make
Something God has already told me to do that I will not obey

Check these points and be honest. Then try listening again.

10 - MISTAKES

"Supposing I make a mistake and do something in the name of God that isn't right?" Of course we make mistakes. We are humans with many faults. However, God will always honor our sincerity.

He will work around and through every honest mistake we make. He will help us make it right. But, remember this! Sometimes when we do obey God, someone else may not like it or agree with it. So when there is opposition, it doesn't always mean you have made a mistake. It can mean that the other person doesn't want to know or to do what is right.

"Supposing I fail to do something that I have been told and the opportunity to do it passes?" There is only one thing to do. Put it right with God. Tell Him you're sorry. Ask Him to forgive you, then accept His forgiveness and begin again. God is our Father - He is not an impersonal computer. He understands us far better than we do.

11 - RESULTS?

We never know what swimming is like until we get down into the water and try. We will never know what this is like until we sincerely try it.

Every person who has tried this honestly finds that a wisdom, not their own, comes into their minds and that a Power greater than human power begins to operate in their lives. It is an endless adventure. There is a way of life, for everyone, everywhere. Anyone can be in touch with the living God, anywhere, anytime, if we fulfill His conditions.

When man listens, God speaks.

When man obeys, God acts.

This is the law of prayer.

God's plan for this world goes forward through the lives of ordinary people who are willing to be governed by Him.

What About Members With Long-term Sobriety?

(Excerpted from Akron Intergroup News, December 1998)

For all the good and right reasons, we pay a lot of attention to AA newcomers. They are the lifeblood of our fellowship, and tradition says they are the primary reason we have meetings. But what about members with long-term sobriety? We're taught the seeds of relapse are found in attitudes that precede the actual picking up of that first drink. While these might be easier to spot with new people, they seem much more difficult to detect in our friends with long-term sobriety. Telling a new AA member to call us before picking up the first drink is excellent advice. But it almost never works for those who no longer have deep cravings for alcohol, because in a subtle, insidious way, they have entered into a private period (weeks, maybe even months) of irrational thinking about their lives, work, this program, loved ones, hobbies, the government or other drivers!

In other words, a dangerous form of alcoholic insanity has emerged. With nothing in its path to prevent it, drinking is the natural, instinctive reaction. Fortunately, we have ways to prevent this from happening. The bond of trust we establish between each other in AA is a powerful ally. If we confront those fellow members closest to us suspected of having difficulties, and if we do this with compassion and a willingness to listen and help in a true 12th Step Spirit, the outcome may be lifesaving. Following is a checklist of relapse symptoms we can watch for - and help a troubled friend explore in a sort of short-form 4th and 5th Step process:

1. Exhaustion - Allowing oneself to become overly tired; usually associated with work addiction as an excuse for not facing personal frustrations.
2. Dishonesty - Begins with pattern of little lies; escalated to self-delusion and making excuses for not doing what's called for.
3. Impatience - I want what I want NOW. Others aren't doing what I think they should or living the way I know is right.
4. Argumentative - No point is too small or insignificant not to be debated to the point of anger and submission.
5. Depression - All unreasonable, unaccountable despair should be exposed and discussed, not repressed: what is the "exact nature" of those feelings?
6. Frustration - Controlled anger/resentment when things don't go according to our plans. Lack of acceptance. See #3.
7. Self-pity - Feeling victimized, put-upon, used, unappreciated: convinced we are being singled out for bad luck.
8. Cockiness - Got it made. Know all there is to know. Can go anywhere, including frequent visits just to hangout at bars, carry out's, boozy parties.
9. Complacency - Like #8, no longer sees value of daily program, meetings, contact with other alcoholics, (especially sponsor!), feels healthy, on top of the world, things are going well. Heck may even be cured!
10. Expecting too much of others - Why can't they read my mind? I've changed, what's holding them up? If they just do what I know is best for them? Leads to feeling misunderstood, unappreciated. See #6.
11. Letting up on disciplines - Allowing established habits of recovery - meditations, prayer, spiritual reading, AA contact, daily inventory, meetings - to slip out of our routines; allowing recovery to get boring and no longer stimulating for growth. Why bother?!
12. Using mood-altering chemicals - May have a valid medical reason, but misused to help avoid the real problems of impending alcoholic relapse.
13. Wanting too much - Setting unrealistic goals: not providing for short-term successes; placing too much value on material success, not enough on value of spiritual growth.
14. Forgetting gratitude - Because of several listed above, may lose sight of the abundant blessings in our everyday lives: too focused on # 13.
15. "It can't happen to me." - Feeling immune; forgetting what we know about the disease of alcoholism and its progressive nature.
16. Omnipotence - A combination of several attitudes listed above; leads to ignoring danger signs, disregarding warnings and advice from fellow members.

The Serenity Prayer "Way of Life"

By Barefoot Bill

In "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age", on page 196, it says the following:

"In 1941, a news clipping was called to our attention by a N.Y. member. In an obituary notice from a local paper, there appeared these words: 'God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.' Never had we seen so much A.A. in so few words. With amazing speed the Serenity Prayer came into general use."

As a prayer, this is a beautiful way to talk to our Creator (I have always used the "we" version when saying it because I prefer to pray for more than just myself); but if you really look at it, what this prayer says can also be used as a way of life that can bring about peace of mind in any and all circumstances that disturb us.

It opens by asking God to grant us serenity to accept things we cannot change. I have always thought that this was unusual because it seems to me that serenity doesn't create acceptance. How it's always worked for me though is that serenity comes after acceptance, but who am I to argue. More importantly, it's been my experience that most of the time, the things I CANNOT change are outside of me.

In the next part, we are asking for courage to change the things we CAN change. Now, I don't know about you but I have wasted a lot of time trying to change many things I could not change (that's where the wisdom part comes in handy). It's also been my experience that most of the time, the things I CAN change are inside of me.

Then comes the difficult part - we ask God for wisdom to know the difference between when to make changes and when it might bring peace to only change our perspective of the situation. I have come across two definitions for the word "wisdom" that I like. One is, "the perfect combination of knowledge and love", and the other is, "thinking with the end in mind". Since we cannot know the future, the only thing we can do is know the One who does, and since our Highest Power makes His home within all of us, we can tap into that Wisdom.

Our program enables us to take advantage of this Wisdom because the first three Steps are for bringing us to the point where we become WILLING to turn our will (which is our motivation and our thinking) and our life (which is our actions) over to the care of a Higher Power (or Love), Steps Four through Nine are HOW we turn our thinking and our actions over, and the last three Steps are how we KEEP our will and our life turned over indefinitely.

The Big Book promises that after doing the work of the first eight Steps and also some Ninth Step work that we now have the ability to begin tapping into this Wisdom when it says, "*We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us*". The Eleventh Step also says that we then can, "*ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it*".

Also, something that you may not have noticed is that contained in the Serenity Prayer are the ONLY two healthy options that we have when presented with difficulties. Sure, we could complain, get friends to co-sign our misery or do nothing at all, but these are old behaviors and bring about no solution. Our emotions are nothing more than an inner barometer. When our calm is disturbed, the only two reasonable alternatives that can get us back to our peace of mind is to either do something to change the situation or get a better perspective toward it. THAT'S IT. And the sooner we realize that, the sooner we can get back to our being comfortable within ourselves. That's why it says, "*As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action*" (Big Book, page 87. Please note that agitation comes WELL before anger & rage, and doubtfulness comes WELL before being in deep trouble).

It's important to realize that we need to make being comfortable on the inside a priority because the more uncomfortable our inner experience is, the more drinking becomes an option. When an alcoholic is "*restless, irritable and discontented, they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks*" (Big Book pages xxvi & xxvii). But of course drinking for the alcoholic has negative consequences. Working the Steps and practicing the principles in all of our affairs ALSO bring about ease and comfort, but the results are beyond our wildest dreams! The effect produced by alcohol needs to be replaced by the effect produced by our continual conscious contact with, and followed guidance from, our Inner Guide.

So use this prayer during your morning time with God, when needed or not needed throughout the day, and as part of your "search for serenity". And for those of you who have never seen the full version of the Serenity Prayer, here it is:
"God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change; courage to change the things we can; and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as the pathway to peace. Taking as Jesus did this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it. Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will; that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen"
(Attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr)

WHAT'S YOUR SCORE?

January 1947 AA Grapevine

KEEP THIS AND CHECK YOUR GRADE EACH MONTH
GIVE YOURSELF FROM ONE TO FIVE POINTS ON EACH QUESTION

1. Has my past been a mess and am I EARNESTLY DETERMINED TO ESTABLISH A BETTER WAY OF LIFE, and am I willing to make the effort? _____
2. Do I admit BEYOND ANY DOUBT that I am powerless over alcohol - that if I use it, it will destroy me? _____
3. Do I sincerely believe that there is a power greater than myself in which I WILL PUT MY TRUST regardless of what happens?

4. Do I realize the importance of talking A.A. and attending all A.A. MEETINGS POSSIBLE, or do I hedge and make excuses? _____
5. Am I really willing to MAKE RETRIBUTION where possible to those I have harmed, or am I just kidding? _____
6. Do I SINCERELY OBSERVE daily moments of constructive meditation, thinking of my humility and desire to understand? _____
7. Am I TRULY HONEST with others, or will I chisel if I get a chance? _____
8. Am I PATIENT in waiting for the rewards of my efforts? _____
9. Am I FRIENDLY and do I TRY TO OVERLOOK the shortcomings of others, regardless of who they are? _____
10. Am I tolerant - do I show consideration for those whose beliefs, practices or habits differ from my own? _____
11. Am I a gossip - do I repeat rumors or chatter about people's affairs? _____
12. Am I GRATEFUL for ALL HELPFUL THINGS and DO I SAY SO? _____
13. Do I have REAL COURAGE and am I FREE FROM FEAR OF ALL KINDS? _____
14. Do I really have CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF and others, or am I filled with doubt and suspicion? _____
15. Do I cooperate with others and HELP PROMOTE constructive ideas? _____
16. Do I practice SELF-CONTROL, and really forget and forgive differences? _____
17. Am I neat in my appearance, and do I keep as clean as I can under the circumstances, both in body and mind? _____
18. Am I extending any effort to help others with their problems? _____
19. Do I realize that my problem is NOT MONEY, but mental and physical? _____
20. Am I making any reasonable effort to OVERCOME any other undesirable habits or CHARACTERISTICS I may possess? _____

Total _____

A total score of less than 50 is regarded as poor; 50 to 60 fair; 60 to 65 low average; 65 to 70 high average; 70 to 80 excellent; over 80 "impossible in this world."

St. Francis Prayer Meditation

12 & 12, pages 98 – 102

We will want the good that is in us all, even in the worst of us, to flower and to grow. Most certainly we shall need bracing air and an abundance of food. But first of all we shall want sunlight; nothing much can grow in the dark. Meditation is our step out into the sun. How, then, shall we meditate?

The actual experience of meditation and prayer across the centuries is, of course, immense. The world's libraries and places of worship are a treasure trove for all seekers. It is to be hoped that every A.A. who has a religious connection which emphasizes meditation will return to the practice of that devotion as never before. But what about the rest of us who, less fortunate, don't even know how to begin?

Well, we might start like this. First let's look at a really good prayer. We won't have far to seek; the great men and women of all religions have left us a wonderful supply. Here let us consider one that is a classic.

Its author was a man who for several hundred years now has been rated as a saint. We won't be biased or scared off by that fact, because although he was not an alcoholic he did, like us, go through the emotional wringer. And as he came out the other side of that painful experience, this prayer was his expression of what he could then see, feel, and wish to become:

"Lord, make me a channel of thy peace - that where there is hatred, I may bring love - that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness - that where there is discord, I may bring harmony - that where there is error, I may bring truth - that where there is doubt, I may bring faith - that where there is despair, I may bring hope - that where there are shadows, I may bring light - that where there is sadness, I may bring joy. Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted - to understand, than to be understood - to love, than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen."

As beginners in meditation, we might now reread this prayer several times very slowly, savoring every word and trying to take in the deep meaning of each phrase and idea. It will help if we can drop all resistance to what our friend says. For in meditation, debate has no place. We rest quietly with the thoughts of someone who knows, so that we may experience and learn.

As though lying upon a sunlit beach, let us relax and breathe deeply of the spiritual atmosphere with which the grace of this prayer surrounds us. Let us become willing to partake and be strengthened and lifted up by the sheer spiritual power, beauty, and love of which these magnificent words are the carriers. Let us look now upon the sea and ponder what its mystery is; and let us lift our eyes to the far horizon, beyond which we shall seek all those wonders still unseen.

"Shucks!" says somebody. "This is nonsense. It isn't practical."

When such thoughts break in, we might recall, a little ruefully, how much store we used to set by imagination as it tried to create reality out of bottles. Yes, we reveled in that sort of thinking, didn't we? And though sober nowadays, don't we often try to do much the same thing? Perhaps our trouble was not that we used our imagination. Perhaps the real trouble was our almost total inability to point imagination toward the right objectives. There's nothing the matter with constructive imagination; all sound achievement rests upon it. After all, no man can build a house until he first envisions a plan for it. Well, meditation is like that, too; it helps to envision our spiritual objective before we try to move toward it. So let's get back to that sunlit beach - or to the plains or to the mountains, if you prefer.

When, by such simple devices, we have placed ourselves in a mood in which we can focus undisturbed on constructive imagination, we might proceed like this:

Once more we read our prayer, and again try to see what its inner essence is. We'll think now about the man who first uttered the prayer. First of all, he wanted to become a "channel." Then he asked for the grace to bring love, forgiveness, harmony, truth, faith, hope, light, and joy to every human being he could.

Next came the expression of an aspiration and a hope for himself. He hoped, God willing, that he might be able to find some of these treasures, too. This he would try to do by what he called self-forgetting. What did he mean by "self-forgetting," and how did he propose to accomplish that?

He thought it better to give comfort than to receive it; better to understand than to be understood; better to forgive than to be forgiven.

This much could be a fragment of what is called meditation, perhaps our very first attempt at a mood, a flier into the realm of spirit, if you like. It ought to be followed by a good look at where we stand now, and a further look at what might happen in our lives were we able to move closer to the ideal we have been trying to glimpse. Meditation is something which can always be further developed. It has no boundaries, either of width or height. Aided by such instruction and example as we can find, it is essentially an individual adventure, something which each one of us works out in his own way. But its object is always the same: to improve our conscious contact with God, with His grace, wisdom, and love. And let's always remember that meditation is in reality intensely practical. One of its first fruits is emotional balance. With it we can broaden and deepen the channel between ourselves and God as we understand Him.

Six Steps to Meditations in Motion

"Meditations in Motion - The Joy of Spirit in Exercise" by Barbara Bartocci

These six steps can change fitness activities from recreation to personal re-creation. By connecting sweat to the sacred, exercise not only builds the body, calms the mind, and lowers stress - it also becomes a joyful meditation in motion.

1) Create Intention - Spiritual masters point out that whatever we focus on will command our energy, so any activity that is done with the right intent will engage our best energy. Consciously choose to let exercise be your path to spiritual energy. As you begin to work out, it may help to say an affirmation. Here are two: "I am exercising my mind, body and spirit today" or "I invite God to be with me as I exercise my body". Then simply pay attention to the natural rhythm and flow of what you're doing.

2) Breathe Deeply - Many people do not breathe properly. Before exercising, breathe deeply and consciously several times. Feel the air moving into and lifting your body. Imagine that the soles of your feet are receiving energy. Pull your breath smoothly up through your torso. As you exhale, picture yourself releasing toxins of anxiety, fear and impatience.

3) Stay focused - If you let your mind run free it's easy to get caught up in a negative thought process. Bring awareness to what you're doing, whether it's lifting a tennis racket, taking a walk, paddling a canoe, or running 5 miles.

4) Repeat Word power - This will help you stay focused if you concentrate on a word for a positive quality you want to encourage in yourself. One week it may be "compassion" another "Love" another week "forgiveness." Silently say your word in rhythm with your exercise. Repetition is one of the most powerful methods of creating continuous prayer.

5) Listen to your body - Sometimes we're stressed without knowing why, which interferes with spiritual connections. Pay attention to the clues your body gives you. Take inventory of your body by asking, "What's happening in my gut? Is my stomach tight or relaxed? What sensations are in my chest? What do I feel in my throat? Is my brain chattering?" Several spiritual writers encourage the physical act of opening your hands. People clench their fists when they're holding on to something and are afraid to "let go." Opening your hands in a slow, conscious way is an act of surrender that shows acceptance and willingness to face life as it is.

6) Extend yourself - Inner power is a state of being, a confidence that you can handle whatever comes in your life. You get that power by reaching beyond your usual comfort zone. The benefits of sports and exercise carry over into other parts of our lives. At the same time, don't push yourself so hard, it becomes counterproductive. "God meets us where we are." Occasional joggers do not suddenly enter an Olympic marathon. They prepare and train over a period of time, and so should we.

GUIDE TO MEDITATION AND PRAYER AND GUIDANCE

(based on oldtime AA)

Floyd H., Spring, Texas

(Repeat daily each morning following inventory, and until change comes)

"God, I realize that the people who wronged me are perhaps spiritually blocked people. I ask you to help me show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend. Please show me how to be helpful to those I resent, and save me from my anger. Show me where I have been selfish, self-seeking, dishonest or fear-based, thus causing my own trouble, and relieve me of the notion that I have to retaliate or that I am a victim."

"I ask too that You relieve me of all my fears, worries, and doubts. I pray that You will start immediately to make all decisions for me. Until my pain and suffering leave, please help me realize that both are leading to positive change in my life."

"In all my relations, I ask for Your guidance. Please give me a vision of a sane and sound ideal in my sex relations (and all relationships), and let me imagine what might happen in my life were I able to move closer to the ideal I have been trying to glimpse. Thank You, God. AMEN."

God made it simple; I should keep it the way God made it. "God made us simple; our complex problems are of our own devising." (Ecclesiastes 7:30) Now, say: "I will keep it real simple by releasing to God all decision-making today."

Because Dr. Bob recommended daily readings of what he called "Power Phrases," let's consider meditating on these:

I will have no expectations nor make demands today.

What I resist persists.

I will cease fighting.

I can resist nothing today while still standing up for my own Highest Good.

I do not have the power to drive anyone crazy or make anyone sane. Each individual is responsible for her/his own peace of mind.

It is none of my business what anyone thinks about me or about anything else.

I do not have the power to make anyone stay in my life.

I do not have the power to drive anyone away.

I do not have the power to make anyone miserable.

I do not have the power to make anyone happy.

I will love all.

I do not have to like all.

My goal is peace of mind (also known as "sanity" or "spiritual living").

The only way I can forgive someone today is to think "The Forgiver, God" is working through me; I and the world will be better off if

I do not judge in the first place.

Not being God, I do not know what is "good" or "bad," and since God knows all and does only good, everything is ultimately for the good.

God will take charge when I let go.

I do not need to know anything or understand anything but I shall instead only seek God's guidance, which I receive intuitively if I become still and quiet.

I will not wish, hope, want, desire, nor crave today.

I will not seek love--I will simply give love.

I will receive human love, should God send it; however, I can only be content if I'm attached to God alone.

I cannot be content in a human relationship with anyone until I am content without any human relationship.

I will seek nothing God does not send.

I will accept all that is sent by God.

I will think less and employ intuition more.

The past is gone--it's an image in my mind. The future can be no more than an image in my mind. Therefore, the present moment is the only real moment. I shall not allow false images to affect the way I feel.

Everything really is going to be OK.

What is happening that you need to say "I love this" about? (Explain why you'll not only accept it, but love it)

Today I will say several times:

"Whatever."

"I must get rid of that belief."

"I have no opinion to express about that."

Make a list of things that don't mean a thing in this life, as revealed by your own experience, or the experiences others have shared, and then read them daily.

7 Minutes With God: How To Plan A Daily Quiet Time

by Robert D. Foster

It was in 1882 on the campus of Cambridge University that the world was first given the slogan:

"Remember the morning watch."

Students like Hooper & Thornton found their days "loaded" with studies, lectures, games & bull sessions. Enthusiasm & activity were the order of the day. These dedicated men soon discovered a flaw in their spiritual armor - a small crack which if not soon closed, would bring disaster.

They sought an answer & came up with a scheme they called the morning watch - a plan to spend the first minutes of a new day alone with God, praying & reading the Bible.

The morning watch sealed the crack. It enshrined a truth so often obscured by the pressure of ceaseless activity that it needs daily rediscovery: To know God, it is necessary to spend consistent time with Him.

The idea caught fire. "A remarkable period of religious blessing" followed, & culminated in the departure of the Cambridge Seven, a band of prominent athletes & men of wealth & education, for missionary service. They gave up everything to go out to China for Christ.

But these men found that getting out of bed in time for the morning watch was as difficult as it was vital. Thornton was determined to turn indolence into discipline. He invented an automatic, foolproof cure for laziness. It was a contraption set up by his bed: "The vibration of an alarm clock set fishing tackle in motion, & the sheets, clipped to the line, moved swiftly into the air off the sleeper's body.

Thornton wanted to get up to meet his God!

The intimacy of communion with Christ must be recaptured in the morning quiet time. Call it what you want - the quiet time, personal devotions, the morning watch, or individual worship - these holy minutes at the start of each day explain the inner secret of Christianity. It's the golden thread that ties every great man of God together - from Moses to David Livingstone, the prophet Amos to Billy Graham - rich & poor, businessmen & military personnel. Every man who ever became somebody for God has this at the core of his priorities: time alone with God!

David says in Psalm 57:7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." A fixed & established heart produces stability in life. Few men in the Christian community have this heart & life. One of the missing links has been a workable plan on how to begin & maintain a morning watch.

I want to suggest that in order to get under way, you start with seven minutes. Perhaps you could call it a daily "Seven Up." Five minutes may be too short, & ten minutes for some is a little too long at first.

Are you willing to take seven minutes every morning? Not five mornings out of seven, not six days out of seven - but seven days out of seven! Ask God to help you: "Lord, I want to meet you first thing in the morning for at least seven minutes. Tomorrow when the alarm clock goes off at 6:15 a.m., I have an appointment with You."

Your prayer might be, "Morning by morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; morning by morning I lay my requests before You & wait in expectation" (Psalm 5:3).

How do you spend these seven minutes? After getting out of bed & taking care of your personal needs, you will want to find a quiet place & there with your Bible enjoy the solitude of seven minutes with God.

Invest the first 30 seconds preparing your heart. Thank Him for the good night of sleep & the opportunities of this new day. "Lord, cleanse my heart so You can speak to me through the Scriptures. Open my heart. Fill my heart. Make my mind alert, my soul active, & my heart responsive. Lord, surround me with Your presence during this time. Amen."

Now take four minutes to read the Bible. Your greatest need is to hear some word from God. Allow the Word to strike fire in your heart. Meet the Author!

One of the Gospels is a good place to begin reading. Start with the Book of Mark. Read consecutively - verse after verse, chapter after chapter. Don't race, but avoid stopping to do a Bible study on some word, thought, or theological problem which presents itself. Read for the pure joy of reading & allowing God to speak - perhaps just 20 verses, or maybe a complete chapter. When you have finished Mark, start the Gospel of John. Soon you'll want to go ahead & read the entire New Testament.

After God has spoken through His Book, then speak to Him - in prayer. You now have two & a half minutes left for fellowship with Him in four areas of prayer that you can remember by the words ACTS.

A - Adoration. This is the purest kind of prayer because it's all for God - there's nothing in it for you. You don't barge into the presence of royalty. You begin with the proper salutation. So worship Him. Tell the Lord that you love Him. Reflect on His greatness, His power, His majesty, & sovereignty!

C - Confession follows. Having seen Him, you now want to be sure every sin is cleansed & forsaken. Confession comes from a root word meaning "to agree together with." Apply this to prayer. It means to agree with God. Something happened yesterday you called a slight exaggeration - God calls it a lie! You call it strong language - God calls it swearing. You call it telling the truth about somebody in the church - God calls it gossip. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

T - Thanksgiving. Express your gratitude to God. Think of several specific things to thank Him for: your family, your business, your church & ministry responsibilities - even thank Him for hardships. "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

S - Supplication. This means to "ask for, earnestly & humbly." This is the part of your prayer life where you make your petitions known to Him. Ask for others, then for yourself. Why not include other people around the world, such as missionaries, students studying abroad, friends in distant places, & above all, the people of many lands who have yet to hear about Jesus Christ.

Let's put these seven minutes together:

- ½ Prayer for guidance (Psalm 143:8)
- 4 Reading the Bible (Psalm 119:18)
- 2 ½ Prayer
 - Adoration (1 Chronicles 29:11)
 - Confession (1 John 1:9)
 - Thanksgiving (Ephesians 5:20)
 - Supplication (Matthew 7:7)

7 minutes

This is simply a guide. Very soon you will discover that it is impossible to spend only seven minutes with the Lord. An amazing thing happens – seven minutes become 20, & it's not long before you're spending 30 precious minutes with Him. Do not become devoted to the habit, but to the Saviour.

Do it not because other men are doing it - not as a spiritless duty every morning, nor merely as an end in itself, but because God has granted the priceless privilege of fellowship with Himself. Covenant with Him now to guard, nourish, & maintain your morning watch of seven minutes.

What Is Acceptance?

By Bill W.

AA Grapevine - March 1962

One way to get at the meaning of the principle of acceptance is to meditate upon it in the context of AA's much used prayer, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Essentially this is to ask for the resources of grace by which we may make spiritual progress under all conditions. Greatly emphasized in this wonderful prayer is a need for the kind of wisdom that discriminates between the possible and the impossible. We shall also see that life's formidable array of pains and problems will require many different degrees of acceptance as we try to apply this valued principle.

Sometimes we have to find the right kind of acceptance for each day. Sometimes we need to develop acceptance for what may come to pass tomorrow, and yet again we shall have to accept a condition that may never change. Then, too, there frequently has to be a right and realistic acceptance of grievous flaws within ourselves and serious faults within those about us - defects that may not be fully remedied for years, if ever.

All of us will encounter failures, some retrievable and some not. We shall often meet with defeat - sometimes by accident, sometimes self-inflicted, and at still other times dealt to us by the injustice and violence of other people. Most of us will meet up with some degree of worldly success, and here the problem of the right kind of acceptance will be really difficult. Then there will be illness and death. How indeed shall we be able to accept all these?

It is always worthwhile to consider how grossly that good word *acceptance* can be misused. It can be warped to justify nearly every brand of weakness, nonsense, and folly. For instance, we can "accept" failure as a chronic condition, forever without profit or remedy. We can "accept" worldly success pridefully, as something wholly of our own making. We can also "accept" illness and death as certain evidence of a hostile and godless universe. With these twistings of *acceptance*, we AAs have had vast experience. Hence we constantly try to remind ourselves that these perversions of acceptance are just gimmicks for excuse-making: a losing game at which we are, or at least have been, the world's champions.

This is why we treasure our Serenity Prayer so much. It brings a new light to us that can dissipate our old-time and nearly fatal habit of fooling ourselves. In the radiance of this prayer we see that defeat, rightly accepted, need be no disaster. We now know that we do not have to run away, nor ought we again try to overcome adversity by still another bulldozing power drive that can only push up obstacles before us faster than they can be taken down.

On entering AA, we become the beneficiaries of a very different experience. Our new way of staying sober is literally founded upon the proposition that "Of ourselves, we are nothing, the Father doeth the . works." In Steps One and Two of our recovery program, these ideas are specifically spelled out: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives had become unmanageable" - "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." We couldn't lick alcohol with our own remaining resources and so we accepted the further fact that dependence upon a higher power (if only our AA group) could do this hitherto impossible job. The moment we were able to fully accept these facts, our release from the alcohol compulsion had begun. For most of us this pair of acceptances had required a lot of exertion to achieve. Our whole treasured philosophy of self-sufficiency had to be cast aside. This had not been done with old-fashioned willpower; it was instead a matter of developing the willingness to *accept* these new facts of living. We neither ran nor fought. But *accept* we did. And then we were free. There had been no irretrievable disaster.

This kind of acceptance and faith is capable of producing 100 percent sobriety. In fact it usually does; and it must, else we could have no life at all. But the moment we carry these attitudes into our emotional problems, we find that only relative results are possible. Nobody can, for example, become completely free from fear, anger, and pride. Hence in this life we shall attain nothing like perfect humility and love. So we shall have to settle, respecting most of our problems, for a very gradual progress, punctuated sometimes by heavy setbacks. Our old-time attitudes of "all or nothing" will have to be abandoned.

Therefore our very first problem is to accept our present circumstances as they are, ourselves as we are, and the people about us as they are. This is to adopt a realistic humility without which no genuine advance can even begin. Again and again, we shall need to return to that unflattering point of departure. This is an exercise in acceptance that we can profitably practice every day of our lives. Provided we strenuously avoid turning these realistic surveys of the facts of life into unrealistic alibis for apathy or defeatism, they can

be the sure foundation upon which increased emotional health and therefore spiritual progress can be built. At least this seems to be my own experience.

Another exercise that I practice is to try for a full inventory of my blessings and then for a right acceptance of the many gifts that are mine - both temporal and spiritual. Here I try to achieve a state of joyful gratitude. When such a brand of gratitude is repeatedly affirmed and pondered, it can finally displace the natural tendency to congratulate myself on whatever progress I may have been enabled to make in some areas of living. I try hard to hold fast to the truth that a full and thankful heart cannot entertain great conceits. When brimming with gratitude, one's heartbeat must surely result in outgoing love, the finest emotion that we can ever know.

In times of very rough going, the grateful acceptance of my blessings, oft repeated, can also bring me some of the serenity of which our prayer speaks. Whenever I fall under acute pressures I lengthen my daily walks and slowly repeat our Serenity Prayer in rhythm to my steps and breathing. If I feel that my pain has in part been occasioned by others, I try to repeat, "God grant me the serenity to love their best, and never fear their worst." This benign healing process of repetition, sometimes necessary to persist with for days, has seldom failed to restore me to at least a workable emotional balance and perspective.

Another helpful step is to steadfastly affirm the understanding that pain can bring. Indeed pain is one of our greatest teachers. Though I still find it difficult to accept today's pain and anxiety with any great degree of serenity - as those more advanced in the spiritual life seem able to do - I can, if I try hard, give thanks for present pain nevertheless. I find the willingness to do this by contemplating the lessons learned from past suffering - lessons which have led to the blessings I now enjoy. I can remember, if I insist, how the agonies of alcoholism, the pain of rebellion and thwarted pride, have often led me to God's grace, and so to a new freedom. So, as I walk along, I repeat still other phrases such as these, "Pain is the touchstone of progress" . . . "Fear no evil". . . "This, too, will pass" . . . "This experience can be turned to benefit."

These fragments of prayer bring far more than mere comfort. They keep me on the track of right acceptance; they break up my compulsive themes of guilt, depression, rebellion, and pride; and sometimes they endow me with the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

To those who never have given these potent exercises in acceptance a real workout, I recommend them highly the next time the heat is on. Or, for that matter, at any time!

8 Questions to Stay on Track *From the Sober Times Newsletter*

- 1) **Who am I recovering for?** If it's for the spouse, job, court, a cause, or friend/associate I may be missing the mark and have to re-think or redo the whole thing. Experience teaches that sobriety only works, or keeps working, when we do it for ourselves.
- 2) **What am I resisting?** Wherever I find resistance that is where the opportunity for the most growth is. If I am not sure of what I am resisting I just listen to my heart, actually my gut, because when it clenches that's where the opportunity for the most growth lies.
- 3) **What is the lesson here?** I need to remain the student. As soon as I begin to think I'm the teacher I get in trouble. When I just do my work, and do it well, and leave the teaching to God I am most happy and others may benefit from my efforts.
- 4) **What am I not doing that needs to be done?** In not doing I may be lacking the "action" part of the program. "Faith without works is dead." All the knowledge and insight in the world are useless without action. Action is an "absolute" for us in recovery. We have blind spots, even after double-digit years of sobriety, that block us from taking action. We may require a firm but loving person to help us out with this.
- 5) **Am I losing my energy to this?** We pay a price for every negative thought we express, or entertain. It's measured in decreased energy, heightened depressions, indifference, anxiety disorders, insomnia, headaches, high blood pressure, chronic, sometimes serious health problems. We may believe otherwise, but we have to reach the place in sobriety where anger, frustration, worry, and criticism have no place in our daily experience. Until we do, we are losing energy, diluting our focus, and rendering ourselves vulnerable to incoming negative energy that results in negative outcomes.
- 6) **Whom am I giving my power to?** This is one of my favorites . . . Is it God? If it is I will surely get God's Power Back. My power is basically my actions and where my thoughts focus or repeat; that's where I am investing my energy. For example, holding on to something I need to let go of is giving my power away; holding resentments, not letting go of attachments, (aka addictions) is giving my power away; reacting to another person's complaints or criticism or negative behaviors is giving my power away to that person; trying to control others or the outcome of my efforts (or non efforts/non-action) or dealing with them, is giving my power away to that person or thing. The subtle and secret fact is when I don't react, I GROW. Are you "Willing to Grow?"
- 7) **Who's in control?** Control is a big issue for most of us in sobriety, especially when we feel we don't have it. We want to feel in control. However, many things in life are not within our control. So who's driving the bus? May I suggest that there is a step beyond control? It transcends egotistical and emotional bondage to the illusion of control. If we recognize that ultimately we are NOT in control, that we are always subject to a Higher Authority, and if we acknowledge that Higher Power, we can get free from the need to always be IN control. I'd rather turn it over to a loving God and then accept what he brings than to waste my time and effort on trying to produce desired affects.

8) **Am I at peace with myself?** As I have said before, being at peace with myself is when I can look at an issue, person, or problem and feel no subtle or sudden surge of energy/emotion. Being at peace is having closure. It's also about integrity, and feeling certain that I am not touched by or swayed by another person or thing. What do you need to do to be at peace with yourself?

Eleventh Step Guidance Meeting Format

“Big Book” Format
Suggestions and Guidelines

Introduction

Eleventh Step Guidance Meetings are for “anyone or everyone interested in a spiritual way of life.” They are NOT Open Discussion meetings. We share only what we have written or captured on our fingertips prior to or during a ten minute “quiet time.”

Eleventh Step Guidance Meetings are non-smoking as were all Twelve-Step meetings during the early days of the fellowship. We are here to listen to the voice of the “One who has all power” to free us from our addictions; we are not here to talk about or feed our addictions.

Procedure for “Listening”

Be quiet and still.

Relax.

Listen.

Write down the thoughts that come.

Test each thought using the Four Standards of Honesty, Purity, Unself-ishness and Love to separate the God thoughts from the self- thoughts.

Share the guidance that you believe passes the “test” with the other members of the group.

We share what we have written or captured on our fingertips to demonstrate that God does “**disclose Himself to us**” and because sometimes the guidance we receive isn’t for us but for someone else in the room.

Guidelines for the Guidance Meeting

Please identify yourself by your first name only. Do not identify yourself in terms of any addiction or affliction.

No cross talk.

Do not critique or comment on anyone else’s guidance.

If you haven’t written anything down or captured any thoughts on your fingertips, please “pass.”

The typical guidance meeting has 8-14 attendees. Because there is no time limit, the size of the group is important. The meeting ends when everyone has had the opportunity to share his or her guidance

If the meeting consistently lasts more than an hour, you can split into two smaller groups to facilitate sharing.

Before the meeting, explain fingertip guidance.

“Fingertip guidance” came about in the 1930's when an Oxford Group team was in South Africa trying to solve racial problems through the use of two-way prayer. Upon their arrival, the team encountered a black population that could speak English but, because of the lack of education, they could not read or write English.

Faced with this dilemma, the team came up with “fingertip guidance.” This is how it works:

As soon as a thought comes into your mind, touch your thumb to your first finger to capture it.

When another thought comes, capture it by touching your thumb to your second finger.

Keep recording until you either run out of thoughts or fingers.

Keep in mind that even if you only capture one or two thoughts, this is far better than letting all of them slip away.

Eleventh Step Guidance Meeting

“Big Book” Format

Good (morning) (afternoon) (evening) my name is _____ and I will be your facilitator for this Eleventh Step Guidance Meeting.

Please help me open this meeting with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer.

(Serenity Prayer.)

I have asked _____ to read a portion of the “Big Book” on prayer and meditation:

(Read pages 86-88 from the “Big Book.”)

We do not have any dues or fees; however, we do have expenses. We will observe the Seventh Tradition at this time by passing the basket.

(Pass the basket)

We will now take a ten-minute “quiet time” for the purpose of listening to and recording guidance. You are free to leave the room, but please use this time to practice two-way prayer rather than for any other activity

(Ten-minute “quiet time.”)

If anyone needs more time, please raise your hand.

(After everyone is ready,)

Now, we will go around the room asking that you share only what you have written or captured on your fingertips without embellishment or explanation. If you haven’t written anything down, please “pass.”

(If a person starts to explain his or her guidance or starts talking about whatever is on his or her mind, please direct the person back to sharing guidance by saying something like, “I’m sorry to interrupt, but I must ask you to share only what you’ve written down or captured on your fingertips during your ‘quiet time.’ Thank you.”)

(After everyone has had the opportunity to share,)

Is there anyone who heard something during the sharing session that he or she feels was directed towards them in addition to the person who shared it? If so, please tell the group, without identifying the person from whom you received the guidance, what it was that you heard. This is three-way prayer—God speaking to us through others. If this has happened to you, please raise your hand.

(Have those who raise their hands share their examples of three-way prayer.)

I would like to thank each of you for participating, either by sharing or by listening.

Please remain seated. We will close this meeting with the Lord’s Prayer.

Eleventh Step Guidance Meeting

Directions for Prayer and Meditation

“Big Book” pp. 85-88

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

WHEN WE RETIRE AT NIGHT, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God’s forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.

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

IN THINKING ABOUT OUR DAY we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don’t struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.

We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.

But this is not all. There is action and more action. “Faith without works is dead.”

Test for self-will / God’s Will

From the “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous

| <u>Step 4</u> | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| <u>BB pg.67</u> | <u>Absolute</u> |
| (self-will) | (God’s Will) |
| selfish | unselfishness |
| dishonest | honesty |
| self-seeking | purity |
| frightened | love |

| <u>Step 10</u> | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| <u>BB pg.84</u> | <u>Absolute</u> |
| (self-will) | (God’s Will) |
| selfishness | unselfishness |
| dishonesty | honesty |
| resentment | purity |
| fear | love |

| <u>Step 11</u> | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| <u>BB pg.86</u> | <u>Absolute</u> |
| (self-will) | (God’s Will) |
| resentful | purity |
| selfish | unselfishness |
| dishonest | honesty |
| afraid | love |

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The Five Finger Prayer

1. Your thumb is nearest to you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember. To pray for our loves ones is, as C. S. Lewis once said, a “sweet duty.”

2. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct, and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right directions. Keep them in your prayers.

3. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God's guidance.

4. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger, as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.

5. Lastly comes our little finger, the smallest finger of all. Which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, "the least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinky should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

ORIGINAL THIRD STEP PRAYER

As Used by DR. BOB

Dear God,

I'm sorry about the mess I've made of my life.

I want to turn away from all the wrong things I've ever done and all the wrong things I've ever been. Please forgive me for it all.

I know You have the power to change my life and can turn me into a winner. Thank You, God for getting my attention long enough to interest me in trying it Your way.

God, please take over the management of my life and everything about me. I am making this conscious decision to turn my will and my life over to Your care and am asking You to please take over all parts of my life.

Please, God, move into my heart.

How ever You do it is Your business, but make Yourself real inside me and fill my awful emptiness. Fill me with your love and Holy Spirit and make me know Your will for me. And now, God, help Yourself to me and keep on doing it. I'm not sure I want You to, but do it anyhow.

I rejoice that I am now a part of Your people, that my uncertainty is gone forever, and that You now have control of my will and my life. Thank You and praise Your name.

Amen.

ORIGINAL SEVENTH STEP PRAYER

As Used by DR. BOB

Dear God

I am coming to You on my knees in all humility to humbly ask You to forgive all my past wrongs and to remove all my defects of character. I want to start a new life today, and I ask You to help me do so and to keep helping if I keep asking.

In Step Three, I turned my will and my life over to Your care.

Thank You for taking complete control of my life, and thank You for this opportunity to wipe my slate clean and start my life anew.

In Steps Four, Five and Six I have completed my moral inventory and admitted to myself and another person the exact nature of my wrongs. I now admit these wrongs to You, God.

I am entirely ready to ask and pray now that You please remove from me every single defect of character. Specifically, I ask You to remove the following shortcomings listed in my Fourth Step moral inventory:

(Read aloud here those defects from your list.)

Thank You, God, for this opportunity for a new beginning in my life and a chance to be a part of the solutions in life instead of the problems. Please grant me wisdom, knowledge and strength as I go out from here to do Your work and live the Victorious Life You designed for me.

Thank You, God, for the steps which will make Your plan for my life clear to me. Thank You and praise Your name.

Amen.

The Set-Aside Prayer *

"Dear God, please set aside everything I think I know

[about myself, my disease, the Big Book, the 12 Steps, the Program, the Fellowship, the people in the fellowship, and all spiritual terms, especially you God] so I may have an open mind and a new experience [with all these things]. Please help me see the Truth. Amen."

* "The Set-Aside Prayer" (sometimes referred to as the "Lay-Aside Prayer"), as stated here, is not word-for-word stated in the Big Book; but statements and ideas that have inspired the prayer can be found in the Big Book on the pages given below and are highlighted in bold font. The words used above, excluding those in the brackets, comprise the prayer in its purest form. Feel free to adapt or modify the bracketed words as needed. Our spiritual advisors have found that this prayer seems to have a profound affect when used while taking someone through Steps 1 and 2 out of the Big Book.

Page 42, ¶ 2: “But the program of action, though entirely sensible, was pretty drastic. It meant I would have to throw several lifelong conceptions out of the window.”

Page 46, ¶ 1: “We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results...”

Page 47, ¶ 1: “When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you.”

Page 47, ¶ 4: “Besides a seeming inability to accept much on faith, we often found ourselves handicapped by obstinacy, sensitiveness, and unreasoning prejudice. Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things make us bristle with antagonism. This sort of thinking had to be abandoned. **Though some of us resisted,** we found no great difficulty in casting aside such feelings. **Faced with alcoholic destruction,** we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. **In this respect alcohol was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process;** we hope no one else will prejudiced for as long as some of us were.”

Page 49, ¶ 2: “We, who have traveled this dubious path, beg you to lay aside prejudice, even against organized religion.”

Page 58, ¶ 3: “Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.”

Open Mind Prayer

"My Creator, let the ears of our hearts be open tonight. Usually Father, when we hear something new we will compare it to our own ideas. If it is the same we will accept it and say that it is correct. If it is not, we will say it is incorrect. In either case we will learn nothing. Father, help us to always listen with an open mind and an open heart so that you can penetrate the soil of our minds which can then lead us to new experiences." - Mark H.

POCKET READINGS

during "Crisis Times"

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(Every moment you feel anxious, bored, restless, irritable, discontent, take this out and read it. Some days in the past, I read it a hundred times. Peace will come if you keep using this tool. In fact, try reading it daily, in or out of crisis, and see what happens in your life!)

*I will leave the care of ____, ____, and ____ in the more capable hands of God.

*I release ____ and her/his future to God.

*I release my child/children to God, the real Parent of all our children (and us).

*I will have no expectations.

*I will make no demands.

*What I resist persists.

*I will cease fighting anybody or anything--I will resist nothing.

*I do not have the power to drive anyone crazy. Each is responsible for doing the work necessary for peace of mind.

*I do not have the power to make anyone stay, or go.

*I do not have the power to make anyone happy or miserable.

*I will love all, even those whose behavior I do not like.

*My goal is peace (of mind).

*My function is to forgive.

*After that, my function is to refuse to judge so that I do not have to forgive.

*There is a rhythm in the universe; I will move to that rhythm. I will relax and take it easy--right now. I will be the water and just flow.

*I am not God, so I do not know what is good or what is bad. In fact, everything just IS, and what IS right now will work out in the future.

*God will take charge only when I stop trying to be the protector or the director.

*I wish for others what I wish for myself--and more.

*I will not seek love; I will just love.

*The present moment is a wonderful moment. Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile. Dwelling in the present moment, I KNOW each micro-second is a wonderful moment.

*I will THINK LESS. The past is gone. The future is not yet here. The past is only an IMAGE in my mind of the way I thought it was--and it wasn't really that way. The future is an IMAGE in my mind of the way I imagine things will be, as if I have THAT capability. HA! I will not allow my thoughts and feelings to be controlled by IMAGES (illusions) that are not even real.

*Everything really is going to be OK.

Earle M. Memorial Prayer

Dear God,
Help me to realize this day that it is Your will,
not mine that is to be done, and then do it.
Help me to accept myself as I am,
but to constantly hope that I may become better.
Help me to forgive, to love and to accept others
but to ask for absolutely nothing in return.
Help me to be grateful for what I have and to accept
more only if You will it.
Help me to receive tenderness as well as give it.
Help me to be honest and sincere with myself,
but to remember with a smile how little I am.
Help me, above all, to have utter faith in You as
my friend and leader.
Help me to recreate the mood of this prayer
every twenty-four hours.

An Alcoholic's Anonymous Prayer

Almighty God, I humbly pray,
Lead me and guide me through this day.
Cast out my selfishness and sin,
Open my heart to let You in.
Help me now as I blindly stray
Over the pitfalls along the way.
Let me have courage to face each task,
Invest me with patience and love, I ask.
Care for me through each hour today,
Strengthen and guard me now, I pray.

As I forgive, forgive me too,
Needing Your mercy as I do.
Oh, give me Your loving care,
Never abandon me to despair.
Yesterday's wrongs I would seek to right,
Make me more perfect in Your sight.
Oh, teach me to live as best I can,
Use me to help my fellow man.
Save me from acts of bitter shame,
I humbly ask it in Your name.

~~ Anonymous ~~

The Mind and Our Thought-Life

“WE control our thoughts by controlling our self talk. At any moment we choose, we can talk to ourselves differently. The fight comes with the emotions that are attached to our thoughts. If our emotion is high and seems to be out of control, we can say to ourselves STOP IT!, take a few deep breaths, then ask the Creator for the right thought or the right decision or the right action. If we practice this for a while, our thought life will be different. It helps if in the morning we ask God to direct our thinking. God loves to help us.” - “Meditations with Native American Elders”, by Don Coyhis

"The mind is a superb instrument if used rightly. Used wrongly, however, it becomes very destructive. To put it more accurately, it is not so much that you use your mind wrongly - you usually don't use it at all. It uses YOU. This is the disease. You believe that you ARE your mind. This is the delusion. The instrument has taken you over." - “The Power of Now”, by Eckhart Tolle

“When people use the expression “I'm going out of my mind” or “he went out of his mind” to describe an outbreak of rage, depression, fear or the like, they are actually speaking incorrectly. The reason we exhibit these emotions on such an extreme level is because we have become identified with the mind. We have "become involved" with the emotion, so to speak. We have allowed the mind to "take possession" of our-"self", rather than just watching the anger or self-pity like one would watch a scene on a movie screen. The mind is like a movie screen. If a character on the screen threatens your life you don't react to it, do you? No. Because you know it's not real. Well, when we react to the characters on our personal movie screen - the mind - we are reacting to something that is not of Reality. So instead of saying "I'm going out of my mind", one can pause, take a step back, watch, observe with no judgments, and recognize that "I am going too far INTO my mind". Once this is recognized you are back into the here-now - back in Reality, and

identification with the mind has been broken. When identification with the mind has been broken, then one has gone beyond the mind. Going "out of my mind" is actually the solution, rather than the problem." ☺ - Mike L.

Sadness as a Meditation

Sadness can become a very enriching experience. You have to work on it. It is easy to escape from your sadness - and all relationships ordinarily are escapes; one simply goes on avoiding it. And it is always there underneath...the current continues. Even in relationship it erupts many times. Then one tends to throw the responsibility on the other, but it is not the real thing. It is your loneliness, your own sadness. You have not settled with it yet, so it will erupt again and again.

You can escape in work. You can escape in some occupation, in relationship and society, this and that, in traveling, but it is not going to go away, because it is part of your being.

Every man is born alone - in the world, but alone; comes through the parents, but alone. And every man dies alone, again moves out of the world alone. And between these two lonelinesses we go on deceiving and fooling ourselves. It is good to take courage and enter into this loneliness. However hard and difficult it may look in the beginning, it pays tremendously. Once you settle with it, once you start enjoying it, once you feel it not as sadness but as silence, once you understand that there is no way to escape, you relax.

Nothing can be done about it, so why not enjoy it? Why not go into it deeply and have a taste of it, see what it is? Why be unnecessarily afraid? If it is going to be there and it is a fact - existential, not accidental - then why not come to terms with it? Why not move into it and see what it is?

Whenever you feel sad, sit silently and allow sadness to come; don't try to escape from it. Make yourself as sad as you can. Don't avoid it - that's the one thing to remember. Cry, weep...have the whole taste of it. Cry to death...fall down on the earth...roll - and let it go by itself. Don't force it to go; it will go, because nobody can remain in a permanent mood.

When it goes you will be unburdened, absolutely unburdened, as if the whole gravitation has disappeared and you can fly, weightless. That is the moment to enter yourself. First bring sadness. The ordinary tendency is not to allow it, to find some ways and means so that you can look somewhere else - to go to the restaurant, to the swimming pool, meet friends, read a book or go to a movie, play a guitar - to do something, so that you can be engaged and you can put your attention somewhere else.

This is to be remembered - when you are feeling sad, don't lose the opportunity. Close the doors, sit down, and feel as sad as you can, as if the whole world is just a hell. Go deep into it...sink into it. Allow every sad thought to penetrate you, every sad emotion to stir you. And cry and weep and say things - say them loudly, there is nothing to worry about.

So first live sadness for a few days, and the moment that momentum of sadness goes, you will feel very calm, peaceful - as one feels after a storm. In that moment sit silently and enjoy the silence that is coming on its own. You have not brought it; you were bringing sadness. When sadness goes, in the wake, silence settles.

Listen to that silence. Close your eyes. Feel it...feel the very texture of it...the fragrance. And if you feel happy, sing, dance. - Osho: "Meditation: The First and Last Freedom"

"Remember, please remember, do not fight sadness. Watch it, and experience it; but just be aware that it (the sadness) is an experience and it (the sadness) is not You. Also, the sadness is not a bad thing. In the World of the Spirit, there is no question of good or bad.....all just is. Then peace flows from within you. Remember, You go much deeper than what you appear to be. If you continue to go WITHIN, you never have to go WITHOUT again." – Anonymous

Meditation on Compassion

"Love is a mind that brings peace, joy, and happiness to another person. Compassion is a mind that removes the suffering that is present in the other. We all have the seeds of love and compassion in our minds, and we can develop these fine and wonderful sources of energy. We can nurture the unconditional love that does not expect anything in return and therefore does not lead to anxiety and sorrow.

The essence of love and compassion is understanding, the ability to recognize the physical, material, and psychological suffering of others, to put ourselves 'inside the skin' of the other. We 'go inside' their body, feelings, and mental formations, and witness for ourselves their suffering. Shallow observation as an outsider is not enough to see their sufferings. We must become one with the object of our observation. When we are in contact with another's sufferings, a feeling of compassion is born in us. Compassion means, literally, 'to suffer with'.

We begin by choosing as the object of our meditation someone who is undergoing physical or material suffering, someone who is weak and easily ill, poor or oppressed, or has no protection. This kind of suffering is easy for us to see. After that, we can practice being in contact with more subtle forms of suffering. Sometimes the other person does not seem to be suffering at all, but we may notice that he has sorrows, which have left their mark in hidden ways. People with more than enough material comforts also suffer. We look deeply at the person who is the object of our meditation on compassion, both during sitting meditation and when we are actually in contact with him. We must allow enough time to be really in deep contact with his suffering. We continue to observe him until compassion arises and penetrates our being.

When we observe deeply in this way, the fruit of our meditation will naturally transform into some kind of action. We will not just say, 'I love him very much,' but instead, 'I will do something so that he will suffer less.' The mind of compassion is truly present when it is effective in removing another person's suffering. We have to find ways to nourish and express our compassion. When we come into contact with the other person, our thoughts and actions should express our mind of compassion, even if that person says or does things that are not easy to accept. We practice in this way until we see clearly that our love is not contingent upon the other person being lovable. Then we can know that our mind of compassion is firm and authentic. We ourselves will be more at ease, and the

person who has been the object of our meditation will also benefit eventually. His suffering will slowly diminish, and his life will gradually be brighter and more joyful as a result of our compassion.

We can also meditate on the sufferings of those who cause us to suffer. Anyone who has made us suffer is undoubtedly suffering too. We only need to follow our breathing and look deeply, and naturally we will see his suffering. A part of his difficulties and sorrows may have been brought about by his parents' lack of skill when he was still young. But his parents themselves may have been victims of their parents; the suffering has been transmitted from generation to generation and been reborn in him. If we see that, we will no longer blame him for making us suffer, because we know he is also a victim. To look deeply is to understand. Once we understand the reasons he has acted badly, our bitterness towards him will vanish, and we will long for him to suffer less. We will feel cool and light, and we can smile. We do not need the other person to be present in order to bring about reconciliation. When we look deeply, we become reconciled with ourselves, and, for us, the problem no longer exists. Sooner or later, he will see our attitude and will share in the freshness of the stream of love which is flowing naturally from our heart." - Thick Nhat Hanh

Be Still

Stillness is accomplished through the act of meditation, which is stilling of the physical/conscious mind to all external stimuli. Continuous, contemplative thought given to truth. A steady effort of the mind to know and hear the voice of God from within the being. The act of "not doing" in an attempt to expand the awareness of "being". When we quiet the conscious mind to hear the Divine presence.

In the beginning, we are tiny little beings with no eyes, ears, noses, or mouths. This means we are quiet. We don't know whether we are black or white, male or female, rich or poor, attractive or not. We do not work, but we do not think of ourselves as being lazy or nonproductive. We have no responsibilities to or for ourselves or others. We are not consciously aware that we know anything. Since we don't know that we know, we do not think of ourselves as being inferior for not knowing. In the beginning we are content to grow into life, into being. People understand that we are in a growth process, and they leave us alone, to grow on our own. If we are lucky in our do-nothing, know-nothing state, the people who know about us, those who know we are growing, are happy for us and about us. They love us, sight unseen. If we are not so lucky, the people who know about us may be quite upset, frantic as a matter of fact, but it doesn't matter. We will still grow. There is a power, a force of life in and around us that loves us even though the people around us are frantic. It is that force of life around us that helps us to grow. The help is free. It asks for nothing in return. And you know what? Even though we look pretty weird floating around in the dark, the force stays with us, showering us with love. It is this force of life that ensures that all of our important parts are in the right places. It is this energy of life that makes sure we have enough to eat. This forceful energy protects us in the dark. Moves us through it while we are on the inside so that we can make it on the outside. The energy I am referring to, the energy that has been with us and in us since the beginning, is the spirit of the Divine. Once we are born, we forget all about this divine energy of life that once put us together. Perhaps it is because we cannot see this energy with our eyes. It is much like the currents of electricity that move through the wires of the television. We plug the set in, push the "on" button, and presto! - there's the picture. We know there is a hidden power at work, but we don't really think about it. We hardly ever talk about it. We also know that if we do not plug the television set in or turn it on it will do absolutely nothing. We realize that the invisible presence of electricity will produce what it is we desire. The power of the Divine works in exactly the same manner. Its invisible presence is the energy we need in order to be activated. Just like the television, you must first be idle in order to be activated. When a television is activated it will produce currents of sound that can be heard and light that can be seen. You, on the other hand, must turn off all currents of sound and light in order to get plugged in. The act of meditation is the best way to get plugged in and turned on to the power of the Divine.

Go back to the beginning. Have no eyes, no ears, no voice. Know nothing. Do nothing. Be nothing. This is the best description of meditation I can offer. You must be able to allow yourself to float in a sea of darkness. This means you must learn to let go. Let go of all thoughts about yourself, your responsibilities in life, opinions about yourself, your desires, and the fears. Meditation enables you to let go of what you know. In order to meditate, you must accept that the invisible power, the force of life that moves through you, will provide everything you need. Think of it this way: You floated around in the darkness of the womb for nine months and turned out okay. Is it so difficult to return to that state for five, ten, or fifteen minutes a day? Is it not worth a try?

I have not kept count of the number of times people have said to me, "I don't know how to meditate." or, "It's hard to meditate. I feel stupid just sitting there doing nothing!" For those who feel that way, I offer this suggestion. You are not "doing nothing". You are plugging in. You are activating the power. You are remembering from whence you came. You are moving yourself out of the way and allowing the divine force of life to move into your being. It will be difficult only if you think of it as difficult. When I first started to meditate, I had an elaborate plan. Candles. Incense. A special mat and a garment. It would take me twenty minutes to get ready to sit down. Once I did, I had expectations. I wanted to float like the swami I had once studied with. My goal was to focus my energy and attention to such a degree that my 140 pound butt would be lifted off the mat. Needless to say, it never happened. It did not because I was busy trying to make it happen. I took a desire into the act of meditation that kept my mind so occupied that it never got still enough for me to plug into the power that would help me float.

"Be still and know!" Stillness is the key. Still the mind. Still the body. Still the need to be anything in order to get plugged in. Once you are plugged in, the power is activated. The energy begins to move. Anything you need to know, you will know. If there is anything you need to do, you will be instructed. You may see something. You may not. You may hear something. You may not. No matter what does or does not happen, you will know you have been activated, energized, and renewed. How will you know? Trust me, you will know, and the evidence will not be the same for everyone.

I am tempted to give you instructions about how to breathe, how to sit, where to sit. I will resist that temptation because I suspect the instructions will confuse you into thinking there is a right way and a wrong way. There are those who will tell you to focus on a word.

For some, that is a good place to start. Others will say you should chant aloud or mentally. That also works. In the past, I have said you must breathe deeply, rhythmically, in order to still the mind and access the power of the Divine. I still believe that, and I know it works for me. However, because I believe more in the necessity to meditate than I do in any one correct way to do it, I will say simply BE STILL AND KNOW there is a universal power seeking an outlet through you. The instrument of this power is your mind. When you still the mind to all outside influences and internal chatter, the power will become activated. BE STILL AND KNOW there is nothing more important than the time you spend in the presence of the universal power. For those few moments of the day, people must leave you alone. You must give yourself up and over to the invisible force of life. The results of this stillness, silence, and act of trust will be growth. You will grow in mental ability and spiritual understanding. You will grow in awareness and ability. You will grow in consciousness. You will grow in your divinity. I do offer you one small suggestion. I suggest that you begin all meditation with prayer. It has been said that prayer is when we talk to the Divine and meditation is when we listen. If we begin by talking to the Divine about what we would like to know, we will receive the appropriate response. Getting a response, however, must not be the goal. We must know that once the need is put forth in the form of a prayer, the response will be forthcoming. It may not come today, but it will come. When we take goals into meditation we run the risk of being disappointed or discouraged. I would also suggest that meditation becomes the primary source of spiritual nourishment in your life. In the same way we feed our bodies three times a day, we should feed our spirit. Just as we would never consider running our car without gas, we should not consider running our lives without the power of the Divine. Think of meditation as a pit stop. You must stop every now and then to check in, making sure all systems are go! - Iyanla Vanzant

An Inventory for Those Who Disturb Us

Write an inventory of all the things that are good & right about the people that disturbed you in your life. – Joe H.

Serenity Prayer Exercise

(Meditate on one line per day):

(Day 1) God...

(Day 2) Grant me the Serenity

(Day 3) To accept the things I cannot change

(Day 4) Courage to change the things I can

(Day 5) Wisdom to know the difference

Third Step Prayer Exercise

(Meditate on one line per day):

(Day 1) God, I offer myself to Thee -

(Day 2) To build with me and do with me as Thou wilt.

(Day 3) Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.

(Day 4) Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life.

(Day 5) May I do Thy will always!

Seventh Step Prayer Exercise

(Meditate on one line per day):

(Day 1) My Creator

(Day 2) I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad.

(Day 3) I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows.

(Day 4) Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding. Amen.

Books With Spiritual Exercises & Prayers

“The Four Agreements Companion Book” (to be used AFTER reading “The Four Agreements” by don Miguel Ruiz); “Experiencing The Power of Now” (to be used AFTER reading “The Power of Now” by Eckhart Tolle); “One Day My Soul Just Opened Up” by Iyanla Vanzant; “Loving What Is” by Byron Katie (see website www.thework.org for “Judge Your Neighbor” worksheets); “Sermon On The Mount” by Emmet Fox (meditate on each essay about each line of the “Our Father” at the back of this book); “Serenity: A Companion for Twelve Step Recovery” (a way through the Bible using the 12 Steps, ISBN: 0-8407-1542-0); “A 12 Step Approach to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius” by Jim Harbaugh; “A Course In Miracles” (there are three parts to the Course - please work with the Workbook for Students first, read the Manual for Teachers second, & read the Text last); “A Mini Course For Life” & “Love Is Letting Go of Fear” & “Forgiveness: The Greatest Healer of All” by Gerald Jampolsky; “Legacy of the Heart: The Spiritual Advantages of a Painful Childhood” & “How, Then, Shall We Live?” by Wayne Muller; “The 12 Step Prayer Book Vol. 1 & 2”; “Illuminata” by Marianne Williamson; “Active Meditations for Contemplative Prayer” by Thomas Keating; “Awareness” & “A Way to Love” by Anthony de Mello; “The Dark Side of the Light Chasers” & “Spiritual Divorce” by Debbie Ford; “The Little Book of Letting Go” by Hugh Prather; “The Way of Liberation” by Adyashanti; Journey Into Now” by Leonard Jacobson; “Essential Spirituality” by Roger Walsh; “Experiencing God Day-By-Day: The Devotional and Journal” (to be used AFTER reading “Experiencing God” by Henry T. Blackaby); “The Practice of the Presence of God” by Brother Lawrence; “30-Day Mental Diet” by Willis Kinnear; “Meditation in a New York Minute” by Mark Thornton; Two great 3-CD sets on meditation - “True Meditation” by

Adyashanti & "Meditations For A New Earth" with Kim Eng & Eckhart Tolle; Great DVD on meditation - "Meditation for Beginners" by Jack Kornfield (the DVD is better than the CD & the book of this)

Are You Sure?

If there is a rope in your path and you perceive it as a snake, fear-based thinking will follow. The more erroneous your perception, the more incorrect your thinking will be. Please write the words "Are you sure?" on a large piece of paper and hang it where you will see it often. Ask yourself this question again and again. Wrong perceptions cause incorrect thinking and unnecessary suffering. - Thich Nhat Hanh

A "Staying Connected" Tip

Get a wristwatch that beeps every hour, and acknowledge God for a minute each hour.

"My Way Is Not Working!"

"No!" he shouted, smashing his fist on the kitchen bar, eyes glaring. "I'm right, and you know I'm right! There's no way I'm wrong! I know what I'm doing...now be quiet and leave me alone!"

And so she did, and so did his kids, and he cried quietly, alone, as they left and his life fell apart...

...because he had to be right.

Had to be the one with all the "right" answers for himself and everyone else. The one who "knew best" and told everyone else what they had to think, do, and believe to fit in with what he believed was "right".

But what he DIDN'T know was that he'd become an arrogant jerk. A know-it-all petty dictator who had to have things HIS way...and that was the real reason he was now losing the people he loved most.

Go after them? Apologize? Admit he'd been wrong? Ask them to forgive him? Change?

Forgetaboutit!

Because in his mind he'd been RIGHT...been the way he'd been taught to be all his life. The way his father has been and his grandfather before him. So he chose, as dumb as it seems and as much as it hurt, to stay locked in his old box, his old thinking, and be "right"...instead of happy.

Feel like you've hit the wall? Like you're going nowhere fast? Scared? Could well be you're stuck in the "gotta be right" box, and it's time to break out and find some new answers so you can get more of what you're after.

How?

1) Begin by admitting it when what you're doing isn't working anymore.

How will you know?

Easy: you hurt and life sucks!

The secret? DO NOT paste on a happy face and "make the best of it". Tell yourself the truth: this game is over and it's time to move on.

2) Accept that the real reason things aren't working is because some of your old beliefs aren't working anymore. Maybe they used to, but things have changed. If some part of you, for example, still believes "father knows best" and you're trying to live that out, you're in for a world of hurt. Why? Because what's true is the only person who knows best for you is you. And you only know what's best for YOU, not every-one else. To try and live any other way is to invite misery.

3) Admit there ARE other ways to believe, think, and act that are equally valid. And that's hard, because most of us have been trained to believe that our way is THE way and other ways are wrong! So we stubbornly refuse to even consider the possibility of another way...until we hurt so badly we've got to. Like a friend of mine who refused to even consider acupuncture and other alternative therapies until he'd exhausted all his old remedies and still hurt so bad he had no other choice.

4) Find some new out-of-the-box beliefs and use them to take different actions.

How?

Do it the quick way: hang out with people who don't think and live the way you do, and let them expose you to new ways of thinking and being that will blow up your box! Yea, I know...too scary, and, of course, those "weirdo's are wrong". Maybe... but I'll bet you good money they'll expose you to new ways of thinking and being that'll break you free and help you finally get what you want.

5) Finally, find some people who've already gotten out of the box you're trying to get out of...people who've already got what you want... and ask them for help. That's right, ASK THEM...and then let the help in when they give it.

Will all this work? Sure...IF you'd rather be happy than just be right.

Guidance Prayers

Lord, what would you have me do, where would you have me go, what would you have me say & to whom? – A Course In Miracles
OR

Lord, take me where you want me to go. Let me meet who you want me to meet. Tell me what you want me to say. And keep me out of the way. – A prayer on a business card of Father Mychal Judge, Chaplain of the New York Fire Department, struck and killed by falling debris 9/11/01 at World Trade Center attack.

All For The Sake of God

A Female Spiritual Teacher from India: "This body has lived with father, mother, husband and all. This body has served the husband so you may call it a wife, it has prepared dishes for all so you can call it a cook, it has done all sorts of scrubbing and menial work so you can call it a servant. But if you look at the thing from another standpoint you will realize that this body has served none but God, for when I serve my father, mother, husband and others I simply considered them as different manifestations of the Almighty, and serve them as such. When I sat down to prepare food, I did so as if it were a ritual, for the food cooked was, after all, for God. Whatever I did, I did in the spirit of Divine service. Hence, I was not quite worldly, though always engaged in household activities. I had but one ideal – to serve all as God, to do everything for the sake of God."

A View From Above

At the end of my freshman year of college, I came back to stay with my parents on Long Island, and I took a summer job at a law firm in Manhattan. I remember what it felt like on my commute to work each morning, popping out of a subterranean, dark, Bosch-like netherworld of subways and train tunnels, not knowing exactly where I was. During my first days at my job, I walked out onto the teeming streets during lunch hour, and all I knew was that I was someplace in midtown, whatever THAT meant. People were swirling around like floodwaters in those concrete canyons amidst skyscrapers that were so densely constructed that even at midday, the sun was completely hidden. I had no orientation, no sense of direction. Where was I? I remember walking around with no idea of where I was going, feeling somewhat nervous that I would not find my way back to the office, and then suddenly I came upon a bus stop and a blow-up map of Manhattan. I saw that if I wanted to amble, it was just a short walk to Central Park and an easy stroll to the Museum of Modern Art. Rockefeller Center was just a block or two away, and if I wanted to venture further after work, I could get on the Fifth Avenue bus and go straight down to Greenwich Village, a favorite teenage haunt of mine. The large blow-up subway map provided me with a view from above, instantly rescuing me from the bewildered feeling that I was lost in a maze. I knew where I was, and I knew what was around me, and I saw how it all fit together.

Spiritually speaking, we've all experienced feelings of being so lost in the dense thickets of our lives that we can't see the paths or figure out how large the forest really is. At those times we lack an overview, a world map, an awareness of the bigger picture. But some people seem to have a deeper and better sense of who they are, where they are standing, and where they are going. They seem to have a better sense of how to navigate the highways and byways of life without losing their way. Simply put, they seem to have a better sense of their spiritual center. This is like having an internal compass, an internal true-ing device. – Lama Surya Das

Thoughts on Death

A sick man turned to his doctor, as he was preparing to leave the examination room and said, "Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side."

Very quietly, the doctor said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? You, a spiritual man, do not know what is on the other side?"

The doctor was holding the handle of the door; on the other side of which came a sound of scratching and whining, and as he opened the door, a dog sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness. Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing...I know my Master is there and that is enough."

The Law of Motive

Happiness is not so much a matter of WHAT you think, or WHAT you say, or WHAT you do; it's not even in WHAT happens to YOU. But rather, it's HOW you think what you think, HOW you say what you say, HOW you do what you do, HOW you experience what you experience. In plain language, that means that whatever you think, say, do, or experience, if you do so out of AWARENESS, out of KINDNESS, out of COMPASSION, out of HONESTY, out of INSIGHT and UNDERSTANDING, out of GENEROSITY, the result, both immediately and down the road, will be one of joy, happiness, peace, freedom, and beauty, not only for you, but often those around you. If, on the other hand, you think, speak, act, or experience out of self-centered motives such as greed, anger, control, competitiveness, dishonesty, denial, ignorance, or the intention to cause harm, the result, both immediately and down the road, will be one of confusion, suffering and ugliness. So, again, the art of being happy, joyous, free, and at peace is not in the WHAT, it is in the HOW. – Scott Morrison

Meditations to Consider

If you see what needs to be repaired and how to repair it, then you have found a piece of the world that God has left for you to complete. But if you ONLY see what is wrong and how ugly it is, then it is yourself that needs repair.

Meditate on this: "What could you not accept, if you but knew that everything that happens, all events, past, present and to come, are gently planned by One Whose only purpose is your good?" – A Course In Miracles

Meditate on this: "Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. 'How can I best serve Thee, Thy will (not mine) be done.'" – Big Book page 85

Meditate on this: "It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us." – 12 & 12 page 90

GRATITUDE INVENTORY

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| <p>I listed people, institutions principles, and situations for which I am grateful. I am grateful for:</p> | <p>I asked myself why I am grateful? The cause:</p> | <p>In most cases it was found that the following was positively affected. Affects my:</p> | <p>Putting out of my mind what others did, I resolutely looked for how I contributed to my gratitude. What did I do or not do to positively get the ball rolling? Did I remember to do it anonymously & not take credit for it? Could I have done it any better? Where did my unselfishness, honesty, thinking of others, loving-kindness, faith, forgiveness and consideration contribute to this?</p> |
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