

Meditation

“There are as many methods in which one can meditate as there are waves in the ocean.”

I. Big Book Meditation

Meditation is mentioned in the Big Book a half a dozen times. It is also discussed at length in the Twelve and Twelve on the chapter on the Eleventh Step. The Big Book appears to describe what may be called a “reflective” or more “contemplative meditation”. It describes what we can call “AA Mornings” and “AA Nights”, reflective times where we consider our sober place in the world (pg.86, BB). It goes on say that, “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 (pg.87, BB).

This is your “standard”, recovery-style meditation. It is often combined with the use of “meditation books”, many of which are published by Hazelden. An excellent one, that actually originated from the early spiritual publication, “The Upper Room” (used by early AA members) is “The 24 Hour a Day Book.” Of the *A. A. General Service Conference Approved* literature, “Daily Reflections” and “As Bill Sees It” may be used, although they’re more secular than spiritual in nature.

One may also use a special line or phrase in the Big Book. When I was struggling early in my recovery I used these two brief lines from “Bill’s Story” (pg.12):

*“It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself.
Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.”*

A special prayer, like “The Serenity Prayer” can be used in meditation and contemplated silently over and over like a “mantra.” A *mantra* (*mohn-trah*) can be a word or phrase repeated to aid our memory. Thus when we repeat the Buddha's name, Christ or Allah, we're remembering them. They can also symbolize and communicate a certain energy or deity, as well as erase bad habit energy by substituting positive consciousness. Hindus might chant, "Om." Christians, "Amen" or "Alleluia." Muslims, "Allah." Jews, "Shalom." Mantras can be recited aloud or mentally. There is a form of Christian contemplative meditation called “*Centering Prayer*”, where one repeats to oneself a sacred word or phrase. In “recovery” this could be “**Thy Will Be Done Not Mine.**”

II. Traditional Contemplative Meditation

The *Twelve and Twelve* states that “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” (pg. 98, 12 & 12).

The Big Book (pg. 87) suggests, “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 have to offer.” This suggests that we “keep an open mind” in regards to meditation, prayer and spiritual practice in general. The following are forms of meditation which require concentration on a variety of concepts, selecting some and excluding others. There is an inward focus to the exclusion of outward stimuli.

Examples of Contemplation Meditation Techniques

AFFIRMATIONS are positive statements that are developed and repeated over and over. Example: “*Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better.*”

VISUALIZATION AND GUIDED IMAGERY. Often called "self-hypnosis", imagery is used to effect change in the outer world. Athletes use imagery to mentally rehearse performance for greater results and to enter their “zone”. Healing imagery can stimulate the body's response to stress, pain and dis-ease.

PRAYER is the oldest form of contemplation meditation. Simple, sincere prayer to your Higher Power repeated silently to your self, works wonders. Prayer is a potent form of meditation and can be practiced anytime, anywhere.

KOAN meditation originates in Japan. A Koan is a riddle that must be contemplated upon until the answer reveals itself. A common Koan is "What did you look like before your parents were born?" The answer comes not from our dualistic mind, but from our deeper mind. Trying to answer this question sends the mind spinning back and back, until, exhausted, it gives up and access to the Higher Self is provided. Years may be spent in Koan contemplation.

INQUIRY is another form of potent contemplation meditation. In inquiry, you sit and relax and then begin to ask yourself. "Who Am I?". Accept any answers that come but do not dwell on them. Then repeat the question, "Who Am I?" Again, wait for the answers to come, then repeat the question. Eventually, if you stick with it, you will enter an area of truth and wisdom deep within yourself.

II. Self-Forgetting

In the “12 & 12” (pg. 99) *the Saint Francis Prayer* says, “For it is by *self-forgetting* that one finds.” Bill W. later explains that the man who uttered this prayer “wanted to become a “*channel*”. Then asked for the *grace* to bring *love, forgiveness, harmony, truth, faith, hope, light, and joy* to every human being he could. This he would try and do by what he called *self-forgetting*. Bill then asks us: What did he mean by *self-forgetting*? And how did he propose to accomplish that? (pg. 101, 12&12)

In a very skillful, enlightened way, Bill leaves it up to us to answer that important question. Does *self-forgetting* have to do with “*self-seeking* slipping away, with losing interest in selfish things?” After-all, *selfishness* and *self-centeredness*! That, we think is the root of our troubles” (pg. 62, BB). Hasn’t *self-will* blocked us from God? (pg.71, BB).

SELF-CENTEREDNESS

In the first 172 pages of *The Big Book* it can be found listed 6 times, on the following pages:
Page 14, 56, 61, 62, 116&164

SELF-SEEKING

In the first 172 pages of *The Big Book* it can be found listed 9 times, on the following pages:
Page 60, 61, 62, 66, 67, 84, 86, 88 & 122

SELF-WILL

In the first 172 pages of *The Big Book* it can be found listed 7 times, on the following pages:
Page 59, 60, 62, 71, 76, 85, 87, & 122.

But then again, maybe *self-forgetting* runs a little deeper than that. After-all, Saint Francis was a not only a Christian monk but a “mystic” in his spiritual practice. He must already understood, having taken *vows*, the importance of not being *selfish* and *self-seeking*. Maybe for him *self-forgetting* meant forgetting his little, earthly, personal (*ego*) “self”? Do you think when Bill W. experienced his “spiritual awakening” and his vision of “white light” that he was aware of his “self”? His *ego*? A price had been paid. It meant destruction of *self-centeredness* (pg.13, BB).

Frank D. elaborates that “the price we all must pay is that thing which we hold most dear – our *self-will* (pg. 39, *The Annotated AA Handbook: A Companion to the Big Book*). No longer can we center our lives, thoughts and action (*will*) on the selfish fulfillment of our desires. But this is not an easy task and a *spiritual awakening* would definitely help us. Some experience “awakenings” of the educational variety. Others experience them gradually, while others more suddenly (see *Appendix II* in Big Book). Working the *Twelve Steps* nurtures the process. *Step Five* defines the purpose of all the Steps: they all deflate our *egos*. But what is *ego*, if not our “self”? Or at least what we think is our “self”? The *ego* is just a “mental construct” (something we create in our minds) and really an illusion. Which reminds me of a Bumper Sticker I once read that said, “Meditation is not what you think!” What we think is our “self” is not necessarily our “true self.”

So what then is our *true self*? And what is left when we “self-forget”? And what role does *mediation* play in all this? Our “True Self” (our greater, Higher Self), what is left when we *self-forget* (forget our little, *ego* self) may be described as a total union with our Higher Power, that “Oneness with Everything.”

To be continued (Arnello S.)