

**The Line By Line Group of Fair Lawn NJ  
presents for 5 weeks only...**

**“HERE ARE THE STEPS WE TOOK”  
THE 1940’s A.A. BEGINNERS’ MEETINGS**

**A BIG BOOK TWELVE STEP WORKGROUP  
with Lena N. & Barefoot Bill**

**Held on 5 consecutive Monday nights from 7:30 – 9:05PM**

**Note:** You are encouraged to bring your sponsor and anyone you are sponsoring. “Temporary Step sponsors” will be available, if needed, for anyone who wishes to take the Steps with us during these sessions. We are also looking for help from anyone who has done the work out of the Big Book and is willing to act as a “temporary Step sponsor” for those who don’t have one during these five weeks. Please bring your Big Book, something to write with, and try to attend all five sessions.

**Session One – Step One**

**February 18th, 2008**

**Step and Information Packet**

# **BIG BOOK STEP INDEX**

- Step 1      **We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.**  
This Step is described on Roman numeral pages 23 – 30 (xxiii – xxx), on pages 1 – 44:1, and 52:2.
- Step 2      **Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**  
This Step is described in parts of chapters 1, 2, 3, and all of chapter 4.
- Step 3      **Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.**  
This Step is described on pages 60:3 – 64:0. The directions for taking Step 3 are on pages 60:4, 62:3, and 63:2 – 64:0. The results of taking Step 3 are given on page 63:1.
- Step 4      **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**  
This Step is described on pages 63:4 – 71 and directions for taking this Step are given throughout. The results of taking Step 4 are given on page 70:3.
- Step 5      **Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**  
This Step is described on pages 72 – 75. The directions for taking Steps 5 are on page 75:1, the first sentence of 75:2, and 75:3. The results of taking Step 5 are on page 75:2 after the first sentence.
- Step 6      **Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**  
This Step is described on page 76:1. The directions for taking Step 6 are also there.
- Step 7      **Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**  
This Step is described on page 76:2. The directions for taking Step 7 are also there.
- Step 8      **Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**  
This Step is described on page 76:3. The directions for taking Step 8 are also there.
- Step 9      **Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**  
This Step is described on pages 76:4 – 84:1 and the directions for completing Step 9 are given throughout. The results of taking Step 9 are on page 83:4 – 84:1.
- Step 10     **Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.**  
This Step is described on pages 84:1 – 85:2. The directions for taking Step 10 are on page 84:2, the first line of 84:3, and 85:1. The results of taking Step 10 are on page 84:3 – 85:0.
- 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.**  
This Step is described on pages 85:3 – 88:3. The directions for taking Step 11 are on pages 86:1 – 88:0. The results of taking Step 11 are found on page 88 lines 2 – 8.
- Step 12     **Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.**  
This Step is described on pages 89 – 150. Many tips on how to carry our message of recover to another alcoholic are found throughout chapter 7, and many tips on how to carry our message and practice these principles in most of our affairs are found throughout chapters 8 – 10.

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## **Step One Prayer**

... to experience powerlessness.

Please God, bring me into this process and give me a new experience of powerlessness and unmanageability, as well as of Your Power and Spirit.

Make it clear that I am fundamentally flawed in body and mind, as well as blocked spiritually. Also, please reveal that You are willing and will do for me what I can't do for myself. I want to surrender to You and this process. But I can't on my own power. You have taken me to a place of willingness and I have been given the willingness to be taken.

This is a gentle but definite process of awakening and awareness. I am willing to be led by Your Spirit – to have Truth revealed about me and about You.

The requirement for this spiritual evolution is complete, unqualified surrender of my self (ego) to You. On my own power this cannot happen. My self (ego) cannot submit. There is a quiet, gentle place where my willingness and Your Grace meet. I am willing to surrender and pray that You take me to that place.

Herb K.

## The Circle & Triangle



"When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." - Big Book page 64 (When it says "physically", please keep in mind that this includes the physical world around us.)

For me, the circle & triangle represents the Alcoholics Anonymous solution to alcoholism. It is a perfect overview of our three-part answer (unity, recovery, & service) to our three-part disease (physical, mental & spiritual).

The foundation of this triangle (which the rest of the solution is built upon) is recovery. The set of 12 spiritual principles associated with recovery are contained in the 12 Steps (which are located in the Big Book, pages i - 164; and then talked about in the 12 & 12, pages 15 - 125). The part of the disease that it treats is the mental.

The left side of this triangle is unity, which can be found in fellowship with other AA's. The set of 12 spiritual principles associated with unity are contained in the 12 Traditions (which are located in the 12 & 12, pages 129 - 192). The part of the disease that it treats is the physical.

And the right side of this triangle is service, which can be found in carrying the message and, with unselfishness & love, contributing inside and outside of AA. The set of 12 spiritual principles associated with service are contained in the 12 Concepts (which are located in the booklet "Twelve Concepts for World Service"). The part of the disease that it treats is the spiritual (remember that the Big Book says on pages 14 - 15 that "we perfect and enlarge our spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others", and on pages 14, 76, 88 & 93 it says, "Faith without works is dead").

Also, notice that the sides of the triangle are all equal in size, which means that not only do I need to be living in all three areas but that I need to incorporate all three proportionately. I have seen many people go back out who were using LESS THAN all three parts, but I have NEVER seen ANYONE return to drinking who was living in ALL THREE. I've heard people refer to it as a three-legged stool. If all three legs are there then the structure is solid, but if one or two legs are missing then what is supporting me is shaky and I am sure to fall.

If actions in these three areas are taken, I can be whole in body, mind and spirit; together as one.

There are times when these principles spill into each other because the lines between them are blurred (like, it could be said that all of the Steps lead to our awakening to the awareness of spirit, or service sounds a lot like our Step 12, or there are aspects of the Traditions that can be used in all of our affairs). But if we want to stay on the "Road of Happy Destiny" we need to be familiar with the whole package that leads to freedom, recovery, peace of mind, joy, usefulness and "a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes".

It doesn't matter how long it's been since our last drink. What matters is how close we are to our next one. How can we tell if we are closer to the next drink than we would like to be? We can get a good indication every few months (as part of taking personal inventory) by ask ourselves, "Am I participating equally in all three branches of the AA solution?" If our answer is, "YES!", we will know as best we can if we are still on the beam in AA's design for living.

At the 20th Anniversary Convention of AA in St. Louis, MO. on July 1 - 3, 1955; Bill Wilson said the following: "Above us we see a banner and that banner shows a circle which is AA circumscribing the world. Within it is a triangle. The base of the triangle is the foundation of recovery on which we stand. The left of the triangle symbolizes our unity, and the right of the triangle our arm of service. Such is the symbol of AA. I first saw it in Norway in 1950, but this symbol is not new with us. We have attributed a particular significance to it but in actuality its significance is very old. Students of ancient days tell that centuries ago it was regarded by priests and witch doctors alike as the symbol by which evil spirits could be kept away, and may that symbol ever stand guard over the society of Alcoholics Anonymous."

This symbol is also an ancient spiritual symbol for wholeness of body, mind and spirit; or "Oneness".

On May 21, 1993, AA World Service released an unsigned document titled: "Follow-up Statement Regarding Use of the Circle/ Triangle Symbol." In it, AAWS stated that "Alcoholics Anonymous will phase out the 'official' use of the circle and triangle symbol in and on its literature, letterheads and other material." That action has generated a considerable amount of discussion because it was taken without a conference action or a "group conscience".

I hope you can see the significance of the Circle and Triangle and please let others know (especially people you work with) about its representation of the 36 spiritual principles in AA's solution to alcoholism that leads to integrity on the personal, group, and service level.

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## The Phenomenon of Craving

The Big Book on page xxiv (The Doctor's Opinion) says that an alcoholic has an "allergy to alcohol". An allergy is an abnormal reaction to any food, liquid or substance. If nine out of ten people have one reaction and one out of ten people have a different reaction, then the reaction of the one out of ten crew is abnormal. It also says on page xxvi that "the action of alcohol on an alcoholic is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is LIMITED to this class and NEVER occurs in the average temperate drinker." (A phenomenon is something that you can see but can't explain). "These allergic types can NEVER safely use alcohol in ANY FORM AT ALL". Then on page 22, "We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink, as he may do for months or years, he reacts much like other men. We are equally positive that once he takes ANY ALCOHOL WHATEVER into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop." This includes substances that contain alcohol like mouthwash, cold remedies, some chocolates, food prepared with alcohol, etc.). Your body doesn't know if you are having a drink or taking Nyquil for a cold, it only senses alcohol and begins to process it. It also says on page xxviii that, "all the different classifications of alcoholics have ONE symptom in common: they CANNOT start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity." Dr. William D. Silkworth, M.D. who at that time had nine years experience specializing in the treatment of alcoholics and drug addicts, wrote this in the late 1930's. He called it a "phenomenon of craving" because at that time there was no way to study metabolism. Since then, science has proven his theory as correct.

The following is an explanation of what happens when alcoholics put alcohol into their bodies, and how it is a completely different experience compared to non-alcoholics. No wonder why non-alcoholics can't relate, and make statements like, "Can't you just stop after one or two drinks?" It shows why alcoholics can use their willpower against everything EXCEPT alcohol.

Alcoholics make up about 12% of the population. The body of the alcoholic is physically different. The liver and pancreas of the alcoholic process alcohol at one-third to one-tenth the rate of a normal pancreas and liver. Now as alcohol enters the body, it breaks down into various components, one of which is acetone. We know now that acetone triggers a craving for more acetone. In a normal drinker, the acetone moves through the system quickly and exits. But that doesn't happen in an alcoholic. In alcoholics, the acetone of the first drink is barely processed out, so by staying in their body, it triggers a craving for more acetone. The alcoholic then has a second drink, now adding to most of the acetone of the first drink, and that makes them want a drink twice as much as the normal drinker. So they have another. Then, having almost three times the craving as a normal drinker, they have another. You can see from that point how alcoholics have no control over how much they drink. The craving cycle has begun and they have no choice but to keep drinking. Once the acetone accumulates in their body, and that begins to happen with only ONE drink, they will crave another. And how many times does an alcoholic think it would be nice to have JUST ONE drink to relax, but has many more? Now you see why. AND THIS CAN NEVER CHANGE!

On top of THAT (like so far it's not bad enough), alcohol is a poison because it destroys human tissue. The two organs that alcohol damages the most are the liver and the pancreas. So the more the alcoholic drinks as time passes (or doesn't drink, because the liver and pancreas also deteriorate naturally as we age), the less their body is able to process the acetone. THAT is why alcoholism is a progressive, fatal illness. Bill W. says on page 30, "We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better." Pretty revealing, huh. It explains many things I never before understood.

But if you think about it, we never have to deal with ANY of this if we DON'T put alcohol into our bodies in the first place. So the MAIN problem of the alcoholic centers in their mind and in their spiritual condition. My mind tells me it's okay to TAKE the first drink and doesn't see that what I'm about to do is harmful (otherwise known as the obsession or powerlessness), and if I'm NOT spiritually fit I can't STAND being sober because it's too uncomfortable (otherwise known as unmanageability). Coincidentally, the Steps deal DIRECTLY and EFFECTIVELY with both. So that's what it means to be an alcoholic - I can't handle drinking and I can't handle not drinking.

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## Alcohol Does Not Always Cook Off

Imagine preparing Boeuf Bourguignon or Grasshopper Pie without wine or liquor. Most chefs would shudder.

Many gourmet cooks think that wine and spirits add essential flavor to dishes and that the alcohol evaporates in the cooking process.

Not true, according to researchers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

After testing six recipes, including main dishes and desserts, government nutritionists found that significant percentages of alcohol and wine poured into hot and cold dishes remain even after cooking.

Although the overall alcohol content of the recipes tested by the government remains small, the new finding may serve as a warning for people who want to bar any alcohol from their diet.

"It was assumed until now that everything would be gone after cooking," said Jorg Augustin, professor of food science and biochemistry at the University of Idaho, who prepared and tested the recipes selected by the USDA.

"We hadn't given it much thought before - but we found that the retentions varied quite a bit," he said.

Recipes that required less cooking time retained the highest percentage of alcohol.

A Brandy Alexander pie, made with 3 tablespoons of Brandy and 1/4 cup of Creme de Cacao, retained 85% of the alcohol. Cherries jubilee, made with 1/4 cup of Brandy and flamed for 48 seconds, retained 75%.

Main dishes such as scalloped oysters, prepared with 1/4 cup dry Sherry poured on top of the casserole and baked for 25 minutes, retained 45%. A chicken dish prepared with 1/2 cup of Burgundy stirred in and then simmered for 15 minutes retained 40%. A Pot Roast, prepared with one cup of burgundy and then roasted for 2 1/2 hours, retained only 5%.

Rena Cutrufelli, a USDA nutritionist, said that the agency will review its recipe files to adjust for the finding. The agency has not issued any recommendations based on these preliminary findings for people concerned with alcohol intake, such as recovering alcoholics or pregnant women, she said.

"We were just trying to prove or disprove the assumption that no alcohol exists (after cooking)."

Cutrufelli said, "I don't think for this small a picture you can say what affects people."

A spokeswoman for the Washington-based American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said the group has not responded to the study. "We don't really know how much alcohol is enough to cause problems," said Kate Ruddon. "But we do know it can cause fetal alcohol syndrome and other problems, we just recommend that women avoid it."

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence also recommends that recovering alcoholics avoid foods cooked with wine or liquor. The taste alone could spark a desire to drink again.

"It depends on the individual," said Jeffery Hon, a spokesman for the New York-based council. "It may be more risky for some individuals, and it also depends on how much is used in the dish."

Chris Spolar

## STEP ONE UNMANAGEABILITY EXERCISE

We can use the spiritual malady references mentioned in the Big Book (page numbers provided) to review honestly the unmanageability in our CURRENT lives. The following are statements that best capture the inner and outer experience of the alcoholic for what is called in the Big Book, "the spiritual malady". The disease of alcoholism has three parts: physical, mental and spiritual. The spiritual part of the puzzle is the deepest part and is sometimes called "the root of our troubles" or "untreated alcoholism" (whether we are drinking or not). These are manifestations of being blocked off spiritually (whether we are drinking or not) & they are basically caused by self-centered fear. The Big Book says on page 62, "Selfishness - self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles". But remember, it then says on page 64, "When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." That's why if we JUST stop drinking and DON'T grow spiritually, our inner life (as THE RESULT of what's listed below) continues to get worse because we haven't dealt with the root problem yet. If you CURRENTLY have unmanageability in the following areas of your life, please consider the fact that you may be suffering from untreated alcoholism (whether you are drinking or not), you may be headed toward your next drink, and you may be closer to a relapse than you think you are. It doesn't matter so much how long it's been since your last drink, what matters MORE is how close you are to your next one. - Barefoot Bill

**1) Am I generally restless (that sense of "something's missing"), irritable (which means "easily annoyed") and discontented (which means "never satisfied")?** (Page xxviii) YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you experience these feelings often? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you feel like you never belong or that you are not a part of, even in AA? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Are you usually uncomfortable in your own skin? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you experience an ongoing sense of sadness? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you often feel like "something is missing" in your life? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2) Am I having trouble with personal relationships?** (Page 52) Do you take care of others too much, to the point where you neglect to do the things you need to do to take care of yourself? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. List names of those close to you (family, friends, co-workers) and evaluate how you are getting along with these people. Also include your relationship with yourself and your Higher Power. Include a few examples of how you treat perfect strangers or those who can't do anything for you. What seems to be the problems that you are having with those around you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3) Am I having trouble controlling my emotional nature?** (Page 52) Are most of your days best described as emotionally up and down? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Consider how you manage your emotions. Are you in control of your negative emotions or are they in control of you? IN CONTROL\_\_\_ NOT IN CONTROL\_\_\_. When you lash out in anger, do you feel like you have no other choice or that it's "their fault"? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Look at some of your more frequent negative emotions (like jealousy, impatience, lust, fear, guilt, frustration, greed, anger, shame, etc.) and analyze them individually in the following way: When you feel this way, what do you say and do? Are you able to find ways to quickly work through them without harming yourself or others, or do you become unapproachable for hours or days at a time? Are you quick to criticize with a biting or sarcastic tongue? Do you beat yourself up for feeling this way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4) Am I prey to misery and depression?** (Page 52) How often in the average month are you miserable or depressed? \_\_\_\_\_ TIMES. How long does it last and what do you do to get rid of it? \_\_\_\_\_  
How does life and other people's behavior cause you misery and depression? What was going on the last few times you were miserable or depressed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are any of these recurring? \_\_\_\_\_. When you are miserable or depressed, do you avoid people, sleep all day, think about hurting yourself or others, or seek escape through alcohol/drugs/food/etc. or extended periods in front of the TV or computer? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5) Am I having trouble making a living?** (Page 52) What areas of your life are not in balance? Included here are: finances/savings/spending/credit cards/loans, your marriage/parenting/friendship/ work life, education, physical/emotional/mental/ spiritual health, do you set aside time for fun/for being alone, are you overweight, do you drink too much coffee or smoke too much, are you having problems getting or keeping a job, have you had a routine medical check-up recently, etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6) Do I feel useless?** (Page 52) Do you often wonder why you are even alive?" YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you often feel inconvenienced or taken advantage of by others? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you have difficulty finding interests or "fitting in"? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you feel like there is no meaning to your life or that you have nothing to contribute to life? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Explain any "YES" here: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7) Is fear a big part of my life?** (Page 52) How much of the average week are you experiencing fear? \_\_\_\_ %. What do you say or do when you are fearful? \_\_\_\_\_. What does fear prevent you from doing? \_\_\_\_\_. How do you get rid of fear? \_\_\_\_\_. List some of your more common fears. Ask yourself why you have them and if they are real or imagined? \_\_\_\_\_

**8) Am I often unhappy?** (Page 52) How much of the average week are you unhappy? \_\_\_\_ %. What do you say or do when you are unhappy? \_\_\_\_\_. How do you get rid of unhappiness? \_\_\_\_\_. Can you usually be described as positive and upbeat? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. When asked about how you are doing, you say that you are doing well. Even though you say that, do you often know deep down within that this is not the truth? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. What areas or past events in your life bring about recurring unhappiness? \_\_\_\_\_

**9) Am I of real help to other people?** (Page 52) When was the last time you brought someone new to a meeting? \_\_\_\_\_. Do you include your number on phone lists for newcomers? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Or do you think that you have nothing to offer them? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Every week, do you reach out to someone in need or in pain (in AA and outside of AA) and expected nothing in return? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Are you successful when you try to help others? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you think that it is important to grow in ways that would make you become more helpful to others? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_.

**10) Do I think I know what's best for everyone?** Are you often like the actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in your own way? Do you believe that everybody, including yourself, would be pleased and that life would be wonderful if only they would do as you say? Can you sometimes be quite virtuous, kind, considerate, patient, generous, even modest and self-sacrificing; yet at other times be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest (depending on which will work in getting YOUR way)? Are you often a victim of the delusion that you can wrest (which means "to take away by force") satisfaction and happiness out of this world if you only manipulate well? (Page 60-61) YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you spend a lot of time getting frustrated when others don't behave the way you think they should? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Is there anyone that you refuse to forgive? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_.

**11) Am I driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity?** (Page 62) Do you often wonder why you do what you KNOW you shouldn't be doing and don't do what you KNOW you should be doing? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you have trouble showing up on time? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. What is the general condition of your inner dialogue/self-talk/self-criticism? GOOD \_\_\_BAD\_\_\_. Although you may not be currently drinking or drugging, do you have other "addictions" (other areas in your life that are out of balance or out of control)? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. If so, give examples. \_\_\_\_\_

**12) Am I an extreme example of self-will run riot, though I usually don't think so?** (Page 62) Do friends and relatives sometimes say that you are selfish even though you don't agree? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you end relationships only because the other person doesn't act the way you think they should? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Are you a "team player"? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you spend most of the time thinking of yourself instead of thinking of what you can do for others? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Is your motto "what's in it for me"? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you think that some rules/laws don't apply to you? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you exhibit signs of or participate in "road rage"? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Would other drivers describe you as considerate? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_.

**13) Am I leading a double life?** Are you very much the actor, presenting to the outer world your stage character, which is the one you like your fellows to see? Do you want to enjoy a certain reputation, but know in your heart that you don't deserve it? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Are you under constant fear and tension because of this, worrying that you may be "found out"? (Page 73) YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Are you lying to or keeping something from your sponsor/spiritual advisor/recovery network? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you usually do what you say and say what you do? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Are you involved in relationships (romantic or illegal) that you shouldn't be? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. What are your hidden secrets: \_\_\_\_\_

**14) Am I like a tornado roaring through the lives of others?** Do you have a habit of breaking hearts, sabotaging sweet relationships, and uprooting affections? (Page 82) YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Have you avoided making amends to your family and those closest to you? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you have difficulty keeping friendships for more than a few months? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you have a habit of pushing people away? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Are you pursuing newcomers for something selfish instead of only helping them in their recovery and spiritual growth? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do co-workers, family, and fellow AA's find you unapproachable? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_.

**15) Are my selfish and inconsiderate habits keeping my home in turmoil?** (Page 82) Are you more interested in your own needs and wants than you are with the needs and wants of your family? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Have you made amends to your family but continue the behavior you originally made amends for? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you sometimes hide away at meetings to avoid responsibilities at home? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Do you spend "quality time" with your spouse/family on a regular basis? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Would your spouse/family agree with your previous answer? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_. Has anyone in your household recently said something like this to you, "The only person you ever think of is yourself"? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_.

**After evaluating these areas, can you now admit that even though you may not be currently drinking, your life (especially you inner life: thinking/emotions) is unmanageable? YES \_\_\_NO\_\_\_.**

## AA's Forgotten Beginning – The Alcoholics Anonymous “Beginners’ Classes”

(Facts and thoughts transcribed from a talk given by Wally P. on 11/23/96 in Mesa, Arizona. Wally is the author of the book "Back To Basics: The Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners' Meetings, 'Here are the steps we took...' in Four One-Hour Sessions".)

Initial growth in Alcoholics Anonymous took place in Cleveland, Ohio. Clarence S. and the guys went out actively pursuing drunks and brought them off bar stools and street corners. We don't do that today, but we were doing it back then [late 1930's and 1940's]. And it worked!

In early 1940, when there were about 1,000 members of AA, more than half were from Cleveland. The book 'AA Comes of Age' talks about it on pages 20 and 21: "It was soon evident that a scheme of personal sponsorship would have to be devised for the new people. Each prospect was assigned an older AA, who visited him at his home or in the hospital, instructed him on AA principles, and conducted him to his first meeting." So even back in the early days the sponsor was taking the sponsee to meetings and getting together with him, rather than having the sponsee track the sponsor down. 'AA Comes of Age' continues by saying, "But in the face of many hundreds of pleas for help, the supply of elders could not possibly match the demand. Brand-new AA's, sober only a month or even a week, had to sponsor alcoholics still drying up in hospitals." Because of this rapid growth in Cleveland, the idea of formalized classes started. In the book 'Dr. Bob and the Good Old-timers' it states on page 261, "Yes, Cleveland's results were the best. Their results were in fact so good that many a Clevelander really thought AA had started there in the first place." Over half of the fellowship was from Cleveland up and through the mid-1940s.

During the winter of 1941 the Crawford Group (founded in February 1941) organized a separate group to help newcomers through the Steps. By the first issue of the Cleveland Central Bulletin, October 1942, the Crawford "Beginners' Class" was listed as a separate meeting. And in the second issue, in November 1942, there was an article entitled "Crawford Men's Training". This refers to possibly the first "Beginners' Class". "The Crawford Men's Training System has been highly acclaimed to many. Old AA's are asked to come to these meetings with or without new prospects, where new prospects will be given individual attention just as though they were in a hospital. Visiting a prospect in his home has always been handicapped by interruptions. But the prospect not daring to unburden himself completely for fear of being overheard by his relatives and by the AA's reticence for the same reason. Hospitalization without question is the ideal answer to where the message will be most effective; but the Crawford training plan strikes us as being the next best."

In the early days they weren't sure if you could get sober if you didn't go to treatment. That was one of the early questions - could a person get sober without going to a three or five-day detox. Because it was during that detox that sometimes ten and twenty AA members came to visit the new person. And each hour the prospect was awake he would hear someone's story - over and over again. And something gelled during these hospital stays. But they were trying to do it outside of the hospital and this is where the first of the classes came from.

These classes continued at Euclid Avenue Meeting Hall through June 1943 and at that time the Central Bulletin announced a second session - "The Miles Training Meeting". The bulletin read, "The Miles Group reports they have enjoyed unusual success with their training meetings. The newcomer is not permitted to attend a regular AA meeting until he has been given a thorough knowledge of the work." The newcomer couldn't go to a meeting until he completed the training session. A lot of places didn't allow you to go to AA meetings until you had taken the four classes. You didn't just sit there - you had already completed the steps when you went to your first AA meeting. "From 15 to 20 participate at each training meeting and new members are thoroughly indoctrinated."

These meetings grew and spread and visitors came from out of town and out of state. In 1943 the Northwest Group in Detroit, Michigan standardized the classes into four sessions. "In June 1943 a group of members proposed the idea of a separate discussion meeting to more advantageously present the Twelve Steps of the recovery program to the new affiliates. The decision was made to hold a Closed Meeting for alcoholics only for this purpose. The first discussion meeting of the Northwest Group was held on Monday night June 14, 1943 and has been held every Monday night without exception thereafter (as of 1948). A plan of presentation of the Twelve Steps of the recovery program was developed at this meeting. The plan consisted of dividing the Twelve Steps into four categories for easier study." The divisions were:

1. The Admission
2. Spiritual
3. Restitution and Inventory
4. Working and the message

"Each division came to be discussed on each succeeding Monday night in rotation. This method was so successful that it was adopted first by other groups in Detroit and then throughout the United States. Finally the format was published in its entirety by the Washington, DC Group in a pamphlet entitled 'An Interpretation of our Twelve Steps.' The first pamphlet was published in 1944 and contains the following introduction: "Meetings are held for the purpose of acquainting both the old and new members with the Twelve Steps on which our Program is based. So that all Twelve Steps may be covered in a minimum of time they are divided into four classifications. One evening each week will be devoted to each of the four subdivisions. Thus, in one month a new man can get the bases of our Twelve Suggested Steps." This pamphlet was reproduced many times in Washington, DC and then throughout the country and is even still being printed in some areas today.

In the Fall of 1944, a copy of the Washington, DC pamphlet reached Barry C. - one of the AA pioneers in Minneapolis. He wrote a letter to the New York headquarters requesting permission to distribute the pamphlet. We talk about "Conference Approved Literature" today; but this is the way the Fellowship operated back then. This is a letter from Bobby B., Bill W.'s secretary, printed on "Alcoholic Foundation" stationery. This is what she says: "The Washington pamphlet, like the new Cleveland one, and a host of others, are all local projects. We do not actually approve or disapprove these local pieces. By that I mean the Foundation feels that each group is entitled to write up their own 'can opener' and to let it stand on its own merits. All of them have their good points and very few have caused any controversy. But in all things of a local nature we keep hands off - either pro or con. Frankly, I haven't had the time to more than glance at the Washington booklet, but I've heard some favorable comments about it. I think there must be at least 25 local pamphlets now being used and I've yet to see one that hasn't some good points."

And then in 1945 the AA Grapevine printed three articles on the "Beginners' Classes". The first one was published in June and it described how the classes were conducted in St. Louis, Missouri. This has to do with the "education plan" and they called it the Wilson Club. "One of the four St. Louis AA groups is now using a very satisfactory method of educating prospects and new members. It has done much to reduce the number of 'slippers' among new members. In brief it is somewhat as follows: Each new prospect is asked to attend four successive Thursday night meetings. Each one of which is devoted to helping the new man learn something about Alcoholics Anonymous, its founding and the way it works. The new man is told something about the book and how this particular group functions. Wilson Club members are not considered full active members of AA until they've attended these four educational meetings."

In the September 1945 issue of the Grapevine the Geniuses Group in Rochester, NY explained their format for taking newcomers through the Steps. The title of the article was "Rochester Prepares Novices for Group Participation". This is how they perceived the recovery process to operate most efficiently: "It has been our observation that bringing men [and woman] into the group indiscriminately and without adequate preliminary training and information can be a source of considerable grief and a cause of great harm to the general moral of the group itself. We feel that unless a man, after a course of instruction and an intelligent presentation of the case for the AA life, has accepted it without any reservation he should not be included in group membership. When the sponsors feel that a novice has a fair working knowledge of AA's objectives and sufficient grasp of its fundamentals then he is brought to his first group meeting. Then he listens to four successive talks based on the Twelve Steps and Four Absolutes. They are twenty-minute talks given by the older members of the group and the Steps for convenience and brevity are divided into four sections. The first three Steps constitute the text of the first talk; the next four the second; the next four the third; and the last Step is considered to be entitled a full evening's discussion by itself." This group taught the Steps in order rather than in segments.

In December 1945, the St. Paul, Minnesota Group wrote a full-page description of the "Beginners' Meetings". The description of their four one-hour classes was: "New members are urged to attend all the sessions in the proper order. At every meeting the three objectives of AA are kept before the group: to obtain and to recover from those things which caused us to drink and to help others who want what we have." In 1945 Barry C., of Minneapolis, received a letter from one of the members from the Peoria, Illinois Group. In the letter, the writer, Bud, describes the efforts of Peoria, Illinois in regarding the "Beginners' Classes". "In my usual slow and cautious matter I proceeded to sell the Peoria Group on the Nicollet Group. Tomorrow night we all meet to vote the adoption of our bylaws slightly altered to fit local conditions". (No one taught the classes the same way. They were taught based on a group conscience.) "Sunday afternoon at 4:30 our first class in the Twelve Steps begins. We're all attending the first series of classes so we'll all be on an even footing. We anticipate on losing some fair-weather AA hangers-on in the elimination automatically imposed by the rule that these classes must be attended. This elimination we anticipate with a "we" feeling of suppressed pleasure. It is much as we are all extremely fed up with running a free drunk taxi and sobering-up service."

Then sometime prior to 1946 in Akron, Ohio the Akron Group started publishing four pamphlets on the AA Program. They were written by Ed W. at the direction of Dr. Bob, one of the co-founders of AA. Dr. Bob wanted some "blue-collar" pamphlets for the Fellowship. In one of the pamphlets, "A Guide to the Twelve Steps", it reads: "A Guide to the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous is intended to be a simple, short and concise interpretation of the rules for sober living as compiled by the earliest members of the organization. The writers and editors are members of the Akron, Ohio Group where Alcoholics Anonymous was founded in 1935. Most of the ideas and explanations were brought out in a series of instruction classes conducted by veteran members of the group." So this proves the classes were being taught in Akron, Ohio. There are a lot of places they were being taught.

Then the classes were actually formalized into a book called "The Little Red Book" in 1946. The inscription on the inside cover says, "The material in this Little Red Book is an outgrowth of a series of notes originally prepared for Twelve Step instruction to AA beginners." So we know the "Little Red Book" came out of these four one-hour classes also. "Few books have had greater record for humble service than the Little Red Book upon which so many members have cut their AA teeth." A manuscript drawn up from these notes was sent to Dr. Bob at the request of USA and Canadian members. He approved the manuscript and the book was published in 1946. Dr. Bob approved of "The Little Red Book". So Dr. Bob not only authorized the publication of the Akron pamphlets, he also endorsed "The Little Red Book", both of which were products of the "Beginners' Classes".

Even our first AA group handbook, originally entitled "A Handbook for the Secretary", published by the Alcoholic Foundation in 1950, had a section on the "Beginners' Classes". At the time there were only three types of meetings: Open Speaker Meetings, Closed Discussion Meetings, and Beginners' Meetings. There was no such thing as an Open Discussion Meeting in the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous. In the Beginners' Meetings, which are described in the Meeting section, the handbook states: "In larger metropolitan areas a special type of meeting for newcomers to AA is proved extremely successful. Usually staged for a half-hour prior

to an open meeting, this meeting features an interpretation of AA usually by an older member presented in terms designed to make the program clear to the new member. (Note: The Chicago Group held their "Beginners' Classes" a half-hour prior to their Open Meeting. When publishing the group handbook, the New York office only described Chicago's format.) After the speaker's presentation the meeting is thrown open to questions." In each of the four one-hour classes there was always a session for questions afterwards. "Occasionally, the AA story is presented by more than one speaker. The emphasis remains exclusively on the newcomer and his problem."

The four one-hour classes were taught all over the country. Some other cities include Oklahoma City, Miami Florida, and Phoenix Arizona.

If these classes were so important, then what happened to them? Most of the people who have joined AA in the last twenty-five years or so have never even heard of them. Ruth R., an old-timer in Miami Florida, who came into AA in 1953, gave some insight into the demise of the "Beginners' Classes". "At that time the classes were being conducted at the Alana Club in Miami - two books were used: "Alcoholics Anonymous" (Big Book) and the "Little Red Book". Jim and Dora H., Florida AA pioneers, were enthusiastic supporters and they helped organize several of the classes and served as instructors." (Note: Dora was a Panel 7 Delegate to the General Service Office.) Ruth recalled that the classes were discontinued in the mid-1950s as the result of the publication of the book "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" by Alcoholics Anonymous Publishing Inc. In the Miami area the "Twelve and Twelve" replaced both the "Big Book" and the "Little Red Book" and "Step Studies" replaced the "Beginners' Classes". In the process, the period for taking the Steps was expanded and modified from 4 weeks to somewhere in between 12 and 16 weeks. The Fourth Step inventory was modified and became a much more laborious and detailed procedure. What was originally conceived as a very simple program, which took a few hours to complete, evolved into a complicated and confusing undertaking requiring several months.

Studying the Steps is not the same as taking the Steps. In the "Beginners' Classes" you take the steps. The Big Book says, "Here are the steps we took" not "here are the steps we read and talked about." The AA pioneers proved that action, not knowledge, produced the spiritual awakening that resulted in recovery from alcoholism. On page 88, the authors of the Big Book wrote, "It works-it really does. 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."

(This concludes the description of the "Beginners' Classes" during Wally P.'s talk in Masa, Arizona on November 23, 1996. Wally P. is an AA Archivist from Tucson, Arizona. For two years he researched and studied areas of the country that held "Beginners' Classes" back in the 40's and '50's. He then started teaching the classes under the guidance of his sponsor who took the classes in 1953 and never drank again. In March of 1996 Wally mentioned the "Beginners' Classes" as part of his historical presentation at the Wilson House in East Dorset, Vermont. Wally then wrote and published a book entitled "Back to Basics: The Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners' Classes - Take all 12 Steps in Four One-Hour Sessions." Since then, there have been over 1000 "Back to Basics" meetings and groups started all over the world. Now, almost 60 years since the classes were first originated, newcomers are once again being taken through the Twelve Steps in four one-hour "Beginners' Classes".

On Saturday 4/11/98, members of the "Into Action Big Book Group" of Berkeley Heights, N.J. went to see Wally give a presentation of the "Beginners' Classes" in Philadelphia. Members went through the Steps in the four one-hour classes, all in one day. This group then began facilitating the classes in June 1998 in various locations throughout New Jersey and has taken thousands of AA members through the Steps since. They have expanded the classes to be five, one-and-one-half hour sessions, to include more of the material for each Step in the Big Book.

The Cherry Hill Group of Southern New Jersey has taught Beginners' Classes every Sunday evening since May 1997.

The Woodlands Group in Texas have been conducting the "Beginners' Classes" since April 1998. Within one year, about ten "Back to Basics" meetings resulted from the Woodland group and approximately 1,650 alcoholics were taken through the Steps that year! The Woodlands and subsequent groups in Texas are enjoying a 75-93% success rate like the Cleveland groups had in the 1940's.)

## **WHAT IS EXPECTED OVER THE NEXT WEEK**

For the newcomers and those taking the Steps with us, your assignment for the next week is:

- 1) Please read this entire Step and Information Packet.
- 2) Begin saying the Step One Prayer (bottom of page 2) each day for the next week.
- 3) Write out your current answers for the Step One Unmanageability Exercise (pages 6 & 7) and share them with your Big Book Step Sponsor.