

ACTION IS THE MAGIC WORD

The only way to solve a problem is with ACTION "a minimum of analysis, a maximum of ACTION."

Lets take a look at the Twelve Steps of our program and see practically how ACTION applies:

1. WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL--THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

Many a one had taken this step mentally years ago. But there never had been any ACTION, and so the drinking continued--to get worse. Such admission entailed no follow-up, so it but fed our self-pity and resentments. "I am powerless, poor me," or "I'm powerless, and it's your fault..." But in A.A. we make this admission with a positive attitude that we can and will do something about it. Hence (paradoxical as it may seem) the ACTION of one Step is the looking to and using the solution in the subsequent Steps one at a time and in proper sequence so that we find the ACTION of each Step is contained in the following one. So, if we are powerless, in order to do something about it we must seek power somewhere. This we do in the Second Step, "a power greater then ourselves."

We find in A.A. many who still have made their admission only mentally. They are the "First-Step Johns," the "no-God-guys" who have admitted they are powerless, and how they hate it! In reality they haven't admitted it to themselves deep inside, for if they had, only fools would hesitate to seek, "a power to restore them to sanity"--or maybe that is the reason they hesitate!

So we admitted that we are powerless over alcohol, and what are we doing about it? ACTION demands that we

2. CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY.

And here again the Step often remains in the mind. There is no ACTION, and "faith without works is dead." No other phase of the A.A. program is so vital; no other Step in the achieving and maintaining of sobriety is so necessary; and no other factor comes into play in our everyday living in A.A. For it is here that the entire working of the Twelve Steps evolves--from ACTION; God's and ours.

Lack of concerted ACTION in Step Two denotes a weakness of faith. Such hesitancy may be very much present in the early days of every A.A., but eventually, in God's time and way (with our willingness) there must be ACTION. And again the ACTION of Step Two is contained in Step Three.

Permanent sobriety and happiness is impossible without all of the Steps. Not perfectly--no one achieves that--but in the best way each can in his or her own way. For, again, the ACTION of one Step is the taking of the next. Nor let us forget that the Twelfth Step itself clearly states that "having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps"--plural!

So having taken the Second Step--its ACTION takes place in Step Three. For, if we truly believe that a "Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity" the only logical practice of that faith would be when we

3. MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM.

This of necessity presumes that we have reached some concrete form of belief, in God as we understand Him. As far as A.A. is concerned and as far as the achieving and the maintaining of sobriety is concerned, it matters little what our belief is--but it is paramount that we ACT on it regardless of what it may be. For in the realm of faith--above all else--ACTION is the magic word. As a spiritual writer of old tells us: "ACT as if everything depended on yourself, believe, and trust as if everything depended upon God."

Now if the decision in the Third Step is sincere, if it is not only mental, if it does not remain sterile, then we must necessarily take Step Four. Why? Because how could we honestly turn our will and our life over to the care of God unless we know what our life consists of? Or unless we make some sort of inventory to find out just what we are turning over to Him! So therefore we

4. MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

The book, Alcoholics Anonymous, suggests that this inventory be written--again indicating the value of ACTION. And if there be sincerity in the making of our list, then more ACTION takes place in the next Step wherein we

5. ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS.

Many of us have admitted our wrongs "to God and to ourselves" for years. That is easy--it entailed no ACTION, no change, no effort. It remained merely mental--and clogged the mind more. But ACTION takes place when we admit our wrongs "to another human being." Otherwise there would be no true mental

catharsis, no improvement, no relief. And although many balk at this particular phase of the Fifth Step, it is precisely the most important phase, for it is ACTION--and ACTION is the magic word.

If we are honest in taking this Fifth Step, again it's ACTION flows into and demands the subsequent Step. For if we have sincerely admitted our wrongs, our faults and our failures--we certainly must take Step Six and

6. WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER.

Here we are entirely ready and willing to accept all that happens each day as God works on our character along with our cooperation. We try to fit in with all circumstances of our life as best we can. Each day we ACT saying in effect:

"You arrange my life God, we'll do our best each day to fit in." And here again sincerely in this Step finds its expression and ACTION in the next Step. For if we honestly want God to "remove our defects" we logically

7. HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS.

Here again many fail to get past the mental or vocal stage. They ask God to remove this and that fault, but they expect Him to do all of the job. They themselves do no foot-work, take no ACTION. In other words, there are many who spend much time and futile energy in "wishing away their faults" without taking any practical steps to practice virtue. Loudly they petition God to take away their pride, etc., but they make no concerted effort to practice humility. On the other hand the sincere person takes ACTION—and in order to intelligently begin the practice of humility, etc.

8. MADE A LIST OF ALL THE PERSONS WE HAD HARMED AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL.

Many of us even went so far in our endeavor to achieve and maintain sobriety in the past as to make such a list as suggested in the Eighth Step--but only mentally and it remained in the mind in fear and trembling or was frantically pushed back into the sub-conscious, which added fuel to the conflict that the alcoholic knows so well. But in A.A. we write it out and if sincere--we use this list, we do something about it in the next Step wherein

9. MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS.

Direct amends. For that is true ACTION; the sort of action that give the practice of humility, the one virtue that the alcoholic needs above all the rest. For "thinking" sorrow is really no sorrow--true sorrow demands ACTION. Not merely we "wish" we hadn't done this, or we "wish" we hadn't done that; but rather, we didn't do this or that, or we did this or that--we are sorry and are going to do precisely this and that to make up for it. That is ACTION.

Lets recapitulate. Look closely at Steps One to Nine, and then to the three last Steps; Ten to Twelve. On analysis we find that there are three definite sections to the Twelve Steps:

1. Here in the admission is the "door" to A.A. And since we are speaking of ACTION we find that many merely "open" the door but do not go in because there is no ACTION.

2-9. In these eight Steps we have the program of readjustment. It is thru them that we "get on the Program." And we find that ACTION throughout these Steps gives a new personality, but a personality which demands constant ACTION to insure progress, and that ACTION takes place on the daily or regular follow-up in Steps.

10-12. ACTION demands that we continue to use what Steps One through Nine have given us and we find the "continued" ACTION of the first nine Steps in Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve. And unless there be this ACTION, we find ourselves sooner or later falling back over the other Steps and out the door again.

The daily program is in the last three Steps. In them are contained the ACTION in the daily life of the good A.A. So we

10. CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG, PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT.

Here again we should not be deceived by thinking that this is a mental affair, that it is sufficient to "admit it" in the secrecy of heart and room. We must ACT on it. If we have "blown our top" we must go to the person involved and admit we were wrong. Even through we may have been right in our contentions, we were wrong "blowing our top." And unless we rid ourselves of it by the external admission, we as alcoholics are in danger of ultimately blowing another top--the bottle's! It is true that the nature of many wrongs we may be guilty of are such that public admission would be neither necessary nor

advisable--but we should admit them to someone. And for this purpose we should seek someone in whom we have absolute trust.

In the regular taking of our inventory and attempting to eliminate the wrongs from our lives, we shall soon find how impotent we are on ourselves and we shall soon find out that for success we must regularly seek for assistance from a Higher Power, from God. So in order that He may ACT on our characters we

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.

In prayer perhaps more so than in the other phases of our living, we find that ACTION is the magic word. It is not sufficient to merely verbally or mentally seek help from God, and to find out His will for us--we must ACT on it. Centuries ago we were told that "He who cries, 'Lord, Lord' will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that does the will of My Father, he will enter the Kingdom of Heaven." ACTION is the magic word! Or as one writer puts it: "When you pray for potatoes, reach for a hoe!" We must do the "foot-work," and then and only then will the "Power" of God flow through us to give us not only sobriety, but contented sobriety. We ask for God's will for us by verbal prayer; we learn God's will for us through meditation; we do the will of God by ACTION.

In seeking the will of God, we have it very clearly outlined for us in the subsequent Step. So in order to ACT upon it we

12. HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS THE RESULT OF THESE STEPS, WE TRIED TO CARRY THIS MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS AND PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OF OUR AFFAIRS.

First of all in the Twelfth Step we find that God has ACTED upon us. And as a result of our ACTING upon the first eleven Steps, He has given to us a "spiritual awakening"--an entirely new outlook toward God, toward our lives, toward our neighbor and toward ourselves. So now we continue to go into ACTION to insure sobriety and our new-found happiness by:

1. "Trying (ACTION) to carry the message of the spiritual awakening as THE result of working all Twelve Steps to other alcoholics" and by

2. "Practicing (ACTION) these principles in all of our affairs.

First of all we notice we "tried" to carry this message to other alcoholics. It is not necessary that we succeed in doing so. ACTION is the magic word, and if there be ACTION, i.e. if we try, we are practicing the Twelfth Step regardless of whether we succeed or not. We have ACTED in doing God's will--the rest, the sobriety of the "prospect", is in God's hands.

So many become confused in this phase of the program. And many slip as a result of gauging their Twelfth Step work not by their attempts but by their successes. They either become depressed and full of self-pity by their lack of success; or they become elated and proud because of their success. What they fail to realize is that the attempt is ACTION and all that is necessary; the success is God's ACTION, not ours.

Secondly, the ACTION in the Twelfth Step also necessitates our "practicing these principles (i.e., all that we have learned in the first eleven Steps) in all our affairs.

Many in A.A. seem never to have noticed this second half of the Twelfth Step. They have ACTION galore in carrying the message to other alcoholics, but they do not ACT on themselves, they do not practice the principles of A.A. in their own lives--in their prayers, in their homes, in their business, in their social lives. This doesn't mean that these individuals get too much Twelfth Step action, but that their ACTION in the Twelfth Step is lop-sided, is not balanced. As a result we have another slip and hear the remark "and he was such an active A.A. too!" It is precisely because of the importance of the ACTION in the second half of the Twelfth Step and because it is ACTION that others do not see, that we can never judge who is and who is not working the program. ACTION is the magic word--ACTION on all of the Steps and all of their parts.

-from Archie M.