

An Early Step Study Guide

This little booklet, originally titled "Alcoholics Anonymous: An Interpretation of our Twelve Steps," was widely used in the early days of A.A. in the Northwest. It was not produced by Alcoholics Anonymous, but rather was printed and subsequently modified by several different publishers. It was, perhaps, the earliest attempt at a guide to the Twelve Steps.

The story is that a serviceman, on his way to the war in the Pacific, stopped into a meeting in Seattle with a one of the booklets. Members were enthusiastic about the booklet and talked the man out of his copy. Many other copies were then made and distributed. This story is, perhaps, anecdotal. However, what is certain is that the little pamphlet became a fixture at many of the early A.A. meetings. The booklet was later renamed to "The Table Mate: Guide to the Study of the Twelve Steps" and considerable expanded. The "Table Mate" is still used by many members today, often handed down from sponsor to sponsee.

A version of the booklet, under the title "A Guide to the Twelve Steps", can be ordered from:

Alcoholics Anonymous of Greater Detroit
380 Hilton Road
Ferndale, Michigan 48220
(248) 541-6565

The text presented here is from one of the booklets dating from the late 40's or early 50's. This printing was obviously rather amateurish and contained many typos. We have reproduced the original here as closely as possible, only cleaning up some of the more blatant typos.

PREFACE

The following pages contain the basic material for the discussion meetings for alcoholics only.

These meetings are held for the purpose of acquainting both old and new members with the 12 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 and one evening each week will be devoted to each of the four subdivisions. Thus, in one month, a new man can get the basis of our 12 suggested steps.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

These steps are divided as follows:

- Discussion No. 1---The admission, Step No. 1.
- Discussion No. 2---The spiritual phase, Steps 2,3,5,6,7, and 11.
- Discussion No. 3---The inventory and restitution, Steps No. 4, 8, 9 and 10.
- Discussion No. 4---The active work, which is Step No. 12.

DISCUSSION NO. 1

THE ADMISSION

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the admission phase of the program and is not intended to replace or supplant-

- a. The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.
- b. Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.
- c. Study of the Program.
- d. Daily practice of the program.
- e. Reading of approved printed matter on Alcoholism.
- f. Informal discussion with other members.

This meeting covers Step No. 1. "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol-that our lives had become unmanageable."

This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction-a help-a brief course in the fundamentals.

In order to determine whether or not a person has drifted from "social drinking" into pathological drinking it is well to check over a list of test questions, which each member may ask himself and answer for himself.

We must answer once and for all these three puzzling questions-

What is an Alcoholic?
Who is an Alcoholic?
Am I an Alcoholic?

To get the right answer the prospective member must start this course of instruction with-

1. A willingness to learn. We must not have the attitude that "you've got to show me."
2. An open mind. Forget any and all ideas or notions we already have. Set our opinions aside.
3. Complete honesty. It is possible-not at all probable-that we may fool somebody else. But we **MUST** be honest with ourselves, and it is a good time to start being honest with others.

SUGGESTED TEST QUESTIONS

1. Do you require a drink the next morning?
2. Do you prefer to drink alone?
3. Do you lose time from work due to drinking?
4. Is your drinking harming your family in any way?
5. Do you crave a drink at a definite time daily?
6. Do you get the inner shakes unless you continue drinking?
7. Has drinking made you irritable?
8. Does drinking make you careless of your family's welfare?
9. Have you harmed your husband or wife since drinking?
10. Has drinking changed your personality?
11. Does drinking cause you bodily complaints?
12. Does drinking make you restless?
13. Does drinking cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
14. Has drinking made you more impulsive?
15. Have you less self-control since drinking?
16. Has your initiative decreased since drinking?
17. Has your ambition decreased since drinking?

18. Do you lack perseverance in pursuing a goal since drinking?
19. Do you drink to obtain social ease? (In shy, timid, self-conscious individuals.)
20. Do you drink for self-encouragement? (In persons with feelings of inferiority.)
21. Do you drink to relieve marked feeling of inadequacy?
22. Has your sexual potency suffered since drinking?
23. Do you show marked dislikes and hatreds since drinking?
24. Has your jealousy, in general, increased since drinking?
25. Do you show marked moodiness as a result of drinking?
26. Has your efficiency decreased since drinking?
27. Has your drinking made you more sensitive?
28. Are you harder to get along with since drinking?
29. Do you turn to an inferior environment since drinking?
30. Is drinking endangering your health?
31. Is drinking affecting your peace of mind?
32. Is drinking making your home life unhappy?
33. Is drinking jeopardizing your business?
34. Is drinking clouding your reputation?
35. Is drinking disturbing the harmony of your life?

If you have answered YES to any one of the Test Questions, there is a definite warning that you may be alcoholic. If you have answered YES to any two of the Test Questions the chances are that you are an alcoholic.

If you answered YES to three or more of the Test Questions you are definitely AN ALCOHOLIC.

NOTE: The Test Questions are not A.A. Questions but are the guide used by Johns Hopkins University Hospital in deciding whether a patient is alcoholic or not.

In addition to the Test Questions we in A.A. would ask even more questions. Here are a few-

36. Have you ever had a complete loss of memory while, or after drinking?
37. Have you ever felt, when or after drinking, an inability to concentrate?
38. Have you ever felt "remorse" after drinking?
39. Has a physician ever treated you for drinking?
40. Have you ever been hospitalized for drinking?

Many other questions could be asked but the foregoing are sufficient for the purpose of this instruction.

WHY DOES AN ALCOHOLIC DRINK?

Having decided that we are alcoholics, it is well to consider what competent mental doctors consider as the REASONS why an Alcoholic drinks.

1. As an escape from situations of life which he cannot face.
2. As evidence of a maladjusted personality (including sexual maladjustments)
3. As a development from social drinking to pathological drinking.
4. As a symptom of a major abnormal mental state.
5. As an escape from incurable physical pain.
6. As a symptom of constitutional inferiority-a psychopathic personality. For example, an individual who drinks because he likes alcohol, knows he cannot handle it, but does not care.
7. Many times one cannot determine any great and glaring mechanism as the basis of why the drinker drinks; but the revealing fact may be elicited that alcohol is taken to relieve a certain vague restlessness in the individual incident to friction between his biological and emotional make-up and the ordinary strains of life.

The above reasons are general reasons. Where the individuality or personality of the alcoholic is concerned these reasons may be divided as follows-

1. A self-pampering tendency which manifests itself in refusal to tolerate, even temporarily, unpleasant states of mind such as boredom, sorrow, anger, disappointment, worry, depression, dissatisfaction, and feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. "I want what I want when I want it" seems to express the attitude of many alcoholics toward life.
2. An instinctive urge for self-expression, unaccompanied by determination to translate the urge into creative action.
3. An abnormal craving for emotional experiences which calls for removal of intellectual restraint.
4. Powerful hidden ambitions, without the necessary resolve to take practical steps to attain them and with resultant discontent, irritability, depression, disgruntledness and general restlessness.
5. A tendency to flinch from the worries of life and to seek escape from reality by the easiest means available.
6. An unreasonable demand for continuous happiness or excitement.
7. An insistent craving for the feeling of self-confidence, calm and poise that some obtain temporarily from alcohol.

WE ADMIT

If, after carefully considering the foregoing, we ADMIT we are an alcoholic we must realize that-

Once a person becomes a pathological drinker, he can never again become a controlled drinker; and-from that point on, is limited to just two alternatives:

1. Total permanent abstinence.
2. Chronic alcoholism with all of the handicaps and penalties it implies. In other words-we have gone past the point where we HAD A CHOICE.

All we have left is a DECISION to make.

WE RESOLVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

1. WE MUST CHANGE OUR WAY OF THINKING. (This is such an important matter that it will have to be discussed more fully in a later discussion.)
2. We must realize that each morning, when you wake, you are a potential drunkard for that day.
3. We resolve that we will practice A.A. for the 24 hours of that day.
4. We must study the other eleven Steps of the Program and practice each and every one.
5. Attend the regular Group Meeting each week without fail.
6. Firmly believe that by practicing A.A. faithfully each day, we will achieve sobriety.
7. Believe that we can be free from alcohol as a problem.
8. Contact another member BEFORE taking a drink-not AFTER. Tell him what bothers you-talk it over with him freely.
9. Work the Program for ourselves alone-NOT for our wife, children, friends or for our job.
10. Be absolutely honest and sincere.
11. Be fully open minded-no mental reservations.
12. Be fully willing to work the Program. Nothing good in life comes without work.

CONCLUSION

1. Alcoholics are suffering from a MENTAL DISEASE-not a physical illness. Fortunately we in A.A. have learned how it may be controlled (this will be shown in the next eleven Steps of the Program.)
2. We can also learn to be FREE from alcohol as a problem.
3. We can achieve a full and happy life without recourse to alcohol.

ASK QUESTIONS

No question pertaining to drinking-or stopping drinking-is silly or irrelevant. The matter is TOO SERIOUS.

Any questions we ask may help some one else.

This is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction-a help-a brief course in fundamentals.

In A.A. we learn by question and answer.

We learn by exchanging our thought and our experience with each other.

Any question you ask may help some one else. To cover as many questions as possible in the short time available all answers must be limited to three (3) minutes.

DISCUSSION NO. 2

THE SPIRITUAL PHASE

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the spiritual phase of the program and is not intended to replace or supplant

- a. The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.
- b. Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.
- c. Study of the Program.
- d. Daily practice of the program.
- e. Reading of approved printed matter on Alcoholism.
- f. Informal discussion with other members.

This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction-a help-a brief course in the fundamentals.

This meeting covers Steps 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11. We will take them in order.

STEP NO. 2-"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Our drinking experience has shown-

1. That as we strayed away from the normal SOCIAL side of life, our minds became confused and we strayed away from the normal MENTAL side of life.
2. An abnormal MENTAL condition is certainly not SANITY in the accepted sense of the word. We have acquired or developed a MENTAL DISEASE. Our study of A.A. shows that-

- a. In the MENTAL or tangible side of life we have lost touch with, or ignored, or have forgotten the SPIRITUAL values that give us the dignity of MAN as differentiated from the ANIMAL. We have fallen back upon the MATERIAL things of life and these have failed us. We have been groping in the dark.
- b. No HUMAN agency, no SCIENCE or ART has been able to solve the alcoholic problem, so we turn to the SPIRITUAL for guidance.

Therefore, we "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

1. We must believe with a great FAITH.

STEP NO. 3-"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of GOD as we understand Him." In the first step we learned that we had lost the power of CHOICE and had to make a DECISION.

1. What DECISION could we make better than to
 - a. Turn our very WILL over to GOD, realizing that our own use of our own will had resulted in trouble.
 - b. As in the Lord's Prayer you must believe and practice THY WILL BE DONE.

2. GOD as we understand Him.
3. RELIGION is a word we do not use in A.A. We refer to a member's relation to GOD as the SPIRITUAL. A religion is a FORM of worship-not the worship itself.
4. If a man cannot believe in GOD he can certainly believe in SOMETHING greater than himself. If he cannot believe in a POWER greater than himself he is a rather hopeless egoist.

STEP NO. 5-"Admitted to GOD, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

1. There is nothing new in this step. There are many sound reasons for "talking over our troubles out loud with others."
2. The Catholic already has this medium readily available to him in the Confessional. But-the Catholic is at a disadvantage if he thinks his familiarity with confession permits him to think his part of A.A. is thereby automatically taken care of. He must, in confession, seriously consider his problems in relation to his alcoholic thinking.
3. The non-Catholic has the way open to work this step by going to his minister, his doctor, or his friend.
4. Under this step it is not even necessary to go to a priest or minister. Any understanding human being, friend or stranger will serve the purpose.
5. The purpose and intent of this step is so plain and definite that it needs little explanation. The point is that we MUST do EXACTLY what the Fifth Step says, sooner or later. We must not be in a rush to get this step off our chest. Consider it carefully and calmly. Then get about it and do it.
6. "Wrongs" do not necessarily mean "crime. It can well be wrong thinking-selfishness-false pride-egotism-or any one of a hundred such negative faults.

STEP NO. 6-"We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

1. After admitting our wrong thinking and wrong actions in Step 5 we now do something more than "admit" or "confess."
2. We now become READY and WILLING to have God remove the defects in our CHARACTER.
3. Remember it is OUR character we are working on. Not the other fellow's. Here is a good place to drop the CRITICAL attitude toward others-the SUPERIOR attitude toward others.
4. We must clean our mind of wrong thinking-petty jealousy-envy-self pity-remorse, etc.
5. Here is the place to drop RESENTMENTS, one of the biggest hurdles the alcoholic has to get over.
6. What concerns us here is that we drop all thoughts of resentment-anger-hatred-revenge.
7. We turn our WILL over to God and let HIS WILL direct us how to patiently remove, one by one, all defects in our character.

STEP NO. 7-"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." The meaning of this step is clear. Prayer-Humility.

1. Prayer. No man can tell another HOW to pray. Each one has, or works out for himself, his own method.

If we cannot pray, we just talk to God and tell Him our troubles.

Meditate-think clearly and cleanly-and ask God to direct our thoughts. Christ said "ask and ye shall receive." What method is simpler-merely "ask."

If you cannot pray ask God to teach you to pray.

2. Humility. This, simply, is the virtue of being ourselves and realizing how small we are in a big world full of its own trouble.

Drop all pretense. We must not be Mr. Big Shot-bragging, boasting. Shed false pride. Tell the simple, plain, unvarnished truth. Act, walk and talk simply. See the little bit of good that exists in an evil man. Forget the little bit of evil that exists in the good man. We must not look down on the very lowest of GOD'S creatures or man's mistakes. Think clearly, honestly, fairly, generously.

3. The shortcomings we ask GOD to remove are the very defects in character that make us drink. The same defects we drink to hide or to get away from.

STEP NO. 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."

1. We pray each night-every night-a prayer of thanks.
2. We pray each morning-every morning-for help and guidance.

3. When we are lonely-confused-uncertain-we pray.

Most of us find it well to:

1. Choose, for each day, a "quite time" to meditate on the program, on your progress in it.
2. Keep conscious contact with GOD and pray to make that contact closer.
3. Pray that our will be laid aside and that God's will direct us.
4. Pray for calmness-quiet-relaxation-rest.
5. Pray for strength and courage to enable us to do today's work today.
6. Pray for forgiveness for yesterday's errors.
7. Ask for HOPE for better things tomorrow.
8. Pray for what we feel we need. We will not get what we "want." We will get what we "need"-what is good for us.

CONCLUSION

We find that no one need have difficulty with the spiritual side of the program. WILLINGNESS-HONESTY and OPEN MINDEDNESS are the ESSENTIALS OF RECOVERY. BUT THESE ARE INDISPENSABLE.

ASK QUESTIONS

No question pertaining to drinking-or stopping drinking-is silly or irrelevant. The matter is too SERIOUS. In A.A. we learn by question and answer.

We learn by exchanging our thought and our experience with each other.

Any question you ask may help someone else. To cover as many questions as possible in the short time available all answers must be limited to three (3) minutes.

GOD grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change, courage to change things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

DISCUSSION NO. 3

INVENTORY AND RESTITUTION

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the inventory and restitution steps and is not intended to replace or supplant-

- a. The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.
- b. Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.
- c. Study of the Program.
- d. Daily practice of the program.
- e. Reading of approved printed matter on Alcoholism.
- f. Informal discussion with other members.

This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction-a help-a brief course in the fundamentals.

This meeting covers Steps 4-8-9-10-We will take them in order.

STEP 4-"Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

The intent and purpose of this step is plain. All alcoholics have a definite need for a good self-analysis-a sort of self-appraisal. Other people have certainly analyzed us, appraised us, criticized us and even judged us. It might be a good idea to judge ourselves, calmly and honestly. We need inventory because-

1. Either our faults, weaknesses, defects of character-are the cause of our drinking OR
2. Our drinking has weakened our character and let us drift into all kinds of wrong action, wrong attitudes, wrong viewpoints. In either event we obviously need an inventory and the only kind of inventory to make is a GOOD one.

Moreover, the job is up to US. WE created or WE let develop all the anti-social actions that got US in wrong. So WE have got to work it out. WE must make out a list of our faults and then WE must do something about it.

The inventory must be four things-

1. It must be HONEST. Why waste time fooling ourselves with a phoney list. We have fooled ourselves for years. We tried to fool others and now is a good time to look ourselves squarely in the eye.
2. It must be SEARCHING. Why skip over a vital matter lightly and quickly. Our trouble is a grave mental disease, confused by screwy thinking. Therefore, we must SEARCH diligently and fearlessly to get at the TRUTH of what is wrong with us-just dig in and SEARCH.
3. It must be FEARLESS. We must not be afraid we might find things in our heart, mind and soul that we will hate to discover. If we do find such things they may be the ROOT of our trouble.
4. It must be a MORAL inventory. Some, in error, think the inventory is a lot of unpaid debts, plus a list of unmade apologies. Our trouble goes much deeper. We will find the root of our trouble lies in- resentments-False Pride-Envy-Jealousy-Selfishness and many other things. Laziness is an important one. In other words we are making an inventory of our character-our attitude toward others-our very way of living. We are not preparing a financial statement. We will pay our bills all right, because we cannot even begin to practice A.A. without HONESTY.

STEP 8-"Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all." Under this step we will make a list (mental or written) of those we have harmed.

We ask GOD to let His Will be done, not OUR will, and ask for the strength and courage to become willing to forget resentments and false pride and make amends to those we have harmed. We must not do this step grudgingly, or as an unpleasant task to be rid of quickly. We must do it WILLINGLY, fairly and humbly-without condescension.

STEP 9-"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

Here is where we make peace with ourselves by making peace with those we have hurt.

The amends we make must be direct. We must pay in kind for the hurt we have done them.

If we have cheated them we must make restitution.

If we have hurt their feelings we must ask forgiveness from them.

The list of harms done may be long but the list of amends is equally long.

For every "wrong" we have done, there is a "right" we may do to compensate.

There is only one exception. we must develop a sense of justice, a spirit of fairness, an attitude of common sense. If our effort to make amends would create further harm or cause a scandal we will have to skip the "direct amends" and clean the matter up under STEP 5.

HUMILITY

A state of complete humility is very difficult to attain, but the goal is well worth the effort, considering the serenity that is achieved.

DISCUSSION NO. 4

ACTIVE WORK

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the inventory and restitution steps and is not intended to replace or supplant-

- a. The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.
- b. Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.
- c. Study of the Program.
- d. Daily practice of the program.
- e. Reading of approved printed matter on Alcoholism.
- f. Informal discussion with other members.

This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction-a help-a brief course in the fundamentals.

THIS MEETING COVERS THE TWELFTH STEP

"Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

This STEP logically separates into 3 parts.

1. The SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.

The terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening" used here and in the book ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, mean, upon careful reading, that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many forms.

Do NOT get the impression that these personality changes, or spiritual experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous.

Among our rapidly membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the "educational variety" because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself.

The new man gradually realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.

Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problem in the light of our experience can recover provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

We find that no one need have difficulty with the spiritual side of the program. Willingness, Honesty and Open Mindedness are the Essentials of Recovery. But these are indispensable.

2. CARRY THE MESSAGE TO OTHERS.

This means exactly what it says. Carry the message actively. Bring it to the man who needs it. We do it in many ways.

- a. By attending EVERY meeting of our own group
- b. By making calls when asked.
- c. By speaking at Group Meetings when asked.
- d. By supporting our Group financially to make group meetings possible.
- e. By assisting at Meetings when asked.

- f. By setting a good example of complete sobriety.
- g. By owning, and loaning to new men, our own copy of the big A.A. Book.
- h. By encouraging those who find the way difficult.
- i. By serving as an officer or on group committees or special assignment when asked.
- j. By doing all of the foregoing cheerfully and willingly.
- k. We do any or all of the foregoing at some sacrifice to OURSELVES WITH DEFINITE THOUGHT OF DEVELOPING unselfishness in our own character.

3. WE PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS.

This last part of the TWELFTH STEP is the real purpose that all of the twelve steps lead to—a new "way of life"; a "design for living." It shows how to live rightly, think rightly and to achieve happiness.

HOW DO WE GO ABOUT IT?

- a. We resolve to live our life, one day at a time—just 24 hours.
- b. We pray each day for guidance that day.
- c. We pray each night—thanks for that day.
- d. We resolve to keep our heads and to forego any anger, no matter what situation arises.
- e. We are patient.
- f. We keep calm—relaxed.
- g. Now, and most important, whatever LITTLE ordinary situation as well as BIG situations arise, we look at it calmly and fairly, with an open mind. Then act on it in exact accordance with the simple true principles that A.A. has taught and will teach us.

In other words, our SOBRIETY is only a correction of our worst and most evident faults. Our living each day according to the principles of A.A. will also correct all of our other lesser faults and will gradually eliminate, one by one, all of the defects in our character that cause frictions, discontent, and unhappy rebellious moods that lead right back to our very chief fault of drinking.

ASK QUESTIONS

No question pertaining to drinking—or stopping drinking is silly or irrelevant. The matter is too SERIOUS. In A.A. we learn by question and answer.

We learn by exchanging our thought and experience with each other.

Any question we may ask may help someone else.

Answers must be limited to three (3) minutes.