

Emotional Sobriety Workbook



Emotional sobriety is not about being free of emotions.

It's about letting go of our need to control.

To accept our imperfections.

To be emotionally balanced.

To take full responsibility for our emotions.

To not blame our emotional responses on other people.

To learn to soothe ourselves rather than react when things don't go our way.

In short, it's about growing up.

And maturing.

Acknowledgments

Margie B. is a recovered member of AA who opened an Emotional Sobriety meeting in Byron Bay in 2006. Since then she has been developing workshops and producing Emotional Sobriety Workbooks. With Margie's guidance she has shown me how to implement this work into my life and the importance of teaching others this practice. With only a few changes, the writing in the workbook is from Margie B.

Margie has had help from her friends Polly P., Dave P., Sandy B., Bob B., Chuck C., Harry Tiebout, Allen Berger, Hazelden Betty Ford and many, many others who helped make emotional sobriety such a rich journey for so many.

I met Margie over 8 years ago and around 6 years ago I hit a rock bottom in my dependencies. I contacted Margie and she sent me an Emotional Sobriety Workbook, told me to read it and then get back to her..... 6 years later I called and said I was ready!!!!!!

As a result of learning and practicing this work I have been able to repair relationships that seemed unrepairable. By learning to rely on my God to provide all my needs and not look to others to provide them has been the key to my personal freedom.

Everything is about the relationship I have with God and how I can best be of service to those around me instead of them all having to serve me... I hope this workbook gives you the same freedom....

Morag C. 2020

All the wonders you seek are within
yourself. We should seek to discover
our own special light. Know how to
live within yourself; there in your
soul lives a whole world of
mysterious and enchanted thoughts;
they will be drowned by noise of this
world. Be still and listen to their
singing and be silent.

Fyodor Tyutchev

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WHAT IS EMOTIONAL IMMATURITY?

A continued sense of uneasiness; continually putting yourself down; seeking approval, acceptance and emotional security from someone and/or something else; feeling like a victim; blaming others when your needs aren't met.

Emotional immaturity is when the input of others almost totally determines how I feel about me. I look to others to give me a feeling of self-worth, belonging and self-esteem. I depend on others to tell me how to feel about me. It's a stage in recovery through which those in recovery will invariably pass. It can preclude a happy sobriety or even lead to relapse.

It's often diagnosed as depression.

It usually doesn't show up until a person is well into recovery and sometimes it takes a crisis to be aware of it. We can't understand why we feel so bad when we are trying so hard, we're going to meetings, sponsoring, practicing the program but we feel empty inside. We may begin to ask ourselves 'is this all there is?' Everything is good, but I feel worthless and I reach for the only thing that relieves my symptoms at that point in time. Food, shopping, sex, prescription drugs, relationships etc.

Sometimes when we talk to older members about this emotional pain they tell us what they have learned - 'go to meetings, read the Big Book and get out of self-pity'.... and we lose a lot of members.

In many cases what is at the root of this feeling of unworthiness or shame is a form of self-hate. Self-hate and shame are two of the primary causes of relapse.

If you have come to this crossroad in your recovery you may like to contemplate renewing your effort at self-discovery and hopefully take your recovery up to a whole new level as Bill did.

As the big book states: Alcoholism is an illness a fatal malady p. 92

Polly P. says 'This is a serious disease – most of us die'.

This workshop is about learning to overcome our emotional handicap – our immaturity – and learning to develop real emotional sobriety

It's about addressing the four causes of self-destructive behaviours that can lead to relapse:

Our addiction (our disease). It lies in wait. Once our brain is changed by addiction it's changed for ever. If we surrender, our disease loses its control over our life. It doesn't go away. It merely recedes into the background.

Ignorance. We can only do what we've been taught. Most of us don't know how to live an authentic, effective, healthy and fulfilling life. Often we don't want to face our shortcomings because that means we have to do something about them.

Unreasonable expectations (pre-meditated resentments and control) and *emotional dependency* (fear).

Self-hate. When we don't live up to who we think we should be and we don't feel worthy of recovery. We don't feel worthy of joy, happiness, success, freedom or love.



STAGE II RECOVERY

Stage II recovery is about learning to grow up. We need to address our immaturity – the ‘King Baby’ aspects of our behaviour and reach beyond those things that are superficially wrong with us.

King Baby Syndrome (or queen baby) was written by Tom Cunningham at the Hazelden Foundation in Minnesota. He wrote the pamphlet for recovering addicts and alcoholics to explore dry drunk syndrome. This term is obviously an oxymoron as it implies that a person is drunk without ingesting alcohol.

Addiction is not about the substance it is an illness that results in a set of symptoms and behaviours that the substance medicates.

The term “His Majesty, the Baby,” originated from Freud’s paper “On Narcissism” (1914) the concept describes an inborn attitude. Freud uses the tale of Narcissus as a synonym for egomania or fixation with oneself to illustrate King Baby Syndrome.

The story: Narcissus is a young man who is seeing his reflection in a pool of water and falls in love with himself, unable to tear himself away he finally dies of self-obsession.

Narcissism in relation to addiction may be caused by dopamine deficiency and therefore feelings of deprivation and dissatisfaction, caused by either a genetic condition or neglect. Whatever the cause, it leads to anxiety and triggers defence mechanisms and defective character traits to compensate.

(Hope rehab Thailand workbook on King Baby Syndrome)



In our 4th step inventory through the Big Book we learned about our resentments, fears, sex conduct and harms and recognized how we were selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened. But we may not have addressed all of our dependencies that cause these reactions in the first place.

When the Big Book was written, the first 100 had amazing changes in their lives. They put their lives back together and knew that this solution could solve all their problems. They practiced absolute dependence on God, the principle of giving in all areas of life and passed on this message to thousands of people. But most of us when life gets busy, stop doing the things that keep us growing. The Big Book states in Step 11 that we must grow further. Page 87 of the Big Book states “ there are many helpful books also and they may be obtained from ones, priest, minister or rabbi.” This is when I suggest to people to start looking at the 12 & 12.

The 12 &12 came along as a result of Bill exploring deeper his own spiritual growth and he wrote about his experience since the writing of the Big book in 1939 to 1953. Within this Bill started to address his dependency and how it caused havoc in his life sober.

To do this deeper work on dependencies, it is imperative that a person has a firm grasp on the practice of the 12 Steps as outlined in the Big Book and has started to have a relationship with a Power greater than themselves.

In Bill's writings to his spiritual adviser, Father Ed. Dowling, he talks about one of the golden rules of Psychology – that when people fail to satisfy our important unmet needs we become depressed, and when we manage to fulfil our unmet needs we experience true happiness.

Bill's letter “Emotional Sobriety – The Next Frontier” is based on learning to understand the underlying cause of his depression – his emotional dependencies.

BACKGROUND OF BILL'S LETTER

15 years after writing the Big Book, Bill wrote the 12 & 12 which was published in 1953. In 1956 when he was 21 years sober, he wrote about emotional sobriety in a letter he sent to a depressed friend. The letter was eventually published in The Grapevine in 1958 titled 'Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier'.

Dr. Harry Tiebout, the first psychiatrist to recognise the importance of AA believed that there are two types of sobriety: Physical and emotional. Emotional sobriety is not automatically rendered with physical sobriety. **George Joseph MD defines emotional sobriety as resilience, wisdom and balance.**

The need to reinforce alcoholics' emotional sobriety was recognised in the early years of traditional recovery fellowships. In the Grapevine article, Bill realised that emotional sobriety was the next frontier and he was hopeful that veteran AA members would make emotional sobriety an actual movement within the organisation. We don't know why it wasn't followed up, but here is a hint from Susan Cheever's biography of Bill Wilson.

'Besides my natural tendency to procrastinate, I've had a dreadful hex about further writing. Figure I had been so beat up by the events of the last years that I could never bring off anything more that could be worthwhile'. Bill W

My experience is that I was 14 years sober before I started to address any other problem other than the drink and drug symptoms of my illness. I was aware for many years that I had issues in relationships, with food, with spending money etc. but I could not see that these things would kill me like alcohol and drugs.

Every surrender I have had with all of the branches of my illness tree has come as a result of getting to a point where I wanted to die. The solution has always come after surrender and complete defeat – the death of EGO. Morag C.

Legacies of Bill and Dr. Bob

Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob left us three remarkable legacies.

The first legacy was the 12 steps. The 12 steps have helped millions of people find freedom from their addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

Their second legacy was the 12 traditions. The 12 traditions do for the fellowship of AA what the 12 steps do for the individual. We can think of the 12 steps as a design for daily living that promotes emotional well-being and peace of mind while the 12 traditions provide guidelines for the healthy functioning of the AA fellowship as a whole.

Their third legacy was the formation and structure of the General Service Office. These three legacies formed the foundation of AA as we know it today.

There is another legacy that Bill W. left us. A legacy that has not been fully recognised for its value and role in recovery.

Bill W's fourth legacy was emotional sobriety. This is one of Bill's most important contributions to recovery. In it he unravels the source of his basic flaws and emotional 'deformities': issues necessary to understand and address if he was going to finally tackle his depression and realise all the wonderful benefits of recovery.

Bill sought the truth about himself and about life. From these efforts he developed the ability to be honest with himself and identify emotional and behavioural patterns that were causing him much distress and anxiety.

The letter that Bill wrote is a synthesis of what he had learned about himself and his dilemma after being sober 21 years.



Bill's Stage II Recovery

At this point in Bill's recovery, he was working on what we now call Stage II recovery. This second stage of recovery was appropriately labelled by Earnie Larsen. **Stage II recovery is concerned with healthy human relations.** This is something that has eluded us throughout our lives because of our emotional immaturity.

Do you ever find yourself overreacting to a comment someone important makes to you and then find yourself silently wondering, 'Why did I react so strongly? What makes their opinion of me more important than what I know to be true?'

Reflecting on what caused him to be upset and how he reacted helped Bill figure out some very important things about himself. In a way, we can say that he took an emotional inventory. As a result of the insights he gained from these self-reflections, **Bill realised that his depression was a result of how he responded when things didn't go his way.**

Bill discovered that he imposed unenforceable rules on others and demanded that they accommodate his ideas. When they didn't, he fought them and when they didn't cave in, he felt deflated and defeated. **When he felt defeated he became depressed.**

Bill realised that his emotional state was dependent on the outcome of his interaction with others, that he was emotionally dependent on how other people behaved toward him for his self-esteem, for his emotional well-being. Bill described his epiphany this way:

'Suddenly I realised what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been dependence — almost absolute dependence — on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionistic specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came so did my depression.'

Our Stage II Recovery

We are all emotionally dependent to one degree or another, and that's why we relate to Bill's struggle. If you want to achieve emotional sobriety, then you need to get honest with yourself about your current level of emotional maturity. We need to conceive to our innermost self all of our dependencies.

We have expectations about how things are supposed to be, and when those expectations aren't met, we don't know what to do. We can become upset and lose our emotional balance.

As we explore this, we begin to see how our need to control everything and everyone in our life is the precursor to anxiety attacks.

Emotional sobriety teaches us to deal with anxiety, depression, obsessions and desires. Once we begin to learn to live more in the present, our anxiety and desires will begin to disappear.

Emotional sobriety is the result of learning to soothe ourselves rather than manipulating other people to comfort us. Emotional sobriety is the movement away from manipulating others for validation toward supporting and validating ourselves. It's about mature love and intimacy.

If we require other people to act and behave a certain way for us to feel safe, then the world will never be a safe place. When I learn to stand on my own two feet and support and validate myself, then what others did or didn't do becomes less important. Emotional sobriety means that we stop taking what other people do personally and we stop letting their limited perceptions define us.

We need to work out how to surrender our needs so we're not hooked in to some external thing. All our needs come from the source/higher self/God and therefore they are already within. All we need to do is bring them to the surface.

What happens when things don't turn out as we want? Expectations lead to disappointment and disappointment can lead to depression as Bill found out. The symptoms of disappointment (lethargy, depression, lack of motivation, denial, anger, low self-esteem etc.) all lead to one thing – **disconnection**. Expectation hangovers cause disconnection from our Higher Power, ourselves and others

As we mature our perception of things change and this allows me to become both thick skinned and tender hearted instead of being so emotionally dependent on other people's approval.

How do we learn to respond in a healthier way to what life expects from us?

How do we learn to respond with grace and humility when things don't go our way?

That's what this letter is about.



THE NEXT FRONTIER – EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY

Published in the Grapevine 1958

**Incredible document written in 1956 - by Bill Wilson when he was 21 years
sober - 15 years after the 12&12**

(Note: Bold in brackets are added comments)

I think that many oldsters who have put our AA “booze cure” to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety.

Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the next major development in AA -- the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God. Those adolescent urges that so many of us have for top approval, perfect security, and perfect romance -- urges quite appropriate to age seventeen -- prove to be an impossible way of life when we are at age forty-seven or fifty-seven.

Since AA began, I’ve taken immense wallops in all these areas because of my failure to grow up, emotionally and spiritually. My God, how painful it is to keep demanding the impossible, and how very painful to discover finally, that all along we have had the cart before the horse!

Then comes the final agony of seeing how awfully wrong we have been, but still finding ourselves unable to get off the emotional merry-go-round. How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result, and so into easy, happy, and good living -- well, that’s not only the neurotic’s problem, it’s the problem of life itself for all of us who have got to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all our affairs. **(Neurotic- means excessive and irrational anxiety or obsession.)**

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That's the place so many of us AA oldsters have come to. And it's a hell of a spot, literally.

How shall our unconscious from which so many of our fears, compulsions and phony aspirations still stream -- be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want! How to convince our dumb, raging and hidden "Mr. Hyde" becomes our main task.

I've recently come to believe that this can be achieved. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones -- folks like you and me -- commencing to get results. Last autumn (**several years back -- ed.**) depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. Considering the grief I've had with depressions, it wasn't a bright prospect.

I kept asking myself, "Why can't the Twelve Steps work to release depression?" By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer..."It's better to comfort than to be the comforted. Here was the formula, all right. But why didn't it work?

Suddenly I realized what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been almost absolute dependence - on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

There wasn't a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away. Because I had over the years undergone a little spiritual development, the absolute quality of these frightful dependencies had never before been so starkly revealed.

Reinforced by what Grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will (**this is the proper use of will**) and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon AA, indeed, upon any set of circumstances whatsoever. Then only could I be free to love as Francis had. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing a love appropriate to each relation of life.

Plainly, I could not avail myself of God's love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. And I couldn't possibly do that so long as I was victimized by false dependencies.

For my dependency meant demand -- a demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me.

While those words "absolute demand" may look like a gimmick, they were the ones that helped to trigger my release into my present degree of stability and quietness of mind, qualities which I am now trying to consolidate by offering love to others regardless of the return to me.

This seems to be the primary healing circuit: an outgoing love of God's creation and His people, by means of which we avail ourselves of His love for us. It is most clear that the current can't flow until our paralysing dependencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

Spiritual calculus you say? Not a bit of it. Watch any AA of six months working with a new Twelfth Step case. If the case says "To the devil with you," the Twelfth Stepper only smiles and turns to another case. He doesn't feel frustrated or rejected. If his next case responds, and in turn starts to give love and attention to other alcoholics, yet gives none back to him, the sponsor is happy about it anyway. He still doesn't feel rejected; instead he rejoices that his onetime prospect is sober and happy. And if his

next following case turns out in later time to be his best friend (or romance) then the sponsor is most joyful. But he well knows that his happiness is a by-product -- the extra dividend of giving without any demand for a return.

The really stabilizing thing for him was having and offering love to that strange drunk on his doorstep. That was Francis at work, powerful and practical, minus dependency and minus demand.

In the first six months of my own sobriety, I worked hard with many alcoholics. Not one responded. Yet this work kept me sober. It wasn't a question of those alcoholics giving me anything. My stability came out of trying to give, not demanding that I receive.

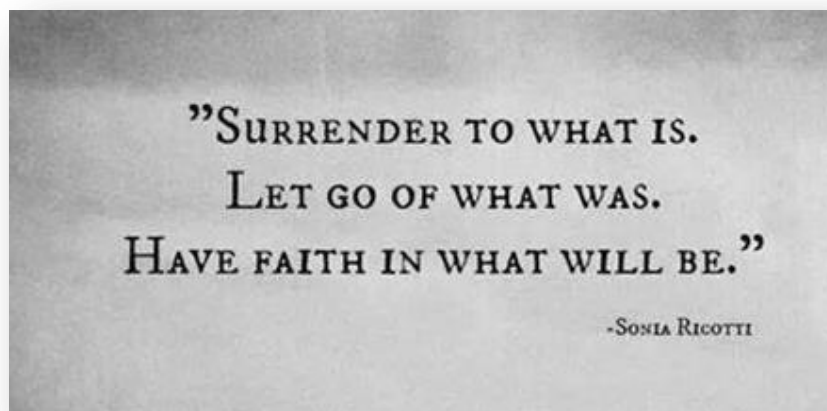
Thus I think it can work out with emotional sobriety. If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love; we may then be able to Twelfth Step ourselves and others into emotional sobriety.

Of course I haven't offered you a really new idea -- only a gimmick that has started to unhook several of my own "hexes" at depth. Nowadays my brain no longer races compulsively in either elation, grandiosity or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine.

Summary of Bill's Letter

This is the middle way – a spiritual path that avoids extremes. Bill has now found his emotional sobriety. This letter gives us some idea of the incredible insight that Bill developed in understanding his anxiety and depression.

The disease of alcoholism is three-fold, physical allergy, mental obsession and spiritual malady. In his letter Bill talks about how the *problem (the spiritual malady)* is also three-fold, our absolute dependencies, the unconscious tapes in our head from early childhood and our childish reactions when our needs are not met. These are the major stumbling blocks to our emotional sobriety - they block us from the '*sunlight of the spirit*'.



ST FRANCIS PRAYER

Using the St. Francis prayer as our foundation for service and humility. Giving and receiving in equal measure. We open the channel to receive God's love and give this unconditionally to others. Through giving ourselves unconditional love, we can begin to trust that we belong and that we are all connected.

ST FRANCIS PRAYER

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace

That where there is hatred, I may bring love

That where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness

That where there is discord, I may bring harmony

That where there is error, I may bring truth

That where there is doubt, I may bring faith

That where there is despair, I may bring hope

That where there are shadows, I may bring light

That where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort, than be comforted – to understand, than to be understood – to love, than be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life.



Spend some time relishing what the prayer's inner essence is. Think about the man who first uttered the prayer. He wanted to become a "channel" – he asked for the Grace to bring love, forgiveness, harmony, truth, faith, hope, light and joy to every human being he could.

He expressed an aspiration and a hope for himself – that with God’s will he might be able to find some of these treasures too. He would do this by self-forgetting. By letting go of wanting – letting go of selfishness, self-centeredness.

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

‘We must awake or we die. So we do awake, and we are sober. Then what? Is sobriety all that we are to expect of a spiritual awakening? Again the voice of AA speaks up. No, sobriety is only a bare beginning, it is only the first gift of the first awakening. If more gifts are to be received, our awakening has to go on. And if it does go on, we find that bit by bit we can discard the old life – the one that did not work – for a new life that can and does work under any conditions whatever.’ Bill W. Grapevine



Had we not variously worshipped people, sentiment things, money and ourselves? And then, with a better motive, had we not worshipfully beheld the sunset, the sea or a flower? Who of us had not loved something or somebody? How much did these feelings, these loves, these worships, have to do with pure reason? Little or nothing we saw at last.

p. 54 Big Book

EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY:

THE MISSING PIECE:

THE SPIRITUAL MALADY

By Mike L., "Carry THIS Message" Group, West Orange, NJ

(Note: Brackets and italics are added comments)

We often hear people say something like, "I have a three-fold disease: body, mind, and spirit." When you ask them to describe what they mean by that statement, they seem to have a firm grasp on the fact that we alcoholics suffer from **"an allergy of the body and an obsession of the mind"**

It is agreed that the "mental obsession" is the part of our "disease" which leads to the first drink; and it's the first drink that triggers the "phenomenon of craving." But, what about the part of my "disease" that triggers the mental obsession in the first place?

Why is it that people who have remained abstinent from drinking in Alcoholics Anonymous for 1 year... 2 years... 5 years... 10 years... and in some cases even 20 years or more, go back to drinking?

We know the physical craving does not cause these people to drink because it's been medically proven that after a few days of not drinking the alcohol is processed out of the body. And, if you've been in the AA Fellowship for a while, for most people, the mental obsession dissipates. So why is it that after a long period of sobriety many people in our fellowship return to drinking - **EVEN WHEN THEY DON'T WANT TO?**

What is the *third fold* of our illness that triggers the mental obsession - WHEN NOT DRINKING - HAVING BEEN SEPARATED FROM ALCOHOL FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME?

The "**missing piece**" of Step 1 appears to be what is referred to on page 64 as the "***spiritual malady***." Let's discuss the second half of Step 1: " - that our lives had become unmanageable." For a long time life was unmanageable because of all the crazy insane things we did while drinking - like the car accidents, hurting people when we didn't mean to, failed relationships, loss of jobs, family dysfunction, jails, asylums, etc.

Finally, someone explained to us that those things are not the insanity that the Big Book talks about; nor are those things why the alcoholic's life becomes unmanageable. Of course those things can be classified as "unmanageability" - but they are external unmanageability. The unmanageability that the 1st Step is pointing to is the **INWARD UNMANAGEABILITY** of our lives - the restlessness, irritability, and discontentment that most alcoholics have even BEFORE they ever picked up their first drink. There are many names for this "inward unmanageability". Some refer to it as "untreated alcoholism." Others use the term "bedevilments", which comes from page 52 of the Big Book. Page 64 simply refers to this "inward unmanageability" as "the spiritual malady."

Our book promises us that "When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." The mental and physical factors of alcoholism are put into remission AFTER the "spiritual malady" is overcome - which means we're still in danger of drinking until we have a spiritual awakening - whether we think so or not.

Two key points to focus on from this point forward:

1. **What really is this "*spiritual malady*"** and how, if left untreated, can it drive an alcoholic back to drinking?
2. What is the remedy for it? **Our Big Book answers both of those questions in masterly detail in Chapters 4 - 11.**

Imagine three layers.

The first layer is our bodily reaction to alcohol when we ingest it - the physical craving. Under that is the second layer: the insanity of the mind just before the first drink - the mental obsession.

Under that is the third layer: the inward condition that triggers the second layer, which in turn triggers the first - the "spiritual malady."

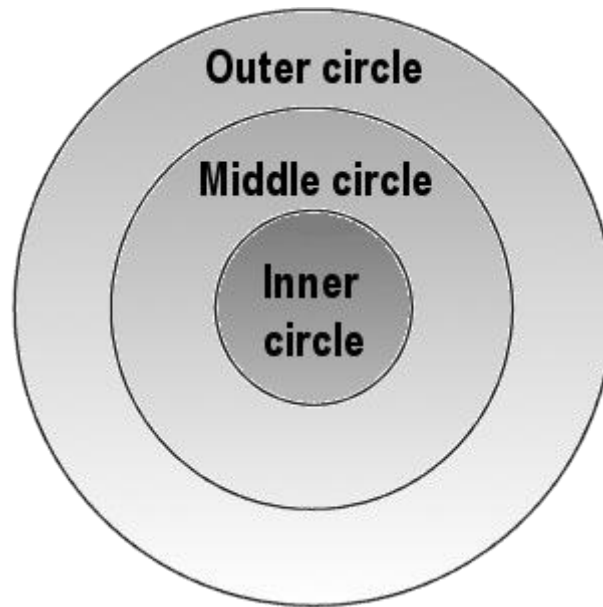
Symptoms of this "third layer" as described in the Big Book include:

1. Being restless, irritable, and discontented (page xxvi)
2. Having trouble with personal relationships
3. Not being able to control our emotional natures
4. Being a prey to (or suffering from) misery and depression
5. Not being able to make a living (or a happy and successful life)
6. Having feelings of uselessness
7. being full of fear
8. Unhappiness
9. Inability to be of real help to other people (page 52)
10. Being like "the actor who wants to run the whole show" (pages 60-61)
11. Being "driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity" (page 62)
12. Self-will run riot (page 62)
13. Leading a double life (page 73),
14. Living like a tornado roaring through the lives of others (page 82)
15. Exhibiting selfish and inconsiderate habits.
16. Depending on others to make me feel anything.

Physical Craving

Mental Obsession

Spiritual Malady



These name just a few of the symptoms of the "*spiritual malady*" that's described throughout our text. But still in all, these are just symptoms of the "*spiritual malady*." What is it really? What is the driving force of the symptoms described above?

On page 62 the text explains that **"Selfishness-self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles."** This **"SELFISHNESS-self-centeredness"** (or the "ego", as some people refer to it) drives us to respond to life situations with the above "symptoms" as well as disorders and addictions other than alcoholism.

(In the Big Book it states that we are self-centred ego-centric p. 61. Ego centric means- thinking of one's self without regard for the feelings or desires of others, Self-Centred.)

If this selfishness-self-centeredness continues to manifest in an alcoholic's life - **EVEN IN SOMEONE WHO IS NOT DRINKING AND CONTINUES TO ATTEND MEETINGS** - and the ego is not smashed and re-smashed by continuous application of all twelve steps, the sober (or "just not drinking") alcoholic is sure to drink again eventually... or even worse, continue to live miserably being "undrunk" (better known as a "dry drunk").

Spiritual Malady

This is why we see people with 10 years in AA wind up in mental institutions - AND THEY HAVEN'T HAD A DROP TO DRINK!

If we continue to act out with selfish - self-centred - ego-driven behaviours we will continue to experience the symptoms of the **"spiritual malady."** If we continue to experience this inward unmanageability, eventually our minds will seek out the **"sense of ease and comfort"** it thinks it can receive from taking a drink. Or, our ego can deceive us into thinking we're doing perfectly fine. (i.e.: Fred's story in Chapter 3... Fred drank when there wasn't "a cloud on the horizon".)

Typically, we'll tell ourselves and others, "Well, at least I'm not drinking." All of a sudden, I can experience a **"strange mental blank-spot"** - otherwise known as a **"sober blackout"** - and before it even hits me I'm pounding on the bar, asking myself **"How'd this happen?"** (*Can also be experienced by making other major decisions e.g leaving your partner, job or moving to another location.*)

So, ask yourself if you're suffering from the *"spiritual malady"* - particularly if you haven't had a drink for a while: What condition is your **"inner life"** in, currently? Are you experiencing any of the symptoms listed previously?

- Has it been a while since you've taken another alcoholic through the Steps?
- Has it been a while since you have gone through the steps?
- Have you ever taken all of AA's Twelve Steps?
- Have you done more than one 4th Step inventory?
- Have you completed all your 9th Step amends wherever possible?
- Are you practicing the disciplines and exercises of steps Ten and Eleven (self-examination, meditation and prayer)... consistently... EVERY DAY?

Page 62 says, **"Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness ("the ego"). We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self (ego) without [God's] aid."**

Page 25 tells us, "There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the levelling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings, which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it.

When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid out at our feet.

We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed." This *"fourth dimension"*, which we find out in the 10th Step is the *"world of the Spirit"*, takes us beyond the physical, mental, and emotional dimensions of life - and eliminates the selfishness (ego) of the *"spiritual malady"*.

The term *"spiritual malady"* does not mean that our "spirit" is sick. **It simply means we are spiritually blocked off from the Power of God, which enables us to remain sober, happy, joyous, and free.**

It's not our body - our allergic reaction to alcohol - that's going to take us back to drinking. It's really not even our mind - the mental obsession - that is the underlying root of what will take us back to drinking. **It's the "spiritual malady", as manifested by our EGO (selfishness-self-centeredness), that can eventually lead us back to drinking or sometimes even suicide.**

On pages 14 and 15 of the Big Book Bill W. writes,

"For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that."

The "spiritual malady" need no longer be a "missing piece" of Step One. It can be the reality of our powerlessness and unmanageability and enable us to see why we so desperately need to seek a Power Greater than ourselves (step two). And unless this malady is recognized, and a course of action (the Twelve Steps) is taken to enable God to remove it, the root of our alcoholic illness can lie dormant and burn us when we least expect it.

Summary

The spiritual malady (self-centredness), triggers our mental obsession (the insanity of the mind that precedes the first drink,) which triggers the physical craving (when we ingest the alcohol). The root cause of all our troubles is selfishness-self-centredness. This is our inward unmanageability, sometimes called untreated alcoholism.

Underneath selfishness is separation from the source. In order to heal from the root, we need to practise altruism in all its forms. To awaken we must learn how self-centeredness manifests in us personally.

The work is what I need to do to stay spiritually well. It's to become fully dependant on God, inventory, amends, work with others. Self-sacrifice is not only about giving up my time, but more about not taking credit for what God has done and continues to do for me and through me.

Self-centredness = Ego.

Ego is serving my desires and needs which results in me being
self-centred and self-reliant.

Ego = Separation from God

Therefore the root cause of all our problems is:

Self-centeredness and self-reliance = Disconnection.

The solution is a spiritual awakening – personality change – complete reliance on God,
others centred = Connection with God.

TYRANNY OF THE SHOULD

All of my expectations are generated from this.

My problem is a basic spiritual unrest. It stems from unrealistic expectations of myself, others and the world around me, and dependency on others when my needs are not met. Until I clear this away, I can't find emotional sobriety.

Shoulds are a list of ironclad rules about how we and other people 'ought' to act. These rules are indisputable; and any deviation from these is deemed bad (by ego). We feel we 'have to', 'must', 'need', or 'ought to' do certain things out of duty, obligation or compulsion, never bothering to question our actions because 'that's the way it's always been'.

We all have an image of what we should be, must or ought to be – the perfect person we think we need to be in order to be lovable.

We create this artificial persona very early in life to fit into the family system and please others.

It's where our beliefs that 'there's something wrong with me', 'I'm worthless', 'I'm not good enough' come from. I must be this way in order to be ok.

This way of thinking was first recognised by psychiatrist Karen Horney who wrote about 'the tyranny of the shoulds' and it was developed further by Dr. Albert Ellis who coined the terms 'shoulding' and 'musterbating'.

There are three main musts (or shoulds); **'I must do well or I'm no good', 'You must treat me well or you're worthless', and 'The world must give me exactly what I want or it's unfair'.**

We often pressure ourselves to follow these rules and feel guilty and bad when we don't. This form of demandingness can lead to guilt, self-hatred, anxiety and depression, and to behaviours like procrastination, withdrawal, obsessing about what has been done (I should have done x instead of y) and worrying about 'what should I do?'

We also judge the actions of others and get annoyed when they don't act 'right'. We think, 'they should know the rules and they should follow them'. This form of demandingness often leads to feelings of anger ('how dare you'), guilt ('you should know better'), jealousy, hurt and self-pity ('how could they have done that to me'). We can get locked in the illusion of an ideal and can't face the reality of this world we actually live in, where things are far from perfect, with deeply flawed families, co-workers and organisations. The more the neurotic person chases their fantasy of perfection and idealism, the more intense the frustration grows.

The more we chase our fantasy of perfection, the more depressed and unsatisfied we are with our lives. Most people have successes and failures as well as dreams. The difference between the neurotic person and others is that the neurotic person experiences mostly failures since they can never live up to their ideals.

They also experience much more frustration since their goals are less changeable than others.

If you are suffering from 'the tyranny of the shoulds', you have to start somewhere. Recognising the 'should' is the first step.

'Do not doubt your own basic goodness. In spite of all confusion and fear, you are born with a heart that knows what is just, loving and beautiful.'

Jack Kornfield bestselling American author and teacher of Vipassana

EXERCISE:

This exercise shows how we develop according to the rules of the subconscious mind.

Take a piece of paper. On the top of the paper write 'I should'.

Start filling it out.

Just list all the 'shoulds' that you have in your life.

This list of 'shoulds' is going to tell us a lot about the masks we wear and how we chase our fantasy of perfection. e.g. I should be thin, I should be the best at my work, I should be further on in my recovery, I should be a better mother/daughter, I should be doing more yoga, I should be going to the gym three times a week etc.

THE PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

The Problem is Three-fold

1. ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCY on people, situations to provide us with validation, love, approval, respect, security, self-esteem, prestige etc. These are our unmet needs.

This surfaces in our emotional security instinct as emotional dependency and control. While we are so dependent on others, we are fused to them. When we are fused to others, we are disconnected from God.

We depend on people, situations and things to provide us with validation, love, approval, respect and security etc. Dependency is based on fear, and the flip side of dependency is control. Expectations are about control.

‘We demand more than our share of prestige, security and romance.’

Bill W

2. OLD TAPES, LIMITING BELIEFS PASSED DOWN BY FAMILY OF ORIGIN.

(‘I’m not good enough’, ‘what will they think of me?’ ‘I should do/be better’, ‘I’ll never amount to anything’ ‘God is punishing or God will only love me if I am good’). This ‘inner critic’ judges and demeans a person. This is how I view the world.

3. MY REACTION WHEN MY NEEDS AREN’T MET.

When our demands aren’t met, we react in one of three ways! We ***move against*** - get angry; we ***move away*** – sulking or silent scorn or we ***move towards*** – people pleasing/peace at any cost. This is what we need to change. ‘Peace and joy elude us’ and we react with disappointment which can spiral into depression as Bill discovered.

So our problem is disconnection from God, self and others through our dependency, our need to control and our limiting beliefs.

The Solution can also be Three-Fold!

1. ACKNOWLEDGE AND SURRENDER DEPENDENCY, SURRENDER MY NEED TO CONTROL... BECOME 100% DEPENDENT ON GOD.

Recognise and release my dependency on people and situations by becoming dependent on my Higher Power. Surrender my need to control. As a perfectionist I want to control everyone and everything in my life to my own specifications. This keeps feeding my dependency because I want everyone to approve of me. I need to continually surrender my control and my dependency. My ego creates unrealistic expectations and entitlement and makes me dependent on external validation.

My needs are beneath my dependencies.

Once I identify the unmet need, I can take responsibility for getting that need met. My primary source of approval needs to be internal rather than external. I need to approve of myself in order to feel true inner peace and security. Self-esteem comes from how I feel about myself. The inventory allows me to identify these needs. **I need to find them within rather than externally and then give them back to the person in Part 1.** My job is to recognise the mirror. We all want the same thing. My pain is their pain. People wait their whole lives for something outside of them to change how they feel inside of them. This is the power of the inventory.

‘If I don’t feel lovable then it’s very difficult for me to believe that anyone else loves me.’ Nathaniel Brandon

2. SURRENDER MY OLD BELIEFS AND CHANGE THEM...

I now see that the ‘unconscious recordings’ from my past, (my limiting beliefs, my ‘shoulds, musts and oughts’) were my parents’, grandparents’ or caregivers’ beliefs, not mine. Many of them are long dead and I need to surrender my dependency on them. I need to become aware of the beliefs, recognise the negative impact they’ve had on my life, forgive the people whose beliefs they were, forgive myself for holding on to them and gently change them on a daily basis. By releasing them, I begin to grow up.

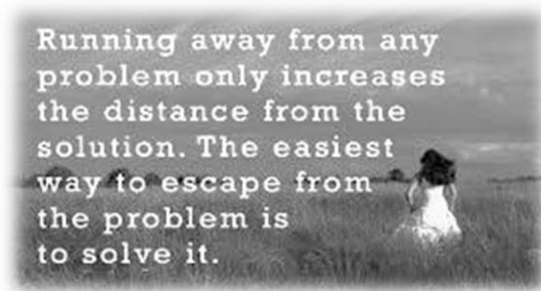
‘The only way we can change from emotional immaturity to emotional maturity is through a change at our innermost core. A change of character. A second surrender. A surrender to the exquisiteness of this program.’ Bob. B

3. CHANGE MY REACTION. IDENTIFY MY NEEDS, SEE HOW GOD GIVES THEM TO ME, THEN GIVE THEM TO ANOTHER PERSON.

Seek the fulfilment of those needs through God. Recognize that what I am seeking or needing is what others are seeking too. My practice is to work out how I can give these needs to others.

My reaction is usually inherited from my family of origin. I don’t need to react like this any longer. Practise the sacred pause, practise the principles of the St Francis prayer and learn to respond instead of reacting.

‘Bite your tongue until it bleeds, don’t react’ Broken Hill Jack



EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY INVENTORY

The capacity for emotional sobriety belongs to everybody in the human family and leads to a fully human response to the adventure and goodness of the gift of human life.

— Thomas Keating —

The inventory has 6 parts.

Part 1 Disturbance

Part 2 My reaction or how I respond to situation

Part 3 My unreasonable expectation or demand (control)

Part 4 My unhealthy dependency (based on fear)

Part 5 My unmet needs

Part 6 How do I reconnect and depend on God, so I can give to others?

Part 1. DISTURBANCE

(Disturbance means: causes anxiety or worry, anything we over think or replay)

Write anything that disturbed or upset you. Don't over-think it. It doesn't matter how big or small, it can even be something positive. Describe the event regardless of whether you were upset a lot or a little. They will all lead you back to the same place in the end – our false dependencies on people, places and things.

Part 2. MY REACTION OR HOW I RESPOND TO SITUATION

How I respond to stress and anxiety. There are three human coping strategies for dealing with basic anxiety. They are applicable both as to how we reacted to criticism as children and to how we continue to respond today.

We either respond by:

- A) MOVE AGAINST** controlling people through anger,
- B) MOVE TOWARDS** trying to please them (people pleasing) or
- C) MOVE AWAY** withdrawing emotionally. We go into quite a bit of detail in this part. What were your thoughts? (I'm a loser, what will they think of me). How did you feel? (Inferior, frightened, nervous, ashamed, impatient). How was your body reacting? (Shake, gut problems, tense, sweat). What did you fantasize? (I wish they would just disappear!)

Writing down all those things helps you understand where you're coming from and how you're reacting. In these first two Parts there's going to be a lot of important information that's going to help you fill out the other Parts. This teaches us how we respond to disappointment when things don't go our way.

We look at our reactions when our needs are not met and how we react to disappointment.

Our reactions come from our family of origin. This is the area we need to become aware of. We need to identify and change our reactions.

Unfortunately, trust is something very few people have with themselves. In this space there's constant overwhelm. We're simply reacting to our thoughts and beliefs as if they're true and hanging on for dear life. With trust, we respond and we come from a space of clarity, not habitual emotional reactivity.

A) MOVING AGAINST:

WE RESPOND BY CONTROLLING THE SITUATION

We try to gain power over others. We often use anger/manipulation or threats. We may use belittling, shame or gossip. Bill W. moved against people. This is how he dealt with his emotional dependency. They tried to control people and circumstances to get them to meet his specifications and when they didn't, he felt depressed. 'I get angry and judge the behaviours (fancied or real) of others'. We might gossip about how mean they are and say negative things about their recovery – use of divisive speech.

B) MOVING TOWARDS:

WE RESPOND BY PEOPLE-PLEASING – CO-DEPENDENT

We seek to please. We make excuses for them, submit to their will or try to please them. 'It's my fault. I'm not good company' or 'they must have had a bad day'. I deny the reality, make excuses for their behaviour, and pretend it's ok. **People-pleasing is based on false beliefs and is grounded in fear. People-pleasing – pleasing others to get love and approval. Not pleasing others we get abandonment and rejection.**

The deepest fear of all human beings is the fear of abandonment, the fear of being left alone. The people-pleaser tries to please to get love and approval. If these aren't forthcoming, they try harder. In one to one relationships they place their emotions and life into the hands of another – they look to the other to fill all their needs. They put the other in the centre of their life. Makes them their God.

Earnie Larson's definition of co-dependency is:

'If I do this, how will she react, instead of how will it affect me'. 'People-pleasers have learned that their self-esteem is based on never making anyone angry'.

People-pleasers have difficulty saying no because they fear their loved ones and friends will become angry. Therefore people-pleasers aren't free to be honest about

what they think or how they feel. They don't get what they need and, as a result, harbor hidden resentments.

This character defect is marked by fear, resentment and dishonesty. People-pleasers often use phrases such as 'it doesn't matter' when their efforts aren't sufficiently acknowledged or they don't get their way. But of course it does – very much. We may try to persuade them to like me by people pleasing and sacrificing my integrity – therefore we move towards them.

C) MOVING AWAY:

WE RESPOND BY WITHDRAWING EMOTIONALLY

We withdraw, hide, collapse, keep secrets and silence myself. We avoid conflict.

“I close down, walk away, don't want to see anyone, I hide in TV, go to my room and sulk, give you looks so you know I am not happy but if you ask me I say I am fine.” Morag C

When controlling and people pleasing doesn't work, we usually default to the third position of moving away. We react by thinking, 'Well, I'm just going to end that relationship, it's toxic'. This doesn't help you grow up.

This is childlike, immature behaviour. We need to grow up and accept responsibility. We are all capable of doing any one of these three things, but typically we have one or two dominant reactions. When things don't turn out the way I want I can get symptoms like a hangover, lethargy, butterflies in my tummy, sadness, lack of motivation, denial, low self-esteem and disconnection and this can lead to depression.

“My habitual behaviour is to get angry and develop an attitude of “who do they think they are? Do they not know who I am and what I do?”

Second reaction is to make excuses for them “they are so sick they would not know any better... I'm the older sober member so I should give them some grace” Then thirdly I go into shut down “what's the point anyhow no one ever gets it, people are always going to disappoint me, I'm not going to work with anyone any more, I'm done”. Hide away don't take calls or go to meetings especially where they are at. Morag C

Healing from your 'favourite' reactions is a choice you make daily. Take baby steps. Practise it over and over again. It takes months to build a new habit. Pause and pause again. Breathe. Change your response.

Dr. Nathaniel Branden (author of 'The six pillars of self-esteem') has a sign in his office saying ...

'No one is coming'

It means the quality of your life is dependent upon what you do or don't do.

No one is coming to rescue you from your fate. It's up to you. We need to build up the courage and motivation to change the things we can. No one among us is perfect. We are all works in progress.



Part 3. WHAT ARE MY EXPECTATIONS OR DEMANDS (CONTROL)?

Now we start to generate a whole set of **‘shoulds’, ‘musts’** and **‘oughts’** on how we or others are supposed to behave. Unrealistic expectations are heavy on the ‘shoulds’ (my kids should always listen to me). Expectations are a learned habit. They are deeply rooted in us (Tyranny of the Shoulds).

An expectation is a ‘rigid clinging to an unrealistic belief’. Expectation is demanding exactly what we want to happen regardless of what is actually happening. An expectation is typically fixed and frozen. It is inflexible and rigid. It is unable to give or to bend or to change.

Sadly, expectations are limited to our previous experiences. We are unable to expect something that we haven’t seen before. We cannot expect something better than what we know.

The worst part of expectations is what happens when we hold onto them. They infect us and overwhelm us, like a virus. We are unable to give them up. We are unable to let go.

Expectations influence our behaviour and attitudes. They affect how we see the world. And then how we respond to it.

My expectations and demands of others are underneath my perfectionism, my control and my resentments. We get hurt seeking to get our needs met.

What happens when our expectations go unmet?

An expectation is so rigid, we always respond negatively. We get frustrated. We become angry. And then we make an attempt to control. We try to force our expectations. We manipulate. We bribe. We shame. Underneath this is fear of losing control.

An expectation does not let us accept what we don't want.

If we hold onto a false expectation, a belief that others will do and should be different than they are, it will poison our relationships. It will negatively influence how we see people and how we treat them. We will try to change them.

Expectations are pre-meditated resentments/distrubances.

In this part we will see how we control and how our expectations of others lead to disappointment. Unrealistic expectations can set us and others up for failure. We have to step up and make the best decision we can, given the circumstances we are confronting.

Remember Dr. Brandon's sign

NO-ONE IS COMING.

We have to stop expecting life to meet our expectations.

We need to accept the fact that the principle source of happiness is in us. Our misery does not come from anyone but us. Don't expect too much of others or expect too specifically what we feel they ought to be, say, give or do. We need to stop expecting and relax into acceptance. Acceptance is where we are right now. Carl Rogers said: 'The moment I accept myself just as I am, then I begin to change.

Examples:

Expectations –

You 'should' you 'must'. You're not doing what I want, when I want, how I want.

I expect them to live up to my standards of perfection and when they don't I sulk, or get depressed, or feel lethargic.

I expect her to act or respond like my unrealistic version of mother/son/friend/workmate.

I expect people to put me first, and when they don't I get disappointed.

I expect people to feel good for me regardless of how I had hurt them.

I expect people to put their feelings aside and do what I ask of them.

I expect people to drop what they are doing and be there for me and when they don't I sulk.

I expect people to feel my pain as deeply as I do and acknowledge that their life is less important.

I expect AA members to recognise I'm an older sober member and when they don't I feel hurt and rejected.

I expect people to respond to me in a timely manner, text, calls and emails.

I expect her to listen to me.

I expect her to read my mind.

I expect him to let me do what I want, when I want without an explanation.

Expectations and demands are a form of control (we need to learn how to give without expectation and how to lower our expectations).

How I control another:

Fear, guilt, ego, power, domination, make another person feel guilty. Secretly, I believe I'm smarter, better and more capable than the other person.

I demand she does things my way. (We don't have the right to expect others to live by our standards).

I demand she treat me as an equal.

I demand I get special treatment just because it's me.

When my expectations aren't met, instead of reacting, try to remember to pause for 4 seconds and ask yourself '**what do I need right now**'. As you pause (and pause again), take a deep belly breath, and come back to the present. Now commit to a conscious choice.

Repeat this daily and you'll form a new relationship with your thoughts. Over time, you'll see changes in your expectations on others and how you respond to others instead of reacting.

Part 4. WHAT IS MY UNHEALTHY DEPENDENCY THAT UNDERLIES MY EMOTIONAL REACTION?

DEPENDENCY IS BASED ON FEAR When your happiness starts to rely on any person, achievement or outcome, then you may discover that you're emotionally dependent. Emotional dependency leads us to expect and demand. We believe that if someone/something really loves us they will meet all our needs. Dependency is based on fear. **(The flipside of dependencies are unrealistic expectations and control).** Any dependency invariably opens us to the fear of loss. Where there is attachment, there is dependency, where there is dependency, there is fear.

Depending on another to get my needs met causes great grief – I'm not enough. When my dependency on another to fulfil my needs isn't fulfilled, it leads me to think I'm not good enough. Underneath this fear of what you think of me is shame and self-hatred.

If my happiness depends on you loving me, my love for you will subtly take a backseat to my need to possess and control you. When I'm attached to you, I must hang on to you and manipulate you so you'll stay around. When my source of happiness is within myself, only then can I appreciate and love you unreservedly, only then can I set you free. Detachment, love and happiness are the best of friends.

Bill wrote to many new families and alcoholics about these dependencies – these excerpts are from 'The Soul of Sponsorship'

“I am beginning to see that all my troubles have their root in a habitual and absolute dependence upon my personal prestige, security, and romantic attachment. When these go wrong, there is depression. Now this absolute dependence upon people and situations for emotional security is, I think, the immense and devastating fallacy that makes us miserable. This craving for such dependencies, this utter dependence upon people, and situations, can only lead to conflict. Both on the surface

and at depth. We are making demands on circumstances and people that are bound to fail us. The only safe and sure channel of absolute dependence is upon God himself. 'I know that my underlying difficulty from which all others stem and are merely symptomatic, is that inner insistence which demands that I either be absolutely dependent upon someone, or else dominate them. The latter being merely the reverse side of the coin whose main face is 'absolute dependence'.

FROM 12 STEPS AND 12 TRADITIONS DOMINATION AND DEMAND

'The primary fact that we fail to recognize is our total inability to form a true partnership with another human being. Our egomania digs two disastrous pitfalls. Either we insist upon dominating the people we know, or we depend upon them far too much. If we lean too heavily on people, they will sooner or later fail us, for they are human, too, and cannot possibly meet our incessant demands. In this way our insecurity grows and festers. When we habitually try to manipulate others to our own wilful desires, they revolt, and resist us heavily. Then we develop hurt feelings, a sense of persecution, and a desire to retaliate.' Bill.W.

'Since I have begun to pray that God may release me from absolute dependence on anybody, anything, or any set of circumstances, I have begun to do so much better that it amounts to a second conversion experience.' Bill W

Part 4 FORMULA

When I use this formula I get to see my dependency and what need I am seeking :

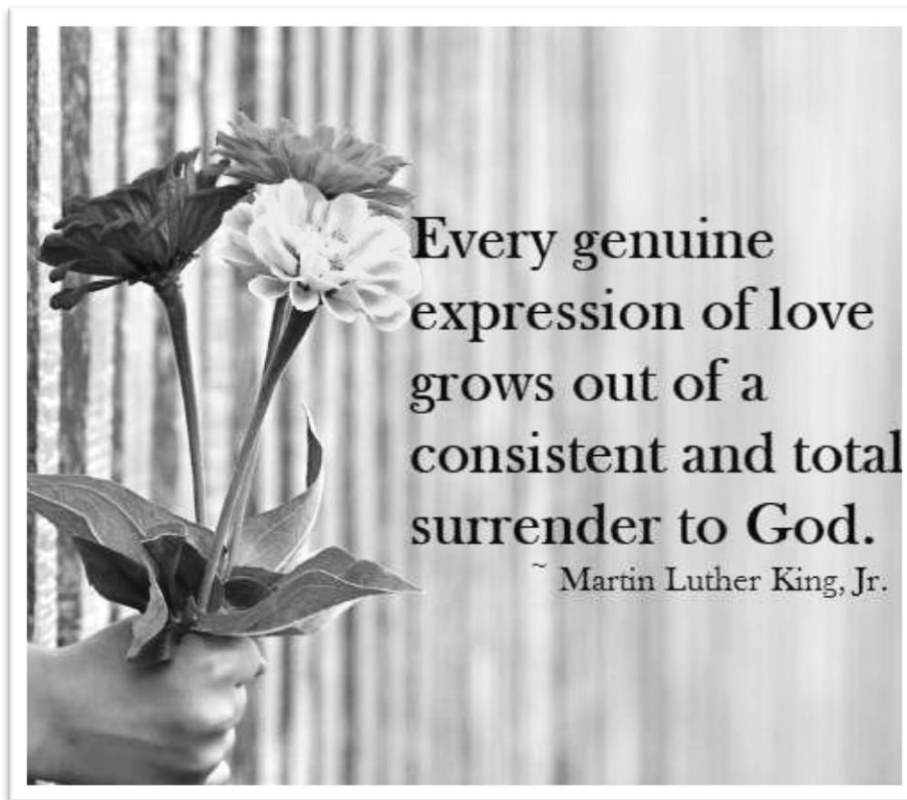
I depend on...(someone or something) **...to...** (do something, or say something) **...so that I feel...** (something eg happy, safe, respected, approved of, so I belong. This is sometimes called recognition approval.

Examples:

- I depend on AA members to acknowledge me so I feel safe, respected, loved and validated.
- I depend on him/her to recognise me for being the perfect friend, so I feel happy and included.
- I depend on his/her hugs to make me feel good about myself and to feel secure and loved.
- I depend on my daughter to accept me just as I am of me to make me feel I am worthwhile.
- I depend on owning possessions to feel safe and secure.
- I depend on my friends to ring me so I feel important and needed.
- I depend on my work to treat me special so I feel respected, approved of and happy.
- I depend on my children to put my needs first so I feel that I matter and have a purpose in life.
- I depend on my workmates to do things my way so I feel comfortable and respected.
- I depend on my friends to behave in a way that puts me first, at all times, especially in times of need.
- I depend on my sponsor to be there when I ring her so I feel special and connected.

- I depend on people I sponsor to get the program so I feel validated and safe in my recovery.
- I depend on unhealthy people to behave recovered so I feel connected to the fellowship/God.
- I depend on everyone to make me feel special so I feel worshiped.
- I depend on meetings to keep me sober.

Dear God, I have a problem.... Me
Dear child, I have the answer.... Me



Part 5. WHAT ARE MY UNMET NEEDS?

We find our unmet needs from Part 4 (**my unhealthy dependency**). Approval addiction is about trying to control everything externally and seek what I need outside. Recovery is about sourcing that from within. We can never find happiness or peace if we are following someone else's idea of what we should be doing. Needs or desires give my life fulfilment. Needs are a deep rooted belief system.

What is it I really need?

NEEDS INVENTORY Connection, acceptance, affection, appreciation, belonging, companionship, compassion, empathy, inclusion, intimacy, love, respect/self-respect, safety, security, support, to see and be seen, to understand and be understood, trust, warmth, validation, touch, sexual expression, honesty, authenticity, integrity, joy, fun, equality, harmony, order, freedom, choice, independence, awareness, clarity, creativity, growth, hope, purpose, to matter, peace.

These are psychological needs that we need to satisfy in order to feel good.

What are my unmet needs? What is it I really need right now? (The answer is always connection, to belong).

Examples:

Just write down the unmet need (no more than 5 or 6).

- I need to be respected, validated, liked.
- I need to feel safe and secure.
- I need to belong.
- I need to be treated with kindness and compassion.
- I need to feel accepted and approved of – not rejected.
- I need to be trusted.
- I need to have space to explore being on my own again – to be ok with that
- I need to be connected.
- I need to belong.

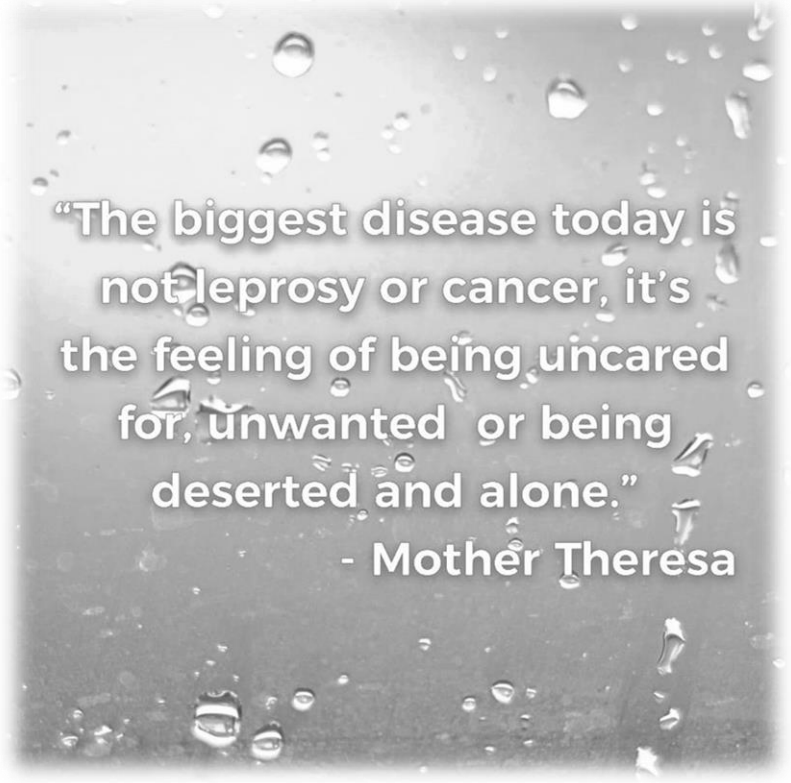
We find out how much we're dependent on others for acceptance, approval, for people to say 'I like you', 'you're worthy'. We need to identify our emotional dependency and its consequent demands. We need to see how we depend on external validation and we need to see how we control others and how our unrealistic expectations of others leads to disappointment. This is the purpose of the emotional inventory.

In a letter to Bill Wilson, Father Ed. Dowling wrote:

“Most spiritual development seems to be not through achievement but through detachment.”

When people fail to satisfy our important unmet needs, we become depressed.

When we manage to fulfil our unmet needs we experience true happiness.



“The biggest disease today is not leprosy or cancer, it's the feeling of being uncared for, unwanted or being deserted and alone.”
- Mother Theresa

Part 6. HOW DO I RECONNECT AND DEPEND ON GOD, SO I CAN GIVE TO OTHERS

When I become disturbed with someone or something I disconnect from God. The result is that I become part of the disturbance and unable to live in God's solution. Through this process I can clear away the disturbance, see my expectations and dependencies, identify my needs and reconnect with God and those around me. The reason I need to reconnect to God first is that I cannot practice the outgoing love of God without Him. I need to be connected to God so I can give to others freely.

It's the middle way – a spiritual path that avoids extremes. Halfway between dependency and control, halfway between thought and reaction, halfway between anxiety and depression, and halfway between low self-esteem and pride.

**This is your most important tool and living in this
state is what empowers us.**

It allows us to be who we are. Once we identify the need we can take responsibility for turning to God and getting that need met. We can ask others for support. We can learn to listen deeply – to ourselves and others.

If it's a person who is in Part 1, we will find many of our needs come down to wanting to feel connected to that person.

When we're frustrated or hurt, we're more likely to respond in some way that will actually leave us feeling more disconnected.

We may want to feel acceptance, but instead, out of our hurt we judge the other, almost guaranteeing that we won't feel accepted.

We want to feel intimacy, but instead, out of our insecurities we start trying to impress instead of sharing, almost guaranteeing that we won't leave the conversation feeling deeply seen.

We want to feel harmony, but instead, out of our fear for conflict we just ignore the problem, almost guaranteeing we won't feel a safe connection to the other because we didn't really deal with the issue.

Why do people criticise? They criticise themselves.

Why do people blame? They blame themselves.

Why do people hate? They hate themselves.

I stay connected and undisturbed through acceptance. Through practising the sacred pause, the two way prayer and practising the principles of St Francis prayer.

'The inventory process shows me how to work with acceptance on a much deeper level than I previously have. Accepting that my thinking creates my experience of my world. I will accept all the people in my life exactly as they are. I will accept all aspects of myself and my life exactly as it is.' Margie B

There are as many ways of connecting with God as there are grains of sand on the beach. Each person will develop their connection through their own process and it may change with every inventory.

COMPASSION PRAYER

If there is a person in your Part 1, you may like to add this prayer:

Just like me, this person is seeking some happiness for their life.

Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in their life.

Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness, fear and depression.

Just like me, this person is learning about life.

Part 6. FORMULA

This formula may be helpful – remembering that everything we do requires an action
Once we see our need we:

- **Surrender our unhealthy dependencies and our need to control. Become dependent on a God instead of depending on people and the world around us to meet my needs.**

How do I turn to God for these needs?

To start, I say the Compassion Prayer for anyone that is in my disturbance list.

I use the Two Way Prayer process. I take the need I have written in Part 5, and move it to Part 6, I asked God to show me the truth about this need, and I read something spiritual. Then I take a few deep breaths and let the pen reveal what God is saying. (These writings are never my own words)

- **Acknowledge and learn to change our childish reactions through connection**

How do I change my reaction?

I then read the St Francis prayer slowly and a word or a line will jump out at me. I write this down and let the pen write again, through this writing God will reveal more to me and I will see a way that I can respond to others differently.

- **Give our needs back to others**

How do I give back to others the needs I am seeking?

Through my writing I am given action/amends on how I can then give these needs to others as they are seeking them as well.

Like our 4th step inventory we have to keep growing in this work, I move into step 6-7 and see if there is anything that I am clinging to that I won't let go of?

Is there any dependencies I am not willing to give up or surrender to God?

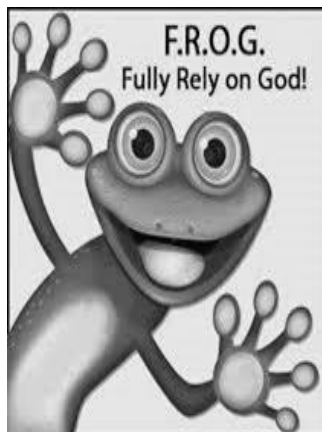
I see throughout my Part 3 list of expectations, amends that I need to make.

How I make amends: Step 8 and 9 direct amends. Next time when a disturbance arises and I automatically want to react, I pause and ask what can I do differently (living amends). How can I keep aligned with being reliant on God and not depending on people? I ask myself what am I needing right now?

We aren't very practised at pausing when we're agitated or doubtful (anxious or disturbed) (p. 87 Big Book). I cannot always recognize what I am craving, seeking or longing for. My practice needs to be asking (praying) only for direction and strength to meet my problems (needs) as He would have me (p. 13).

Asking myself what is it I'm craving, longing for or seeking? Become willing to release my clinging and desires. If I feel resistant, I ask God to help me be willing to let go of it (p. 76). Asking God to divorce me from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives (p.86) and turning to God to get this need met (Two Way Prayer). By receiving strength, inspiration and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power, I begin to sense the flow of His Spirit into me – I become God-conscious (p. 85). In this state I feel full, content, loved, secure, valued and know I belong to God. I can then turn my thoughts to someone I can help and become others-centered (p. 84). What is it that the other person is needing? What can I bring to this situation rather than what can I get (p. 102). My life as an ex-problem drinker depends on the constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs (p. 20). Giving rather than getting becomes my guiding principle (p. 128).

Bill's solution was: Surrender our unrealistic expectations of ourselves and others daily. Let go of unhealthy dependencies and the need to control. Surrender our exaggerated self-importance. Step into humility (ego deflation at depth).



QUICK TIPS

- Focus on the solution.
- What other people think of me determines who I am. Don't let other people's perceptions affect me. (This gives them the power to change my reality).
- Don't take things personally. It's ok that you do what you do.
- Look inside not out for self-esteem.
- Challenge your expectations and identify your emotional dependency.
- Take responsibility for my growth. Develop a healthy relationship with feelings.
- Practise acceptance. It is what it is. (So Hum)
- Discipline is not being regimented. Discipline is consistency of effort.
- Learn to practise self-comfort when disappointed. Emotional sobriety is about being able to soothe ourselves, not rely on others.
- Emotional independence = thick-skinned and tender hearted.
- Become aware of my unconscious beliefs. Recognise they aren't my beliefs, they come from caregivers. Change them and forgive the people who passed them to me.
- 9th step myself and 12th step myself.
- Change my reaction. Through conscious awareness, the sacred pause and breath work. And practise, practise. Action, action
- Get some distance from the issue. Take time out
- Identify my needs and give them to myself. Then give them to the other person.
- Ask for help
- Laugh

'Sometimes the scariest bridge to burn is the one between you and the person you thought you were.'



Some Examples of How Others Have Been Able to Meet Their Needs Through God.

‘How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world’. Anne Frank

Validation. I was born, I am enough. I have God’s stamp on my heart. Self-validation is accepting your own internal experience, your thoughts and your feelings. Knowing that you are understood and that your emotions and thoughts are accepted by others is powerful.

What we practise we become.

‘You either walk inside your story and own it, or you stand outside your story and hustle for your worthiness’ - Brene Brown.

Action: Mindfulness and self-validation go hand in hand. Be present. Don’t numb your emotions. Notice where you feel body sensations: fear (often in the throat), grief (in the tummy). Validate your feelings as normal. Be genuine and truthful to yourself. Don’t pretend to be someone you aren’t. Rejecting who you are is one of the highest levels of invalidation. Find the diamond within. Allow your true self to be seen. Let go of who you think you’re supposed to be and embrace who you are. Dream higher than the sky and deeper than the ocean.

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT VALIDATION/APPROVAL

The desire for validation is one of the strongest motivating forces known to humans. We all want to hear ‘well done’. Approval feeds our strongest desire. The strongest of all emotional needs is directly linked to our feelings of approval or disapproval. Love is the ultimate expression of approval.

Love feeds the same core emotional need as approval does.

Every person on the planet has an inherent and insatiable desire to feel safe and secure. Approval makes us feel secure.

There’s a huge degree of inner peace and security connected to feeling good about who we are. Disapproval can have the opposite effect. When we’re met with ridicule or rejection we can begin to doubt our personal worth and our sense of security is threatened. To feel good about ourselves we have to live in harmony with our beliefs and values. When you disapprove of yourself, all the external approval in the world can’t make up for it.

We need to be truthful with ourselves and others, be true to our values, show consideration for those around us and give ourselves validation and acknowledgement. **(Ego prayer: Your will not mine. Breathe in God, breathe out me.)**

Belonging. To have the sense of belonging I need to have a connection with God - but to have that connection with God I need to feel like I belong to God.

Every person on this earth is seeking the sense of belonging. We want to belong to family, to community, to the earth and to each other. For me to belong I need to participate in this world. I need to become part of the community I am seeking.

Action: Become someone who gets involved in the world, find the communities you belong to. Create the fellowship you crave. Know and trust that you belong with God as God is your first connection here and beyond.

Intimacy. Vulnerability is needed for intimacy. Emotional, physical and spiritual intimacy. I need to take off the mask, be honest about how I feel and ask for what I need. Vulnerability is the glue that holds intimate relationships together. I need to feel the pain of loss and disappointment in order to grow. We have fear of intimacy, because we have a fear of abandonment and rejection and we often have these fears because we were wounded in childhood. We may have felt rejected by our parents because they were wounded. When we truly know ourselves, we are more capable of having a deeply fulfilling life and nourishing relationships. **Into me you see.** I am you, you are me. Loneliness can be absence of connection, not the absence of people. Letting someone see your true self is the greatest gift you can give them.

Learn to be authentic. People with high self-worth do not need to hide behind a mask and display a false persona. The most attractive people I know display a true confidence within themselves, they do not need to seek approval for who they are.

Action: Practise vulnerability. Keep coming back to where you find God. Your most intimate relationship starts with God. To surrender and to be seen and accepted as you are through God's loving eyes. Let others see you as you truly are, be truthful with yourself, practise courage daily. Gratitude for your body. Face the shame. Positive self-talk. Remember that underneath perfectionism is shame, judgement and blame. Shame hates being spoken, so talk about it! Cut the power cord to your negative thinking. Don't feed it or try to fix the

thought. It will eventually float by because new thoughts come along. You don't have to feel good enough to be good enough. Deep down you are already good enough. Nothing can change that. Remember that vulnerability is not winning or losing. It's having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome.

Self-love. It's love of self. Look at myself with eyes of love and compassion, just as God sees me. Open my heart to receive God's love so I can give it to others. Remember **at my core I am perfect, whole, and complete.** Accept the love of others. Start softening – letting go. Kindness begins the thawing. Unconditional love is not expecting anything in return. Give to others what you want and need. Put away the self-help books on the shelf and resolve to practice self-love.

Action: Daily reflective walks, choose time alone. Healthy solitude. Choose daily mindful rituals, otherwise you will continue to do mindless rituals. Rest for the mind, sleep for the body, nurturing food for the soul. Become a friend to myself and be a friend to others. Be unconditionally generous with giving love. Laugh every day. Tell jokes. Don't take things too seriously. Today choose connection over separation. Mantra: I am the love I seek. I am the one I seek.

Self-respect. Treat myself as I would my best friend. If we treated people we loved with disrespect, the relationships would get stagnate, sick and eventually die. The same is true with ourselves. When we treat ourselves as objects, fail to listen to our own needs and ignore the warning signs that our bodies give us, the relationship with ourselves falls apart and we experience stress, unhappiness, and disease.

Action: Move your body, Savouring thoughts 3:1, 5:1, deep, respectful listening and action to self and others. New experiences. Learn a new skill and practise, practise, practise.

SAVOURING THOUGHTS

Savouring thoughts is a practice of changing how we think and feel. When you have a disturbing or negative thought - take a breath and think of 3 things that have made you feel warm and fuzzy inside e.g. sunrise, feeling of your feet in the ocean or a pet you love. Savour these thoughts to increase the intensity of the positive feelings. If the negative thought is about someone close to you turn your thoughts to savour 5 things that make you feel good.

Self-compassion. Be warm and understanding when you fail or feel inadequate. Practice compassion for self and others. Compassion is a relationship between equals. Learn how to self-soothe - self-hug, self-kiss.

Action: Focus on spiritual things. Breath work, tiny habits, wake up 15 minutes early, movement (10 minute walk, hike, gym) affirmations/mantras. Strengthen your vagus nerve which helps with mood, digestion and wellbeing.

Self-esteem Practice seeing yourself as God sees you.

Action: Question my thoughts – is this how God would speak to me. 3rd step prayer. Don't hide from what you are feeling. Honour who you are. Release old negative patterns. Practice God esteem by doing things for others. What is the role God assigns you? Mantra: Every day is a day when I must carry the vision of God's will into all my activities p. 85 BB. Mantra: Let go, let God. Ask yourself: who will I serve today? Loving Kindness meditation.

Self-forgiveness. Forgiveness is an action, not a feeling. You cannot feel forgiveness. No matter what we've done or how guilty or shame filled we may feel, we deserve love. To forgive means letting go of what we're holding. Where does it live in the body? Breathe into it and say 'forgiven, forgiven'. Honour that it's difficult. Forgive others through making amends. It is by forgiving that we are forgiven. God's love is eternally forgiving.

Action: Compassion is self-forgiveness. Forgive self so I can forgive others. See everyone as God. God is in everyone. Recite 'Just Like Me'. How can I soothe myself? What do I really really need right now? Somatic healing for the body (Daily breath exercises, massages).

Acceptance. – surrender - certainty (trust). The only way you will find acceptance and peace is through God. No one else is responsible.

Action: Commit to living God consciously. Have integrity with your core, fidelity with your word and credibility with yourself. Practise accepting people, places, things and situations as being exactly the way they are supposed to be at this moment. Nothing happens in God's world by mistake. Learn to trust (mistrust of others stems from not trusting yourself). Stop comparing yourself with others. Find your own uniqueness. Change negative beliefs and celebrate your strengths.

Support. Connection. Being supported needs to come from within first, trusting the power of God to take care of all your needs.

Action: ‘Footprints in the Sand’ visualisation. Support yourself but don’t isolate or withdraw. Spend more quiet time with God. Reach out to others, get involved in the fellowship. If you run from your fears, they will follow you. If you run straight at your fears, they will get the hell out of your way. Fears hate it when you do that. What is underneath your fear?

Disconnection. Practise connection. You are not alone.

To understand and be understood.

Action: Use St Francis Prayer – it is better to understand than be understood. Be patient, be non-judgemental, deep listening and peaceful speech. Be curious. Don’t blame and be helpful, appreciative and forgiving. Validation. I was born, I am enough.



PRAYERS

Bill's Surrender Prayer

There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. p. 13 BB

Dr. Bob's Third Step Prayer

Dear God,

I'm sorry about the mess I've made of my life. I want to turn away from all the wrong things I've ever done and all the wrong things I've ever been. Please forgive me for it all. I know you have the power to change my life and can turn me into a winner. Thank you God, for getting my attention long enough to interest me in trying it your way.

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

Please God, move into my heart. However you do it is your business, but make yourself real inside me and fill my awful emptiness. Fill me with your love and Holy Spirit and make me know your will for me.

And now, God, help yourself to me and keep on doing it. I'm not sure I want you to, but do it anyhow.

I rejoice that I am now a part of your people, that my uncertainty is gone forever, and that you now have control of my will and my life.

Thank you and praise your name. Amen.

St Francis Prayer

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



Two Way Prayer

How to Begin Practicing Quiet Time Fr. Bill W.

(An updated version of the How to Listen to God pamphlet written for those in recovery)

Preparation:

- Commit to practicing Quiet Time for a minimum of 10 to 20 minutes daily for 30 days.
- Practice it each morning. (Get up earlier if need be. If for any reason you miss a morning, that's quite OK, simply begin counting the 30-day period over again! If you will do this for 30 days in a row, you'll likely make it a practice for the rest of your life.)
- Choose a sacred space - a quiet place where you can be alone. It should be comfortable and inviting. Reserve it only for prayer, if at all possible.
- Buy a notebook to write down your thoughts - have it ready when you begin.

Start:

- Sit in an upright posture. Remember into whose Presence you are entering.
- Read a short passage from scripture preferably beginning with the ones Dr. Bob and early A.A. members recommended: the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 13 that's known as "The Love Chapter," and finally the Letter of James. So much of the A.A. program came from this short section of the Bible that A.A. was almost named, "The James Club!")
- Breathe deeply 2 or 3 times - let go of all tension and worry with each outward breath. (Add any other relaxation techniques, prayers, petitions or practices you find helpful.)
- Write a question. A very honest question that captures your real need. If you have a problem that's troubling you where you really need God's guidance, write it out and ask.

Here are some examples:

1. God, I've tried getting clean and sober before – please tell me what I need to do that's different this time. (If you're already sober, look at other addictions or behaviors in your life that have you stuck and ask for guidance with them.)
2. Heavenly Father, I feel so alone and separated from you and from others, please help me feel your presence.
3. Father/Mother God, I'm withdrawing / isolating again - moving further away from my spouse (or my child). Please tell me what to do.

4. Lord Jesus (or Spirit, or My Creator), I need your guidance today as I face _____.

Please show me the way so I can do your will. (Notice the different names being used for God. Choose the name that feels right for you.

If you are struggling to find a name, start with “Unknown God” or “God, if you’re there.”)

- Listen for God’s Voice, with your pen & notebook in hand. If the connection isn’t immediate and words do not come into your mind, use your active imagination, especially when you’re first making conscious contact:

Say to yourself, “If God were to speak to me this is what he might say:”

- Write the words that come into your mind. Try not to edit them. Only listen and write.

(If words come that you think are not from God write them down anyway. Put them in brackets if you like and try to re-focus on listening for God’s Voice. In time, you will come to distinguish God’s Voice more clearly from the voices of the ego.)

- If stuck, write your own name or write, “My child” or “My precious” or some other term of endearment that a loving Father-Mother God might use when speaking to you.

- Stop writing when it becomes strained.

- Feel the closeness of God as you experience conscious contact.

Following your Guidance:

- Share your writings weekly with a sponsor or with another individual who is also practicing Quiet Time. You may find that their writings contain some particular spiritual guidance for you or yours for them.

- Check your guidance. Does it pass the test: is it Honest, Pure, Unselfish and Loving.

- Act on your guidance – but only if it passes the test – and if it is a major move, check it also with others who are also listening to God.

Some Historical References:

- Dr. Bob and the Good Old-Timers tells of the 1938 report Frank Amos sent to John D. Rockefeller after studying the new A.A. Movement. Amos reported “The A.A. members of that time did not consider meetings necessary to maintain sobriety. They were simply ‘desirable.’ Morning devotion and ‘quiet time,’ however, were musts.” (p.136)

- Bill Wilson: “I sort of always felt that something was lost from A.A. when we stopped emphasizing the morning meditation.” Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers (p. 178)
- In Dr. Bob’s last major talk in Detroit, Michigan in 1948, he identified some of the spiritual principles that kept him and other A.A. Pioneers sober:
“We were convinced that the answer to our problems was in the Good Book. To some of us older ones, the parts that we found absolutely essential were the Sermon on the Mount, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and the Book of James. ...
The Four Absolutes, as we called them, were the only yardsticks we had in the early days, before the Steps. I think the Absolutes still hold good and can be extremely helpful. I have found at times that a question arises, and I want to do the right thing, but the answer is not obvious; almost always, if I measure my decision carefully by the yardsticks of absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, absolute purity, and absolute love, and it checks up pretty well with those four, then my answer can’t be very far out of the way....”
The Big Book 11th Step instructions encourages us to “...ask God to direct our thinking” and that “we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought....What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We will come to rely upon it.” (Big Book p. 87)

A Final Note:

Sometimes people ask me, “How do you know it’s really God’s Voice you’re hearing? How do you know it’s not just you?” My answer is that I really don’t know - and in the end, it really doesn’t matter. If it’s me, it’s the best part of me I’ve ever found and it’s the part I need to start listening to more and more. It’s the small, still Voice that quiets the raucous “ego voices” of guilt and shame, anger and fear, addiction and destruction. Those are voices I’ve known and listened to all of my life. At 20 years sober, it was time for a major change to my program and not just a little tweaking around the edges. What I discovered was yet another Promise of the Big Book coming true: “When we drew near to Him He discloses Himself to us!” (Big Book p. 57).

THRIVING IN RECOVERY

If you want to renew your sobriety and keep it fresh, take care of your body. Recovery isn't just surviving, but thriving. Fill the hole, the sense of loss, the emptiness and pain – and show up for life. Accept all parts of myself. Connecting with myself with gentleness and compassion.

In order to make living amends to self, we need to give ourselves a transformative gift.

This includes:

- Prayer, meditation, contemplation and self-compassion.
- Sleep and rest.
- Nutrition and fuel.
- Gut health.
- Breath work.
- Sexuality and pleasure.
- Exercise and activity – yoga, martial arts, bushwalking.
- Passionate purpose

We need spiritual and physical fitness for living sober. This helps our body heal and enables us to live in our body as a home. My body is my first and last home and when I take care of it, I'm able to come back to it. If you drink you abandon yourself and your body. When I pay attention to recovery in all aspects – spiritual, mental and physical – I come back into my body and this helps me recover spiritually and emotionally as well.

We all have a critical voice in our head and we need to foster compassion with ourselves.

Remember the cause of all problems is self-love (selfishness). Replace it with love of self and everything changes.

Ask yourself:

- How are you eating?
- How are you breathing?
- How are you moving your body?
- How are you managing your anxiety?
- How do you deal with your mind?
- How do you deal with your addiction

MEDITATIONS

HAND ON HEART

When you notice you're under stress,
take 2-3 deep, satisfying breaths.

Gently place your hand over your heart, feeling the gentle pressure and warmth of your hand.

If you wish, place both hands on your chest, noticing the difference between one and two hands. Feel the touch of your hand on your chest. If you wish, you could make small circles with your hand on your chest. Feel the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Linger with the feeling for as long as you like. Hopefully you'll start to develop the habit of physically comforting yourself when needed, taking full advantage of this surprisingly simple and straightforward way to be kind to ourselves

SELF-LOVE AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Close your eyes, breathe deeply, place your hands on your heart, and repeat silently to yourself:
'I am not broken. There is nothing to fix. May I be loved by myself and others ... just the way I am'.

EXERCISE FOR WHEN YOU ARE LOW IN ENERGY

Breathe in very deeply, wherever you are, hold as long as comfortable, and then breathe out. Do this seven times. You'll find the increased oxygen giving you extra energy, and soon you will move past your cravings.

VAGAL BREATHING EXERCISE

Activate the vagal nerve and the parasympathetic nervous system to reduce the bodies stress response of fight and flight. This can be done simply by exhaling longer than inhaling and holding your breath after each inhale. Just 5 min a day can make a huge difference. 11 min a day will balance the endocrine system. 25 min a day will balance blood pressure.

SO HUM MEDITATION

For thousands of years, people have used the mantra So Hum to contact the stillness within and to heal their heart from hatred, bitterness, loneliness, anger, depression and other negative emotions. So Hum is an ancient Indian mantra that can be translated as ‘it is what it is’.

The moment we realise how much we cannot control is the moment we can learn to let go.

Letting go takes practice like throwing a ball through a hoop. With So Hum we learn to let go, accept our lives, allowing whatever thoughts and emotions come up – being ok with myself as life runs its course.

This is a simple meditation technique where you simply follow the breath inhale and exhale and you add a mantra.

The mantra is SO HUM. It is what it is. So be it.

The SO is heard on the INHALE and the HUM is heard on the EXHALE.

When said mentally this is the sound of our own breathing

Breathe in life energy SO

Release whatever no longer serves you HUM

Sit up tall with your feet flat on the floor. Close eyes, half-moon smile, keep your spine straight and upright not touching the back of the chair. If possible, relax your mouth, jaw and tongue.

Observe the breath in and out.

Just start to follow the breath, inhaling and exhaling.

As you inhale mentally chant the word ‘so’.

As you exhale, mentally chant the word ‘hum’

Inhale ‘so’ Exhale ‘hum’

Continue to mentally chant the mantra and this will help with the craziness of your mind. You will become more focused and calm.

Now finish the meditation by stating an intention, commitment or prayer. This could be anything like – remain in recovery, stay sober today, deepen my connection with my true self, be in service to others.

So Hum – it is what it is. Accepting what is.

ACCEPTANCE is moving from ‘I can’t accept this’ to ‘what can I learn from this’ – it’s growth. Moving from information to action. We learn to accept whatever is happening in our lives.

METTA - LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION

Loving-kindness meditation consists primarily of connecting to the intention of wishing ourselves or others happiness. Sit in a comfortable and relaxed manner. Take two or three deep breaths with slow, long and complete exhalations. Let go of any concerns. For a few minutes, feel or imagine the breath moving through the center of your chest - in the area of your heart.

Metta is first practiced toward oneself, since we often have difficulty loving others without first loving ourselves. Sitting quietly, mentally repeat, slowly and steadily, the following or similar phrases:

May I be happy. May I be well. May I be safe. May I be peaceful and at ease.

Sink into the intentions they express. If feelings of warmth, friendliness, or love arise in the body or mind, connect to them, allowing them to grow as you repeat the phrase. You might hold an image of yourself in your mind's eye.

Metta towards a friend or someone in your life who has deeply cared for you. Slowly repeat phrases of loving-kindness toward them:

May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be peaceful and at ease.

Again sink into their intention or heartfelt meaning. And, if any feelings of loving-kindness arise, connect the feelings with the phrases so that the feelings may become stronger as you repeat the words. Bring to mind other friends, neighbors, acquaintances, strangers, animals.

Metta towards people with whom you have difficulty

May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be peaceful and at ease.

Sometimes during loving-kindness meditation, seemingly opposite feelings such as anger, grief, or sadness may arise. Take these to be signs that your heart is softening, revealing what is held there. You can either shift to mindfulness practice or you can—with whatever patience, acceptance, and kindness you can muster for such feelings—direct loving-kindness toward them. Above all, remember that there is no need to judge yourself for having these feelings.

Excerpts gratefully reprinted from the book *The issues at hand* by Gil Fronsdal, Guiding teacher of insight

Meditation Centre

1. Disturbance (anything that separates me from God)

2. My reaction or how I respond to situation

A) Move against (anger/control)

B) Move towards (people please)

C) Move away (avoid)

3. My unreasonable expectation or demand (control)

I expect you to follow my script

I demand you show me respect.

4. My unhealthy dependency (based on fear)

I depend on someone or something.... to do something... so I feel

5. What are my unmet needs?

I need to be

6. How do I reconnect and depend on God, so I can give to others?