



LESSON TWO

STEP ONE

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

No one likes to admit complete defeat, and this first Step on the road to recovery makes all of our natural instincts cry out against accepting this idea. We think we are able to control every aspect of our lives, but this one thing—our drinking—cannot be controlled.

No other kind of bankruptcy is like this one. Alcohol bleeds us of all our self-sufficiency and the will to resist its demands. We seem to survive in most other matters, but in this one area we've become helpless. The way we drank was self-destructive, and we have become used to sabotaging our lives and those around us.

When we enter AA we take another view of this defeat. Through this defeat we become victorious. Through this humiliation we can find strength. *The more we can admit defeat the more firm will be our bedrock upon which we can build a happy and purposeful life.*

Little good can come to us in joining forces with AA, unless we admit this in the beginning. In this admission of complete defeat we will find enduring strength. If we do not admit this defeat we will keep trying to control our drinking, and we will get deeper and deeper into trouble.

We have given up the idea of controlling our drinking because we have tried it and failed. We also know that willpower alone is futile. If this were possible we would have licked it already. *It is a statistical fact that alcoholics rarely stop drinking alone, and those who do are dry by endurance and are unhappy people. These are difficult people to be around.*

During the early days of AA only the most hopeless grasped this idea of defeat and were saved. Many less desperate could not make this admission of hopelessness. Today many are able to make this admission before they go way down to the bottom. The face of AA has changed, and many are spared these years of hell by making this admission early. From the experience of others we know where we will end up if we drink again. Addiction to alcohol and other drugs is a fatal progressive illness. We can reverse this process, however, by embracing this first Step, as completely as we are able at this time.

Few people will really try AA until they are hurt. AA teaches us things that are hard, and we always look for the easy way out.

After admitting that we are no longer in control, then we must accept this fact. That is just as hard. Webster's dictionary says "acceptance is to receive with consent." So it is with alcoholism. If we agree to live by AA's suggested program, we do not drink. We shall live with alcoholism rather than die from it.

KEY IDEA 1

Recovery is possible for alcoholics who honestly want to stop drinking.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Willingness is all that is needed. A good test for willingness is to answer honestly, *To what lengths am I willing to go to achieve sobriety?* To be willing is to be ready and prepared. We can always profit by being strong-willed, as long as that means "strong-willingness," not hardheadedness.

KEY IDEA 2

In twelve simple Steps they outlined a way of life for daily practice that restored them to physical health and contented sobriety.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

A difference exists between *program* and *fellowship*. Program is the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Fellowship is the support and example we give and receive. Countless troubled people have agonized and sometimes died, many by their own hand, because they had given up hope. They never learned that they needed help in solving what seemed like overwhelming problems. It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help. It's a sign of strength.

KEY IDEA 3

A marked personality change, influenced chiefly by negative thinking, now drives the alcoholic to heavier drinking.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Beware of rationalizing by blaming people, places, and things or soothing guilt with self-pity and the "if only's": "If only people understood me." "If only I had a job." We often hear that the alcoholic is the last one to find out that he or she is an alcoholic. Everyone around this person knows the alcoholic needs help.

KEY IDEA 4

There is no shortcut, no substitute, no other way out for the alcoholic.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Referring to acceptance, the Big Book says, “Halfway measures availed us nothing.” What does “fake it ’til you make it” mean? AA is for “real alcoholics” who will stop drinking someday. It’s always better they are alive when it happens.

KEY IDEA 5

The alcoholic’s future security depends on the successful attainment of AA as a way of life.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Functioning in an alcohol-free lifestyle is possible, even though we fear that we or this lifestyle will be boring. Boredom is a form of conceit. When we are bored we are saying, *Okay, life, you are not doing your job of keeping me entertained.* This thinking can poison our attitude and take us back to the point where our addiction seems like the only way out of that boredom.

KEY IDEA 6

Reflect upon your powerlessness over this sickness.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Insanity is taking that first drink, each time expecting different results. Living in that world of being out of control was strange and crazy. Everything was turned around: Right was left, up was down, good was bad, and day was night.

KEY IDEA 7

Consider your inability to take it or leave it alone.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Look at examples of promises and firm resolve repeatedly broken. We all have one more slip in us, but do we have one more recovery? We need to always “remember when.” When we forget about our First Step, we are setting ourselves up to drink again.

KEY IDEA 8

There is no mystery about it.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

The Steps are the only proven way. Pride tells me that I am different, that I can do it my way.