

Our Primary Purpose...

“Our chief responsibility to the newcomer is an adequate presentation of the program. If he does nothing or argues, we do nothing but maintain our own sobriety. If he starts to move ahead, even a little, with an open mind, we then break our necks to help in every way we can.”

Bill Wilson, Co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous.

** As Bill Sees it, page 105.*



Identifying

The nature of most alcoholics is to feel different than others. Moving forward, it is suggested that a newcomer look for similarities they share with others instead of the differences. Identifying is a powerful part of recovery.



The Problem

Alcoholism is a threefold, chronic, progressive disease which affects the mind, body, and spirit.

- Chronic: If you have it, you will die with it or from it.
- Progressive: It will continue to worsen over time whether you are drinking or not.



The Solution: The 3 Legacies of A.A.



Recovery: The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Service: Carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous To those suffering from the disease.

Unity: The fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

* If you stay active in all 3 parts of Alcoholics Anonymous, recovery is guaranteed.

Foundation Meeting

(Everything you need to know about Alcoholics Anonymous.)

Alcoholics Anonymous Page One:

*“Alcoholics Anonymous - The story of how many thousands of men and women have **recovered** from alcoholism.”*

* **Recovered.** Past tense. The problem has been removed. Not cured, but removed. The obsession has been lifted.



Preface (Second Paragraph)

*“Because this book has become the **basic text** for our society and has helped such large numbers of alcoholic men and women to recovery, there exists strong sentiment against any radical changes being made in it.” - Page xi*

- * Consider this a **Text Book**. A book of instructions. It should be studied, learned, and practiced. Ideally with the guidance of a teacher (**Sponsor**). Each chapter builds off of the previous.
- * A Sponsor should be another alcoholic who has worked the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous resulting in a spiritual awakening.



Forward to the First Edition: 1939

*“We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have **recovered** from a seemingly **hopeless** state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics **precisely** how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book. — Page xiii*

- **Recovered:** to save from loss and to restore to usefulness.
- **Hopelessness:** a feeling of despair. Having no expectation of recovering. We couldn't live with or without alcohol.
- **Precisely:** exact, clear cut. No grey area. No interpretation needed.



Forward to the First Edition (continued)

*“For you, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that **no further authentication will be necessary.**” — Page xiii*

- There have been many good books written about alcoholism. None of which offer step by step instructions. The instructions in this book are a recipe for a miracle.

Even The 12 Steps & 12 Traditions, written by co-founder Bill Wilson as a reflection of what the 12 Steps meant to him, offers no instructions. Page 17 of the book encourages one to always defer to The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous for direction.



Forward to the First Edition (continued)

*“We think this account of our experiences will help everyone to better understand the alcoholic. Many do not comprehend that **the alcoholic is a very sick person**. And besides, we are sure that **our way of living has its advantages for all**.” – Page xiii*

- Alcoholism is a disease. It has nothing to do with will power or moral fortitude.
- Having worked the 12 steps an active member of A.A. will become a useful member of the human race at last. We have something to contribute to humanity, since we are qualified, as a fellow-sufferer, to give aid and comfort to those who have stumbled.
- The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous has spawned over 200 plus 12 step fellowships. People saw that the program worked for alcoholics and adapted it to their own personal problem.



Forward to the Second Edition: 1955

*“Sixteen years have elapsed between our first printing of this book and the presentation in 1955 of our second edition. In that brief space, Alcoholics Anonymous has mushroomed into nearly 6,000 groups whose membership is far above 150,000 **recovered** alcoholics. Groups are to be found in each of the United States and all of the provinces of Canada.” – Page xv*



Forward to the Second Edition: 1955 (continued)

*“This physician (Dr. Bob, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous) had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma but had failed. But when the broker (Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous) gave him Dr. Silkworth’s description of alcoholism and its hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady with a willingness he had never before been able to muster. He sobered, never to drink again up to the moment of his death in 1950. This seemed to prove that one alcoholic could affect another as no nonalcoholic could. **It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery.**”* – Page xvi



Forward to the Third Edition: 1976

“By March 1976, when this edition went to the printer, the total worldwide membership of Alcoholics Anonymous was conservatively estimated at more than 1,000,000, with almost 28,000 groups meeting in over 90 countries.”

“The basic principles of the A.A. program, it appears, hold good for individuals with many different lifestyles, just as the program has brought recovery to those of many different nationalities.”

“In spite of the great increase in the size and the span of this Fellowship, at its core it remains simple and personal. Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength, and hope.” – Page xvii



Forward to the Fourth Edition: 2001

“This fourth edition of “Alcoholics Anonymous” came off press in November 2001, at the start of a new millennium. Since the third edition was published in 1976, worldwide membership of A.A. has just about doubled, to an estimated two million or more, with nearly 100,800 groups meeting in approximately 150 countries around the world.” — Page xxiii

“While our literature has preserved the integrity of the A.A. message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. In any meeting, anywhere, members share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics.” — Page xxiv



XXV - The Doctor's Opinion

“We of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the reader will be interested in the medical estimate of the plan of recovery described in this book. Convincing testimony must surely come from medical men who have had experience with the sufferings of our members and have witnessed our return to health. A well-known doctor, chief physician at a nationally prominent hospital specializing in alcoholic and drug addiction, gave Alcoholics Anonymous this letter”: - Page xxv



Who was Dr. William D. Silkworth?

A graduate of Princeton University, he obtained his medical degree from New York University-Bellevue Medical School specializing in neurology. During his internship at Bellevue, he discovered he had a passion for working with drunks and interned in an inebriate clinic.

He was a member of the psychiatric staff in the U.S. Army Hospital. Then he became an associate physician at the Neurological Institute of Presbyterian Hospital in NYC.

He began working at Towns Hospital in NYC after being laid off from Presbyterian Hospital following the market crash of 1929.

While at Towns Hospital, he chose to continue to specialize in working with alcoholic and drug-dependent patients.

By 1939, he had treated tens of thousands of such patients. He had a different view on alcoholism based on what he had been witnessing through working with so many alcoholics.

He argued that it's a chronic medical illness with specific symptoms and no effective treatment, only a hopeless outcome.

Until then, not much had been studied due to medical opinions that it was considered a vice and not an illness.



The Doctor's Opinion

To Whom It May Concern:

I have specialized in the treatment of alcoholism for many years.

In late 1934 I attended a patient who, though he had been a competent businessman of good earning capacity, was an alcoholic of a type I had come to regard as hopeless.

In the course of his third treatment he acquired certain ideas concerning a possible means of recovery. As part of his rehabilitation he commenced to present his conceptions to other alcoholics, impressing upon them that they must do likewise with still others. This has become the basis of a rapidly growing fellowship of these men and their families. This man and over one hundred others appear to have recovered. – Page xxv



The Doctor's Opinion

I personally know scores of cases who were of the type with whom other methods had failed completely.

These facts appear to be of extreme medical importance; because of the extraordinary possibilities of rapid growth inherent in this group they may mark a new epoch in the annals of alcoholism. These men may well have a remedy for thousands of such situations.

You may rely absolutely on anything they say about themselves.

Very truly yours,

William D. Silkworth, M.D. – Page xxv



The Doctor's Opinion

“The doctor’s theory that we have an allergy to alcohol interests us. As laymen, our opinion as to its soundness may, of course, mean little. But as ex-problem drinkers, we can say that his explanation makes good sense. It explains many things for which we cannot otherwise account.” – Page xxvi



The Doctor's Opinion

“We doctors have realized for a long time that some form of moral psychology was of urgent importance to alcoholics, but its application presented difficulties beyond our conception. What with our ultra-modern standards, our scientific approach to everything, we are perhaps not well equipped to apply the powers of good that lie outside our synthetic knowledge.”

– Page xxvi

Wait, what did he say? Let's try it this way:

- Moral Psychology = Spiritual Experience
- Good = God
- Our = Doctors



The Doctor's Opinion

Paraphrased:

“We **doctors** have realized for a long time that some form of ***spiritual experience*** was of urgent importance to alcoholics, but its application presented difficulties beyond **doctor's** conception. What with **doctor's** ultra-modern standards, **doctor's** scientific approach to everything, **doctors** are perhaps not well equipped to apply the powers of **God** that lie outside **doctors** synthetic knowledge.”



The Doctor's Opinion

“Many years ago one of the leading contributors to this book came under our care in this hospital and while here he acquired some ideas which he put into practical application at once. Later, he requested the privilege of being allowed to tell his story to other patients here and with some misgiving, we consented. The cases we have followed through have been most interesting; in fact, many of them are amazing. The unselfishness of these men as we have come to know them, the entire absence of profit motive, and their community spirit, is indeed inspiring to one who has labored long and wearily in this alcoholic field. They believe in themselves, and still more in the Power which pulls chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death.” – Page xxvii



The Doctor's Opinion

The doctor writes:

“We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.” – Page xxviii



The Doctor's Opinion

“Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false.” – Page xxviii

- How has your drinking been injurious to you and others?
- The truth... Our lives have become unmanageable.
- The false: We will some how learn to control and manage our drinking.



The Doctor's Opinion

*“To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are **restless, irritable and discontented**, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks which they see others taking with impunity.” – Page xxviii*



The Doctor's Opinion

Restless – Feeling of uneasiness. Inability to rest or relax. Feeling worried or anxious.

Irritable – Easily annoyed. Abnormally sensitive. Easily exacerbated.

Discontent – dissatisfaction with circumstances, situation, status or possessions.

- * Things are not going so well, I need a drink!
- * What a perfect day! Let's have a drink!



The Doctor's Opinion

“After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.” – Page xxix



The Doctor's Opinion

“I do not hold with those who believe that alcoholism is entirely a problem of mental control. I have had many men who had, for example, worked a period of months on some problem or business deal which was to be settled on a certain date, favorably to them. They took a drink a day or so prior to the date, and then the phenomenon of craving at once became paramount to all other interests so that the important appointment was not met. These men were not drinking to escape; they were drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control. There are many situations which arise out of the phenomenon of craving which cause men to make the supreme sacrifice rather than continue to fight. “



The Doctor's Opinion

“The classification of alcoholics seems most difficult, and in much detail is outside the scope of this book. There are, of course, the psychopaths who are emotionally unstable. We are all familiar with this type. They are always “going on the wagon for keeps.” They are over-remorseful and make many resolutions, but never a decision. There is the type of man who is unwilling to admit that he cannot take a drink. He plans various ways of drinking. He changes his brand or his environment. There is the type who always believes that after being entirely free from alcohol for a period of time he can take a drink without danger. There is the manic-depressive type, who is, perhaps, the least understood by his friends, and about whom a whole chapter could be written. “ - Page xxx



The Doctor's Opinion

*“Then there are types entirely normal in every respect except in the effect alcohol has upon them. They are often able, intelligent, friendly people. All these, and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire **abstinence**.”* – Page xxx



Disease of the Mind, Body and Spirit

The Allergy of the Body

Science has proven that an alcoholic develops a physical allergy, an abnormal reaction to alcohol. This manifests as a physical craving for more when we take the first drink. As we continue to drink more, the stronger the craving becomes. The real alcoholic finds it impossible to stop drinking once he starts.

- If you are allergic to bee stings, and you are stung, you have no control over how your body responds. It is exactly the same for a real alcoholic when they take the first drink.



Disease of the Mind, Body and Spirit

The Spiritual Malady

Spiritual references our **Thoughts**, **Beliefs**, and **Emotions**.

Malady describes how we are in **Conflict** with our thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. What we know, feel, and believe about ourselves does not align with how we want others to see us.

- * Feeling somehow different than others.
- * Trouble connecting with people.
- * Difficulty regulating emotions.
- * Feelings of fear, depression, anxiety or uselessness.



We Agnostics : The Bedevilments

“We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn’t control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn’t make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn’t seem to be of real help to other people.” — Page 52, We Agnostics



Disease of the Mind, Body and Spirit

The Obsession of the Mind

Despite an awareness of the consequences, we are unable to resist taking that first drink. We know at once we will feel a sense of ease and comfort with the first drink. — *Page xxix, The Doctor's Opinion*

Disease of the Mind, Body and Spirit

The Vicious Cycle

The **Spiritual Malady** results in an **Obsession of the Mind** to take the first drink. The first drink triggers the **Allergy of the Body**, creating a craving for more. The more we drink, the stronger the craving becomes. We find it nearly impossible to stop once we start. We drink until we can no longer carry on. We arise feeling low for loosing control once again which compounds our spiritual malady. And the cycle repeats.



Chapter 2, There is a Solution

In Chapter 2, we learn that there are 3 types of drinkers:

“Moderate drinkers have little trouble in giving up liquor entirely if they have good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone.”

- Page 20

- * I don't think I want another drink, I'm starting to feel it.
- * I can't finish this drink, it's getting warm.



Chapter 2, There is a Solution

*“Then we have a certain type of **hard drinker**. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason—ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor—becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention.” – Page 20*

* Hard drinkers may sometimes show up in treatment centers and A.A. Meetings.



Chapter 2, There is a Solution

*“But what about the **real alcoholic**? He may start off as a moderate drinker; he may or may not become a continuous hard drinker; but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink.” – Page 21*

** The hard drinker has a habit. The Alcoholic has an illness.*



Chapter 2, There is a Solution.

“The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.” – Page 24



Chapter 2, There is a Solution.

- Think about the worst thing that has happened due to your drinking. How long after that were you drinking again?
- Insanity is repeating something over and over, expecting different results. Alcoholic insanity, is repeating something over and over, knowing what the result will be.



Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism

MOST OF US have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death. – Page 30



Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed. We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. - Page 30



Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism

All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals—usually brief—were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better. - Page 30



Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism

We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of our kind like other men. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet. - Page 30



Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism

Despite all we can say, many who are real alcoholics are not going to believe they are in that class. By every form of self-deception and experimentation, they will try to prove themselves exceptions to the rule, therefore nonalcoholic. If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right-about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him. Heaven knows, we have tried hard enough and long enough to drink like other people! - Page 31



Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism

Here are some of the methods we have tried: Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums—we could increase the list ad infinitum.



Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism

We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition. - Page 31



Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism

Most of us have believed that if we remained sober for a long stretch, we could thereafter drink normally. But here is a man who at fifty-five years found he was just where he had left off at thirty. We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic." Commencing to drink after a period of sobriety, we are in a short time as bad as ever. If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol. - Page 33



Chapter 4, We Agnostics

“In The Preceding chapters you have learned something of alcoholism. We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic.

*If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are **probably alcoholic**. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a **spiritual experience** will conquer.” - Page 44*



Chapter 4, We Agnostics

It's not about the quantity or frequency of your drinking.

Rather can you control the amount you drink once you've started (every time)?

Are you able to resist the first drink after a period of abstinence?



Step One

If not, are you willing to admit to being powerless over alcohol?
If so, congratulations. You've taken Step One.

“We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery.” - Page 30, *More About Alcoholism*

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable.



Chapter 4, We Agnostics

If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago. - Page 44

Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power? - Page 45



Chapter 4, We Agnostics

Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God. - Pg 17

- This spiritual program has worked for countless people from many different backgrounds and faiths.
- Discuss laying down misconceptions, A Higher Power, and one's own conception of God.



Step Two

Step Two: *Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

- * You only need a willingness to believe that there may be something more powerful than you.
- * A higher power of your design, of your understanding.



Chapter 4, We Agnostics

To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as he is means disaster, especially if he is an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face. But it isn't so difficult. About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type. - Page 44

- Do you believe there is a power in the lives of each person in this room that is keeping them sober?
- Do you believe this power could work for you?



Chapter 4, We Agnostics

We, who have traveled this dubious path, beg you to lay aside prejudice, even against organized religion. We have learned that whatever the human frailties of various faiths may be, those faiths have given purpose and direction to millions. People of faith have a logical idea of what life is all about. Actually, we used to have no reasonable conception whatever. We used to amuse ourselves by cynically dissecting spiritual beliefs and practices when we might have observed that many spiritually minded persons of all races, colors, and creeds were demonstrating a degree of stability, happiness and usefulness which we should have sought ourselves. - Page 49



Chapter 5, How It Works

- *RARELY HAVE we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.* - Page 58



Chapter 5, How It Works

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. - Page 58



Chapter 5, How It Works

Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now! Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon. Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery: - Page 58



Chapter 5, How It Works

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.*
- 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
- 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
- 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

- Page 59



Chapter 5, How It Works

- 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
- 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
- 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
- 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

- Page 59



Chapter 5, How It Works

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

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs. - Page 59



Chapter 5, How It Works

Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection. - Page 60



Chapter 5, How It Works

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.

(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.

(c) That God could and would if He were sought. - Page 60



Chapter 5, How It Works

Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood Him.

Just what do we mean by that, and just what do we do?

The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way. - Page 60



Chapter 5, How It Works

Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt. - Page 62



Chapter 5, How It Works

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help. - Page 62



RMBBG

Chapter 5, How It Works

This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

*When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. **Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well.*** - Page 62



Chapter 5, How It Works

As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn. - Page 63



Chapter 5, How It Works

We were now at Step Three.

Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him:

“God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!”

We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.



Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Through personal inventory we discover the roots of our spiritual malady.

- Resentments, why we hold deep seeded ill will towards someone else.
- Fear, what fears do we have and why do we have them.
- Sex Conduct & Relationships, How have I treated others?

Where have I been selfish?



Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

The feeling of being at one with God and man, emerging from isolation through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of shame or guilt, brings us to a resting place where we may prepare for the following Steps toward a full and meaningful recovery.



Steps Six & Seven

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. - In an act of humility, we focus on our willingness to change those old behaviors which separated us from our Higher Power.

Step Seven: Humbly ask Him to remove our short comings.

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad, I pray that you remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen — page 76



Steps Eight, Nine, and Ten

- Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.



Steps Eleven and Twelve

- Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics , and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



The Promises

As laid out in chapter 6 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, alcoholics who stay sober and work the Twelve Steps will see these Promises come true:

Promise 1: We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

Promise 2: We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

Promise 3: We will comprehend the word serenity.

Promise 4: We will know peace.

Promise 5: No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

Promise 6: The feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. - Pages 83 & 84, Into Action



The Promises

Promise 7: We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

Promise 8: Self-seeking will slip away.

Promise 9: Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

Promise 10: Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.

Promise 11: We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

Promise 12: We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. - Pages 83 & 84, Into Action



What the Promises Mean:

The Big Book's Promises describe the change in attitude that will transpire within the alcoholic, "sometimes quickly, and sometimes slowly." They may take time, but they "will always materialize if we work for them."

A person working The 12 Steps to recover from alcoholism will surely experience an internal shift that produces a new level of peace and well-being.



What the Promises Mean:

Simultaneously, the Big Book promises the departure of these unwelcome byproducts of alcoholism:

Fear

Regret

Feelings of uselessness

Self-pity

Selfishness and self-seeking



What the Promises Mean:

The person who works The 12 Steps will gain a spiritual foundation and a whole new outlook on life, and the dread and negativity of alcoholism will be undone.

There are four sources of guidance for the recovering alcoholic:

The recovering alcoholic attends AA meetings and is mentored by other members of the fellowship who have practiced the Twelve Steps and applied the AA principles to their own lives.

The recovering alcoholic is also guided by the program, the Big Book, the Twelve Steps and their instructions.

The recovering alcoholic establishes a relationship to a Higher Power, whatever its form, and trusts in the guidance of spirit.

The final source of wisdom comes from within: the recovering alcoholic must create a hopeful vision of the future, and find the determination to make it true.



We Have Recovered

We are not cured of alcoholism. Through the Grace of our Higher Power, We have Recovered.

Chapter 6, Into Action tells us: *“What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.”*

Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities.

How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done. - Page 85, Into Action



Chapter 11, A Vision for You

Our book is meant to be suggested only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the person who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the great fact for us. - Page 164



Chapter 11, A Vision for You

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. - Page 164

