

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group

Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

WEEK #5

The Dr.'s Opinion

(Session04c - 09:24 minutes)

Charlie said you can get to trouble going to town. That's the trouble with trouble; it always starts off as fun, isn't it? How many of you went off to get drunk and to get into trouble. I would go out and get drunk and have a little fun. And that's the trouble with trouble it always starts out as fun, at least that's the way it did with me.

You know I just love to watch normal, social, temperate, moderate drinkers. Fascinating to watch them, saw one on the airplane yesterday. Yeah, yeah, he ordered a drink, got him a mixer with it and he put his mixer in this glass with ice in it, poured his little bottle in there. They buy little-bitty bottles on airplanes. I think it costs them four dollars today and hell there's not a drink in that bottle period but anyhow that's what they get. And he poured it in there and then he took a little stick, and he went through a stirring ceremony. I don't know much about stirring when it comes to drinking but he stirred and he stirred and he stirred, and after a while he laid his little stick down and you know what he did then? He picked up his magazine and started reading his damn magazine. I'm sitting there watching him saying drink the damn stuff what the hell did you get it for. That's what we call alcohol abuse. Now that may be normal but I call that sick to drink like that. So I think I'll read this again,

Big Book p. xxiv, par.3 *"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."*

J & C And the explanation for this explains many things for which I could not otherwise account. It explained to me why I would go down by the bar with every intention of having two and the next thing I know it's midnight or one or two or three o'clock in the morning or the next day or the next week and I'd wonder what in the hell happened. I just went down there to drink two. Well this idea about this allergy to alcohol interested me; it explained many things, which I couldn't otherwise account. Now let's go to Roman numeral page xxvi. A good textbook will never tell you anything for what it doesn't give you more information to back it up. He's talked here about the allergy, now let's go over to Roman numeral xxvi, first paragraph; let's expand on that just a little bit.

Big Book p. xxvi, par. 2 *"We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy*;"*

J & C I used to hate that word, they'd call me a chronic alcoholic and I hated it. I don't particularly like it today, but I found out too that chronic just means something that you do over and over and over, so therefore I was a chronic drinker or a chronic alcoholic.

Big Book p. xxvi, par. 2 *... 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.*

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J & C You know this manifestation of allergy that Charlie talks about, the phenomenon of craving after we take the few drinks.

We don't have the craving before we take the few drinks.
It's only after we take the few drinks that the phenomenon of craving develops,
and then we have to have more and more and more, and
only alcoholics have that

Non-alcoholics do not crave alcohol after they take a drink, they just don't. They get all they want to drink every time they drink which is two or three maybe and that's all they want cause they don't have this phenomenon of cravings but alcoholics have.

* An allergy is an abnormal reaction to any food, beverage, or substance of any kind.

The action of strawberries on one who is allergic to strawberries, is manifested by a rash. The action of milk on one who is allergic to milk is manifested by dysentery.

The action of ragweed on one who is allergic to ragweed, is manifested by itchy, watery eyes, sneezing and etc.

The action of alcohol on one who is allergic to alcohol, is manifested by, and he refers to it as the phenomenon of craving.

He uses the word phenomenon cause he didn't understand it. So what it is, is manifested by an actual physical craving in the body that demands more of the same after we have started. And the word craving is very, very important. Now I hear people today say well I came to A.A. and I craved a drink for four years. No, in the context of the Big Book that's the wrong use of the word craving. They might have needed a drink or wanted a drink, desired a drink.

The Allergy is manifested by a
physical craving,
which is triggered by the first drink
You can't see it, you can only feel it
and only alcoholics feel it

The only way an alcoholic can crave alcohol is to first put it in the body, then the physical craving develops and then we can't stop and we end up drunk. So in the "recovery section (Roman numeral section +1st 164 pages) of the book - when you see the word 'craving' it's always referring to the body, never to the mind, we'll use the word 'obsession' for the mind, the word craving is for the body. Now he goes on a little further over on Roman numeral xxviii and he talks about five different kinds of drinkers. Then he drives this idea of the phenomenon of craving home being an allergy one more time. Let's look at these five drinkers. He says the classification of alcoholics; this is on Roman numeral page xviii,

Big Book p. xxviii, par. 3 *"The classification of alcoholics seems most difficult, and in much details 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."*

J & C We call that Type 1.

Big Book p. xxviii, par. 4 *"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."*

J & C That's Type 2.

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Big Book p. xxviii, line 15 *'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.'*

J & C Type 3.

Big Book p. xxviii, line 18 *'There is the manic-depressive type, who is, perhaps, the least understood by his friends, and about whom a whole chapter could be written.'*

J & C Now that's Type 4. Now I've always thought I was the next one, type five.

Big Book p. xxviii, par. 5 *"Then there are types entirely normal in every respect except in the effect alcohol has upon them. They are often able, intelligent, friendly people."*

J & C God I like that, wasn't that good. Any more type fives in the room tonight? Yeah, a whole bunch of them. Now, he makes his point one more time.

Big Book p. xxviii, par. 6 *"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."*

J & C Now I think what he said is this, that if all we alcoholics in this room tonight should take a drink, God forbid that happen, but if we did, we would not all react just exactly the same. In just a little bit one of us would be crying in our beer, oh, boo hoo hoo, the world's not treating me right. In just a little bit, one of 'em be up here on this stage, whooping and hollering and dancing, and cutting up and having a hell of a good time. In just a little bit there'd be two over in that corner getting in a fight just sure as anything. Look over here and there'll be a couple, one putting the make on the other, we tend to do that too when we drink. We would do many different things, but if we're a real alcoholic there's one thing that every one of us would do, we would start looking for a second drink. The phenomenon of craving has taken over now, the allergy has manifested itself, and now we can't stop. Got to have a third drink and a fourth and a fifth, and a sixth, and an eighth and a tenth and on and on until we're drunk, sick and in all kinds of trouble.

Now it really doesn't make any difference whether we're born with it, or whether we drank ourselves into it.

I was born with it I'm sure. The first drink I took at age fourteen the allergy presented itself that night and I got drunk. Every time I drank I got drunk. I drank twenty-six years I don't ever remember taking one drink of anything that had alcohol in it, it always led to two, to three to six to eight to ten, etc. Some of you, I'm sure, drank with safety for several years, but somewhere you crossed the line and the same thing began to happen to you after several years of drinking that happened to me from the very beginning, but what difference does it make. The fact is that that's the way we are tonight. I know that's the way we are tonight too because if we were not that way tonight, we wouldn't be in this room tonight. If you and I could drink without getting drunk, where would we be? We'd be out there drinking without getting drunk but you see we can't do that. That's what we've got in common in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, is

We can't drink without getting drunk → wanting more, wanting another

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The Dr.'s Opinion

(Session05 - 16:05 minutes)

Now back in the 1930's this was the Doctor's Opinion. In the 1930's they knew very little about metabolism. Today they know lots about,

Metabolism.

- 1) Today they know that if you put anything in your system such as a piece of bread or a piece of beefsteak that the mind and body recognizes what that is.
- 2) Certain organs in the body begin to produce some things called enzymes.
- 3) They attack that food and begin to break it down and separate it into useable and non-useable items.
- 4) What the body can use such as the proteins, the amino acids, the vitamins the body will retain,
- 5) What it can't use it will dissipate through the urinary and intestinal tract,

they call that metabolism. Today they have proven that The Doctor's Opinion is no longer just an opinion, it's actual truth. And we're going to look at a little picture here for just a minute, and I want to stress that this is not A.A. information. A.A. won't get involved into why we're allergic, because that might bring controversy. But this information presented to us a few years ago by members of the medical profession, is so interesting and has such depth and meaning for people like us, I think we would be remiss if we didn't look at it. So let's look at it for just a moment.

In the center of that picture there's nine people there that drink safely. They are at ease with alcohol. They take a drink or two, the mind and body senses it, the enzyme production starts, and the enzymes attack the alcohol,

this is how
alcohol
is processed
through
the body of
the
non-alcoholic

(1st Stage) breaks it down into acetaldehyde,

(2nd Stage) then to diacetic acid,

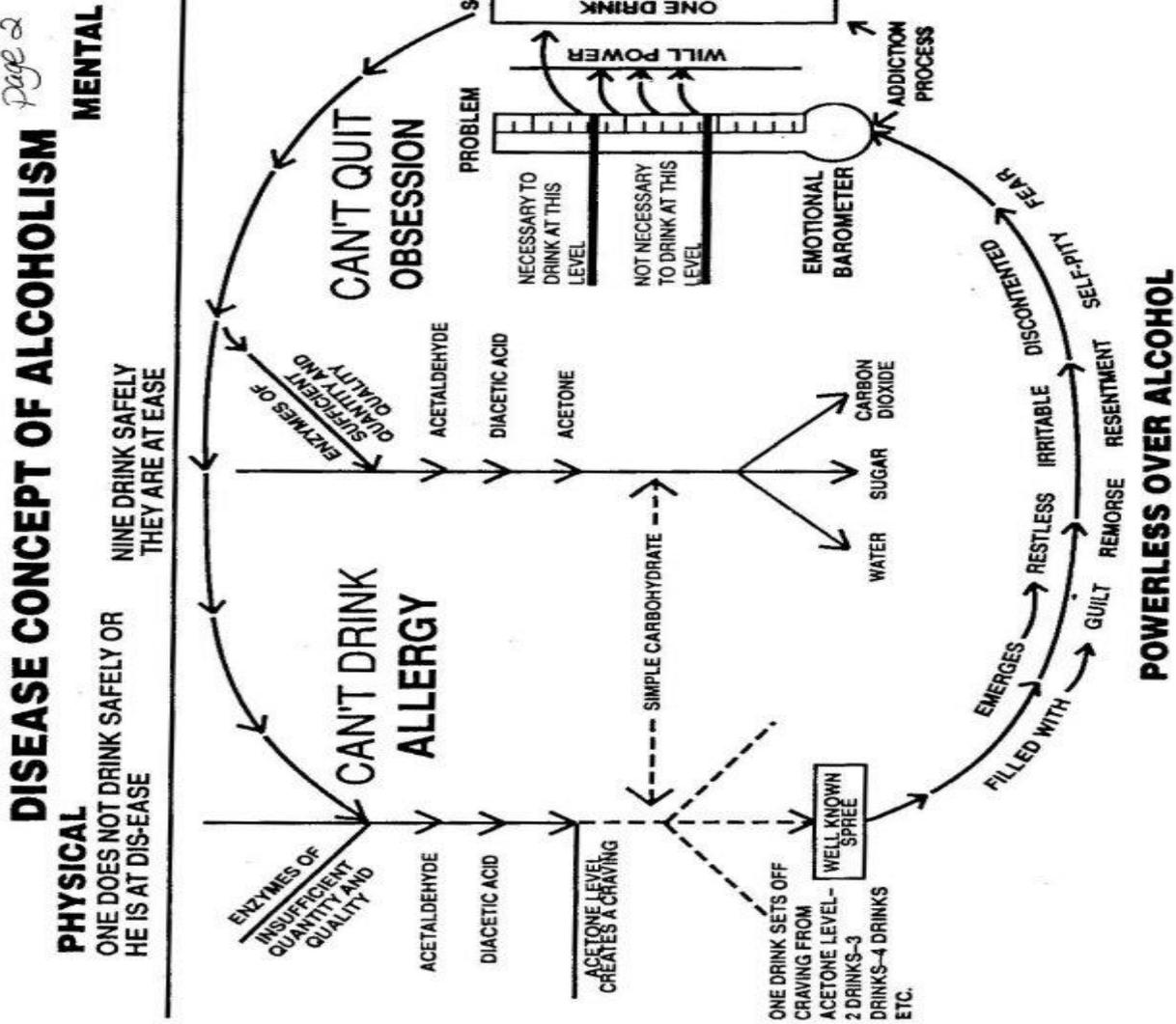
(3rd Stage) then to acetone.

(final Stage) In the final stages it becomes a simple carbohydrate made up of water, sugar, and carbon dioxide.

- The water would be dissipated through the urinary and intestinal tract.
- The sugar is calories, energy, empty calories, none of the amino acids, none of the vitamins, but a form of energy. The body will burn them; store the excess as fat to be used at a later date.
- The carbon dioxide will be dissipated through the lungs.

In the normal social drinker this takes place at the rate of approximately one ounce per hour. Now I know it'll vary with different people, but the average is one ounce per hour. And if they don't drink more than an ounce per hour forever they can't get drunk. Their body metabolizes it and burns it up and gets rid of it at that rate. Very seldom do you see a social drinker drinking more than an ounce per hour. If you're with one of them and they're drinking more than an ounce an hour, you better get out of the way. Cause they're going to puke on you after a while. They'll either go to sleep or they'll puke on you, one of the two, every time.

Page 2



The left-hand side is the one who does not drink safely, or he's at disease with alcohol. And if you want to use the word disease that's all it means, something that separates you from the norm.

When alcoholics put it in our body, the same thing happens. The enzymes attack the alcohol,

- (1st Stage) break it down to acetaldehyde,
- (2nd Stage) then to diacetic acid,
- (3rd Stage) then to acetone.
- (final stage) - - - - -

This shows how alcohol is processed through the alcoholics body, and the resulting havoc it creates.

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It seems as though, in our bodies, the enzymes necessary to complete the metabolism, breaking it down from acetone to the simple carbohydrate, are not there in the same qualities and/or quantities as they are in the body of the nonalcoholic.

Therefore it stays in our body for a longer period of time as acetone.
It is proven today, that acetone ingested into the human system that remains there for an appreciable period of time, will produce an actual physical craving for more of the same.

In a non-alcoholic's body it (acetone) goes through that stage (conversion to simple carbohydrate) so rapidly the craving never occurs. In our body it stays there long enough, the craving develops and that demands a second drink.

Now just think

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) you got most of the acetone
from the first (drink), | 2) now you put that
in from the second (drink). |
|---|--|

The acetone level goes up, and if the acetone's what causes the craving, then the craving becomes harder with a second drink. Now you put in the third,

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) you got most of the first, (drink) | 2) nearly all of the second, (drink) |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

3) and now you put in the, acetone from the third (drink)

and the craving goes up, and that demands a fourth.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1) you got most of the first, (drink) | 2) nearly all of the second, (drink) |
| 3) that from the third, (drink) | 4) and now you put in the acetone from the fourth (drink) |

as the acetone level increases the craving becomes harder.

At midnight we're laying out in the parking lot, they've run over us and broken our leg, and they come running up to us and say can we help you, and we say, my God yes, give me another drink. You see we're craving it harder at midnight after thirty drinks than we were at 6:00 in the evening after 2 drinks. That explains to me why I never got enough. Hell I drank twenty-six years; I never did get all the alcohol I wanted.

I got a hell of a lot more than I needed, more than I could stand, but I never got all I wanted.

Because the more you drink, the higher the craving;
the higher the craving the more you want,
the more you want
... it's just endless.

Now if this never got any worse, we could probably learn to live with this situation, but we know not only do we have an illness,

we have a progressive illness that always gets worse and never better.

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Today we know that as we drink, the more we drink, the longer we drink, the more tissue we destroy. Alcohol is a destroyer of human tissue, and the more tissue we destroy it seems as though that it acts upon two organs of the body first, which are the liver and the pancreas. Now today we know that

the organs of the body that produce the enzymes necessary to metabolize alcohol are the liver and the pancreas. And as we drink and as we damage them

- 1) the enzyme production becomes less and less,
- 2) the craving becomes harder and harder
- 3) with the resultant drinking becoming worse and worse.

We know also that the body begins to shut down on the production of everything as we get older, now I wish that we're not true, but believe me it is, I'm experiencing lots of that. If I should take a drink today after twenty some odd years of sobriety,

I wouldn't start where I left off twenty some odd years ago.

- 1) The craving would be harder,
- 2) the drinking would be harder, and
- 3) the resultant trouble would be harder due to the aging factor

So not only do we have a physical illness, we have a progressive physical illness due to two factors:

(a) damage to the body, and also (b) due to the aging factor.

Now that I see that, I can accept the fact that I can no longer successfully drink alcohol. Until I could see this I knew there had to be a way I could drink without getting drunk, and I damn near killed me trying to find it. But now that I can see this I can accept the fact that I can no longer safely drink alcohol.

Now if that's all that was wrong with me, and if that's all that was wrong with you, we would pass the hat, get up and go home and never have to go to another A.A. meeting. But you see that's just half of my problem; the other half is right up here in my head. If I never took the first drink this allergy couldn't hurt me.

1) alcoholics don't have the quality/quantity of enzymes required to completely metabolize alcohol to begin with
2) because the enzymes can't metabolize the alcohol we are left with acetone sitting around in our systems
3) when acetone remains there for an appreciable period of time, it produces an actual physical craving for more alcohol
4) the alcohol we crave is a destroyer of human tissue - the more we drink, the more we destroy human tissue
5. the first organs to be destroyed are the liver and the pancreas which are the two organs that produce the enzymes necessary to metabolize alcohol
the more we drink, the more we crave,
the more we crave, the more we drink,
the more we drink the more we destroy
the more we destroy, the more we drink
the more we drink, the more we crave ...

Alcoholism is a progressive disease. This is true in many areas of our lives whether we are drinking, or sober twenty some odd years. In relation to the physical aspect, for each year that we grow a little older in sobriety, our bodies grow older too. And as the body age's, the production of enzymes needed to break down alcohol, slows down as well. If an alcoholic picks up a drink after twenty years of sobriety, the acetone that will now remain longer in his system will trigger stronger cravings than he has ever felt before. The drinking will be much worse and it will be much harder to stop if he so desires. We can't pick up where we left off; it would be as if we never stopped.

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I have a friend who's allergic to, of all things, fish. Every time he eats fish, his throat swells up, he almost chokes to death. But that's not his problem; the fact that he's allergic to fish is beside the point because if he don't eat fish that can't happen to him. But he's got something up here in his head that isn't right when it comes to fish. The switch doesn't close, or a light bulb doesn't come on or something.

He's three French fries short of a Happy Meal.

From time to time his mind tells him that it's okay to eat fish. And he'll eat the fish, his throat swells up, he ends up in the hospital every time. And I bet it always starts like this, 'Well I haven't had any fish in 90 days, surely I could have one piece of fish'. He says, 'it's that Orange Roughy I've been eating, if I eat nothing but Halibut it'd be okay'. Or he might even say, 'it's them damn people I've been eating fish with, if I just change my crowd'. Whatever the reason, his mind gives him permission to do so. Now I'm the same way when it comes to alcohol.

Left on my own resources,
from time to time my mind tells me it's okay to drink alcohol,
and then I take the drink and the allergy takes over.

So the real problem centers in my mind rather than my body.

Let's look at the mind for just a few minutes, and then we'll be through for the night. As Charlie said, the Doctor said,

Big Book p. xxviii, line 29 *"It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is **entire abstinence.**"*

J & C In other words, if we have an allergy to alcohol, and we crave more when we drink, he suggests we don't drink. And that's the end of that. So now we're going to talk about the most dangerous part of the illness, and the most dangerous part of the illness of alcoholism is when we're not drinking. You know why it's the most dangerous part of the illness? Because we're thinking, about drinking. So let's move back now to Roman numeral page xxvi, and we're going to start talking about the mind, two-fold illness. We talked about the physical allergy in great detail, now were going to talk about the obsession of the mind. It's the bottom page roman numeral twenty-six

Big Book p .xxvi, par. 5 *"Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol."*

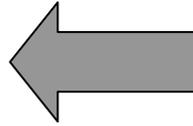
J & C Now many alcoholics are highly offended when you say that. They say, no, that's not the reason I drank. They say the reason I drank cause I love the taste of alcohol. I wouldn't argue with them whether they do or not. I loved the taste of cold beer, I always have all my life as far back as I can remember. I also love the taste of cold mountain spring water. I never did sit down and drink a case of cold mountain spring water. You see that beer did something for me that that spring water didn't do.

All my life as a kid growing up I was on the outside of the crowd looking in. Always wanted to be a part of, and knew I could not be. Always knew that whatever I said, whatever I did, it would be the wrong thing, people would laugh and I would be embarrassed. You ladies I couldn't even get around you, if I got around you I would be absolutely completely tongue tied, you scared me to death. One night somebody gave me a drink of moonshine whisky and all those fears disappeared. And I was allowed to ask a girl to dance with me for the first time in my life. I was allowed to take her home from the dance for the first

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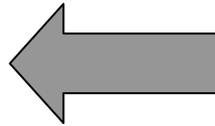
time in my life. We got in the back seat of a '36 Chevrolet, and I was allowed to do some things I'd been wanting to do for a long, long time. I loved what alcohol did to me, for me, not to me but for me.

And if it gave me a slightly tipsy out of control beginnings of a nauseous feeling, I wouldn't love that,



this is how the 'normal, social, temperate, moderate drinker' feels when he drinks alcohol, so he only has one or two

but you see it gives me that great, exciting, in control feeling and allows me to function in the manner I've never been able to function before.



this is how the alcoholic drinker feels when he drinks alcohol, (abnormal)

Big Book p.xxvi, par. 5

"Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol."

J & C I think we can all pretty well identify with that effect in the beginning. I certainly had that same effect and drank it for the same reasons, but we know that alcoholism is a progressive illness too, it gets worse over time.

And after a while I began to do some of those things that Charlie talked about, and I began to drink more, and more, and more, and



The effects become progressively

I began to wake up some mornings with a little guilt, shame and remorse as a result of the things that I was doing while drinking. And that brought on more drinking, and I had to drink to get rid of those feelings, so another effect by which I drank. And as the years and time went by and the trouble that I had in my life went by in the end I drank for the sickest effect of all, which is total oblivion. And there's only one thing wrong with oblivion though isn't there, it's you wake up, then you got to start doing it again. So there are many, many effects by which we drank, and it progressively gets worse. He said,

Big Book p. xxvi, par. 5

"The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them their alcoholic life seems the only normal one"

J & C And I couldn't recognize the truth from the false because my alcoholic life had become normal to me. Everywhere I went, alcohol was involved, every bar that I went to (if they (didn't) drank like that, the way I did, in that bar, I didn't go to those bars. That's what I was doing down there in the Zebra Lounge. You know one time I remember I woke up one morning and had a clear thought and I looked over at my wife Phyllis and I said, 'Phyllis, do you realize that most people don't drink like we do'. And you know what she said? Now I don't talk this way, this what she said, 'bullshit', yeah, that's just what she said. 'Everybody we know drinks just like we do'. You know I thought well that's true.

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So my alcoholic life had become normal.
The abnormal had become normal.
And I couldn't hardly tell the truth from the false in that light.

Now he begins to describe how people like us feel whenever we're sober, in forced periods of sobriety.

Big Book p. xxvi, par. 5 *"They are restless, irritable and discontented ...,"*

J & C Put a few little words in there too, say they were full of guilt, shame and remorse. And remember you know when we first got sober and we were new, they said if we didn't drink we were going to feel better? Well you're going to feel better all right; you're going to feel resentment better, you're going to feel anger better, you're going to feel a lot of things better. Running around, feeling lousy as hell, wanting to feel better, knowing only one way to feel better. We begin to think about what one or two drinks will do for us. We don't think about what 20 drinks will do, or thirty, we think about what one or two will do for us.

Big Book, top of p. xxvii *"... 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."*

J & C And impunity simply means those people who are drinking and seemingly they don't have any problems.

Big Book, top of p. xxvii *"After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do,"*

J & C After we've finally given in and taken a couple of drinks.

Big Book, top of p. xxvii *"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."*

J & C And how many times have I done that, how many times have you done that? Come off of one of those big drunks and long extended period drunks and promise them and yourself and anybody that will listen, I'll never do it again, I'm through, I promise you I'm through. And those of you who've made those promises you know that we were sincere and we meant that. He said,

Big Book, top of p. xxvii *"This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery."*

See he's quit talking about the body now, he's talking about the psychic change, the mind. Later on in our book the psychic change is going to be described as a spiritual experience, a spiritual awakening, a personality change. All four words mean the same thing. A psychic change (without it), there's very little hope for us for recovery, so the change is going to have to be here in the mind.