

# COMMON SOLUTION RECOVERY WORKBOOK

# INTRODUCTION

## COMMON SOLUTION RECOVERY

### THE PURPOSE

The purpose of the Common Solution Recovery workbook is to present the program of recovery contained in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous to all affected by alcoholism and other addictions.

“ Our chief responsibility to the newcomer is an adequate presentation of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous”

Bill Wilson (1941)

### THE HISTORY

When the Big Book was published in 1939 it had to contain all the information necessary to recover from alcoholism. Few meetings existed and the purpose of the book was to place AA’s message and unique experience before the **world**. The book had to contain the three pieces of information necessary to recover from alcoholism (What is the problem?, what is the solution?) and specific, precise, and clear-cut directions on how to find the solution.

*To show other alcoholics **precisely** how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.*

*Forward to the First Edition, p.xiii*

*It is the purpose of this book to answer such questions (What do I have to do?)**specifically**. We shall tell you what we have done.*

*Page 20, paragraph 3*

*Further on, **clear-cut** directions are given showing how we recovered.*

*Page 29, paragraph 2*

Common Solution Recovery is the result of the Way Out Workshops presented by volunteers in the Branson AA community since 1998. Thousands have been introduced to the three pieces of information necessary to recover from the basic text of the Big Book of AA during this period with many positive results and dynamic recoveries. The Common Solution Recovery presentations are a logical expansion of the existing program.

*The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a **common solution**. We have a **way out** on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism.*

*Page 17, paragraph 3*

## THE BOOK

*The infant Society determined to set down its experience in a book which finally reached the public in April 1939. At this time the recoveries numbered about one hundred. The book was called "Alcoholics Anonymous," and from it the fellowship took its name. In it alcoholism was described from the alcoholic's point of view, the spiritual ideas of the Society were codified for the first time in the Twelve Steps, and the application of these Steps to the alcoholic's dilemma was made clear. The remainder of the book was devoted to thirty stories or case histories in which the alcoholics described their drinking experiences and recoveries. This established identification with alcoholic readers and proved to them that the virtually impossible had now become possible. **The book "Alcoholics Anonymous" became the basic text for the Fellowship and still is.***

*Twelve and Twelve, page 17*

G.K.Chesterson was a prolific writer of religious editorials for the London Times during the early Twentieth Century. When asked during an interview, "If you were stranded on a deserted island with only one book to read, what book would you choose?" All present naturally expected him to answer, "The Bible". He hesitated only for an instant and quickly replied "That's easy. I would like to have a book called *A Practical Guide to Shipbuilding*."

The Big Book of AA can be your guide to escape from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body, from the inevitable feelings of loneliness and despair that alcoholism and other deadly addictions produce. It is our sincere hope that you experience the freedom of recovery as we have, that you will find the way out to a new way of life.

## **STEP ONE**

### **THE PROBLEM**

#### In This Chapter

1. What it means to be alcoholic
2. Why the alcoholic is powerless over alcohol

#### **Purpose of The Doctor's Opinion**

*To confirm what we who have suffered alcoholic torture must believe – that the body of an alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind. (p. xxiv, first paragraph)*

#### Who wrote The Doctor's Opinion?

Dr. William D. Silkworth, M.D. was the Medical Director at Towns Hospital, a depression era institution for treatment of alcoholism and drug addiction in New York City, where Bill Wilson had been hospitalized seeking treatment for his alcoholism. (p.7,par.4, p.14,par.3) Dr. Silkworth had treated many thousands of alcoholics at the time he wrote The Doctor's Opinion.

He stated that his theory of alcoholism and drug addiction was developed as the result of almost all alcoholics he was treating asking him the same two questions:

First... "Why can't I stop drinking once I start?"

Followed by " Now that I really want to stop altogether, why do I keep starting?"

**First Question      “Why can’t I stop once I start?”**

**READ DOCTOR’S OPINION, p. xxvi, first full paragraph**

We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these \_\_\_\_\_ alcoholics is the manifestation of an \_\_\_\_\_; that the phenomenon of \_\_\_\_\_ is limited to this class and \_\_\_\_\_ occurs in the average \_\_\_\_\_ drinker. These allergic types can \_\_\_\_\_ safely use alcohol in any form at all: and once having formed the \_\_\_\_\_ and found they cannot break it, once having lost their \_\_\_\_\_-confidence, their reliance upon things \_\_\_\_\_, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.

*The Meaning Of...*

*chronic – Continual, repeatedly, over and over*

*manifestation – how something appears to observation*

*allergy – abnormal reaction to a substance*

*phenomenon – a visible appearance of something  
seemingly without an explanation*

*craving – to require or demand, an appetite*

*-happens ONLY after the intake of alcohol*

*temperate – habitual moderation*

## PHYSICAL PART OF ALCOHOLIC PROBLEM

### Allergy of the Body

First drink = **1 craving**, demands another drink

Second drink = **2 cravings**, appetite for more,  
can only be filled with

Third drink = **3** **cravings...and so on**

...once the alcoholic takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this. (p.22.par.5-p.23,par.1)

#### *The Least I Need to Know...*

- 1. If I am an alcoholic, my body has a different reaction to alcohol than the majority of people.*
- 2. If I am an alcoholic, I can never safely use alcohol again.*
- 3. If I am an alcoholic, I have no control over alcohol once I drink.*

**IF THE PHYSICAL ALLERGY IS THE ONLY PART OF YOUR PROBLEM....THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLE...**

# ***QUIT DRINKING!***

However, if “Just Say No” isn’t working in your life, consider the second question that the doctor’s patients commonly asked.  
**“Why Can’t I Stop Starting?”**

READ DOCTOR’S OPINION, p xxvi, last paragraph

Men and women drink essentially because they like the \_\_\_\_\_ produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, unless they can again experience the sense of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ which comes at once from taking a few drinks - drinks which they see others taking with \_\_\_\_\_. After they have succumbed to the \_\_\_\_\_ again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of \_\_\_\_\_ develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a \_\_\_\_\_, emerging remorseful, with a firm \_\_\_\_\_ not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and, unless this person can \_\_\_\_\_ an entire psychic change, there is very little hope of his \_\_\_\_\_.

*The Meaning Of...*

*injurious - harmful*

*differentiate— make a distinction, tell one from the other*

*impunity – free from consequences*

*succumbed – give in to*

*desire – obsession (thought or idea that overrides all other thoughts or ideas to the contrary and absolutely will not respond to reason*

*spree – binge, run*

*resolution – declaration, promise, pledge*

*psychic – supernatural and/or spiritual*

## ***MENTAL PART OF ALCOHOLIC PROBLEM***

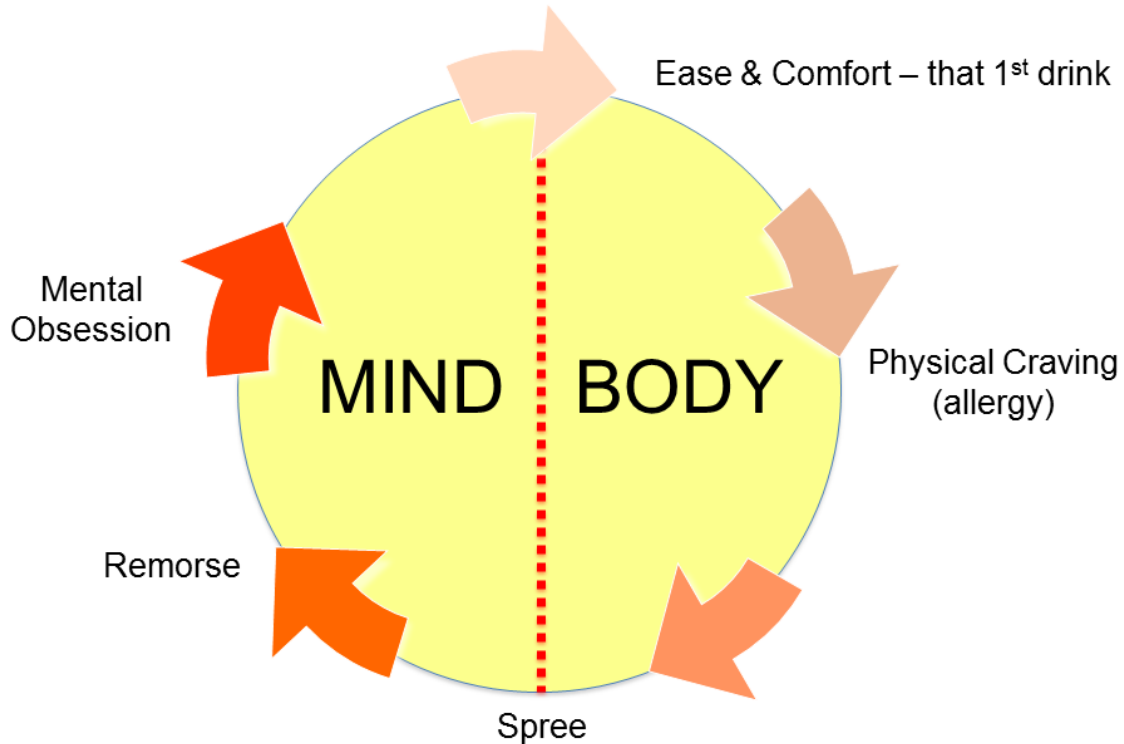
### **Obsession of the Mind**

**Why can't I stop starting?**

|

**Why can't I stop once I start?**

### **Cycle of Addiction**



...the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.

Page 23, paragraph 2

I now remembered what my alcoholic friends had told me, how they prophesied that if I had an alcoholic mind, the time and place would come – I would drink again.

Page 41, paragraph 3



## ***The Least I Need to Know...***

- 1. If I am an alcoholic, my mind is in possession of an obsession of the mind that I can safely use alcohol despite all evidence to the contrary.*
- 2. An obsession of the mind is a thought or idea that will overcome all other thoughts or ideas to the contrary, will always be a lie in the area of alcohol use and absolutely will not respond to reason.*
- 3. If I am alcoholic, I am powerless to keep myself from drinking again.*

### **UNMANAGABILITY OF LIFE**

*If I am powerless over alcohol because I...*

*Can't drink due to an allergy of the body  
and...*

*Can't keep from drinking due to an obsession  
of the mind...*

*my life has probably become unmanageable.*

*“Bill’s Story”, Chapter One shows us the unmanageability of an alcoholic’s life.*

*Read “Bill’s Story” to identify and compare with our own story of personal powerlessness and unmanageability of our own lives.*

*We see where Bill Wilson’s powerlessness over alcohol and unmanageability of his life leads him to make the mental conclusion of Step One.*

No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass (swamp) of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. **Alcohol was my master.**

Page 8, paragraph 2

We do **not** surrender in Step One, we **must** admit complete defeat!

### ***STEP ONE – The Least You Should Know***

- 1. Step One is a mental conclusion.***
- 2. The main problem of the alcoholic is in his mind.***
- 3. The alcoholic is powerless over alcohol whether he is drinking or not drinking.***
- 4. The allergy of the body happens when we drink.***
- 5. The obsession of the mind to drink will overcome all reasons not to.***

## WHAT THE SOLUTION ISN'T?

### In This Session

1. *What is a real alcoholic?*
2. *What is a human resource?*
3. *What will not work as the solution?*

*The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a **common solution**. We have a **way out** on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries for those who suffer from alcoholism. (p. 17:3)*

*We hear about many solutions to the problem of "alcoholism" from many different sources in and out of Alcoholics Anonymous. There are many answers being offered. The Big Book very clearly presents only one.*

### The Real Alcoholic

The tragic truth that if the man be a **real alcoholic**, the happy day may not arrive. (p23:4)

Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were **real alcoholics**. (p30:1)

We know that no **real alcoholic** ever recovers control. (p30:4)

Despite all we can say, many who are **real alcoholics** are not going to believe they are in that class. (p31:1)

If he is a **real alcoholic** and very far advanced, there is scant chance of success. (p34:1)

He agreed he was a **real alcoholic** and in a serious condition. (p35:3)

*What Is a Real Alcoholic?*

*Page 20:5-21:1*

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

Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically or 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 stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention.

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.

*The real alcoholic is suffering from an **obsession of the mind** that condemns him to drink against his will and an **allergy of the body** that condemns him to death when he does. No reason will be sufficient to allow an alcoholic to stop or moderate. How many of us have many good and even strong reasons not to use again? Loss of family or job? Health or financial reasons? The doctor has told me that I could and probably will die if I drink again. Kids? Parole or probation violations? Now, look back at the last time we drank or used. If we are honest about it, we all had those same reasons before the last time we gave in to the desire. And, strong as they are, they did not stop us did they?*

*If we are a real alcoholic or a real addict reasons will not stop us from drinking and using again.*

If we have made the mental conclusion of Step One, we have seen that we are powerless to remove our alcoholic obsession on our own and power is the obvious solution to our problem.

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous uses the Doctor's Opinion and the first 59 ½ pages to give us the information required to help us to make the mental conclusions of Steps One and Two.

*Our description of the alcoholic(Doctor's Opinion), the chapter to the agnostic(We Agnostics), and our personal adventures before and after (Bill's Story, There Is A Solution, More About Alcoholism) 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 44:4-45:0*

If a mere code of morals or better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago. But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us, no matter how much we tried. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn't there. Our human resources, as marshaled by the will,, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.

## What are Our Human Resources?

Resolve	p 5:4, 5:6, 34:1, 34:2, 38:2	Self-help books
Self-confidence	p 6:0, 40:2	Isolation
Other drugs	p 7:0	Relationships
Self-knowledge	p 7:2-3, 36:3, 39:1, 40:1, 42:0	Exercise
Fear	p 8:2	Sponsors
Meetings	p 17:2	Moving
Good reasons	p 20:5	Professionals
Strong reasons	p 21:0, 35:3, 37:0	Big Book memorization
Common sense	p 22:2	Scripture memorization
Will power	p 22:2, 24:1, 33:2, 40:2	New car
Desire to stop	p 24:0, 32:1	
Choice	p 24:1	
Memory	p 24:1, 41:2	
Treatment	p 26:1, 30:4	
Psychiatrists	p 26:1	
Church	p 27:5	
Control	p 30:3	
Physicians	p 31:0	
Self-deception	p 31:1	
Experimentation	p 31:2	
Hospitalization	p 32:2, 38:0	
Money	p 33:0	
Period of sobriety	p 33:1	
Necessity	p 34:2	
Wishes	p 34:2	
Job	p 35:2	
Family	p 35:3	
Intelligence	p 38:2	
Code of morals	p 44:4	

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?

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 problems.

Page 45, paragraph 1,2

## What is Not the Solution? – The Least We Should Know

1. The real alcoholic at certain times will have no mental defense against the first drink.
2. Human resources cannot provide such a defense.
3. The real alcoholic is hopeless apart from Divine help.

## WHAT THE SOLUTION IS? STEP TWO

### In This Session

1. What is the Solution
2. What is a Spiritual Awakening
3. How Do I Take Step Two?

### Page 44:1

*In the preceding chapters you have learned something of alcoholism. We hope you have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic. If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit \_\_\_\_\_, or if when drinking, you have little \_\_\_\_\_ over the amount you take, you are probably \_\_\_\_\_. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an \_\_\_\_\_ which **only a spiritual experience** will conquer.*

The solution to your problem, as presented in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, is a spiritual awakening and a life led on spiritual principles.

*We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired.*

*Page 28, paragraph 4*

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous is written by people with a common problem who found a common solution and were moved to share their experiences with the world.

*Each individual, in the personal stories, describes in his own language and from his own point of view the way he established his **relationship with God**.*

*Page 29, paragraph 3*

What Is a Spiritual Experience?

*The terms “spiritual experience” and “spiritual awakening” are used many times in this book, which, upon careful reading shows that the personality **change** sufficient (adequate) to bring about \_\_\_\_\_ from alcoholism has manifested (made visible) itself among us in many different forms.*

*Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality **changes**, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular **upheavals**. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous (wrong).*

*In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary **changes** are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to \_\_\_\_\_ they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming “God-consciousness” followed at once by a vast **change** in feeling and outlook.*

*Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such **transformations** (changes), though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the “educational variety” because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound (deep) **alteration** (change) in his reaction to life; that such a \_\_\_\_\_ could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of \_\_\_\_\_ . With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped and unsuspected \_\_\_\_\_ which they presently identify with their own conception (idea) of a Power greater than themselves.*

*Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence (core) of a spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it “God-consciousness”(awareness).*

*Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can \_\_\_\_\_, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts (ideas). He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance (narrow-mindedness) or belligerent (argumentative) denial (rejection).*

*We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. **Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of \_\_\_\_\_ . But these are indispensable (very important).***

How do I take Step Two?

The Big Book offers a changed life as a result of a spiritual awakening as the solution to the problem of alcoholism.

*If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming \_\_\_\_\_, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through \_\_\_\_\_ aid, we had but two alternatives (choices): One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable (unbearable) situation as best we could; and the other, to accept \_\_\_\_\_ help. This we did because we honestly wanted to, and were willing to make the effort.*

*Page 25, paragraph 4*

Step Two is a mental conclusion that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity in the area of the first drink.

*We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I now believe, or am I even **willing to believe**, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically (vigorously) assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone (foundation) a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built*

*Page 47, paragraph 3.*

The mental conclusion of Step Two requires only a willingness to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could be the solution, nothing more is required.

The newcomer needn't believe in anything but he must **be willing** to believe that there is a Power greater than himself which can enter into his life and expel the obsession from his mind (restore him to sanity in the area of the first drink)

*My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, "**Why don't you choose your own conception of God?**"*

*Page 12, paragraph 3*

*It was only a matter of being **willing to believe** in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.*

*Page 12, paragraph 5*

The basis of success or failure of the program is our willingness to believe that there is a Power greater than ourselves which will solve our problems. The willingness to believe comes from knowing the depth and weight of our problem as defined in the *Doctor's Opinion*.

#### STEP TWO – THE LEAST WE SHOULD KNOW

1. Step Two is a second mental conclusion of the solution.
2. A Spiritual Awakenings or a Spiritual Experience is necessary to recovery.
3. The minimum requirement to take Step Two is a willingness to believe that there is a Power greater than myself.



## **STEP THREE**

### ***THE DECISION***

#### **In This Chapter**

1. What is the decision?
2. Why the decision must be made.
3. How do I make the decision?

Page 60, paragraph 2

*Our description of the alcoholic (Doctor's Opinion), the chapter to the agnostic (Chapter Four), and our personal adventures before and after (Chapter's One, Two and Three) make clear (obvious, plain) three pertinent (relevant, important) ideas:*  
*(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.*

**STEP ONE – We were powerless over alcohol and our lives had become unmanageable.**

- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.*  
*(c) That God could and would if He were sought.*

**STEP TWO – Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

The Doctor's Opinion and the first 59 ½ pages of the *Big Book* contain the information required to make the two mental conclusions of Step's One and Two.

The original manuscript, prior to editing of the first edition of the *Big Book* stated this very clearly...

*If you are not convinced of these vital issues, you ought to re-read the book to this point or else throw it away!*

***A PROBLEM WELL DEFINED IS A PROBLEM HALF SOLVED.***

***and***

***MY SOLUTION TO ANY PROBLEM WILL ONLY BE AS GOOD AS MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEM.***

Page 60, paragraph 3

Being convinced (*of these three pertinent ideas*), **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?

*First, what do we mean by turning our will and lives over to the care of God?*

*Read Page 60, paragraph 4 through page 62, paragraph 1.*

### **WHY DO I NEED TO STOP RUNNING MY OWN LIFE?**

*Any life run on self-will can hardly be a success.*

*People never do what I want them to when I am trying to run the show.*

*I decide to try harder to get them in line with my desires.*

*Am I not really trying to get my own way, a victim of the delusion (fantasy) that I can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if I manage my life and the people around me better.*

*These self-centered actions cause others to retaliate (get even).*

*In turn, I think primarily (mainly) about myself, causing resentments and self-pity.*

*Page 62, paragraph 2*

**SELFISHNESS – SELF-CENTERDNESS!** That we think is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation (nothing done on our part to cause it), but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on \_\_\_\_\_ which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our \_\_\_\_\_ making. They arise out of \_\_\_\_\_, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this \_\_\_\_\_. We must, or it **KILLS US!**

**Selfishness leads to resentments and fear –  
These self-centered problems lead to emotional stress –  
These emotions (stemming from thoughts of self) lead to the obsession –  
The obsession to drink appears as solution to problems –  
And, invariably, we drink!**

*Page 62, paragraph 3*

**We must or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of \_\_\_\_\_ without His aid. Many of us had \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ much by wishing or trying on our \_\_\_\_\_ power. WE HAD TO HAVE GOD'S HELP.**

*What is meant by turning our will and lives over to God?*

*We ask God to change the way we have been thinking (our wills) and, in turn, as our thinking changes, our actions (our lives) will follow.*

*What do we do to turn our will and life over to God?*

*Page 62, paragraph 4*

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

*When we say the Step Three prayer on Page 63 and do it sincerely (from the bottom of your heart), we have made the decision of Step Three.*

### **STEP THREE – The Least We Should Know**

- 1. Step Three is a decision to change, not a change in itself.**
- 2. Selfishness and self-centeredness is the root of all my problems.**
- 3. God must change my thinking, I can't do it myself.**

## STEP FOUR THE WRITTEN INVENTORY

### In This Chapter

When do I take the inventory?  
What it means to take a moral inventory?  
Why do I have to take an inventory?  
Why does the inventory have to be written?  
How do I take the inventory?

### WHEN DO I TAKE THE INVENTORY?

Page 63, last paragraph

***NEXT** we launched out on a course of vigorous (forceful) action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision (Step Three) was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless **AT ONCE** followed by a strenuous (exhausting) effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves, which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.*

We are to begin the actions of a personal inventory as soon as we have sincerely asked God to take control of our will and our lives. Time after time we see many well-intentioned alcoholics and addicts be side-tracked by their own or others thinking that tomorrow would be a better time to start the process.

Action is necessary to achieve the results desired. Up until now, we have only made the two mental conclusions, What My Problem Is and What May Be the Solution to My Problem, followed by a decision to seek the Solution, but no real change has taken place. Over and over we watch individuals take the first three steps of this program, only to be drunk or using a short time later.

***THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO PERMANENT RECOVERY for the real alcoholic IN THE FIRST THREE STEPS OF the program of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS!***

*“Wait” is sometimes the door to “never”.*

*Willingness without action = Fantasy*

## **WHAT IS A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY?**

*Page 64, paragraph 2*

Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade.

<u>BUSINESS INVENTORY</u>		<u>PERSONAL INVENTORY</u>
<i>Fact-finding</i>	=	<i>Searching</i>
<i>Fact-facing</i>	=	<i>Fearless</i>
<i>Truth</i>	=	<i>Moral</i>
<i>Stock-in-trade</i>	=	<i>Ourselves</i>

*The inventory process is a sincere effort by ourselves to discover the truth of who and what we really are and how these parts of ourselves were blocking us off from the necessary personal relationship with God.*

## **WHY DO I TAKE AN INVENTORY?**

*Page 64, paragraph 2*

One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values.

We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws (*faults*) in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations (*appearances*).

*Just as the successful businessman must uncover, discover and discard the worthless pieces in his business inventory, we must undergo an identification process based on truth rather than emotions of the parts of self that are obstructions to a Spiritual Awakening and a life led on spiritual principles that an alcoholic and addict need to live and thrive.*

## **RESENTMENTS**

*The first common manifestation of self that we inventory is resentment.*

*Resentment – Feeling offense, bitterness, anger about something we feel has been done to us in the past.*

*Page 64, paragraph 4*

Resentment is the “number one” offender. It \_\_\_\_\_ more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have not only been mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady (*illness*) is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.

### **HOW DO I INVENTORY MY “SELF” AND WHY MUST IT BE WRITTEN?**

*Page 64, paragraph 4*

In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem (*self-worth, pride*), our pocketbooks (*money*), our ambitions (*desires for the future*), our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were “burned up”.

### **INVENTORY INSTRUCTIONS**

1. *Paper and pencil are needed.*
2. *List resentments going down the paper*
3. *List why we have the resentment in second column going down*
4. *List what part or parts of self are affected by the resentment*

***A written inventory reduces mental and emotional confusion, not causes it. Patterns of persons and personal individual shortcomings will develop as we look at the truth about ourselves on paper. We can see only one resentment at a time in our minds. A Big Book inventory MUST be written!***

***NOTE: The inventory form is designed to make the writing process easier to understand and to do. It is not designed to alter the instructions of pages 64-67 and is not required to complete the process. However, the inventory must be written as directed and as definite as the example on page 65.***

*Page 65, last paragraph*

We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty.

Read Page 65, last paragraph through page 66, paragraph 4.

Definitions –

remorse –guilt, regret  
futility – uselessness  
precise – exact  
squander – waste  
grave – serious  
harboring – protecting  
brainstorm – sudden rage, outburst  
dubious - doubtful

NEXT INSTRUCTION

Page 66, paragraph 4

*We turned back to the list, for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We saw that we could not wish them away any more than alcohol.*

The inventory must be written to see the way we were being dominated by our resentments toward the past.

A wrong on the other person's part need not have actually happened for the resentment to be real and deadly.

Resentments require God's Power to escape.

Page 66, paragraph 5

*This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick (Column One, I'm resentful at:). Though we did not like their symptoms (Column Two, The Cause) and the way these disturbed us (Column Three, Affects my:), they, like ourselves were sick too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."*

*We asked God...* is a prayer to help us to display to the offender forgiveness by our actions toward them in this Spirit.

Forgive – To cease to blame or feel resentment about.

Forgiveness is impossible in my own power, I must ask God for the willingness to forgive.

All persons, to some extent, are spiritually sick, including myself.

If I remain unwilling to ask God to help me to forgive, I remain blocked off from God and His Power in my life.

Forgiveness does not mean excusing the consequences of the wrong action that the other person faces.

Page 67, paragraph 2

*We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.*

A willingness to forgive sometimes may mean that I have to approach God again and again with what I thought that I had given up.

"I really can only claim to love God as much as the person that I love the least."  
Dorothy Day

## FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Page 67, paragraph 3

*Referring to our list again, putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely (determinedly) looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking (self-centered) and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults, we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.*



The last column of the inventory sheet is the root cause of the resentment. All resentment grows out of selfish, dishonest, self-centered and frightened thinking.

This is where we were to blame. These selfish thoughts are the sole cause of our resentment. We may have had absolutely no part in causing the other person to harm us but the resentment always stems from our selfishness.

Resentments are NOT caused by something someone did to us, they are caused by our selfish thinking. This is an inventory of our shortcomings, not the people listed in the first column.

The Fourth Column is not something we did. We are now able to see that selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened people is who and what we ARE!

### **The Least We Should Know About the Resentment's**

- 1. Resentments are the leading cause of relapse in alcoholics and addicts.**
- 2. Resentments separate us from God.**
- 3. Resentments are lies.**
- 4. Resentments must be removed by God's Power, we cannot remove them in ourselves.**
- 5. Our own selfishness is the root cause of resentments.**

***NB: Worksheets for here are:***

***Resentment Inventory Prompt Sheet &***

***Resentment Inventory Sheet***

***See the attached pdf***

## **FEARS**

Page 68, paragraph 2

*We reviewed our fears thoroughly (in detail). We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance (relying on our own intellect and power for solutions to problems) was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence (secure in our own abilities), but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky (self-satisfied), it was worse.*

The Fear Inventory Worksheet is designed to follow this set of instructions given to us in this paragraph. Again, it is not designed to alter the directions or persuade you to deviate from the book in any way. The worksheet is merely an effort to simplify the instructions by following the outline that we learned to do in the resentments.

### FEAR INVENTORY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Again, we write down the fear inventory on paper to see all the fears at one time rather than one at a time in our minds.
2. We list our fears going down the page in the first column.
3. In the next column, we ask ourselves if we had these fears because self-reliance has failed us.

NOTE: We have already inventoried many of our fears when we saw how self-centered fears had caused many of our resentments in our lives.

Page 68, paragraph 3

*Perhaps (maybe) there is a better way – we think so. For we are now on a different basis (foundation); the basis of relying and trusting upon God. We trust infinite (unlimited) God rather than our finite (limited) selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent (amount) that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity (misfortunes) with serenity (peacefulness).*

The “different basis” that we are now on is the foundation of relying on and trusting in God rather than ourselves. We made the decision to do this in Step Three and writing and following the directions of a Big Book Step Four Fears inventory is the action we must take for our decision to become a reality in our lives.

God has all power and we have admitted that we are powerless. His Power is necessary to overcome self-centered fears and the disastrous decisions and actions that we are certain to take based on these fears.

Page 68, paragraph 4

*We never apologize to anyone for depending on our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically (the opposite of what we would think), it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages (result of years of experience) is that faith means courage (guts). They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead, we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear **and direct our attention to what He would have us be**. At once, we commence (begin) to outgrow fear.*

Reliance upon God and His Power is the foundation for our new way of life. This dependence is likely the opposite of what our out-of-control instincts and years of emotional bad habits have told us.

Instead of dreading a future occurrence or barging into action based on these fears, the program of Alcoholics Anonymous tells us to pray.

#### FINAL INSTRUCTION

We ask God in prayer to remove our fear and direct us to what He would have us be (trusting in and relying upon God).

All fear, in its most basic form, boils down to either

(1) Fear of losing something we have

OR

(2) Fear of not getting something that we want.

#### **The Least We Should Know About Fears –**

- 1. Self-centered fear blocks us from God and can control our lives.**
- 2. We are powerless to remove our own fears, God must.**
- 3. Prayer is the tool needed when we experience fear.**
- 4. We outgrow fear when we take God-directed action.**
- 5. Self-reliance is the root cause of our self-centered fears.**

**NB: Worksheets for here are:**

**Fear Inventory prompt sheet**

**Fear Inventory sheet**

**See attached PDF**

## INVENTORY OF OUR PAST SEX CONDUCT

Read Page 68, paragraph 5 through page 69, paragraph 1

*Now about sex. Many of us need an overhauling (major repairs) there.*

We are beginning to see how selfishness and self-centeredness have been controlling our lives. We now look at our sex conduct and the damage that our own actions have caused ourselves and others in the area of this powerful instinct.

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*But above all, we tried to be sensible (reasonable) on this question. It's so easy to get way off track.*

Like our Resentment Inventory and our Fear Inventory, we are seeking the truth about ourselves and must be as thorough and honest as we can without deviating from the directions.

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*Here we find human opinions (attitudes) running to extremes (far-reaching boundaries) – absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust (desire) of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation (reproduction). Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail (complain about) the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind. They see its significance (importance) everywhere. One school would allow man no flavor for his fare and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet.*

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The range of attitudes and beliefs about sex conduct are far reaching in today's society, from ultra-conservative to extremely liberal, from traditional and fundamentalist to radical and tolerant. Both can be exceedingly judgmental toward each other resulting in hard-feelings and arguments.

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*We want to stay out of this controversy (debate). We do not want to be the arbiter (judge) of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?*

Sex has caused problems in everyone's sex life. No one has had perfect conduct in the area of this powerful instinct. The inventory is not designed to judge anyone's sex life or to demand that you follow values and rules imposed by others. The purpose of the Sex Conduct Inventory is to honestly examine how "self" has controlled our conduct and has been harming others. We must see the truth of our past to allow for change in our future.

We reviewed our own conduct (*behavior*) over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably (*without cause*) arouse (*provoke*) jealousy (*resentment*), suspicion (*distrust*) or bitterness (*hostility*)? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

### *DIRECTIONS FOR INVENTORY OF OUR SEX CODUCT*

*We may use the provided form designed to make the process easier to understand and to examine ourselves or we can follow the directions as laid out in this paragraph of the Big Book. Again, this worksheet is not designed to change the process but rather to simplify it. However, in either method, the inventory MUST be written.*

### *INSTRUCTIONS*

1. *List the persons we have harmed with our sex conduct in the first column.*

*NOTE: The book does not say, "Whom had we slept with or had sex relations with?" We have likely harmed many others with our actions while selfishly involved with our sex partners.*

2. *In Column Two, we list what we did (where were we at fault? and what we should have done instead in each instance.*
3. *We answer the question "Did I arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness?" in Column Three.*
4. *Next, in the fourth column, we look at the source of our sex conduct, our own selfishness, our dishonesty and our inconsiderate thinking.*

In this way we tried to shape (*form*) a sane (*rational*) and sound (*sensible*) ideal (*model*) for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test – was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed (*hated*).

*We use this part of the inventory to see how our own self-centered desires for control, security and affection have caused harm to other persons in our lives.*

*We pray to God for the right thoughts and actions that He would have us live for in our future sex conduct.*

*Page 69, paragraph 4*

Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends (*repair the damage*) where we have done harm, provided we do not bring still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.

*Willingness to change is the key to our new life. I am powerless to change without God's help. Just like resentments and fears, I must ask God to help me to be willing to change. This includes a willingness to make the effort to repair the damage that my selfish sex conduct of the past has caused, provided I do not cause even more hurt in doing so. I must pray for knowledge to take the right actions.*

*Page 69, paragraph 5*

God alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel (*direction from*) with persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical (obsessed with rules and regulations) about sex as others are loose (*unrestrained*). We avoid hysterical (*fanatical*) thinking or advice.

*We are coming to realize that God designed and created sex. Therefore, we allow Him to judge our sex situation as long as we are willing to grow toward it.*

*We can talk it over with others as God directs me to do so, but as we come to depend and rely on God's guidance, we are able to distinguish good advice from bad.*

*Page 70, paragraph 2*

Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so. But this is only a half-truth. It depends on us and our motives. If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing (*guessing*). These are facts out of our experience.

*As we grow toward our ideal of a God-directed sex life we may make mistakes based on our old selfish nature. If we hurt someone and are sorry, we ask God to forgive us, to give us the courage to make amends, and to direct us to a better*

*way of living. If we continue to hurt others we will remain separated from God and the obsession will lead us back to using alcohol and drugs. These are the experiences of every alcoholic who has seen the truth about himself in this inventory process.*

*Page 70, paragraph 3*

To sum up about sex: We earnestly (*sincerely*) pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable (*uncertain*) situation, for sanity, and for strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious (*dominating*) urge, when to yield (*give-in*) would mean heartache (*misery*).

*We come to rely on God to guide our thinking and direct our actions in the area of our sex conduct the same way as in the other areas of our lives. If sex is a major problem area, we are to unselfishly work even harder with others who need our help. We cannot think of others wellbeing and work for them and be selfish and self-centered at the same time.*

### ***The Least We Should Know About Our Sex Conduct Inventory***

- 1. All people have sex problems.***
- 2. The sex instinct is God-given.***
- 3. Selfish sexual conduct hurts myself and others.***
- 4. I am as powerless in the area of my sex conduct as in resentments and fears.***
- 5. I must depend upon God for solution to my sex problems.***

### **FOURTH STEP CONCLUSIONS**

*Spiritually sick people are angry, frightened or hurting other people.*

*Selfishness in its many forms are the cause of separation from God.*

*My nature is to be selfish and self-centered.*

*Resentments, fear and guilt are caused by my selfishness.*

***NB: The Worksheet for here is:***

***The Sex Conduct Inventory Sheet pdf attached***

## STEP FIVE

### DISCUSSING OURSELVES WITH ANOTHER

#### In This Session

- What Is a Fifth Step?
- Why Do I Need To Do It?
- When Do I Take Step Five?
- How Do I Select a Fifth Step Partner?
- How Do I Work the Fifth Step?
- What Can I Expect From Doing a Fifth Step?

Page 72, paragraph 1

*Having made our personal inventory (Step Four), what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude (state of mind), a new relationship (connection) with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles (hindrances) in our path. We have admitted certain defects: we have ascertained (discovered) in a rough way what the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects (flaws). This brings us to the Fifth Step in the program of recovery mentioned in the preceding chapter.*

Steps Four, Five, Six and Seven are a willing effort on our part to face and to be rid of the things in ourselves which block us from a vital relationship with God. We have thoroughly and honestly admitted our shortcomings and defects of character to ourselves and to God when we took the action of Step Four. We have discovered that resentments, fears and harmful actions are the result of our own selfishness, dishonesty, self-centeredness, etc. We discovered that these attitudes are a very part of us and must be removed if we were to live. The next required step in the process is to admit these wrongs and where they come from in our self to another person.



*This is perhaps difficult – especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary (alone) self-appraisal (examination of self) insufficient (not enough). Many of us thought it necessary to go much further. We will be more reconciled (prepared to accept) to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably (always) they got drunk. Having persevered (continued) with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought that they had lost their egoism (self-centeredness) and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story.*

All of the steps are designed to deflate our egos, none more than Step Five. We have agreed with God and admitted to ourselves our own imperfections and often feel that is enough. The program of Alcoholics Anonymous and the experience of the people who wrote it, warn us that more is needed. If we attempt to withhold discussion of our deficiencies by rationalizing and justifying them to ourselves, we will remain caught up in our own emotions and will probably drink or drug as the result. Our own thinking is not to be trusted. It is better to ask God for the willingness to share the truth of our lives with another person than to live and die in our own alcoholism and addictions. We are relying on God to expel the obsession to use and easier methods, requiring less humility and honesty, simply don't work.

Read page 73, paragraph 2 – page 75, paragraph 1

Definitions:

Reputation – status  
Inconsistency – lack of reliability  
Revolted – disgusted with  
Sympathetic – concerned  
Intimate – private, personal  
Confidential – secret  
Situated – positioned  
Postponed – delayed  
Confidence – secret

When the Big Book was written in 1939, there were few meetings and the book was being shipped to locations where no sponsors or experienced alcoholics with which to share our 4<sup>th</sup> Step. The book had to suggest a number of persons with which to do our 5<sup>th</sup> Step, such as religious authorities, doctors, psychologists, various members of our own family or friends. In 1953, Bill Wilson wrote that our Fifth Step partner might be “someone who is experienced, not necessarily our sponsor”.

The rule is that we must be hard on ourselves but always considerate of others.

The “right person” should be readily available and we should prayerfully remain in complete readiness to talk with the right person when he appears. Be sure that your delay is not based on fear or rationalization.

The guidelines we are looking for are:

- (1) That he be able to keep whatever we share to himself (Trustworthy)
- (2) That he fully understand what we are attempting (Understanding)
- (3) That he will not try to change our plan (Accepting)

Page 75, paragraph 2

*When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory (Step Four) and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence (trust).*

Sharing our shortcomings and defects of character requires an “act of the will” to take the action required. If our choice for a Fifth Step partner is someone who has worked the steps and experienced a spiritual awakening, little or no explanation will be necessary.

Page 75, paragraph 3

*We pocket (put away) our pride (egoism) and go to it, illuminating (revealing) every twist (corner) of character, every dark cranny (crevice) of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe (God).*

These are the promises of following the directions and taking the action required to complete Steps Four and Five. Freedom comes from knowing the truth about ourselves and when this process is completed, we are promised the beginnings of the desired spiritual experience. We begin to become aware of the reality and the presence of God and His power in our lives and the feeling that the obsession has been removed will often occur.

Read Page 75, paragraph 3

Proposals – suggestions

Omitted – left out

Skimped – taken short-cuts

We now come to the second time element in specific, precise and clear-cut directions of recovery. We are to take one hour and review what we have accomplished with God's help and thank Him that we now know Him better. We have now completed Step Five.

### **The Least We Should Know**

Examination of our character defects with another person is required to see the truth of our own shortcomings.

Knowing the truth about ourselves sets us free.

Fellowship of groups and belonging can be exciting but cannot replace the one-on-one relationship required to change.

## STEPS SIX AND SEVEN

### ***The Change***

The self-examination of Step Four and the confession of Step Five do not remove the shortcomings and defects of character that we have identified. We may feel relief from the tension of our past, but now we must collect the things blocking us off from the vital relationship with God and make a new decision and a new surrender of ourselves, much like we did in Step Three.

### **STEP SIX**

Page 76, paragraph 1

*If we can answer to our satisfaction (self-approval), we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized (stressed) willingness as being indispensable (essential). Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable (intolerable)? Can He now take them all – every one? If we still cling (hold tightly) to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.*

If we can answer “yes” to the questions on page 75, we are ready for Step Six. Step Six is a willingness to be changed in to what God would have us be. We have identified the things of self that are keeping us out of relationship with God. We have identified selfishness, self-centeredness, dishonesty, fear, self-reliance and our inconsiderate treatment of other people as the root cause of our problems and realize that we must be rid of them to survive. We have learned that we cannot wish or will them away in our unaided power.. We must be willing to ask God to take all of them. If we are not willing to let go entirely, we do have to be willing to ask God to help us. These defects have become a very part of our nature. God must supply the necessary power

### **STEP SEVEN**

Page 76, paragraph 2

*When ready, we say something like this: “My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now 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 to do your bidding (will). Amen.” We have now completed Step Seven.*

Step Seven is a simple prayer asking God to remove from us those shortcomings and defects of character that we have identified as the root cause of our problems. In Step Three we offered as much of ourselves as we knew to as much of God as we understood. Now, after identifying the things which had been blocking us, we pray to a God that we have come to know better to change the parts of self that hinder us from doing his will. Note that this prayer ends with “Amen” where Step Three didn’t.

## STEPS EIGHT

### Willing To Act

We have experienced willingness as being the key to our spiritual growth. We had to have willingness to face the truth of our problem, to believe, to write a fourth step, a willingness to share our shortcomings with another and finally a willingness to let go of our defects and blockers. Now that we have experienced God's Power affecting a change in our thinking, we must have more willingness to repair the damage done in the past by our former lifestyle.

Page 76, paragraph 3

*Now we need more action, without which we find that "Faith without works is dead." Let's look at **Steps Eight and Nine**. We have a list of persons we harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic (far-reaching) self-appraisal (assessment of our self). Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris (wreckage) which has accumulated (piled up) out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning that **we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol**.*

Willingness followed by action is the key to recovery in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. The list of persons we harmed is our written Fourth Step that contains all the people, places and institutions that we have harmed with our wrong judgments, beliefs and actions. Step Nine requires a willingness to face these people on our Fourth Step and set right our wrongs. This willingness is what we pray for in Step Eight. Step Eight is also a time to look at our inventory list and be sure that no one would be harmed if they read it. The directions do not tell us to make a new list, but experience has shown us that some Fourth Step papers should be destroyed after we have transferred the list to a sheet that we would be able to carry without hurting others if it was read by someone else. It has become popular to burn the Fourth Step papers when Step Five is completed. **WARNING: Do not** dispose of your fourth step paperwork until you have transferred the necessary information to your amends list.

## **Step 9**

### ***Setting Right the Wrongs***

The Big Book masterfully covers the required amends process necessary to set past relationships with others straight. We will never come fully clean with our past until we accept responsibility for it. The amends process is an ongoing effort to straighten up our past lives by accepting responsibility for our wrongs and taking the necessary action to do so. If we are unwilling to go through with the amends process, we are working some program other than the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Read Page 76, last paragraph – Page 83, paragraph 3

diffident – hesitant  
emphasize – stress  
prejudice – closed minded  
injustice – unfairness  
maximum – most possible  
fanatic – extremist  
beneficial – helpful  
convictions – beliefs  
gratified – grateful  
satisfactory – suitable  
consequences – result of an action  
reparations – repayments  
implicate – involve  
domestic – household  
fundamentally – basically  
complicate – make difficult  
equivalent – equal  
utmost- most possible  
frankness – honesty  
tornado – whirlwind  
reconstruction – rebuilding  
tolerance – open-mindedness

As we read these pages, we can see how the Big Book covers in a general way each amend that we will encounter in making our amends.

Some comments are made that apply to all amends and the process itself;

*Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.*  
p. 77, par. 1

*But our man is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong.*  
p.77, par. 1

*Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue.*  
p.77,par.3

*We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them.*  
p.78,par.3

*Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences might be.*  
p.79,par.2

*Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit.*  
p.79,par 3

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The program of Alcoholics Anonymous contains suggestions for making every type of amends that we encounter. Although no two amends will be exactly alike due to differences in people and locations, we can always find comparable situations addressed on pages 77-83.

Such topics as amends to:

*“the man we hated”* (page 77, paragraph 3)

*“creditors”* (page 78, paragraph 3)

*“criminal offenses”* (page 78, paragraph 4)

*“amends where other people are involved”* (page 79, paragraph 3)

*“we have domestic(marital) troubles.”* (page 80, paragraph 5)

*“there is plenty we should do at home”* (page 82, paragraph 3)

*“some wrongs we can never fully right”* (page 83, paragraph 3)

*“Some people cannot be seen”* (page 83, paragraph 3)

## NINTH STEP PROMISES

Page 83, Paragraph 4

*If we are painstaking (conscientious) about this phase (period) of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through.*

*We are going to know (experience) a new freedom and a new happiness.*

*We will not regret (felt sorry for ourselves) the past nor wish to shut the door on it.*

*We will comprehend (understand) the word serenity (calmness) and we will know peace.*

*No matter how far down the scale (measuring stick) we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit (help) others.*

*That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.*

*We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows (others).*

*Self-seeking will slip away.*

*Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.*

*Fear of people and of economic insecurity (anxiety) will leave us.*

*We will intuitively (instinctively) know how to handle situations which used to baffle (confuse) us.*

*We will suddenly realize (become aware of) that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.*

The Promises of the Ninth Step come to us during the amends process. Although read at many meetings and alcoholic and addict treatment facilities, it should be made clear that until the alcoholic has made the mental conclusions of Steps One and Two, followed by the decision to turn our thinking and our actions as a result of our thinking over to God in Step Three. We fulfill this decision by following the directions of Steps Four, Five, Six and Seven to examine ourselves, admit our wrongs, and willingly allow God to remove the things in our mind that are responsible for keeping us from being the person that He intended us to be. We follow this change of heart and mind with the willingness to be in relationship with others and to set right the wrongs of our past. The promises of Step Nine come only as the result of working all the steps in order following the specific, precise and clear-cut directions.



## STEPS TEN, ELEVEN AND TWELVE

### STEP TEN - CONTINUE

We have done much and been given much in the first nine steps. Now we enter in to a lifetime process of continuing to watch for selfishness and self-centeredness and other blockers from God. Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve serve as an ongoing tool for spiritual growth as they are practiced.

Page 84, paragraph 3

*This thought brings us to Step Ten, which suggests we **continue** to take personal inventory and **continue** to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously (with much effort) commenced (began) this way of living as we cleaned up the past. We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness (usefulness). This is not an overnight matter. It should **continue** for a lifetime. **Continue** to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we harmed anyone. Then we resolutely (purposefully) turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code (policy).*

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS:

***This thought...the thought is that God keeps his promises regardless of how we feel at this time, if we have been thorough and as honest as we are capable of in working the process, the truth is that God is now doing for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. Our part is to be willing to follow the working directions.***

*Continue, continue, Continue...We cannot continue to do something that we have never started doing. Step Ten cannot be put into practice without the experience of Steps Four through Nine.*

*...as we cleaned up the past. We are to begin working Steps 10-12 as we begin our amends process.*

*...the world of the Spirit. Up until now, we have been living in the world of our own selfish spirit. The world of God's Spirit is where an alcoholic or addict must live to survive. As we have seen, the book in two places, has called this the fourth dimension of existence. The fourth dimension cannot be described or understood. It must be experienced.*

*...grow in understanding and effectiveness. We must be growing spiritually or we lose what we have obtained. As I continue working Steps 10,11 and 12, I will grow even more in my understanding of God and his Power and this growth will increase my usefulness to Him and to the people around me.*

*...continue for our lifetime. Spiritual growth must continue everyday by the practicing of these principles..."One day at a time".*

*Continue to watch...* We continue to be alert for things that block us in our new relationship with God. We learned to do this when working **Step Four**.

*When these crop up...* We will never be 100% spiritually fit in this lifetime. We will sometimes slip back into selfishness and self-centeredness. When something bad happens, selfishness, dishonesty, resentment or fear, we are to view these as symptoms of spiritual sickness and go to the doctor just as we would for a physical problem.

*..., we ask God at once to remove them.* We are learning to rely on God to do for us what we can't do for ourselves and just as we did in **Steps Six and Seven**, we are willing to be changed and we ask God to change us. We do this as soon as we identify the problem in us. If we delay, we remain in our selfishness and remain to

*We discuss them with someone immediately...***Step Five.**

*...and make amends quickly...* **Steps Eight and Nine.**

**Step Ten is to be continually practiced as the day goes on. It is often referred to as our "walking around step". Step 10 is not something we do once a day at night. Selfishness will build up to a point of allowing the obsession to use to return and we will have to drink or use before night ever arrives.**

*Love and tolerance of others is our code.* When the blockers from a relationship with God are removed, I will find as I practice these steps, that I am more patient and loving towards people. This is a sure sign that God is working in me and through me to care about others and how I may be of service to them. Hate and intolerance are sure indicators of selfishness and self-centeredness.

## The Promises of Step Ten

The Big Book promises of Step Ten are given to anyone who has had a spiritual awakening as the result of taking the action required to recover. They are not given to those who are working another program or attempting another method of recovery.

1. *And we have ceased (stopped) fighting anything or anyone – even alcohol.* We have admitted that we are powerless over alcohol and drugs, we have been defeated every time we fought our addictions. So we stop battling and allow God to take control.

For by this time sanity will have returned.

In Step 2, we were willing to believe that God could restore us to sanity in the area of the first drink. The book promises us that by working the steps, we now can see the truth in the area of the first drink. We return to sanity only when the obsession to drink has been removed. This is the definition of a recovered alcoholic.

2. *We will seldom be interested in liquor.* Our thoughts are no longer being controlled by the insane obsession that we can safely drink alcohol or use drugs.

3. *If tempted, we recoil (react) as from a hot flame.* If the thought does cross our minds that we can safely use, the book promises that we will react as we would react to fire threatening our well being.

4. *We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically.* This sane and normal reaction happens without any work on our part other than a willingness to attempt to stay in right relationship with God.

5. *We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it.*

God has provided us with a new attitude toward alcohol and when the obsession is removed, it is 100% God and 0% us. The miracle for each recovered person is not that we haven't used today, not even that we haven't wanted to use, but that we haven't had to use.

Any real alcoholic will understand the experience of having to use drugs or alcohol to change the way we feel.

6. *We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation.*

We have admitted that we are powerless and know from past experience that we can do nothing in our human strength to win the fight, including avoidance of places and persons that might cause us problems.

7. *We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality – safe and protected.*

We feel safe and protected by God in the area of using as the result of working the Steps as instructed.

8. *We have not even sworn off. Instead the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us.*

Swearing off is a human resource that we know won't work. God must remove the obsession to drink – no human power can do it. The Big Book promises that as the result of working the steps, God has reached into my mind and removed the obsession to drink and I can now see the Truth in the area of the first drink.

9. *We are neither cocky nor are we afraid.*

The recovered alcoholic is not overconfident in himself nor does he constantly remain fearful of returning to alcohol and drugs for a solution to his problems.

*That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.*

The Big Book is a book of experience, not of theory or ideas. The first recovered alcoholics wrote the book to share with new people how they found a way out of the hopeless pit of alcoholism. The promises of Step 10 are based on the results that they got from working the Steps and promise us that we will continue to receive them as long as we are in right relationship with God.

Page 85, paragraph 2

*It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels (successes). We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle (clever) foe (enemy). We are not cured (healed) of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve (relief) contingent (conditional) upon the maintenance (upkeep) of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities (actions). "How can I best serve Thee – Thy will (not mine) be done." These thoughts must go with us constantly (all the time). We can exercise (implement) our will power along this line all we wish.*

*It is the proper use of the will.*

The success that we have experienced in our recovery is only by God's Grace and is not of our own making. The Big Book warns us that (1) it is easy to believe the lie that we have done something to achieve or to earn sobriety and that this type of thinking will result in disaster, and (2) recovered does not mean cured. We must continue to grow in our relationship with God and continue to maintain that relationship to be guided by Him. This is the difference between recovered and healed. We will always be alcoholics, we can be recovered alcoholics, but we must never assume that we can safely drink or use again under any circumstances. Our willpower under the guidance of a sane, God-directed mind can now be used correctly. Man's thinking is his own when it is under God's guidance.

Page 85, paragraph 3

*Much has been said about receiving strength, inspiration and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent (degree) we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop (grow) this vital (necessary to life) sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action.*

As we practice the spiritual principles as directed in the program contained in the text of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous we will begin to become aware of God's presence in our thinking and our actions. In the past we have always had to rely on our senses of touch, taste, hearing, sight and smell in our decision making process. Now we begin to develop a sixth sense, that of faith that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves, regardless of how situations may appear to us at a given moment. To grow in this *relationship* more action is required.

## STEP ELEVEN – CONNECTION

*“There is a direct linkage among self-examination, prayer and meditation. Taken separately, these practices can bring about much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven the result is an unshakable foundation for life.”*

*Bill Wilson, p.98, 12x12*

Bill Wilson was less than three years sober when he wrote the information required to work Step Eleven. Bill's background has shown us that he obviously was not a spiritual giant or great religious leader, but knew that to grow in relationship with God that regular prayer and meditation would be required.

Step Eleven is broken down to three distinct areas of each day. The instructions give us suggestions on prayer and meditation before going to sleep at night, when I wake up in the morning and as I go through the activities of each day.

Page 86, paragraph 2

***When we retire at night**, we constructively (usefully) review (examine) our day. Were we selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology (amend)? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream (flow) of life? But we must be careful not to drift (wander) into worry, remorse or morbid (gloomy) reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire (ask) what corrective measures should be taken.*

The purpose of the nighttime review is to go back over our day and see if we neglected to address any mistakes as we applied Step Ten to our daily living. It is not meant to replace the actions of Step Ten. We repeat the process of examining ourselves for shortcomings in our lives of that day. We answer the question of what selfishness had we neglected to take care of or recognize at the time that it occurred. The book warns us not to be remorseful when we see our part in these occurrences and selfish thoughts. We then rely on God for forgiveness and direction about what we should do about each matter.

Basically we rely on God to help us to **think** or meditate about what His plan was for us that day and we **pray** to Him for strength and direction to allow him to correct our walk with Him.

Page 86, paragraph 3

***On awakening*** let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider (think about) our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced (separated) from selfish, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ (use) our mental faculties (minds) with assurance (promise of success), for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought life will be placed on a much higher plane (level) when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives (purposes).

When we wake up in the morning, we are instructed to pray for unselfish motives in all our activities that we will plan for the next twenty-four hours. We can now think about the day ahead and make plans without the obstructions of self-centeredness that have controlled our thinking for so long. The Big Book assures us that we will be able to trust these thoughts and we will learn to trust that we are being God-directed.

Page 86, paragraph 4

*In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine (decide) which course (way) to take. Here we ask God for inspiration (guidance), an intuitive (instinctive) thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch (guess) or the occasional inspiration gradually (slowly over a period of time) 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 (guess) in all sorts of absurd (silly) actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely on it.*

Many times as we plan our day we will not be able to make a decision. We pray to God to guide us in the direction that we should choose. We are relying on God to guide our thoughts and our actions in every area of our life. Prayer is about contact, not necessarily answers. We may make mistakes due to our inexperience but we are promised as we continue to grow in our prayer life, we will come to depend upon God's guidance in all of our activities.

Page 87, paragraph 2

*We usually conclude (finish) the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why.*

We have asked God to guide our thinking when we woke up and we have asked Him for direction when we have faced indecision in planning our day. Now we conclude our morning meditations with more prayer for God to direct our thinking and our actions in all we do. The purpose of prayer is to seek God's will, not to change it. Too often, we seek God's approval for our own selfish plans rather than for His will.

Page 87, paragraph 3

*If circumstances (conditions) warrant (are called for), we ask our wives or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also. If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select a few set prayers which emphasize (stress) the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minister, or rabbi (Jewish religious teacher). Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.*

Nothing in the suggestions on prayer and meditation should interfere with traditions of our religious beliefs. We might want our wife family or others to join us in morning devotions. Reading helpful books or written prayers may also be helpful as we grow spiritually. If we don't know of any writings, ask for direction from someone who is experienced in prayer and meditation.

Page 87, paragraph 4

***As we go through the day** we pause when agitated (stirred up) or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done." We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange (set up) life to suit ourselves.*

We have asked God to direct our thinking and our actions for the day. Because of our morning prayers and meditations, we can now face the world relying on God rather than ourselves. We no longer have to make decisions based on emotions and feelings but grounded in God's Truth. When we feel irritated by something, we are told to stop and pray. This is where Step Ten is interwoven with Step Eleven. Bill Wilson writes (12X12, Page 90) *"It is a spiritual axiom (true fact) that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong **with us.**"*



Step Ten has instructed us to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fears that indicate we are slipping back into our old way of thinking and to ask God at once to remove whatever is blocking us off from Him. The book promises that, as a result of putting these methods into practice, we will be in less danger of stressful situations in our lives and that we will have more energy to accomplish things that we could not do before when we were trying to run our own lives.

Page 88, paragraph 2

*It works – it really does.*

In the Third Step narrative on page 62, the book told us that playing God in our own lives didn't work. Now that we have been willing to work the steps and have experienced the solution that the program of Alcoholics Anonymous offers, we have found a way to live that allows God to be God in our lives and we are experiencing this truth. Playing God in our own lives doesn't work, not playing God does!

Page 88, paragraph 3

*We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.*

Many of us have spent years trying to control our own lives. We have seen the hopelessness of living this way and have asked God to change us. We must be willing to ask God to take control of our lives each and every day and give us the strength to do His will in our lives. The very life of each and every real alcoholic and addict depends upon our willingness to obey spiritual principles.

*“If he deviates too far, the penalty is sure and swift;  
He sickens and dies”*

*12x12, page 130.*

Page 88, paragraph 4

*But this is not all. There is action and more action. “Faith without works is dead.” The next chapter is entirely devoted to Step Twelve.*

Praying and meditating each day do not necessarily make me feel better. The visible results of unselfish prayer are seen in how I treat others in my daily walk.

I now have a message of experience to carry and an unselfish purpose for living in doing so. Chapter Seven tells us how to carry this message and how to practice these principles in our lives.

## **STEP TWELVE – CARRY**

Having **had** a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps... is an event that has happened as the result of working the first eleven steps of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Somewhere in our willingness to follow the specific, precise and clear-cut directions of working these steps and a continued willingness to apply these spiritual principles in our lives, the book promises us that we will have had a personality change sufficient to recover from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps we are now qualified to carry this message to others who were suffering in the cycle of addiction as we were. In fact, the book tells us that we are not only qualified to carry this message, but are required to do so to grow in our own spiritual walk.

Page 89, paragraph 1

*Practical (realistic) experience shows that nothing will so much insure (guarantee) immunity (protection) from drinking as intensive (concentrated) work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence where others fail. Remember they are very ill.*

The founders and early members of Alcoholics Anonymous discovered from the very beginning that helping other alcoholics to find a way out of their addictive lifestyle was essential to their own recovery. Bill Wilson was able to stay sober by working with Dr. Bob, Bill and Dr. Bob immediately began work with AA Number Three in Towns Hospital. When prayer and meditation don't seem to be working, carrying the message helps the suffering alcoholic as well as the carrier.

Page 20, paragraph 1

*Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may meet their needs.*

The individual who has the three pieces of information necessary to recover (Problem, Solution, How To Find the Solution) has a challenging responsibility to pass the information on to those who are not yet found a way out. Alcoholism, we now have learned, is a life and death struggle and we now have a solution that works.

“How do I carry this message?” is a commonly asked question by alcoholics who have just had a spiritual awakening. Chapter Seven is written to provide us with a general guideline to working with others.