

"No!" he shouted, smashing his fist on the kitchen bar, eyes glaring. "I'm right, and you know I'm right! There's no way I'm wrong! I know what I'm doing...now be quiet and leave me alone!"

And so she did, and so did his kids, and he cried quietly, alone, as they left and his life fell apart...

...because he had to be right.

Had to be the one with all the "right" answers for himself and everyone else. The one who "knew best" and told everyone else what they had to think, do, and believe to fit in with what he believed was "right".

But what he DIDN'T know was that he'd become an arrogant jerk. A know-it-all petty dictator who had to have things HIS way...and that was the real reason he was now losing the people he loved most.

Go after them? Apologize? Admit he'd been wrong? Ask them to forgive him? Change?

Forgetaboutit!

Because in his mind he'd been RIGHT...been the way he'd been taught to be all his life. The way his father has been and his grandfather before him. So he chose, as dumb as it seems and as much as it hurt, to stay locked in his old box, his old thinking, and be "right"...instead of happy.

Feel like you've hit the wall? Like you're going nowhere fast? Scared? Could well be you're stuck in the "gotta be right" box, and it's time to break out and find some new answers so you can get more of what you're after.

How?

1) Begin by admitting it when what you're doing isn't working anymore.

How will you know?

Easy: you hurt and life sucks!

The secret? DO NOT paste on a happy face and "make the best of it". Tell yourself the truth: this game is over and it's time to move on.

2) Accept that the real reason things aren't working is because some of your old beliefs aren't working anymore. Maybe they used to, but things have changed. If some part of you, for example, still believes "father knows best" and you're trying to live that out, you're in for a world of hurt. Why? Because what's true is the only person who knows best for you is you. And you only know what's best for YOU, not every-one else. To try and live any other way is to invite misery.

3) Admit there ARE other ways to believe, think, and act that are equally valid. And that's hard, because most of us have been trained to believe that our way is THE way and other ways are wrong! So we stubbornly refuse to even consider the possibility of another way...until we hurt so badly we've got to. Like a friend of mine who refused to even consider acupuncture and other alternative therapies until he'd exhausted all his old remedies and still hurt so bad he had no other choice.

4) Find some new out-of-the-box beliefs and use them to take different actions.

How?

Do it the quick way: hang out with people who don't think and live the way you do, and let them expose you to new ways of thinking and being that will blow up your box! Yea, I know...too scary, and, of course, those "weirdo's are wrong". Maybe... but I'll bet you good money they'll expose you to new ways of thinking and being that'll break you free and help you finally get what you want.

5) Finally, find some people who've already gotten out of the box you're trying to get out of...people who've already got what you want... and ask them for help. That's right, ASK THEM...and then let the help in when they give it.

Will all this work? Sure...IF you'd rather be happy than just be right.

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Lord, please smash my ego!

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What are the "ifs" and "buts" that limit your enjoyment of life?

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Lord, please show me my unmanageability.

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"Bill's Story" Exercise: First half (pages 1 – 8) underline what you identify with how Bill drank, how Bill felt & how Bill thought. Second half (pages 8 – 16) underline all the things Bill did (Step work) that you are NOT willing to do.

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Is there anything you haven't tried yet that you think may work to solve/fix your problem/addiction? If there is, please have at it. If not, let's consider doing all it says to do in the Twelve Steps out of the Big Book.

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When you say that you are an alcoholic, what do you mean?

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(Also included in Steps 2 & 3 exercises) A.C.I.M. LESSON 24

I do not perceive my own best interests.

In no situation that arises do you realize the outcome that would make you happy. Therefore, you have no guide to appropriate action, and no way of judging the result. What you do is determined by your perception of the situation, and that perception is wrong. It is inevitable, then, that you will not serve your own best interests. Yet they are your only goal in any situation which is correctly perceived. Otherwise, you will not recognize what they are.

If you realized that you do not perceive your own best interests, you could be taught what they are. But in the presence of your conviction that you do know what they are, you cannot learn. The idea for today is a step toward opening your mind so that learning can begin.

The exercises for today require much more honesty than you are accustomed to using. A few subjects, honestly and carefully

considered in each of the three practice periods (once in the morning, once in the early afternoon, and once at night) which should be undertaken today, will be more helpful than a more cursory examination of a large number. Two minutes are suggested for each of the mind-searching periods which the exercises involve.

The practice periods should begin with repeating today's idea ("I do not perceive my own best interests"), followed by searching the mind, with closed eyes, for unresolved situations about which you are currently concerned. The emphasis should be on uncovering the outcome you want (this is not about coming up with ideals of what you want, this is about the following - what does your actions and thoughts around these situations tell you about what you want here). You will quickly realize that you have a number of goals in mind as part of the desired outcome, and also that these goals are on different levels and often conflict.

In applying the idea for today, name each situation that occurs to you, and then enumerate carefully as many goals as possible that you would like to be met in its resolution (again, what does your actions and thoughts around these situations tell you about what you want). The form of each application should be roughly as follows:

In the situation involving ___, I would like ___ to happen, and ___ to happen,

and so on. Try to cover as many different kinds of outcomes as may honestly occur to you, even if some of them do not appear to be directly related to the situation, or even to be inherent in it at all.

If these exercises are done properly, you will quickly recognize that you are making a large number of demands of the situation which have nothing to do with it. You will also recognize that many of your goals are contradictory, that you have no unified outcome in mind, and that you must experience disappointment in connection with some of your goals, however the situation turns out.

After covering the list of as many hoped-for goals as possible, for each unresolved situation that crosses your mind say to yourself: "I do not perceive my own best interests in this situation", and go on to the next one.

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Have the prospect use 3 different highlighters, read from the title page through "We Agnostics" and highlight every statement concerning the allergy with one color. Then do it concerning the obsession with a different highlighter color. Then all the way through to page 164 for the spiritual malady with the last highlighter color, writing at least a paragraph on each bedevilment on page 52 about how they are showing up in your life.

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As you go through the next week, write down the times you feel most good about yourself.

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It was suggested to me that I wrote my Step One down so that I could see it for what it really was!

I wrote what happened to me that last few times I drank/drugs.

The fear it created.

The guilt it created.

The regret it created.

The harm I did to myself.

The harm I did to other people.

The financial damage.

The psychological damage.

The relationship damage.

The mental damage.

How it affected my working.

How it affected my self-esteem.

I wrote all of this down and then put the facts into an envelope, then I put the envelope in a safe place to be taken out, read and scrutinized. After a while the thinking says, "It was not that bad, you will get away with one". So, when the step one is written it cannot be denied that along with the passing of time, that all of this did not occur. So, I know today, that if I drink, all that is in that envelope will come back to me again. Thankfully, today, I have a choice. In the past I had no choice.

The "unmanageability", guilt, resentment, hatred, debt, anxiety, fear, panic attacks, intrusive thoughts, depression, self loathing, all of these caused "DIS-EASE" and that disease caused me to crave. Another way of looking at craving is that it is a feeling that will go away once you feed it with whatever it is crying out for!

In my case, my past had caused me so much DIS-EASE that I just wanted rid of feelings, I felt fear all of the time, and thoughts would race through my head. My drinking career was very short, but when I drank, I drank in a way that harmed people around me, and it also put my own life in danger. It cost me much more than money, I ended up in an army alcohol addiction unit. I would not accept that I was an alcoholic. The psychiatrist explained to me, (after I had tried to punch him for hinting that I had a drink problem!) that "an alcoholic is a person who constantly does damage to himself, or to other people through his or her drinking". I drank because of my anxiety. I can now see that it was unmanageable, because I had denied it. I did not want to discuss it. This was due to the fear of being thrown into the "nuthouse". Also I was trapped in "macho mode". How could I tell people that I was a serving soldier, but, I could not get on a bus, train or meet people in a social way unless I was under the influence of alcohol?. Yet, I was still involved in active service as a soldier, and I carried out my job in an exemplary manner. I was a prisoner of people's opinions. I was always wanting to be liked, and I would crash down on anyone who I thought disliked me. It was always conflict, never peace. In my time in AA and NA, I have met so many people who had totally different drinking/using patterns to myself.

I was very lucky to meet a lovely old lady in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, England. I was asking her what her rock bottom was. She told me that she could not sleep, and she was told that a _ glass of Sherry would get her to sleep. She told me that she would crave all day for her Sherry. She said it soon crept up to 3 full glasses of Sherry. Her rock bottom was the thought of 4 glasses of Sherry!. I looked at this woman who was old enough to be my Grandma and I thought, "Great, she has got more courage, and more of an insight

into where she was heading, which is more than I did! ". That taught me a lot. I realized then that the only requirement for membership was a desire to stop drinking. I know that if I was to drink, because of a problem, it would be like putting out a fire with petrol!. It would only make matters worse. So, step one, I fully understand the implications of today!
I was always seeking the 4 'A's:

APPROVAL

APPRECIATION

ACCEPTANCE

APPLAUSE

Seeking the 4 'A's caused me so much pain. Always wondering what people would think of me, my fear of rejection kept me in a violent mode. I was scared to say no. This kept me involved in gang warfare, in my heart I knew I should not be involved with that lifestyle, but my head was telling me to seek the 4 'A's. I understand now that the heart and the head should be in tune. That is what the following steps are about.

Today I get the 4 'A's by trying to live a spiritual, caring life, not from everyone, but from the people that count.

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Have you seriously damaged your relationships with other people because of your addictive behaviors? If so, list the relationships and how you damaged them.

If other people have told you how you have hurt them, then write down what they said.

Describe any missed appointments that resulted from your addictive behaviors.

Describe any memory lapses where you cannot account for where you were.

Describe any times that you cannot recall how you got home.

Describe times and ways that you have significantly neglected or damaged relationships with your loved ones in order to indulge in your addictive behaviors or because you were recovering from your addictive behaviors.

Describe any illnesses that have resulted from your addictive behaviors.

If your addictive behavior contributed to excessive spending, describe the situations and why you did it.

Describe times that you have withdrawn from social interaction and isolated yourself to an extreme degree and why.

Describe incidents where you expressed inappropriate anger towards other people.

Describe embarrassing or humiliating incidents in your life. Were they related to your addictive behaviors? If so, how were they related?

Describe attempts that you have made in the past to control your addictive behaviors. How successful have they been? Do these attempts show the powerlessness that you have over your addictive behaviors?

Do you feel any remorse from the ways that you have acted in your life? If so, explain that in detail.

Describe any irrational or crazy set of events that have happened since you began your addictive behavior. Did you rationalize this behavior? If so, in what way?

Have you avoided people because they did not share in or approve of your addictive behavior? If so, list these people and situations.

Describe any dreams that you have had that exhibit the unmanageability or chaos of your life.

Can you pinpoint one time period in your life when your life began to become extremely unmanageable? If so, describe that period of time and what was happening.

Is there one incident or insight that made you realize that your life was unmanageable? If so, describe it in detail.

How would you summarize the powerlessness and unmanageability of your life in the face of your addiction?

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Step One Worksheet – Use "Tornado Exercise" to look at your life:

1. Have you worked **all 12 Steps** of Alcoholics Anonymous **completely** since coming into the program of Alcoholics Anonymous?
2. Can you say "Yes" to all **12** of these statements? **Have you:** (1. Admitted Powerless over alcohol; 2. Admitted life unmanageability; 3. Come to believe in the Power of God; 4. Given your Will and Life over to God; 5. **Written** Three inventories (resentment, fear, & harms to others with sex emphasized); 6. Written a Sex Ideal; 7. Shared it all - No more "take it to the grave" stuff; 8. Asked God to remove your defects; 9. Finished **All** amends that you know of, accepting responsibility, paid **all** the money back, changed your behavior - especially at home, completed what they asked of you to make your relationships right; 10. A daily prayer life; 11. A daily meditation life & evening review; 12. Been in the trenches – actually 12 stepping drunks, volunteering & doing service work, etc.) If No, why not?
3. Have you continued to do **all 12 Steps** in some part of your daily life at least every other year? If not, which Steps have you been skimping on?
4. Have you been having trouble with personal relationships (family, friends, co-workers)? If so, with whom?
5. What seems to be the problems that you are having with the people in your relationships?
6. Whom do you resent...why? (ie: Is it because THEY aren't doing what you want and you aren't getting YOUR way?)
7. Is there anyone that you refuse to forgive? If so, who is it and what did they do to you?
8. Are you full of fear in your relationships? Is your whole life shot through with fears? What are your fears?
9. How successful are you at managing your sober life today? Have you been careless with your Program (not doing what you know you should be doing)? What specifically haven't you been doing?
10. Are you able to control your emotional nature? Are you quick to criticize with a biting or sarcastic tongue? Why?

11. Do you fly off the handle easily (using a raised voice while arguing, or yelling & screaming)? With whom specifically (family, spouse, kids, coworkers, etc.)?
12. Are you impatient with others? Are you impatient with certain situations? If so, where specifically are you most impatient?
13. Do you exhibit or participate in Road Rage or overreacting on the phone? If so, do you think that is sane, emotionally sober behavior? What fears trigger this behavior in you?
14. Can you be alone with yourself in quiet? (You & a comfortable hour with **No**: reading, T.V., music, radio or phone.) If not, why?
15. Would other people describe you as: having a short temper, being argumentative or hard to get along with? Would other people describe you as being "emotionally volatile" or "passionate"? Would you describe yourself as a controlling person? Would others describe you as a "Control Freak"? If so, write down who in your life would describe you this way (boss, coworkers, the fellowship, family, spouse, kids, etc.) and which of these descriptions you think they would apply to you.
16. Do you want to become a better person? For yourself or because you will become more effective for God? Can you be thankful for someone else pointing out your weaknesses and opening up your eyes to them? What if the person pointing out your weaknesses were your enemy?
17. Do you face criticism with calmness & peace inside because you know it can lead to growth? If not, what are you afraid of?
18. Do you feel like you have to "Win" while getting your point across in discussions, arguments or fights? If so, why (could it be that you are ego-driven)? What are you afraid of when you are trying to "Win"?
19. Would your family say that you are controlling when it comes to money? Are you a good steward with God's money? Are you cheap? If so, are you cheap in all areas? How about when it comes to things you want? Do you Tithe (10% donation to God)? If so, do you Tithe with money? Do you Tithe (other than AA work) with your time?
20. In looking back over your life, what memories are still painful, shaming, guilty, or that you still feel "dirty" about?
21. Do you loath (hate, abhor, despise, or detest) something about yourself? If so, what?
22. What current defects of character, do you perceive, are preventing you from being at peace?
23. Today, in what ways do you feel inadequate as a person?
24. Have you been unhappy lately? Do you sulk in silent scorn? If so, where (home, the fellowship, in relationships, at work, with friends, etc.)?
25. Have you recently been prey to misery? Have you recently been prey to depression? Have you recently been prey to whining or complaining? Have you recently been prey to martyrdom? If so, where in your life and about what?
26. In what areas of your life are you still playing the victim and why? (home life, the fellowship, relationships, work, etc.)
27. Have you had a feeling of uselessness lately?
28. Are you able to be of real help to other people? (Living Amends - Making a substantial positive difference at home, at work, at school, at church, as a volunteer, as a sponsor, as a mentor, as a parent, as a friend, etc.)
29. What are your goals for the future as you see them today?

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STEP 1

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

The first time I took a drink I knew it wasn't for me. Every time I drank I got drunk and I got sick. It made me forget. It made me suffer. With the help of others I finally surrendered.

QUESTIONS

1. How did alcohol control you?
How and when did you really feel powerless over alcohol?
When did you feel powerless over someone or something?
2. Who or what in your life is making you feel different and causing you stress to-day?
Who do you feel is controlling you now?
What situations, feelings, or realities have you been running from, denying, or avoiding?
3. What would you have to face in your own life if you stopped trying to control someone or something?
What might happen if you stopped allowing someone or something to control you?
4. What in your life is unmanageable?
What is your current condition in these areas: emotions, finances, spirituality, physical health, career?
What are you doing for fun, pleasure and enjoyment?
5. What is the current state of your relationships with these people: family, friends, co-workers.
Do you have any relationships, or are you feeling alone and isolated?
6. What is causing you to be resentful?
Is there anyone you want to say something to? If so, why can't you say it?
7. What particular incident helped you to begin attending A.A. meetings?
If attending for a time, what issue has been plaguing you most recently?
When was the last time you did something loving and nurturing for yourself?
Is there someone in your life that you feel is causing you misery?
Do you feel that if he or she behaved differently, you would be happy?

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