

STEP ONE UNMANAGEABILITY EXERCISE

We can use the spiritual malady references mentioned in the Big Book (page numbers provided) to review honestly the unmanageability in our CURRENT lives. The following are statements that best capture the inner and outer experience of the alcoholic for what is called in the Big Book, "the spiritual malady". The disease of alcoholism has three parts: physical, mental and spiritual. The spiritual part of the puzzle is the deepest part and is sometimes called "the root of our troubles" or "untreated alcoholism" (whether we are drinking or not). These are manifestations of being blocked off spiritually (whether we are drinking or not) & they are basically caused by self-centered fear. The Big Book says on page 62, "Selfishness - self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles". But remember, it then says on page 64, "When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." That's why if we JUST stop drinking and DON'T grow spiritually, our inner life (as THE RESULT of what's listed below) continues to get worse because we haven't dealt with the root problem yet. If you CURRENTLY have unmanageability in the following areas of your life, please consider the fact that you may be suffering from untreated alcoholism (whether you are drinking or not), you are probably headed toward your next drink and closer to a relapse than you think you are. It doesn't matter so much how long it's been since your last drink, what matters MORE is how close you are to your next one. - Barefoot Bill

1) Am I generally restless (that sense of "something's missing"), irritable (which means "easily annoyed") and discontented (which means "never satisfied")? (Page xxviii) YES___NO___. Do you experience these feelings often? YES___NO___. Do you feel like you never belong or that you are not a part of, even in AA? YES___NO___. Are you usually uncomfortable in your own skin? YES___NO___. Do you experience an ongoing sense of sadness? YES___NO___. Do you often feel like "something is missing" in your life? YES___NO___.

2) Am I having trouble with personal relationships? (Page 52) Do you take care of others too much, to the point where you neglect to do the things you need to do to take care of yourself? YES___NO___. List names of those close to you (family, friends, co-workers) and evaluate how you are getting along with these people. Also include your relationship with yourself and your Higher Power. The quality of the relationship would include not only if conflicts are present but also how much love is present. Include a few examples of how you treat perfect strangers or those who can't do anything for you. What seems to be the problems that you are having with those around you? _____

3) Am I having trouble controlling my emotional nature? (Page 52) Are most of your days best described as emotionally up and down? YES___NO___. Consider how you manage your emotions. Are you in control of your negative emotions or are they in control of you? IN CONTROL___ NOT IN CONTROL___. When you lash out in anger, do you feel like you have no other choice or that it's "their fault"? YES___NO___. Look at some of your more frequent negative emotions (like jealousy, impatience, lust, fear, guilt, frustration, greed, anger, shame, etc.) and analyze them individually in the following way: When you feel this way, what do you say and do? Are you able to find ways to quickly work through them without harming yourself or others, or do you become unapproachable for hours or days at a time? Are you quick to criticize with a biting or sarcastic tongue? Do you beat yourself up for feeling this way? _____

4) Am I prey to misery and depression? (Page 52) How often in the average month are you miserable or depressed? ___ TIMES. How long does it last and what do you do to get rid of it? _____. Do you feel hopeless & victimized by life? YES___NO___. How does life and other people's behavior cause you misery and depression? What was going on the last few times you were miserable or depressed? _____

Are any of these recurring? _____. When you are miserable or depressed, in what ways do you escape (avoid people, sleep all day, think about hurting someone, alcohol, drugs, food, sex, long periods in front of the TV or computer, etc.) _____.

5) Am I having trouble making a living? (Page 52) What areas of your life are not in balance? Included here are: finances/savings/spending/credit cards/loans, your marriage/parenting/friendship/ work life, education, physical/emotional/mental/ spiritual health, do you set aside time for fun/for being alone, are you overweight, do you drink too much coffee or smoke too much, are you having problems getting or keeping a job, have you had a routine medical check-up recently, etc. _____

6) Do I feel useless? (Page 52) Do you often feel inconvenienced or taken advantage of by others? YES___NO___. Do you have difficulty finding interests or "fitting in"? YES___NO___. Do you feel like there is no meaning to your life or that you have nothing to contribute to life? YES___NO___. Explain any "YES" here: _____

7) Is fear a big part of my life? (Page 52) How much of the average week do you experience fear & worry? ____ %. What do you say or do when you are fearful (anger, procrastination, etc.) _____. What does fear prevent you from doing? _____. How do you get rid of fear? _____. Do you care too much about what others think? YES ____ NO _____. List a few of your more common fears. Ask yourself why you have them and if they are real or imagined? _____

8) Am I often unhappy? (Page 52) How much of the average week are you unhappy? ____ %. What do you say or do when you are unhappy? _____. How do you get rid of unhappiness? _____. Can you usually be described by others as positive and upbeat? YES ____ NO _____. When asked about how you are doing, you probably say that you are doing well. Even though you say that, do you often know deep down within that this is not the truth? YES ____ NO _____. Do you have difficulty having fun? YES ____ NO _____. What areas or past events in your life bring about recurring unhappiness? _____

9) Am I of real help to other people? (Page 52) When was the last time you brought someone new to a meeting? _____. When you give your number to newcomers do you ALSO get their number so you don't miss an opportunity to be of service? YES ____ NO _____. Or do you think that you have nothing to offer them? YES ____ NO _____. Weekly, do you reach out to someone in need or in pain (in and outside of AA) and expected nothing in return? YES ____ NO _____. Are you successful when you try to help others? YES ____ NO _____. Do you think that it's important to grow in ways that would help you be more helpful to others? YES ____ NO _____.

10) Do I think I know what's best for everyone? Are you often like the actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in your own way? Do you believe that everybody, including yourself, would be pleased and that life would be wonderful if only they would do as you say? Can you sometimes be quite virtuous, kind, considerate, patient, generous, even modest and self-sacrificing; yet at other times be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest (depending on which will work in getting YOUR way)? Are you often a victim of the delusion that you can wrest (which means "to take away by force") satisfaction and happiness out of this world if you only manipulate well? (Page 60-61) YES ____ NO _____. Do you spend a lot of time getting frustrated when others don't behave the way you think they should? YES ____ NO _____. Is there anyone that you refuse to forgive? YES ____ NO _____.

11) Am I driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity? (Page 62) Do you often wonder why you do what you KNOW you shouldn't be doing and don't do what you KNOW you should be doing? YES ____ NO _____. Do you have trouble showing up on time? YES ____ NO _____. What is the general condition of your inner dialogue/self-talk/self-criticism? GOOD ____ BAD _____. Although you may not be currently drinking or drugging, do you have other "addictions" (other areas in your life that are out of balance or out of control)? YES ____ NO _____. If so, give examples. _____

12) Am I an extreme example of self-will run riot, though I usually don't think so? (Page 62) Do friends and relatives sometimes say that you are selfish even though you don't agree? YES ____ NO _____. Do you end relationships only because the other person doesn't act the way you think they should? YES ____ NO _____. Are you considered by others to be a "team player"? YES ____ NO _____. Do you spend most of the time thinking of yourself instead of thinking of what you can do for others? YES ____ NO _____. Is your motto "what's in it for me"? YES ____ NO _____. Do you think that some rules/laws don't apply to you? YES ____ NO _____. Do you exhibit signs of or participate in "road rage"? YES ____ NO _____. Would other drivers describe you as considerate? YES ____ NO _____.

13) Am I leading a double life? Are you very much the actor, presenting to the outer world your stage character, which is the one you like your fellows to see? Do you want to enjoy a certain reputation, but know in your heart that you don't deserve it? YES ____ NO _____. Are you under constant fear and tension because of this, worrying that you may be "found out"? (Page 73) YES ____ NO _____. Are you lying to or keeping something from your sponsor/spiritual advisor/recovery network? YES ____ NO _____. Do you usually do what you say and say what you do? YES ____ NO _____. Are you involved in romantic or illegal business relationships that you can't talk about to most people? YES ____ NO _____. What are your hidden secrets: _____

14) Am I like a tornado roaring through the lives of others? Do you have a habit of breaking hearts, sabotaging good relationships, and uprooting the affections of others? (Page 82) YES ____ NO _____. Have you avoided making amends to your family and those closest to you? YES ____ NO _____. Do you have difficulty keeping friendships for more than a few months? YES ____ NO _____. Do you have a habit of pushing people away? YES ____ NO _____. Are you pursuing newcomers for something selfish instead of only helping them in their recovery and spiritual growth expecting nothing in return? YES ____ NO _____. Do co-workers, family, and fellow AA's find you unapproachable? YES ____ NO _____. Do you spend alot of time gossiping & talking about others? YES ____ NO _____.

15) Are my selfish and inconsiderate habits keeping my home in turmoil? (Page 82) Are you more interested in your own needs and wants than you are with the needs and wants of your family? YES ____ NO _____. Have you made amends to your family but continue the behavior you originally made amends for? YES ____ NO _____. Do you sometimes hide away at meetings to avoid conversations & responsibilities at home? YES ____ NO _____. Do you spend "quality time" with your spouse/family on a regular basis? YES ____ NO _____. Would your spouse/family agree with your previous answers? YES ____ NO _____. Has anyone in your household recently said something like this to you, "The only person you ever think of is yourself"? YES ____ NO _____.

After evaluating these areas, can you now admit that even though you may not be currently drinking, your life (especially you inner life of thinking and emotions) shows signs of unmanageable? YES ____ NO _____.