

**The Big Book's Chapter 5
"How It Works"**

The "How It Works" Reading

The Four Points of Step Three

**Step Four: Resentment Inventory, Fear
Inventory, Sex/Harms Inventory, and
Creating A Sex/Relationship Ideal**

Step Guides, Handouts and Articles

FROM RARELY TO NEVER?

I have heard so many people in A.A. say that Bill Wilson wanted to change the word "Rarely..." to the word "Never..." in the opening of "How It Works", that I just wanted to bring this rumor to the light of truth. In the book "Pass It On" (the green AA history book which came out 13 years after Bill died) it says on page 200:

"According to an apocryphal story (which means "a story of doubtful authenticity"), Bill was asked in later years whether there was any change he wished he could make in the Big Book, and he replied that he would change 'rarely' to 'never'. Bill himself said he never considered that change."

"Rarely - or Never?"

How co-founder Bill Wilson answered a frequently asked question.

The AA Grapevine, December 1978

From time to time over the years, some AA members will question the wording of the first sentence of Chapter 5 of Alcoholics Anonymous: "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path." Why, the enthusiastic member asks, doesn't the Big Book say, "Never have we seen a person fail...?"

This question was answered - several times - by an AA well qualified to speak on the subject, since he wrote the book, with the assistance of other early members.

Bill Wilson, AA's co-founder, answered a 1961 letter from Minnesota with these words (preserved, like those of the following letter, in the archives at the AA General Service Office): "Concerning your comment about the use of the word 'rarely' in Chapter 5 of the Big Book: My recollection is that we did give this considerable thought at the time of writing. I think the main reason for the use of the word 'rarely' was to avoid anything that would look like a claim of a 100% result. Assuming, of course, that an alcoholic is willing enough and sane enough, there can be a perfect score on [a person of this sort]. But since willingness and sanity are such elusive and fluctuating values, we simply didn't want to be too positive. The medical profession could jump right down our throats.

"Then, too, we have seen people who have apparently tried their very best, and then failed, not because of unwillingness, but perhaps by reason of physical tension or some undisclosed quirk, not known to them or anyone else. Neither did we want to over encourage relatives and friends in the supposition that their dear ones could surely get well in AA if only they were willing. I think that's why we chose that word. I remember thinking about it a lot.

"Maybe some of these same reasons would apply to present conditions. Anyhow, I do know this: The text of the AA book is so frozen in the minds of tens of thousands of AA's that even the slightest change creates an uproar."

In 1967, Bill made the following reply to a Florida member asking the same question: "Respecting my use of the word 'rarely,' I think it was chosen because it did not express an absolute state of affairs, such as 'never' does. Anyhow, we are certainly stuck with the word 'rarely.' My few efforts to change the wording of the AA book have always come to naught - the protests are always too many."

And at the 1970 General Service Conference, this Ask-It-Basket question was addressed directly to Bill: "If there was any change you would make in the Big Book, would it be to change the word 'rarely' to 'never' at the start of Chapter 5.

Bill answered, "No."

HOW IT WORKS*

*This is from the pre-production multilith (1938). This is the opening of the Big Book's Chapter Five in the original manuscript that was sent out to the fellowship a few months before the Big Book was published. This was written and re-written over thirty times and this is how it looked before the last changes were made. Differences are highlighted in bold print.

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

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

At some of these **you may balk**. **You may think you can** find an easier, softer way. **We doubt if you can**. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that **you are dealing** with alcohol – cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for **you**. But there is One who has all power – that One is God. **You must find Him now!**

Half measures **will avail you** nothing. **You stand** at the turning point. **Throw yourself under** His protection and care with complete abandon.

Now we think you can take it! Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as **your** Program of Recovery:

1. Admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care **and direction** of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely **willing that** God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly, **on our knees**, asked Him to remove our shortcomings – **holding nothing back**.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make **complete** amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve **our contact** with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual **experience** as the result of **this course of action**, we tried to carry this message to **others, especially alcoholics**, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

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

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after, **have been designed to sell you** three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That **you are** alcoholic and cannot manage **your** life.
- (b) That probably no human power **can relieve your** alcoholism.
- (c) That God **can and will**.

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

HOW “HOW IT WORKS” WORKS

(The following is from the Big Book’s December 1938 pre-production multilith [see previous page]. This is the opening of the Big Book’s Chapter Five “How It Works” in the Original Manuscript that was sent out to inform the Fellowship that there had been progress made in the writing of the book, and so that the last changes could be made a few months before the Big Book was published on April 10, 1939. “How It Works” was written and re-written over thirty times and this is how it looked before the very last changes were added. I am NOT suggesting that these last changes should not have been made. Actually, in most cases I think that it was really important that the changes were made, but I think it’s significant to see that the Original Manuscript version reveals more of where the authors were coming from. Differences with how it currently appears in the Big Book are underlined below. Since this is heard hundreds of times by AA members, it often is not REALLY listened to anymore so I have included commentary here, in regular type, on some of the parts that are important and that many AA’s no longer even notice.)

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our directions (thoroughly does NOT mean “slowly”, it means “completely”). **Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program** (please ask yourself occasionally, “Am I currently giving myself completely to AA?” In other words, “Am I CURRENTLY involved in ALL THREE PARTS of AA’s solution for alcoholism: #1 Recovery [which can be found in the Program; also known as the working of all Twelve Steps], #2 Unity [which can be found in the Fellowship; also known as going to meetings, participating in a Homegroup, and interacting with other AA’s], and #3 Service [which can be found in unselfishly doing for others and expecting nothing in return - inside AND outside of AA; also known as altruism.]” I have seen many people go back to drinking who got away from one or more of the three parts to AA’s solution [this includes old-timers], but I have NEVER seen ANYONE return to drinking who remained involved in ALL THREE.), **usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally** (which means “on their own”) **incapable of grasping and developing a way of life which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.** (Please notice that the word “honest” or “honesty” is mentioned THREE TIMES in the first paragraph, and even says that our way of living DEMANDS RIGOROUS HONESTY. Honesty must be really important because this is AA’s MOST READ piece of literature. Also, we need to ask ourselves if we are becoming more and more honest. This is an important form of dealing with reality. Also, I would like to suggest that “grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty” is the ESSENCE of the AA Program and way of life!)

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you [#1] have decided you want what we have (what we have is a spiritual awakening and freedom from the bondage of alcoholism, selfishness and fear as THE RESULT of working all Twelve Steps. Also, please keep in mind that the “we” here is not referring to all the people in AA today. They’re talking about the first members of AA who contributed to the Big Book, and the experiences of the people described in and practicing the Big Book way of life. The promises in the Big Book are ONLY the result of working the Steps as outlined in the Big Book.) **and [#2] are willing to go to any length to get it – then you are ready to follow directions.** (So you don’t have to wait months or years before getting into working all the Steps. Back when this was originally written, the Steps were worked immediately and quickly, and resulted in a 75% recovery rate throughout the fellowship for the first 20 years of AA’s existence.)

At some of these you may balk. You may think you can find an easier, softer way. We doubt if you can. (No subtlety there!) **With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start.** (They’re BEGGING us!) **Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.** (That’s a warning AND a promise. If we let go of our old ideas, especially the ones that don’t work anymore [like how we have been dealing with our alcoholism on our own and how we live our life], we’ll get some positive results. But if we DON’T let go of these old ideas the result will be nil, which means “nothing” or “worthless”.)

Remember that you are dealing with alcohol – cunning, baffling, powerful (and let me add that alcoholism is patient, too!) **Without help it is too much for you. But there is One who has all power – that One is God. You must find Him now!** (I think the Big Book authors are trying to tell us something important here!)

Half measures will avail you nothing. (Half measures do NOT avail us half results. Only being honest half the time is not being honest; only being kind and considerate to others half the time does not bring about half results in spiritual matters. I don’t know if we’ll ever be able to be 100% honest and loving at all times, but the more we are, the more and more freedom, happiness and serenity we’ll experience! And if half measures avail us NOTHING, then LESS than half measures avail us LESS than nothing!) **You stand at the turning point. Throw yourself under His protection and care with complete abandon** (I think the authors are again trying to tell us something important. Also, abandon means “to give up with the intent to never take back”.)

Now we think you can take it! (They say this because they have just given us over 65 pages worth of information describing the desperateness of the alcoholic dilemma. Now they're going to lay out the practical program of recovery which clears away what blocks us from a Power greater than human power, which WILL solve all our problems.) **Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as your Program of Recovery** (so it's a suggested program not a program of suggestions. Also, it's not enough to just READ about or HEAR about or TALK about the Steps. We need to PARTICIPATE and have an EXPERIENCE by taking ALL the actions that the Twelve Steps require):

- 1. Admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.** (For a long time I translated or internalized this sentence as saying, “Admitted I was powerless over alcohol, and WHEN I’M DRINKING my life is unmanageable.” But that’s NOT what it says. When a dash is used in a sentence like this, what it’s saying is: “Admitted we were powerless over alcohol, and admitted that our lives had become unmanageable.” What does our literature say about this admission of powerlessness and unmanageability? In other words, what differentiates an alcoholic physically, mentally, and spiritually, from a non-alcoholic? Physically, the alcoholic has an allergy, or an abnormal reaction, to alcohol. The alcoholic’s abnormal reaction to alcohol is a craving for more alcohol once we take a few drinks. This craving NEVER happens to a non-alcoholic. Because of this, a non-alcoholic can ALWAYS predict how much they are going to drink, but an alcoholic CANNOT. Besides the craving, alcohol DOES something for an alcoholic that it does NOT do for a non-alcoholic. When an alcoholic drinks, they get a feeling of ease and comfort; an “IN control, get up and go into town, I like this” kind of a feeling. When a NON-alcoholic drinks, they get an “OUT of control, beginning of a nauseating, slightly tipsy, I don’t like this so I don’t want any more” kind of a feeling. That’s why they stop after one or two, and make statements like, “I don’t want another drink because I am FEELING that first one.” Spiritually, because of the selfish and self-centered way the alcoholic views and deals with other people, their emotions, and life; they are filled with inner turmoil, discomfort, and anxiety. Since alcohol is the ONLY thing that the alcoholic has experienced that brings relief from this inner unmanageability, we turn to alcohol again and again, even though it has caused problems for us in the past. We don’t see what alcohol is doing TO us, we ONLY think about what it is going to do FOR us, which describes the alcoholic’s mental obsession. A NON-alcoholic’s relationship with alcohol is a “take it or leave it” kind of relationship, but an ALCOHOLIC’S relationship with alcohol is an “I need it to deal with life” kind of relationship. Please ask yourself if you can relate to the experience of an alcoholic. Also, in the middle of the first paragraph on page 44, the Big Book makes a few statements that can be used to review the information about Step One and the direction we need to move in. In the middle of the first paragraph on page 44, it says: “If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely” [which describes the mental and spiritual part of alcoholism], “or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take” [which describes the physical part of alcoholism], “you are probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which ONLY a spiritual experience will conquer.” If I’m powerless over whether I drink or not, than what I need is the Power with a capital “P”; and if my life is unmanageable, especially my INNER life [WHETHER I’M DRINKING OR NOT] than what I need is a new Manager with a capital “M”. In the Fourth Edition Big Book, this Step is described on Roman numeral pages 25 – 32 (xxv – xxxii), on pages 1 – 44:1, and 52:2.)
- 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.** (Please note that “Came to believe” describes a process, and is not saying that we need to believe anything prior to considering this Step. The question in the Big Book associated with Step Two can be found in the middle of page 47: “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 assure him that he is on his way.” Nothing more is needed to move on with the rest of the Program. Our “coming to believe” will take place as we take the actions necessary to work the remaining Steps. Because we get results, our simple belief or our willingness to develop turns into actual faith in a Higher Power as we depend more and more on this Power as a source of guidance in our lives. I’ve heard many people say that the insanity that Step Two is talking about is all the crazy things we did when we were drinking. Things like the D.W.I.’s, the crashed cars, the jobs and families we lost because of our drinking, etc. But we ALL don’t have those things in common. Besides, there ARE alcoholics who NEVER got D.W.I.’s or who NEVER lost jobs because of drinking, but that doesn’t make them any less an alcoholic. Even some NON-alcoholics have gotten D.W.I.’s and lost jobs because of their drinking. The ONLY insanity that we ALL have in common, which is the insanity Step Two is talking about, is the insanity of returning to the first drink even though alcohol has caused us problems again and again. We are not able to see the TRUTH about the damage alcohol has caused us because we ONLY think about relief, ease and comfort that comes by taking a few drinks. Also, for some people, the word “sanity” is not completely clear because it sounds like it’s saying that we are crazy. Other descriptions that capture the essence of what is being said, and can be substituted for the word “sanity” in Step Two, are words like: ...restore us to honesty, reality, freedom, love, peace of mind, truth, or balance. For the newcomer: Step One is where you are, Step

Two is where you want to go, and Steps Three through Twelve are how you get there! In the Big Book, this Step is described in parts of chapters 1, 2, 3, and all of chapter 4.)

3. **Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care and direction of God as we understood Him.** (There are three words here that are important to understand. For a long time, I thought that the Third Step said that I turn my will and my life over to the care of God. But it doesn't say that. What it says is that I MAKE A DECISION to turn my will and life over to the care of God. So the first word that needs to be understood HERE is the word DECISION, which is defined as "making up one's own mind." Let's say my car breaks down. Although the DECISION to get my car fixed is a vital and crucial step, that decision alone does not get the car fixed. I will ALSO need to take the actions necessary to get it fixed. For any decision to mean ANYTHING, it ALWAYS requires further action. If I decide, or make up my own mind, to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him, that decision alone will not turn it over. I will have to take the actions necessary to turn it over. The first three Steps are designed to bring us to the point where we become WILLING to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a Higher Power, Steps Four through Nine are HOW we turn our will and our lives over [because Steps Four through Nine reveal and remove the blocks that prevent us from actually doing so], and the last three Steps are how we KEEP our will and our lives turned over to God indefinitely. After a period of time though, our ego [self-will] begins to reassert itself again; and because of our "human-ness", we fall short in maintaining perfect spiritual focus in all of our thoughts and activities. That is why I believe, even if we have worked the Steps to the best of our ability once, we will need to eventually begin the Steps cycle again and again. The other two words that are important to understand are the words WILL and LIVES. I've always thought that the words "will" and "lives" were concepts way over my head and were way too large to relate to or comprehend. But then it was explained to me that my "will" is my thinking and what motivates me, and that my "life" is all the actions that I've taken up to this moment. That explanation made the words a little more down to earth and easier to comprehend. So I now understand the Third Step as saying that I decide to take the actions necessary to turn my thinking, my motivations, and my actions over to the care of God as I understand Him. Since it's been said in many different pieces of spiritual literature that God is Love, it can also be said that the essence of all this is that I need to always be motivated by love, I need to always try to have loving thoughts and always try to take loving actions. Also, what motivates me drives my thinking and my thinking directs my actions, so I need to go deeper than just acting my way into right thinking. If my motivation and thinking is GOD-directed, I will make the right decisions [whether it seems that way at the time or not], and the actions taken will inevitably be healthy. But if my motivation and thinking is SELF-directed, I will mostly make the wrong decisions [even though I may not realize it at the time], and the actions taken will inevitably be unhealthy. Quite possibly, the single most important statement about Step Three can be found at the top of page 64 where it says, "Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have LITTLE PERMANENT EFFECT unless AT ONCE followed by a STRENUOUS EFFORT to face, AND to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us." So it's saying this Third Step decision will have little permanent effect unless we immediately follow it up with an intensely active effort to work Steps Four through Nine, because where we face these blocks is in Steps Four, Five, and Six and where we get rid of them is in Steps Seven, Eight, and Nine. And what we're being blocked off from is the ability to turn our will and lives over to begin with. So after working the six middle Steps, then and ONLY then, will we be able to turn our motivations, our thoughts, and our actions over to our Higher Power with any kind of consistency. In the Big Book, this Step is described on pages 60:3 – 64:0. The directions for taking Step 3 are on pages 60:4, 62:3, and 63:2 – 64:0. The results of taking Step 3 are given on page 63:1 and the last line of 63:3.)
4. **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.** (One of the definitions for the word moral is "truthful" and another is "conduct in relationship". Also, I think a key word here in the Fourth Step is OURSELVES, not anyone else. The Big Book provides us with three specifically outlined and powerfully transforming written inventories: the Resentment Inventory, the Fear Inventory, and a Sex and Harms Inventory of our conduct. It also asks us to create a future sex life/relationship ideal. In the Big Book, this Step is described on pages 63:4 – 71 and directions for taking this Step are given throughout. The results of taking Step 4 are given on page 70:3.)
5. **Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.** (Please notice that it does NOT say that we just admit our wrongs, although that is part of the process. It says that we admit THE EXACT NATURE of our wrongs. That's why the three Fourth Step Inventories not only compile what we did, but draws attention more importantly to WHY WE DID IT. The exact nature of our wrongs or why we did these things are what we need to ask God to help us with in Steps Six and Seven. Also, notice that it says that we are to first admit our Fourth Step Inventories to God. I have had some incredible results in working with people by asking them to first find a place where they feel God's presence strongly and spend an hour or two silently or out loud sharing their Inventories with their Higher Power. From doing this, there is a sense of forgiveness, accumulated power, and a little more understanding that is then carried into the Fifth Step with the person or persons who will hear it. After the Fifth Step is done, we get a deeper sense of humility and another perspective which brings about a strong understanding of our inner workings. In the

- Big Book, this Step is described on pages 72 – 75. The directions for taking Steps 5 are on page 75:1, the first sentence of 75:2, and 75:3. The results of taking Step 5 are on page 75:2 after the first sentence.)
6. **Were entirely willing that God remove all these defects of character.** (There is a very important direction associated with Step Six in the Big Book which is often missed. It says that “if we still cling to a defect we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.” So if there is a shortcoming that we are not willing to ask God to help us with, we pray for the willingness until it comes. This should not stop us from going on to Step Seven with the shortcomings we ARE willing to ask Him to help us with. In the Big Book, this Step is described on page 76:1. The directions for taking Step 6 are also there.)
 7. **Humbly, on our knees, asked Him to remove our shortcomings – holding nothing back.** (Notice that the wording here is a little stronger than how it ended up in the Big Book. It’s obvious that the authors considered this Step to be a deep and all-inclusive part of this Program. Notice that it’s NOT saying that WE work on our shortcomings, because the only way I can work on my shortcomings is by making them worse. We need to seek our Higher Power’s help with our defects and to begin to take the actions necessary to move in the opposite direction. Also, this is one of the many statements that lead me to see that AA is NOT a SELF-help program, it’s a SPIRITUAL help program. In the Big Book, this Step is described on page 76:2. The directions for taking Step 7 are also there.)
 8. **Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make complete amends to them all.** (Please notice that it mentions the word “all” twice! Do you think they really mean that? The word amend is sometimes reduced to only saying that we are sorry. I prefer using the definition found in Chapter 1 Bill’s Story where it says “I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.” It’s more about taking responsibility than it is about only saying that we are sorry. Also, one of the definitions for the word amend is “to change” so we need to change and move away from the behavior that caused the harm in the first place. Just like the Sixth Step, the Book says that “If we haven’t the will to make amends, we ask until it comes,” so don’t forget to pray for the willingness to make the amends that you are not willing to make. In the Big Book, this Step is described on page 76:3. The directions for taking Step 8 are also there.)
 9. **Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.** (An important word here is the word “direct”, and I’d like to suggest that WE are not the “others” mentioned here. Also, one of the greatest things that I have ever heard about hesitating to make amends is the following: Is it possible that your lack of willingness to make amends [or move forward with ANY Step] has ANYTHING to do with whether you drink again or not? It sure makes ya think! In the Big Book, this Step is described on pages 76:4 – 84:1 and the directions for completing Step 9 are given throughout. The results of taking Step 9 are on page 83:4 – 84:1.)
 10. **Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.** (It doesn’t say “IF we were wrong”, it says “WHEN we were wrong” so it’s realistically admitting that we ARE going to make mistakes. By the time we get to the Tenth Step we now have a way to deal with the times we fall short – Steps Four through Nine in a quick way, moment by moment. Also, it says that we “promptly ADMIT it” not “promptly EXPLAIN it”. In the Big Book, this Step is described on pages 84:1 – 85:2. The directions for taking Step 10 are on page 84:2, the first line of 84:3, and 85:1. The results of taking Step 10 are on page 84:3 – 85:0.)
 11. **Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.** (For some reason, the word “conscious” was not included here originally. Notice that it mentions what we should ONLY be praying for. I believe that if I pray for specific things, I am assuming that I know better than God about what is best for me or someone else. Also, you’ll notice that in Step 10 it says “Continue”, in Step 11 it says “Seek and improve”, and in Step 12 it says “in all of our affairs” so the Program leaves no room for complacency or coasting. Besides, the only way we can coast is downhill! The last three Steps are not MAINTENANCE Steps, they’re GROWTH Steps. To maintain something means to keep it the same. For me, our Program is like walking up a down escalator. If we keep moving forward, we can get to the next level. But as soon as we slow down or stop our forward movement, we go right back down to where we came from. And I don’t know about you but I desperately do not want to go back to where I came from! In the Big Book, this Step is described on pages 85:3 – 88:3. The directions for taking Step 11 are on pages 86:1 – 88:0. The results of taking Step 11 are found on page 88 lines 2 – 8.)
 12. **Having had a spiritual experience as the result of this course of action, we tried to carry this message to others, especially alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.** (This Step, as written here, obviously has three parts: 1 - the spiritual awakening AS THE RESULT of the Steps. This is a promise. It doesn’t say that it MIGHT happen or that it SOMETIMES happens, it says that it WILL happen IF we work all Twelve Steps completely; 2 – I don’t carry MY message or A message but I carry THIS message - the message of the SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS THE RESULT OF THE STEPS to alcoholics and perhaps others too; and 3 - practicing the principles of the Steps [the way of life outlined in the Big Book] in ALL of our affairs. Every once in a while I have to ask myself if I think they really mean ALL here and if I’m doing this more and more in my life. When I do this I get a positive result and when I don’t do it I get a negative result. Speaking of carrying this message, I recommend to people I work with that when speaking at

an AA speaker meeting that they use the same format as Bill W. did in “Bill’s Story” at the beginning of the Big Book. “Bill’s Story” is 16 pages and for the first 8 pages he talks about what it was like when he was drinking and for the last 8 pages he talks about what happened to bring about a change and what’s it like now that he is in recovery. Most of the time at speaker meetings the speaker will speak for 20 minutes and 19 of it is usually drunkalog and 1 minute is “and now everything is wonderful and we have a nice way of closing”. This doesn’t bring much hope to any newcomers in the room. If we can do half our talk about our experience with drinking [so the newcomer can identify with the fact that we ARE an alcoholic]; and then spend the other half of our talk on experience, strength and hope about what it’s like working the Steps and practicing a Program of recovery, we then will carry a much stronger message to the newcomer in a way that has depth and weight. We ALL know how to drink. How about hearing more about living a happy, useful, contented life without needing alcohol? In the Big Book, this Step is described on pages 89 – 150. Many tips on how to carry our message of recover to another alcoholic are found throughout chapter 7, and many tips on how to carry our message and practice these principles in all of our affairs are found throughout chapters 8 – 10.)

You may exclaim, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. (Which is why it’s a good idea to go back and work the Steps, starting with the first one, every year or two. Because we are human, we WILL fall short in keeping spiritual focus in all of our affairs.) **We are not saints.** (An understatement!) **The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.** (Do you think that this is important? If you do, are you more loving, honest, unselfish and accepting than you were a year ago?) **The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.**

Our description of the alcoholic (Step 1), the chapter to the agnostic (Step 2), and our personal adventures before and after (there are two ways that this can be taken: before and after this part of the book, or your personal adventures before AND after you stopped drinking), **have been designed to sell you three pertinent ideas:**

- (a) **That you are alcoholic and cannot manage your life.** (Drinking or not. Step One)
- (b) **That probably no human power can relieve your alcoholism.** (Step Two. Please keep in mind that this includes everyone in the fellowship, yourself, your sponsor, your support group, etc. Although they are all important, they are still only human power.)
- (c) **That God can and will.** (Also Step Two, and what a wonderful promise IF God were sought!)

If you are not convinced on these vital issues, you ought to re-read the book to this point or else throw it away! (Rather humorous! In other words, take it or leave it!)

The Ten Points of the “How It Works” Reading

Chapter five of the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” has always been a faithful guide for people who want to practice the Twelve Step Program. The following Ten Points are a summary of the lifesaving directions given in Chapter Five, and are to be considered as part of your daily Program:

1. Completely give yourself to this simple Program.
2. Practice rigorous honesty.
3. Be willing to go to any lengths to recover.
4. Be fearless and thorough in your practice of the principles.
5. Realize that there is no easier, softer way.
6. Let go of your old ideas absolutely.
7. Recognize that half measures will not work.
8. Ask God’s protection and care with complete abandon.
9. Be willing to grow along spiritual lines.
10. Accept the following pertinent ideas as proved by A.A. experience:
 - (a) the you cannot manage your own life;
 - (b) that probably no human power can restore you to sanity;
 - (c) that God can and will if sought.

In the Fellowship of the Spirit,
Barefoot Bill
Berkeley Heights “Into Action” Big Book Group

Step Three: Three Words and Four Points
by Barefoot Bill

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." (The third step is found in its entirety in the Big Book from pages 60 to 64)

If the writer of a textbook has an understanding of a word, but the reader of the book has a different understanding of the same word, then the information that comes through will be garbled and incomplete. There are three words in the above "window shade on the wall" version of Step Three that are important to understand.

For a long time, I thought that the Third Step said that I turn my will and my life over to the care of God. But it doesn't say that. What it says is that I MAKE A DECISION to turn my will and my life over to the care of God. So the first word that needs to be understood is the word DECISION, which is defined as "making up one's own mind." Let's say my car breaks down. Although the DECISION to get my car fixed is a vital and crucial step, that decision alone does not get the car fixed. I will ALSO need to take the actions necessary to get it fixed. For any decision to mean ANYTHING, it ALWAYS requires further action.

If I decide, or make up my own mind, to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand God, that decision alone will not turn it over. I will have to take the actions necessary to turn it over. The first three Steps are designed to bring us to the point where we become WILLING to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a Higher Power, Steps Four through Nine are HOW we turn our will and our lives over (by removing the blocks that prevent us from actually doing so), and the last three Steps are how we KEEP our will and our lives turned over to God indefinitely. After a period of time though, our ego (self-will) begins to reassert itself again; and because of our "human-ness", we fall short in maintaining perfect spiritual focus in all of our thoughts and activities. That is why I believe, even if we have worked the first nine Steps to the best of our ability once and are living in Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve, we will still need to eventually go back to Step One and begin the 12 Step cycle again and again for deeper awakenings and further growth in other areas where we have God blocked off that we may not be currently aware of.

The other two words that are important to understand are the words WILL and LIVES. I've always thought that the words "will" and "lives" were concepts way over my head and were way too large to relate to or comprehend. But then it was explained to me that my will is my thinking and what motivates me, and that my life is all the actions that I've taken up to this moment. That explanation made the words a little more down to earth and easier to internalize. So I now understand the Third Step as saying that I decide to take the actions necessary to turn my motivations, my thinking, and my actions over to the care of God as I understand Him. Since I believe that God is Love and Truth, I need to make it a priority to be motivated by love, to move toward having loving thoughts (no matter how I feel or what my circumstances are), to always try to take loving actions (whether I think "they" deserve it or not), and to work at seeing the reality of truth that life presents to me in each moment. Also, what motivates me drives my thinking and my thinking directs my actions, so I need to go deeper than just acting my way into right thinking. If my motivation and thinking is God-directed, I will make the right decisions (whether it seems that way at the time or not), then the actions taken will also be right. But if my motivation and thinking is self-directed (which usually means based on self-centered fear), I will usually make the wrong decisions (even though I may not realize it at the time), then the actions taken will probably also be wrong. Now it made perfect sense!

Besides understanding these three words, the Third Step in the Big Book includes four distinct points involved in taking the Step completely.

The first part is found at the bottom of page 60 where it says, "The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good." When I read our Basic Text, I like to personalize it so to put it another way, the first requirement is that I be convinced that MY life run on MY will can hardly be a success. Yes, they use the word "requirement". That means that this is needed before I can go on, so I ask myself, "Do I agree with this statement?" Being self-centered and prideful, at first I disagreed. But then the book gives a classic example of where my self-will has always led me: the actor who is forever trying to run the whole show. In other words, not only will I be happy if you act the way I think you should, but YOU will be happy too and life would be wonderful because I know what's best for everybody. This is a really lame attempt at playing God. I have never met an alcoholic who cannot

completely relate to this part of the book. The word that comes to mind is manipulation, but you can call it whatever you want. The authors really convicted me here because how could a group of people back in the late 1930's know that about me without even having met me? I was busted! They certainly have my attention now.

As the book continues (page 62), they start to make statements like, "Selfishness - self-centeredness! That we think is the root of our troubles." and "So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so." (So whether I realize it or not, I am usually in self-will and perhaps don't even notice. That's how cunning, baffling and powerful the ego is. Also, it's important to know that this includes before we started drinking, while we were drinking, and even since we STOPPED drinking prior to working Step Three.) The book continues: "ABOVE EVERYTHING, we alcoholics MUST be rid of this selfishness. We MUST, or it kills us." (Wait a minute. Do you think they really mean, "Above everything" and "must"? I always thought that ALCOHOL was my problem. I guess that explains why it says on page 53 that, "When we became alcoholics, crushed by a SELF-IMPOSED crisis we could not postpone or evade," on page 64 that, "Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions," and on page 103, "After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol.")

In my book, next to the line, "So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making," I have written in the margin the word, "Hope!" and one day someone sitting next to me at a meeting noticed it. After the meeting, he came to me and said, "Why would you put such a word next to that line? It seems to me that if I have caused most of my troubles, I must be destined for the rest of my life for that to continue." I told him that the reason I put that there was because it is neither necessary nor possible to change others. But if I (with God's help and the Steps) can change myself, I will find that no other changes are needed. If other people or life were to blame for my troubles, there isn't a whole lot I can do about that. But if I am to blame for almost all of my troubles, there is something I can do about that because I am the ONLY person that I can change. Like a wise man once said, "It is easier to put on slippers than to carpet the whole world." The person I was talking to thought for a few seconds, nodded in agreement, opened his Big Book and wrote, "Hope!" next to the same line.

The Book goes on further (page 62) to notify the self-centered alcoholic that God (what I defined earlier as Love and Truth) can rid us of our selfishness: "There often seems NO way of ENTIRELY getting rid of self without His aid. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We HAD to have God's help." **SO THE ONLY THING THAT WE HAVE GOING FOR US, WHICH IS SELF-WILL AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE (OR MY LIFE RUN ON MY WILL) IS THE VERY THING THAT WILL LEAD US BACK TO DRINKING (AT BEST) AND/OR PROGRESSIVE MISERY AS TIME PASSES (AT WORST).** Let me repeat that: **THE ONLY THING THAT WE HAVE GOING FOR US, WHICH IS SELF-WILL AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE (OR MY LIFE RUN ON MY WILL) IS THE VERY THING THAT LEADS US BACK TO DRINKING AND/OR PROGRESSIVE MISERY. IF WE ARE TRYING TO MAKE OURSELVES "UN-SELF-CENTERED", WE ARE STILL BEING SELF-CENTERED! WE CAN'T THINK OUR WAY OUT OF THIS, A SELF-WILL PROBLEM CANNOT BE OVERCOME BY SELF-WILL, A SICK MIND CANNOT HEAL A SICK MIND, WE CAN'T USE THE PROBLEM TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM.** Ouch! That snuffed out any hope I had of not pursuing this Higher Power stuff. Now what? I guess since I saw in Step One that I am powerless, what I need is a new Power. I also saw in Step One that my life is unmanageable (especially my mental/emotional/spiritual life, whether I am drinking or not) so what I need is a new Manager. Because anything at all that God has in mind for me is better than anything at all that I will EVER have in mind for me!

So the AA program ultimately asks me to make TWO surrenders, not just one. I need to surrender to my drinking alcohol (Step One), but I also need to surrender to my self-will or "my life run on my will" (Step Three). Unfortunately, many members of AA only make the first surrender and inevitably do not experience all the freedom, joy and serenity that the AA way of life promises. Because of this, they are often miserable and/or go back to drinking. There is a BIG difference between "not drinking" and "not drinking and being happy about it."

In Step 2, we are told that we need to come up with some sort of "God of our understanding" or "Power greater than ourselves." A.A. gave me more respect than anyone I had ever known by allowing me to believe whatever I wanted to believe about this Power. But there is a little unseen footnote next to Step 2 that states, "So long as I am not it!" The Big Book says again and again that my belief that the universe revolves around me is a big part of my problem, so that "center of my universe" needs to be replaced with some belief in a Power greater than human power. Then in Step 3, it introduces us to an important attribute

that this Power needs to have when it says, "the CARE of God as we understood Him." So our concept of the Power now needs to include the fact that this "God" cares and is caring. This was difficult for me at first because my original concept of our Creator was more along the line of a "judgmental, harsh, He's going to get me, something to be feared" kind of God. I had to completely scrap my old ideas and start over because they just didn't work for me anymore. It wasn't the kind of power that I would turn to for help. If I was to put my trust and life in God's Hands, and turn to Him for help and guidance, I started moving in the direction of thinking of this Power as something that was the loving overseer of everything and, that no matter what was going on in my life, God could be trusted to ALWAYS have my best interest and spiritual maturity in mind. That was the beginning of an outstanding relationship!

This brings us to the second highlight of the Third Step, the last paragraph of page 62, which contains the specifics about this decision we are making: "This is the how and why of it. First of all, I had to quit playing God." (Why? Because,) "It didn't work. Next, I decide that hereafter in this drama of life God was going to be my Director. He is the Principal; I am His agent. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which I pass to freedom." For those who do not know, the keystone is the supporting stone for the ENTIRE structure, so the Third Step decision is the supporting Step for the rest of the Steps. Wow! Now this decision is starting to sound important. God is going to be my Director (and my new Employer), so I need to be doing what I think GOD alone wants me to be doing. In other words, I need to be directed by love, do the next right and healthy thing, and honestly deal with reality. I am going to be His agent, and since an agent is given the power to represent the Principal, I am deciding to start acting in a way that would represent my Highest Power. And if we are all His children (since God has no grandchildren), I need to start acting as if we are ALL equal brothers or sisters. Now I know what this Step 3 decision is that I am making!

But just how do we do all this? We've tried doing things like this before and it has never worked. We mistakenly started to assume that we must not be capable of it.

Although we all have probably tried to have more integrity and peace in our life, our selfishness, self-centeredness and fear prevented us from doing so because our efforts in that direction have usually had a price tag and an expectation of "what's in it for me" associated with it. After I did something for you, if you didn't act the way I thought you should be acting, I wasn't going to do for you anymore. I never was truly altruistic (which means to give of yourself and expecting nothing in return). That's probably because I never followed through with the last two parts involved in working this Step.

The next aspect of working the Third Step thoroughly is the Third Step Prayer, which can be found in the middle of page 63. This prayer is nothing more than an affirmation of the decision we are making mentioned at the bottom of page 62. For a few years in A.A., I thought that the Third Step was only the prayer, but you can see that there is a whole lot more going on here besides just a prayer. I had read Step 3 in the Big Book many times and had gone to many Big Book meetings prior to 1994 and never noticed most of this until I really started to study it. I suggest to people I work with that they say this prayer each morning immediately after waking up (along with their other morning prayers and meditation) and throughout the day when needed or not. I also like to suggest that it be read slowly, while noticing what it says. There is a lot contained in these simple words.

Before going on to the last important statement that is made about this Step, make sure you pay attention to the sentence right after the Third Step prayer, along with the last full paragraph on page 63. Contained in these sentences are some warnings and considerations about following through with Step Three. They are not to be taken lightly and I think they are there to let us know that (like the 12 & 12 says) the effectiveness of the whole A.A. program will rest upon how well and earnestly we try to do this. Also, keep in mind that this book was originally written assuming that the alcoholic reader may have no other fellow A.A.'s in their area (since there were only two meetings at the time in Akron OH and New York City). Today, it would probably be unnecessary for a person to go outside of our fellowship to find the right person or persons to take this spiritual step with. And notice that it says that we are, "voicing it without reservation," which means that we need to say it out loud. It also says there that, "The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea" I usually suggest to people I work with that we can write our own Third Step Prayer in our own words from your own Heart, as our commitment to our Higher Power. Writing our own prayer is a powerful exercise. We would then share our own Third Step Prayer and also say the Third Step Prayer the Big Book provides with our Sponser as we transition into the Fourth Step.

The fourth and last element of this Step begins at the bottom of page 63 and continues to the top of page 64. For me, it is the MOST important point about this step yet it is rarely discussed at meetings and usually

overlooked. It states: "NEXT we launch out on a course of VIGOROUS action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had NEVER attempted." (Which is why I was never before able to be good, loving, and considerate toward others on any consistent basis - I never looked at what was stopping me from being this way). It continues with, "Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have LITTLE PERMANENT EFFECT unless AT ONCE followed by a STRENUOUS EFFORT to face, AND to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us." So it's telling me that this Third Step decision will have little permanent effect unless I immediately follow it up with an intensely active effort to work Steps Four through Nine, because where we face these things is in Steps Four, Five, and Six and where we get rid of them is in Steps Seven, Eight, and Nine. And what we're being blocked off from is the ability to turn our will and lives over to begin with. So after working the six middle Steps, then and ONLY then, will I be able to turn my motivations, my thoughts, and my actions over to my Higher Power with any kind of consistency.

Step 3 in the 12 & 12 on page 40 seems to give the impression that we need to stay at Step 3 for a while before going to Step 4 when it says, "Then it is explained that other Steps of the A.A. program can be practiced with success only when Step Three is given a determined and persistent trial." This does not contradict what the Big Book is saying about going on to Step 4 "at once" following my Step 3 decision because it is merely saying that if I don't stay connected to Step 3 as I work the remaining Steps, they will not have the fullest transforming power and effectiveness that they could. In other words, if I'm doing my Ninth Step amends and I've lost my commitment to Step 3, the power and freedom I'll be bringing into the process of making amends will be compromised.

This was my missing link! Now I saw why, sober for three and a half years, going to a lot of meetings, making coffee, putting away chairs, going to the diner after the meeting, talking to my sponsor and support group regularly, and going to retreats and conventions; I walked around experiencing AT BEST only small glimpses of the peace of mind and the freedom that I heard other members talking about. I never knew all this because I was told to just stay in Steps 1, 2, and 3 for a while. Now I see that this goes COMPLETELY contrary to what our program says to do. Oops, there it is!

My experience started to showed me that if fear is telling me what to do, my Inner Guide can't be. If resentments are directing me, I am not going to do what God wants me to do which is be loving toward all. And if guilt and remorse over what I have done in the past is driving me today, then I'm also blocked off from the sunlight of the Spirit. Which is the ONLY thing that can overcome my self-will (or the ego) and relieve an alcoholic of the mental obsession and the spiritual malady that keeps us miserable and wants us to return to drinking. And it was ONLY after I went on to work the REST of the Steps AT ONCE (like the Big Book says to do) that I became TRANSFORMED for the better in EVERY aspect of my life and being. It was ONLY after doing what the book was telling us to do ALL ALONG, that I started to experience being happy that I was no longer drinking.

By the way, check out the results of deeply taking the Third Step, otherwise known as the Third Step Promises that can be found in the first paragraph on page 63. And in closing, I'd like to include a story about this step that I think captures the essence of it. In other words, in all things God is the owner and I am the caretaker. Thanks for letting me share.

A STEP 3 PARABLE by Steve B.

A drunk is staggering along the street and he meets God. "God, I can't do this anymore," he says. "Please, please, will you give me sobriety?" God says, "Sobriety isn't free, how much money have you got?" The drunk reaches into his pocket. "Fifty bucks." "I'll take it," says God, "you're sober." The man stands up straight, drunk no more. It feels pretty good. "Yeah but, God?" "Yes?" "I know I gave you my money willingly. But, you see, I need to get gas for my car." "You have a car?" says God. "Well, yes." "You didn't tell Me that. I'll take the car." "But..." "I'll take the car. It's part of the price for your sobriety." "But how will I get to work?" "You have a job? I'll take the job, too." "But God, how will I pay my mortgage?" "Mortgage? You have a house? I'll take that too." "But God, my family. How will I take care of them if you have my house and my job?" God says to him gently and lovingly: "In order to keep your sobriety; you must give Me these things. But I will let you drive My car as long as you remember it's My car. You can have the job, but remember you're working it for me. It's My house but I will let you live in it. And as for the family, they are My family but I will trust you to take care of them."

Some Thoughts on Step Four

If you choose to do your Fourth Step in your head and don't write it down, that's fine, but please don't call it AA.

The moment you start to resent a person, you become their slave. He / She controls your dreams, robs you of your peace of mind and good will, and takes away the pleasure of your work. He / She blocks your relationship with God and nullifies your prayers. You cannot take a vacation without this person going along! He / She destroys your freedom of mind and hounds you wherever you go.

There is no way to escape the person you resent. He / She is with you when you are awake; invades your privacy when you sleep; is close beside you when you eat, when you drive your car, and when you are on the job. You lose neither efficiency nor happiness. He / She even influences the tone of your voice. He / She even steals your last moment of consciousness before you go to sleep.

So, if you want to be a slave - harbor resentments.

Am I SELFISH? If I am resentful, it is because someone did not do what I wanted them to do in the past. They did not do it my way. That is being SELFISH. If I am angry, it is because someone is not doing what I want them to do right now. They are not doing it my way. That is being SELFISH. If I am fearful it is because I know someone is not going to do what I want them to do in the future. They are not going to do it my way. That is being SELFISH. If I feel guilty or remorseful, it is because I got my own way at your expense. And that is being SELFISH. It seems that page 62 of the Big Book is correct when it says SELFISHNESS is the root of all my trouble.

If you hate a person, you hate something in them that is part of yourself. What isn't part of ourselves doesn't disturb us. What I hate in another, is usually what I struggle with myself.

Forgiveness is a process through which we free ourselves from the bondage to another person that is maintained for as long as we stand in judgment of them. Forgiveness is love in action.

The 4th step isn't about finding out who you are, it's about finding out who you are not, so you can get rid of it & who you are will shine thru. That's why self-knowledge avails us nothing. We need to find out what GOD wants us to be.

Hating destroys the hater.

Nothing that you fear is as bad as the fear itself.

The man who fights life's battles without fear fights one enemy - the real thing confronting him. But the man who fights with fears within him fights three enemies - the real thing to fight, plus the imaginary things built up by fear, plus the fear itself. And the greatest of these is fear. Fear is what looses from within itself the enemies that capture us within before the real fight with the outward enemy begins.

So boiled down to its essence, the conclusion is that there is nothing to fear save fear, nothing to worry about except worry.

Resentment = wrong judgments, Fear = wrong believing, Harms = wrong actions.

That which we fear grows in proportion to our obsession with it. The more we fear a thing, the bigger it becomes, which in turn increases our fear. How lucky we are that our Higher Power awaits our call for the strength, the companionship that is guaranteed us! We are in partnership, all the way, every day, if we'd only recognize it. We can move toward and through anything. And the added benefit is that we come to trust our partnership. We soon know that all situations can be met. All experiences can be survived. Avoidance is no longer our technique for survival.

Tackling with God's help that which seems impossible, reduces it to manageable size. It also deflates the power our fears have given it.

Resentment is like taking poison and expecting the other person to get sick.

Fear is the faith that something bad is going to happen.

Thanks for your anger, because it reminds me when I'm angry what I do to myself.

Fears usually revolve around three things: afraid of loosing what I have, afraid of not getting what I want, or afraid of someone finding out what I did.

It is not that anything changes, it's just that we get a new pair of glasses that are in focus, and when we take a look at everything through the spiritual glasses, we realize everything has been fine all along. The problem was that our vision was distorted. It was distorted because we were looking at everything from a position of self-centeredness; we're looking at the universe with us at the center. From that perspective, everything was screwed up. As soon as we change to being more God-centered or love-centered or others-centered, peace of mind becomes our constant state.

(A prayer to begin with each time you sit down to write your Fourth Step) God please help me with this; show me what I need to know. Please protect me, Thy Will not mine be done. Amen.

Any person capable of angering you becomes your master; he can anger you only when you permit yourself to be disturbed by him.

The things we are afraid of seem to be like high mountains to climb. When we have gone through them they were in fact small speed bumps.

Dear God, it is I who have made my life a mess. I have done it, but I cannot undo it. I desperately need Your help. My mistakes are mine, and I will begin a searching and fearless thruth-finding inventory. I will write down the exact NATURE of my wrongs. I pray for the strength to complete the task. Amen.

If I am trying to make myself "un-self-centered", isn't that still being self-centered?

"God, Please help me show those I resent the same Tolerance, Pity and Patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend. Help me to see that this is a sick man. Father, please show me how I can be helpful to him and save me from being angry. Lord, help me to avoid retaliation or argument. I know I can't be helpful to all people, but at least show me how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one. Thy will be done."

Is it possible that fear is a conscious decision?

Instead of going into the 4th Step as "cleaning your room by rearranging the same old stuff you've always been stuck with", think of it as "cleaning your room by throwing out the stuff you don't want so you can replace it with stuff you DO want".

The way you are is NOT the result of what has happened to you, it's the result of what you decide to KEEP INSIDE of you.

A scientist showed the Teacher a documentary film on the achievements of modern science. "Today we are able to irrigate a desert," he exulted, "harness the power of Niagara Falls, and detect the composition of a distant star and the makeup of an atom. Our conquest of nature will soon be complete." The Teacher was impressed but pensive.

Later he said, "Why conquer nature? Nature is our friend. Why not spend all that energy in overcoming the one single enemy of the human race: fear?"

At a certain point, we forgive because we decide to forgive. Healing occurs in the present, not the past. We are not held back by the love we didn't receive in the past, but by the love we're not giving in the present.

You don't wait to get better before you do a 4th Step; you do a 4th Step to get better.

FEAR - False Evidence Appearing Real or Frantic Efforts to Appear Recovered or Forget Everything And Run or Face Everything And Recover.

Fear is only an illusion. It is the illusion that creates the feeling of separateness, which is the false sense of isolation that exists only in your imagination.

An expectation is a premeditated resentment.

To be wronged is NOTHING unless you insist on remembering it.

If I totally, at the depth of my being, trusted God, I would never experience fear. So my fears and anxieties reveal my current agnosticism.

It's not what's going on around me that makes me feel the way I'm feeling, it's what I'm thinking ABOUT what's going on around me that makes me feel the way I'm feeling. And when I change the way I'm thinking about what's going on around me, my feelings toward them also change. Every time I have a negative emotional reaction, I am always telling myself something about what's happening. And if I have a negative emotional reaction, whatever I'm telling myself is always a lie, and all I have to do to stop having these negative emotional reactions is to become aware that I am telling myself a lie, and the moment I know I'm telling myself a lie, I stop doing it. And then I stop having the negative emotional reaction. It sounds complicated but it isn't. Of all judgments that I can make about what's going on, they all can be boiled down to two. I'm always telling myself one or the other of two lies whenever I am angry, disappointed, annoyed, afraid; whatever. I'm either telling myself: 1) this should not happen, or 2) this is terrible/intolerable/unacceptable/I am unable to live with this (or however you want to put it). There is only one cure for resentment – detachment. The detachment that comes from attachment, whole-souled attachment, to the One Who loves even the "unlovable" and the "undeserving" of love. Our attachment needs to be on God and God alone. And since God is love, we get over resenting someone by loving them!

Non-consideration of our character defects is every bit as self-destructive as denial of them. Admission of them is what's called for. But non-sharing of them with another human being makes it impossible to experience the maximum experience of feeling ashamed of ourselves that gives the maximum hope of wanting to be rid of them all.

On the slope of Long's Peak in Colorado lies the ruin of a gigantic tree. Naturalists tell us that it stood for some four hundred years. It was a seedling when Columbus landed at San Salvador, and half grown when the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth. During the course of its long life it was struck by lightning fourteen times, and the innumerable avalanches and storms of four centuries thundered past it. It survived them all. In the end, however, an army of beetles attacked the tree and leveled it to the ground. The insects ate their way through the bark and gradually destroyed the inner strength of the tree by their tiny but incessant attacks. A forest giant, which age had not withered, not lightning blasted, nor storms subdued, fell at last before beetles so small that a man could crush them between his forefinger and his thumb. Aren't we like that battling giant of the forest? Don't we manage somehow to survive the rare storms and avalanches and lightning blasts of life, only to let our hearts be eaten out by resentments?

It is necessary that we extricate from an examination of our personal relations every bit of information about ourselves and our fundamental difficulties that we can. Since defective relations with other human beings have nearly always been the immediate cause of our woes, including our alcoholism, no field of investigation could yield more satisfying and valuable rewards than this one. Calm, thoughtful reflection upon personal relations can deepen our insight. We can go far beyond those things which were superficially wrong with us, to see those flaws which were basic, flaws which sometimes were responsible for the whole pattern of our lives. Thoroughness, we have found, will pay – and pay handsomely.

Most anger/resentment in relationships is supported by this sentence: If only you were more like me then I wouldn't have to be upset at you right now, so why don't you work at becoming more like I want you to be.

Victims don't stay sober.

Many people think that it's too much work to put a Fourth Step inventory in writing. They believe it's much easier to simply search their memories and identify the nature of their wrongs. However, time and again, experience has shown that the opposite is true. Our popcorn-machine minds shoot out so many random and unrelated thoughts that the central theme gets lost. Writing it all down, on the other hand, creates more order and focus, and enables us to discover the recurring patterns in our actions.

Those who have gone before us in the Twelve Step process discovered that only by making a deep and soul-searching examination could they begin to effect the kind of recovery that could withstand the stimuli that sparked their dysfunctional behavior.

What we are searching out in our inventory is not only the behavior that we see as unproductive, but also the very nature of that behavior.

Does that behavior stem from fear, or from resentment, ignorance, defiance, or from a need to retaliate because others have treated us unfairly?

Those who have successfully completed Step Four report that the human tendency to generalize, skip or undervalue specifics results in an inventory that is, at best, a mediocre attempt. To truly rid ourselves of unproductive thinking and actions, we need to be detailed enough to detect the patterns that must be changed in order to create a more satisfying life.

Through the process of "uncover," "discover," "recover," we progress into deeper self-knowledge and acceptance. This process allows us to uncover long-forgotten incidents. In them, we discover the origins of earlier, carefully disguised characteristics that had become recurring themes in our bag of coping tricks. The object of this search is not to make us feel more guilty or ashamed of ourselves, but to clearly point out how the mosaic of our life has been made up of tiny missteps.

In his book, "How to Stop Worrying and Start Living" Dale Carnegie says: "When we hate our enemies, we give them power over us - power over our sleep, our appetites and our happiness. They would dance for joy if they knew how much they were upsetting us. Our hate doesn't harm them at all, but turns our days and nights into a hellish turmoil." No matter how much harm we feel has been done to us, and how much we feel our anger is justified, our job now is to take our eyes off the microscope and pick up the mirror. We are responsible for our own actions and reactions, we have no power over anyone else's actions or emotions, nor do we want them living rent-free in our heads. Lord knows, we have enough work to do on ourselves without muddying the water with other people's behavior. A woman told her sponsor a truly sad tale of disappointment and despair. She ended by saying: "You know, I feel I've really been betrayed." "That's because you have been betrayed," said her sponsor. "Now that your perception has been validated, and your very understandable pain has been acknowledged, it's up to you to accept that unpalatable truth, and get on with your business of making a new life. I must relinquish the gratification of justifiable anger.

PRIMARY INSTINCTS OF LIFE WHICH CREATE SELF

SOCIAL INSTINCT	SECURITY INSTINCT	SEX INSTINCT
<p>SELF-ESTEEM— What I think of myself, high (Positive = self-love) or low (Negative = self-hate)</p> <p>PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS— My relations with other human beings and the world around me.</p> <p>AMBITIONS— My goals or plans for the future to gain self-esteem and personal relationships (to be liked, accepted, and respected).</p>	<p>POCKETBOOK—My desire for anything of a material nature (money, property, buildings, etc.) to be secure.</p> <p>EMOTIONAL SECURITY—My general sense of personal well-being, usually based on my demand for my own way: either to dominate those about me or to become overly dependent upon them.</p> <p>AMBITIONS—My goals or plans for the future to gain material wealth and/or emotional security.</p>	<p>My desire to have sex and reproduce</p> <p>AMBITIONS—My goals or plans for the future regarding my sex life.</p>
<pre> graph TD SW((SELF WILL)) W((WRONGS)) SW --- W S[Social Instinct] --> SW Sec[Security Instinct] --> SW SW --> W W --> R[RESENTMENTS] W --> F[FEAR] W --> H[HARMS OR HURTS] </pre>		
<p>RESENTMENTS “Wrong Thinking or Wrong Judging”</p>	<p>FEAR “Wrong Believing”</p>	<p>HARMS OR HURTS “Wong Acting”</p>
<p>Feelings of bitter hurt or indignation, which comes from rightly or wrongly held feelings of being injured or offended.</p>	<p>Feelings of anxiety, agitation, uneasiness, apprehension, etc.</p>	<p>Wrongful acts, which result in pain, hurt feelings, worry, and financial loss, etc., for others and also self.</p>

DEFINITIONS OF WORDS USED IN STEP FOUR

AMBITION	Our goals or plans for the future, or what we want.
ARBITER	One chosen to judge.
BITTERNESS	Pain, suffering, ill will or regret.
DEFECT	Lack of something necessary for completeness. Same as shortcoming - what blocks me off from God and others.
DISHONEST	The act or practice of telling a lie, cheating, deceiving, stealing.
EXACT	Very accurate, precise, correct.
FATAL	Causing death.
FAULT	Something done wrongly, an error or mistake.
FEAR	A feeling of anxiety, agitation, uneasiness or apprehension.
FINITE	Limited.
FRIGHTENED	A temporary or continual state of fear.
FUTILITY	Uselessness.
IDEAL	Goal, aim, conception, standard, mental image.
INCONSIDERATE	Without thought or consideration of others.
INFINITE	Without limits, boundless.
INSTITUTION	Significant practice or relationship in a society or an established organization or corporation, especially of public character.
INVENTORY	Written list of items (used to evaluate personal characteristics).
JEALOUSY	Feeling of rivalry, unfaithfulness, or the loss of another's exclusive devotion.
MISTAKE	A wrong action or statement (caused by faulty judgment).
MOLD	To give shape to, to exert influence on.
MORAL	Honest, truthful. Relating to the practice, manners, or conduct of men/women, as social beings, in relation to each other, and with reference to right and wrong.
NATURE	The essential characteristic of something (root cause, the truth of where the wrong began – what created the wrong).
PARADOXICALLY	A statement that seems contradictory or opposed to common sense, but is true.
PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	My relations with other human beings and the world about me.
POCKETBOOK	Anything of a material nature (money, property, buildings, jewelry, etc.)
PRIDE	An excessive and unjustified opinion of oneself: either positive (self-love) or negative (self-hate). An alcoholic's pride is usually based on how we think others view us.
PRINCIPLE	Rule or code of conduct, fundamental law or assumption.
RESENTMENT	Comes from the Latin word "sentire" which means "to feel", and when you put "re" in front of any word, it means "again", so the word resent means "to feel again".
SANE	Healthy, able to appraise the effect of one's actions.
SECURITY	My general sense of personal well being, usually based on my demand for my own way: either to dominate those about me or to become overly dependent upon them. Has two possible viewpoints – financial security or emotional security.
SELF-CENTERED	Occupied or concerned only with one's own affairs.
SELF-ESTEEM	What I think of myself, how I view myself: either high (positive = self-love) or low (negative = self-hate).
SELFISH	Concerned with one's own welfare or interests and having little or no concern for others.
SELF-SEEKING	Constant looking to further one's own interest.
SHORTCOMING	Falling short of what is expected or required. Same as defect - what blocks me off from God and others.
SOUND	Showing good judgment, healthy, free from flaw or defect.
SUBJECTED	To study motive.
SUSPICION	To have doubt or mistrust, with little or no proof.
WRONG	Judging, believing or acting incorrectly.

RESENTMENT INVENTORY PROMPT SHEET

Here is a list of people, institutions and principles that may be helpful in your resentment inventory. Feel free to add to the lists if you need to.

PEOPLE

Father (Step)
Mother (Step)
Sisters (Step)
Brothers (Step)
Grandfather (Step)
Grandmother (Step)
Aunts
Uncles
Cousins
Clergy
Police
Lawyers
Judges
Doctors
Employers
Employees
Co-Workers
In-Laws
Husbands
Wives
Creditors
Childhood Friends
School Friends
Teachers
Life Long Friends
Best Friends
Acquaintances
“Bible-Thumpers”
Girl Friends
Boy Friends
Parole Officers
Probation Officers
A.A. Friends
Friends in the Military

INSTITUTIONS

Marriage
Church
Religion
Races
Law
Authority
Government
Education System
Hospitals
Health Care System
Correctional System
Mental Health Sys.
Welfare
Philosophy
Nationality
Rehabs
Mental Institutions
I.R.S.

PRINCIPLES

God (or any Deity)
Bible
Retribution
Ten Commandments
Satan
Death
Life after death
Heaven
Hell
Sin
Adultery
Golden Rule
Original Sin
Seven Deadly Sins
Love, honor, obey
Reciprocity Theory
Twelve Steps
Twelve Traditions
Twelve Concepts
“Do unto others...”
“Can’t be too thin”
“Love thy neighbor”
“Don’t put off until tomorrow...”
Old guiding sayings

RESENTMENT INVENTORY

<p>I listed people, institutions and principles with whom I am angry. (64:3)</p> <p>I am resentful at: (This includes grudges, regrets, prejudices, and those we're annoyed with, agitated by, or that "let us down".)</p>	<p>I asked myself why I am angry? (64:3)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Cause</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Do not minimize here or be "spiritual" or nice. Allow yourself to be as critical, as judgmental or as petty as you feel.)</p>	<p>In most cases it was found that the following was hurt, threatened or interfered with.</p> <p>Affects my: (64:3, 65:1)</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>S</td><td>E</td><td>P</td><td>S</td><td>A</td><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>R</td><td>S</td><td>R</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td><td>S</td><td>O</td><td>E</td><td>M</td><td>R</td><td>E</td><td>E</td><td>E</td><td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td>L</td><td>T</td><td>C</td><td>C</td><td>B</td><td>I</td><td>R</td><td>L</td><td>X</td><td>L</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td><td>E</td><td>K</td><td>U</td><td>I</td><td>D</td><td>S</td><td>A</td><td>A</td><td>A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td><td>E</td><td>R</td><td>T</td><td>E</td><td>O</td><td>T</td><td>T</td><td>T</td><td>I</td> </tr> <tr> <td>M</td><td>T</td><td>I</td><td>I</td><td>I</td><td>N</td><td>I</td><td>I</td><td>I</td><td>I</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td><td>B</td><td>T</td><td>O</td><td></td><td>A</td><td>O</td><td>O</td><td>O</td><td>O</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td><td>O</td><td>Y</td><td>N</td><td></td><td>L</td><td>N</td><td>N</td><td>N</td><td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td><td>O</td><td></td><td>S</td><td></td><td>S</td><td></td><td>S</td><td></td><td>S</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td><td>K</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> </table>	S	E	P	S	A	P	P	R	S	R	E	S	O	E	M	R	E	E	E	E	L	T	C	C	B	I	R	L	X	L	F	E	K	U	I	D	S	A	A	A	E	E	R	T	E	O	T	T	T	I	M	T	I	I	I	N	I	I	I	I		B	T	O		A	O	O	O	O		O	Y	N		L	N	N	N	N		O		S		S		S		S		K									<p><u>Putting out of my mind the wrongs others had done</u>, I resolutely looked for <u>my own</u> mistakes. Though a situation had not been <u>entirely</u> my fault, <u>I try to disregard the other person involved entirely</u>. Where had I been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?</p> <p>Where was I to blame? (67:2)</p> <p>Included here might also be: 1-What are the actions I took or failed to take in relation to this resentment which resulted in harms to others or my own failure to grow, to develop, and to become secure in my own person? 2-Am I failing to spot and check my tendency to provoke or elicit a victim situation? In other words, where did I put myself in a position to be hurt?</p>
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FEAR INVENTORY PROMPT SHEET

Here is a list of fears that may be helpful in your Fear Inventory. Feel free to add to this list if you need to.

Fear Of Abandonment	Fear Of Not Being In Control
Fear Of Acceptance	Fear Of Not Having Sex
Fear Of Anger	Fear Of Not Having Enough \$
Fear Of Animals	Fear Of Not Having A Job
Fear Of Authority	Fear Of Parents
Fear Of Being Alone	Fear Of People
Fear Of Being Found Out	Fear Of Physical Pain
Fear Of Being In A Relationship	Fear Of Police
Fear Of Change	Fear Of Public Speaking
Fear Of Confrontation	Fear Of Other Races
Fear Of Creditors	Fear Of Rejection
Fear Of Crying	Fear Of Relapse
Fear Of Disapproval	Fear Of Religion
Fear Of Disease's	Fear Of Responsibility
Fear Of Doctors	Fear Of Sex
Fear Of Drowning	Fear Of Sin
Fear Of Dying	Fear Of Sobriety
Fear Of Failure	Fear Of Stealing
Fear Of Fear	Fear Of Success
Fear Of Feelings	Fear Of The Truth
Fear Of Gangs	Fear Of The Unknown
Fear Of Gays	Fear Of Violence
Fear Of Getting Old	Fear Of Wealth
Fear Of God	Fear Of Women
Fear Of Gossip	Fear Of Working
Fear Of Government	Fear Of Writing Inventory
Fear Of Guns	Fear That There Is No God
Fear of Having Children	
Fear of Having No Children	
Fear Of Heights	
Fear Of Hospitals	
Fear Of Hurting Others	
Fear Of Insanity	
Fear Of Insects	
Fear Of Insecurity	
Fear Of Intimacy	
Fear Of Jail	
Fear Of Lies	
Fear Of Living	
Fear Of Loneliness	
Fear Of Losing A Child	
Fear Of Losing A Spouse	
Fear Of Losing A Parent	
Fear Of Love	
Fear Of Making Amends	
Fear Of Men	
Fear Of Not Being In A Relationship	

FEAR INVENTORY

<p>I listed my fears. (68:1) (Remember to include the fears identified in the Resentment Inventory. Also consider the opposite fear.)</p>	<p>I asked myself why I had them. (68:1) (The justification you tell yourself for having the fear, usually another underlying fear.)</p>	<p>But did not I, myself, set the ball rolling? (67:3) How did self-reliance fail me? (68:1) How am I contributing to the fear? This includes considering if my own selfishness and self-centeredness was involved. (62:1) (This is similar to the fourth column of Resentments. Also, is the fear imagined or real?)</p>	<p>Just to the extent that we do as we think God would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity. <u>We ask God to remove our fear & direct our attention to what He would have us be.</u> What, perhaps, is a better way? (68:2 & 3)</p>

FEAR INVENTORY

<p>I listed my fears. (68:1) (Remember to include the fears identified in the Resentment Inventory. Also consider the opposite fear.)</p>	<p>I asked myself why I had them. (68:1) (The justification you tell yourself for having the fear, usually another underlying fear.)</p>	<p>But did not I, myself, set the ball rolling? (67:3) How did self-reliance fail me? (68:1) How am I contributing to the fear? This includes considering if my own selfishness and self-centeredness was involved. (62:1) (This is similar to the fourth column of Resentments. Also, is the fear imagined or real?)</p>	<p>Just to the extent that we do as we think God would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity. <u>We ask God to remove our fear & direct our attention to what He would have us be.</u> What, perhaps, is a better way? (68:2 & 3)</p>

SEX & HARMS INVENTORY

Whom did I hurt? (69:1) (Directly or indirectly. Perhaps begin with the people you've had sex with and then branch out to all relations, even those not involving sex.)	Did I unjustifiably arouse (in THEM): (69:1)			I reviewed <u>my own</u> conduct over the years past. Where was I at fault? Where had I been selfish, dishonest or inconsiderate? (69:1) What were/are my motives? (70:1) (Remember to go back and put on the Fear Inventory any new fears you find while reviewing your past sex & harms conduct.)	What should I have done instead? (69:1)
	J E A L O U S Y	S U S P I C I O N	B I T T E R N E S S		

SEX & HARMS INVENTORY

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	J E A L O U S Y	S U S P I C I O N	B I T T E R N E S S		

FUTURE SEX/RELATIONSHIP IDEAL

Now about sex. Many of us needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes - absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower natures, a base necessity of procreation. Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail 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 everywhere. One school would allow man no flavor for his fare and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. 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?

During and after the sex inventory, we try to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subject each relation to this test - is it selfish or not? We ask God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remember always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.

Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. 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.

God alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice.

To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the 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 impuriose urge (hornyness), when to yield would mean heartache.
(pages 68-70)

Since it suggests that we come up with a future sex (relationship) ideal, please use this form to develop one. For you, what would be the ultimate? What is usually included here are: 1) ideal attributes and behaviors in OURSELVES that we would like to bring to a relationship, 2) ideal attributes and behaviors that we would look for in SOMEONE ELSE that we might consider having a relationship with. (If you are currently in a relationship, #2 would then become: positive attributes and behaviors that my partner already has that I can appreciate and notice more.), and 3) attributes and behaviors that would describe what an ideal relationship would generally look like.