

## **An Introduction to Working the Steps Guide**

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I usually like to start a study of the Big Book way of life with something on the Circle & Triangle. Since alcoholism affects us physically, mentally & spiritually (more on that in "Working Step 1"), it's important to realize that AA's solution to alcoholism (as outlined in the Big Book) would also need to have three parts. When I first heard this, after being in AA for three & a half years, it was news to me. I really thought at that time that AA's solution to alcoholism was "don't drink & go to meetings" because that was what I heard constantly. After my experience showed me that there's a big difference between not drinking, & not drinking & being happy it, I started to integrate all three parts of AA's solution. This focus and consistency has brought about continued serenity, growth & freedom for me & everyone I've ever known who did the same. For more on this please go back to the Pre-Step Work files and read "The Circle & Triangle."

I also think that it's important to note that there is a BIG difference between "the fellowship" & "the Program". Both are important. The fellowship (meetings & interaction with other AA's) is "a group of men & women who share their experience, strength & hope with each other", and the Program (the Steps) is "a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole". Understanding this then, it is very incorrect to be at a meeting & say "I've been in the program for six months but it doesn't seem to be working for me." If you haven't gotten into working all of the Steps (no matter how long you've been dry), you are ONLY in the FELLOWSHIP, not the PROGRAM. I know that we hear the expression "in the program" all the time but I must say that it is often misused.

Let's start the introduction by turning to Roman numeral page 13 (xiii). At the top of the page xiii, in the Foreword to the First Edition, we find:

"We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics PRECISELY HOW WE HAVE RECOVERED is the MAIN purpose of this book. For them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary. We think this account of our experiences will help everyone to better understand the alcoholic. Many do not comprehend that the alcoholic is a very sick person. And besides, we are sure that our way of living has its advantages for all."

With all the many different Fellowships in the world today that use the 12-Step format, that last line certainly has come true. Also in the paragraph we just read, the "Big Book" authors immediately tell us that the purpose of this book is to show us how to recover from alcoholism. This is a revolutionary statement, because until this book was written, there was no hope for alcoholics. Now, anyone who is willing to follow the directions they have provided, CAN RECOVER.

We know that the words "recover" or "recovered" are not necessarily popular words in A.A. today. However, these words ARE used throughout our literature. For a new person in A.A. (and perhaps for those who do not know), what does the word "recovered" mean? Well, the Big Book gives what can be considered as our definition for the word "recovered" beginning at the bottom of page 84. What I am about to read are the results of working the first ten Steps, otherwise known as the Tenth Step Promises. The bottom of page 84 gives a description of "recovered" as:

"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone - even alcohol. For by this time sanity (which means seeing the truth about alcohol) will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality - safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. (Now here's a warning.) That is how we react so long as (or IF) we keep in FIT spiritual condition."

Please now turn back to the beginning of the book, Roman numeral page 20 or xx. This is from the Foreword to the Second Edition and was written in 1955, 16 years AFTER the Big Book was published. Five lines down from the top of page xx it says:

"Of alcoholics who came to A.A. and really tried, 50% got sober at once and remained that way, 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with A.A. showed improvement."

Remember that this was written 20 years after AA began. This is saying that all those who came to AA and went through this process, 75% eventually got sober. And let us remember that this is long before there were a lot of meetings so it was IMPOSSIBLE for people to get sober on the fellowship, they needed to get sober on the Program. They applied these Steps to their life, they had a spiritual awakening or a spiritual experience, and they didn't find it necessary to drink from that point on. Maybe after these next five

weeks, we can apply these principles to OUR life, get the same results, and carry this simple little message into our fellowship, and then maybe AA as a WHOLE will again have a 75% rate of recovery like they did back then. For more on recovery rates please go back to the Pre-Step Work files and read “Recovery Rates in Early AA.”