

Table Talk



A Guide to the Study of The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

Table Talk -- from an old study pamphlet from the early years of A.A., with some minor modifications, additions and error correction.....

***IT WAS ON TEX'S COFFEE TABLE WHEN HE HELPED ME GET SOBER!.....
AND STAY THAT WAY! ONE DAY AT A TIME!....***

Editor's note:

The following portion of Chapter 5 of the big book, "**Alcoholics Anonymous**" is considered by many the masterpiece, the priceless ingredient of recovery including the Twelve Steps, that it surely is.

AA WORLD SERVICES, (formerly AA Publishing) has given permission for the reprint in this work. For those who have not read the Big Book, we urge that you add it to your library. It may be obtained at cost at any A.A. meeting. **IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE !**

"Strange as it may seem . . . it works"

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HOW IT WORKS

A Portion of Chapter 5 of the Big Book, pages 58, 59 and 60

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. 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 manner of living 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 take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier softer way. But we could not. 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 we deal with alcohol -- cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power -- that One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked his protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery.

1. We 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 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 ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make 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 conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Many of us exclaimed, "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 make clear three pertinent ideas:

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- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if sought.

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PREFACE TO TABLE TALK

The following pages contain the basic material for the discussion meetings for alcoholics only.

These meetings are held for the purpose of acquainting both old and new members with the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions on which our program is based.

So that all 12 steps and 12 traditions may be covered in a minimum of time they are divided into six classifications and one evening each week will be devoted to each of the six subdivisions. Thus, in six weeks, a new man can get the basis of our 12 suggested steps and 12 traditions of A.A.

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These steps are divided as follows:

Discussion No. 1 -- The admission, Step No. 1

Discussion No. 2A -- The spiritual phase, Steps No 2, 3 and 5.

Discussion No. 2B -- Spiritual, continued, Steps No. 6,7 and 11.

Discussion No. 3 -- The inventory and restitution, Steps No. 4, 8, 9 and 10.

Discussion No. 4 -- The active work, which is Step No. 12

Discussion No. 5 -- The 12 Traditions -- That A.A. may survive.

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DISCUSSION NO. 1

THE ADMISSION

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the admission phase of the program and is not intended to replace or supplant--

- a. **The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.**
- b. **Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.**
- c. **Study of the Program.**
- d. **Daily practice of the program.**
- e. **Reading of helpful printed matter on Alcoholism.**
- f. **Informal discussion with other members.**

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This meeting covers Step No. 1 --

STEP NO. 1 "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol -- that our lives had become unmanageable."

This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction -- a help -- a brief course in the fundamentals.

In order to determine whether or not a person has drifted from "social drinking" into pathological "**alcoholic**" drinking it is well to check over a list of test questions, which each member may ask himself and answer for himself.

We must answer once and for all these three puzzling questions --

- What is an Alcoholic?**
- Who is an Alcoholic?**
- Am I an Alcoholic?**

To get the right answer the prospective member must start this course of instruction with --

1. **A willingness to learn. We must not have the attitude that "you've got to show me."**
2. **An open mind. Forget any and all ideas and notions we already have. Set our opinions aside.**
3. **Complete honesty. It is possible -- not at all improbable -- that we may fool somebody else. But we MUST be honest with ourselves, and it is a good time to start being honest with others.**

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SUGGESTED TEST QUESTIONS

1. Do you require a drink the next morning?
2. Do you prefer to drink alone?
3. Do you lose time from work due to drinking?
4. Is your drinking harming your family in any way?
5. Do you crave a drink at a definite time daily?
6. Do you get the inner shakes unless you continue drinking?
7. Has drinking made you irritable?
8. Does drinking make you careless of your families welfare?
9. Have you harmed your husband or wife since drinking?
10. Has drinking changed your personality?
11. Does drinking cause you bodily complaints?
12. Does drinking make you restless?
13. Does drinking cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
14. Has drinking made you more impulsive?
15. Have your less self-control since drinking?
16. Has your initiative decreased since drinking?
17. Has your ambition decreased since drinking?
18. Do you lack perseverance in pursuing a goal since drinking?
19. Do you drink to obtain social ease? (In shy, timid, self-conscious individuals.)
20. Do you drink for self-encouragement? (In people with feelings of inferiority.)
21. Do you drink to relieve marked feelings of inadequacy?
22. Has your sexual potency suffered since drinking?
23. Do you show marked dislikes and hatreds since drinking?
24. Has your jealousy, in general, increased since drinking?
25. Do you show marked moodiness as a result of drinking?
26. Has your efficiency decreased since drinking?
27. Has your drinking made you more sensitive?
28. Are you harder to get along with since drinking?
29. Do you turn to an inferior environment since drinking?
30. Is drinking endangering your health?
31. Is drinking affecting your peace of mind?
32. Is drinking making your home life unhappy?
33. Is drinking jeopardizing your business?
34. Is drinking clouding your reputation?
35. Is drinking disturbing the harmony of your life?

If you answered **YES** to any **one** of the Test Questions, there is a definite warning that you may be alcoholic.

If you answered **Yes** to any **two** of the Test Questions, the chances are that you *are* an alcoholic.

If you answer **Yes** to **three** or more of the Test Questions you are definitely **AN ALCOHOLIC**.

NOTE: The Test Questions are not A.A. questions, but are the guide used by Johns Hopkins University Hospital in deciding whether a patient is alcoholic or not.

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In addition to the Test Questions, we in A.A. would ask even more questions. Here are a few --

36. Have you ever had a complete loss of memory while, or after drinking?

37. Have you ever felt, when or after drinking, inability to concentrate?

38. Have you ever felt "remorse" after drinking?

39. Has a physician ever treated you for drinking?

40. Have you ever been hospitalized for drinking?

Many other questions could be asked, but the foregoing are sufficient for the purpose of this instruction.

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ASK QUESTIONS

No question pertaining to drinking -- or stopping drinking -- is silly or irrelevant.

The matter is TOO SERIOUS.

Any questions we ask may help someone else.

This is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction -- a help -- a brief course in fundamentals.

In A.A. we learn by questions and answers.

We learn by exchanging our thoughts and our experience with each other.

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WHY DOES AN ALCOHOLIC DRINK?

Having decided that we are alcoholics, it is well to consider what competent mental doctors consider as the reasons why an Alcoholic drinks.

1. As an escape from situations of life which he cannot face.
2. As evidence of a maladjusted personality (including sexual maladjustments).
3. As a development from social drinking to pathological drinking.
4. As a symptom of a major abnormal mental state.
5. As an escape from incurable physical pain.
6. As a symptom of constitutional inferiority -- a psychopathic personality. For example, an individual who drinks because he likes alcohol, knows he cannot handle it, but does not care.
7. Many times one cannot determine any great or glaring mechanism as the basis of why the drinker drinks; but the revealing fact may be elicited that alcohol is taken to relieve a certain vague restlessness in the individual incident to friction between his biological and emotional make-up and the ordinary strains of life.
8. The above reasons are general reasons. Where the individuality or personality of the alcoholic is concerned these may be divided as follows --
9. A self-pampering tendency which manifests itself in refusing to tolerate, even temporarily, unpleasant states of mind such as boredom, sorrow, anger, disappointment, worry, depression, dissatisfaction, and feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. 'I want what I want when I want it' seems to express the attitude of many alcoholics toward life.
10. As instinctive urge for self-expression, unaccompanied by determination to translate the urge into creative action.
11. An abnormal craving for emotional experiences which calls for removal of intellectual restraint.
12. Powerful hidden ambitions, without the necessary resolve to take practical steps to attain them and with reluctant discontent, irritability, depression, disgruntledness and general restlessness.
13. A tendency to flinch from the worries of life and to seek escape from reality by the easiest means available.
14. An unreasonable demand for continuous happiness or excitement.
15. An insistent craving for the feeling of self-confidence, calm and poise that some obtain temporarily from alcohol.

WE ADMIT

If, after carefully considering the foregoing, we ADMIT we are an alcoholic we must realize that it is the experience of A.A. that once a person becomes a pathological "**alcoholic**" drinker, he can never again become a controlled drinker; and -- from that point on, is limited to just two alternatives:

1. Total permanent abstinence.
2. Chronic alcoholism with all of the handicaps and penalties that it implies. In other words -- we have gone past the point where WE HAD A CHOICE.

All we have left is a **DECISION** to make.

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WE RESOLVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

1. WE MUST CHANGE OUR WAY OF THINKING.

(This is such an important matter that it will have to be discussed more fully in a later discussion.)

2. We must realize that each morning, when we awake, we are a potential drunkard for that day.
3. We resolve that we will practice A.A. for the 24 hours of that day.
4. We must study the other eleven Steps of the Program and practice each and every one.
5. Attend the regular Group Meeting each week without fail.
6. Firmly believe that by practicing A.A. faithfully each day, we will achieve sobriety.
7. Believe that we can be free from alcohol as a problem.
8. Contact another member **BEFORE** taking a drink -- not **AFTER**. Tell him what bothers you -- talk it over with him freely.
9. Work the Program for **OURSELVES ALONE** -- **NOT** for our wife, children, friends or for our job.
10. Be absolutely honest and sincere.
11. Be fully open minded -- no mental reservation.
12. Be fully willing to work the Program. Nothing good in life comes without work.

CONCLUSION TO DISCUSSION No. 1 - STEP 1

1. Alcoholics are suffering from a three-fold illness, mental, physical and spiritual. Fortunately we in A.A. have learned how it may be controlled (this will be shown in the next eleven Steps of the Program).
2. We can also learn to be Free from alcohol as a problem.
3. We can achieve a full and happy life without recourse to alcohol.
4. Success will be achieved in proportion to our active participation in all phases of A.A.

ASK QUESTIONS

Don't be just a listener -- be a **VOICE** -- you help yourself and you help others by your contribution to the meeting.

ASK QUESTIONS GIVE YOUR VIEWPOINT

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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GOD grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

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DISCUSSION NO. 2

PARTS A AND B

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THE SPIRITUAL PHASE

PART A

STEPS 2, 3 AND 5

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the spiritual phase of the program and is not intended to replace or supplant--

- a. The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.**
- b. Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.**
- c. Study of the Program.**
- d. Daily practice of the program.**
- e. Reading of helpful printed matter on Alcoholism.**
- f. Informal discussion with other members.**

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This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction -- a help -- a brief course in the fundamentals.

This meeting covers **Steps No. 2, 3 and 5**. We will take them in that order.

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STEP NO. 2 -- "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Our drinking experience has shown that --

1. That as we strayed away from the normal **SOCIAL** side of life, our minds became confused and we strayed away from the normal **MENTAL** side of life.
2. An abnormal **MENTAL** condition is certainly not **SANITY** in the accepted sense of the word. We have acquired or developed a **MENTAL ILLNESS**. Our study of A.A. shows that --
 - a. In the **MENTAL** or tangible side of life we have lost touch with, or ignored, or have forgotten the **SPIRITUAL** values that give us the dignity of **MAN** as differentiated from the **ANIMAL**. We have fallen back upon the **MATERIAL** things of life and these have failed us. We have been groping in the dark.
 - b. No **HUMAN** agency, no **SCIENCE** or **ART** has been able to solve the alcoholic problem, so we turn to the **SPIRITUAL** for guidance.

Therefore, we "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." *We must believe with great faith. Faith will sustain us when we do not understand.*

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STEP NO. 3 -- “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” In the first step we learned that we had lost power of **CHOICE** and had to make a **DECISION**.

1. What Decision could we make better than to:
 - a. Turn our very WILL over to GOD, realizing that our own use of our own will has resulted in TROUBLE.
 - b. As in the Lord’s Prayer we must believe and practice THY WILL BE DONE.
2. GOD as we understand him.
3. RELIGION is a word we do not use in A.A. We refer to a member’s relation to GOD as the SPIRITUAL. A religion is a FORM of worship -- not the worship itself.
4. If a man cannot believe in GOD he can certainly believe in SOMETHING greater than himself. If he cannot believe in a power greater than himself he is a rather **HOPELESS EGOTIST**.

“Strange as it may seem . . . it works”

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STEP NO. 5 -- “Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

1. There is nothing new in this step. There are many sound reasons for “talking over our troubles out loud with others.” It is a natural human act to unburden ourselves.
2. The Catholic already has this medium readily available to him in the Confessional.
3. But -- the Catholic is at a disadvantage if he thinks his familiarity with confession permits him to think his part of A.A. is thereby automatically taken care of. He must, in confession, seriously consider his problems in relation to his alcoholic thinking.
4. The non-Catholic has the way open to work this step by going to his minister, his doctor, or his friend.
5. Under this step it is not even necessary to go to a priest or a minister. Any understanding human being, friend or stranger, will serve the purpose.
6. The purpose and intent of this step is so plain and definite that it needs little explanation. The point is that we **MUST** do **EXACTLY** what the Fifth step says, sooner or later. We must not be in a rush to get this step off our chest. Consider it carefully and calmly. Then get about it and do it.
7. “Wrongs” do not necessarily mean “crime”. It can well mean wrong thinking -- selfishness -- false pride -- egotism -- or any one of a hundred such negative faults.

GOD grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

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Note:

The importance of discussion No. 2 and its therapeutic value to the newcomer has by popular acceptance been extended to two weeks, (or tables). Thus, Discussion No. 2 , part A, on the second week and Discussion No. 2, part B, the third week.

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THE SPIRITUAL PHASE

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PART B

This meeting covers **Steps No. 6, 7 and 11.**

STEP NO. 6 -- “Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

1. After *admitting* our wrong thinking and actions in Step 5 we now do something more than “ADMIT” or “CONFESS”.
2. We now become READY and WILLING to have GOD remove the defects in our CHARACTER.
3. Remember it is OUR character we are working on, NOT the other fellow’s. Here is a good place to drop the CRITICAL attitude toward others -- the SUPERIOR attitude toward others.
4. We must clean our mind of wrong thinking - petty jealousy - envy - self-pity - remorse, etc.
5. Here is the place to drop RESENTMENTS, one of the biggest hurdles the alcoholic has to get over.
6. What concerns us here is that we drop all thoughts of resentment, anger, hatred - revenge.
7. We turn our WILL over to GOD and let HIS WILL direct us how to patiently remove, one by one, all defects in our character.

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STEP NO. 7 -- “Humbly asked Him to remove our short-comings”

The meaning of this step is clear . **Prayer -- Humility.**

1. **Prayer.** No man can tell another HOW to pray. Each one has, or works out for himself, his own method. If we cannot pray, we just talk to God and tell Him our troubles.
2. Meditate -- think clearly and cleanly -- and ask God to direct our thoughts.
3. Christ said “ask and ye shall receive.” What method is simpler? -- merely “ask”.
4. If you cannot pray ask God to teach you to pray.
5. **Humility.** This, simply, is the virtue of being ourselves and realizing how small we are in a big world full of its own trouble.
6. Drop all pretense. We must not be Mr. Big Shot -- bragging, boasting. Shed the false pride. Tell the simple, plain, unvarnished truth. Act, walk and talk simply. See the little bit of good that exists in an evil man. Forget the little bit of evil that exists in the good man. We must not look down on the lowest of GOD’S creatures or man’s mistakes. Think clearly, honestly, fairly, generously.
7. The shortcomings we ask God to remove are the very defects in character that make us drink. The same defects we drink to hide or to get away from.

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STEP NO. 11 -- "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with GOD as we understood Him praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

1. We pray each night -- every night -- a prayer of thanks.
2. We pray each morning -- every morning -- for help and guidance.
3. When we are lonely -- confused -- uncertain -- we pray.

Most of us find it well to:

1. Choose, for each day, a "quiet time" to meditate on the program, considering our progress in it.
2. Keep conscious contact with God and pray to make that contact closer.
3. Pray that our will be laid aside and that God's Will direct us.
4. Pray for calmness -- quiet -- relaxation -- rest.
5. Pray for strength and courage to enable us to do today's work today.
6. Pray for forgiveness for yesterday's errors.
7. Ask for HOPE for better things tomorrow.
8. Pray for what we feel we need. We will not get what we "want". We will get what we "need" -- what is good for us.

CONCLUSION TO DISCUSSION No. 2 Parts A and B

We find that no one need have difficulty with the Spiritual content of the Program. WILLINGNESS -- HONESTY and OPEN-MINDEDNESS are the **ESSENTIALS** of RECOVERY. **THEY ARE INDISPENSABLE.**

ASK QUESTIONS

No question pertaining to drinking -- or stopping drinking -- is silly or irrelevant. The matter is TOO SERIOUS. In A.A. we learn by questions and answers. Any questions we ask may help someone else. We learn by exchanging our thoughts and our experience with each other.

ASK QUESTIONS GIVE YOUR VIEWPOINT

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DISCUSSION NO. 3 INVENTORY AND RESTITUTION

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the inventory and amend phase of the program and is not intended to replace or supplant--

- a. **The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.**
- b. **Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.**
- c. **Study of the Program.**
- d. **Daily practice of the program.**
- e. **Reading of helpful printed matter on Alcoholism.**
- f. **Informal discussion with other members.**

This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction -- a help -- a brief course in the fundamentals.

This meeting covers **Steps No. 4, 8, 9 and 10.** We will take them in that order.

STEP NO. 4 -- "Made searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." The intent and purpose of this step is plain. All alcoholics have a definite need for a good self-analysis -- a sort of self-appraisal. Other people have certainly analyzed us, appraised us, criticized us and even judged us. It might be a good idea to judge ourselves, calmly and honestly. This is not a list of past offenses but an attempt to determine our present character or personality. We need an inventory because --

1. Either our faults, weaknesses, defects of character - are the cause of our drinking - OR -
2. Our drinking has weakened our character and let us drift into all kinds of wrong actions, wrong attitudes, wrong viewpoints. In either event we obviously need an inventory and the only kind of inventory to make is a GOOD one. Moreover, the job is up to US. WE created or WE let develop all the anti-social actions that got US in wrong. So WE have got to work it out. We must make out a list of OUR faults and then WE must do something about it.

The inventory must be four things --

1. It must be HONEST. Why waste time fooling ourselves with a phony list. We have fooled ourselves for years. We tried to fool others and now is a good time to look ourselves squarely in the eye.
2. It must be SEARCHING. Why skip over a vital matter lightly and quickly. Our trouble is a grave mental illness, confused by abnormal thinking. Therefore, we must SEARCH diligently and fearlessly to get at the TRUTH of what is wrong with us - just dig in and SEARCH.
3. It must be FEARLESS. We must not be afraid we might find things in our heart, mind, and soul that we will hate to discover. If we do find such things they may be the ROOT of our trouble.
4. It must be MORAL inventory. Some, in error, think the inventory is a lot of unpaid debts plus a list of unmade apologies. Our trouble goes much deeper. We will find that the root of our trouble lies in --

RESENTMENTS -- FALSE PRIDE - ENVY - JEALOUSY - SELFISHNESS and many other things. Laziness is an important one. In other words we are making an inventory of our character - our attitude toward others - our way of living, We are not preparing financial statement. We will pay our bills all right, because we cannot even begin to practice A.A. without HONESTY.

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STEP NO. 8 -- "Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all." Under this step we will make a list (mental or written) of those we have harmed.

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We ask GOD to let His Will be done, not OUR will, and ask for the strength and courage to be willing to forget resentments and false pride and make amends to those we have harmed. We must not do this step grudgingly or as an unpleasant task to be rid of quickly. We must do it willingly, fairly, and humbly -- without condescension

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STEP NO. 9 -- "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

Here is where we make peace with ourselves by making peace with those we have hurt.

The amends we make must be *direct*. We must pay in kind for the hurt we have done them.

If we have cheated we must make restitution -- except when to do so would injure others.

If we have hurt their feelings, we must ask forgiveness from them.

The list of harms done may be long, but the list of amends is equally long.

For every "wrong" we have done, there is a "right" we may do to compensate.

There is only one *exception*. We must develop a sense of justice, a spirit of fairness, an attitude of common sense. If our effort to make amends would create further harm or cause a scandal we will have to skip the "direct" amends and clean the matter up under **STEP 5**.

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STEP NO. 10 -- "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

In coming into A.A. we usually will have a pretty big inventory to work on, as in Steps 4, 8 and 9. But even after that, we will not be perfect. We have a long way to go. We will continue to make mistakes and will be inclined to do some more wrong thinking and wrong doing.

So, at intervals, we CONTINUE to take inventory. Here the purpose is to check on our progress. We certainly cannot be perfect so the need for regular inventory is apparent.

These inventories are PERSONAL. We confine the inventory to Ourselves. We are the one who needs it. Never mind the other fellow. He too, is probably troubled, and will have to make his own inventory.

When we make these inventories, probably the best way to start is to go over, one by one, each of the twelve steps to try to discover just what, in these steps, we are not following. Are we following this way of life?

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The businessman HAS to make a physical inventory from time to time.

We have to make a personal inventory of ourselves from time to time if we want to recover from a serious mental illness.

So much for the Inventory Steps. Now look at some of the things we would do well to cover in an inventory.

1. Selfishness -- the common vice of all alcoholics.
2. Egotism -- who is without some of it? Self-importance, Mr. Big.
3. False pride -- to big to admit a fault or an error.
4. Impatience -- the spoiled child in a grown man.
5. Resentments -- an Alcoholic usually is sore at the whole world -- everybody is wrong.
6. Lack of Common Honesty - usually fooling ourselves and trying to fool others. False pretense, Sham.
7. Deceit.

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8. Hate -- the outgrowth of anger and resentment.
9. Jealousy -- just "wanting" what the other fellow worked to get.
10. Envy -- a sure-fire cause of discontent and unhappiness.
11. Laziness -- just plain laziness.

And so on through a long list.

Conversely our inventory could show a list of virtues we very definitely lack and should go to work on to develop such as --

Honesty, Humility, Truthfulness, Patience, Tolerance, Simplicity, Fairness, Generosity, Industry (go to work and really work), Honest Pride in work well done...

And so on through a long list.

Then consider a few major virtues --

Faith -- If we have lost faith we must work desperately hard to get it back. Ask GOD to give us faith in HIM, our fellowman and ourselves.

Hope -- If we have lost hope we are dead pigeons. Only those who have been cruelly hurt and in desperate need can know the wonderful sense of security that lies in hope for better things.

Trust -- Since our own self-sufficient conduct of our own lives has failed us, we must put our trust in GOD, who has never failed.

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ASK QUESTIONS

No question pertaining to drinking -- or stopping drinking -- is silly or irrelevant. The matter is TOO SERIOUS. In A.A. we learn by questions and answers. Any questions we ask may help someone else. We learn by exchanging our thoughts and our experience with each other.

GIVE YOUR VIEWPOINT

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GOD grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

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DISCUSSION NO. 4

ACTIVE WORK

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the active work phase of the program and is not intended to replace or supplant--

- a. **The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.**
- b. **Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.**
- c. **Study of the Program.**
- d. **Daily practice of the program.**
- e. **Reading of helpful printed matter on Alcoholism.**
- f. **Informal discussion with other members.**

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This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction -- a help -- a brief course in the fundamentals.

THIS MEETING COVERS THE TWELFTH STEP

STEP NO. 12 -- "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

This STEP logically separates into THREE parts --

a. **The SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.**

The terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening" used here, and in the book ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, mean, upon careful reading, that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcohol has manifested itself among us in many forms.

Do NOT get the impression that these personality changes or spiritual experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and/or spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone this conclusion is erroneous.

Among our rapidly growing membership of hundreds of thousands of members such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what psychologist William James called the "educational variety" because **they develop over a period of time**. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference before he is himself.

The new man gradually realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by **himself alone**. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by year of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than ourselves.

Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problem in the light of our experience can recover, PROVIDED that he does not close his mind to SPIRITUAL concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

We find that no one need have difficulty with the Spiritual aspect of the Program. **Willingness, Honesty and Open-mindedness are the Essentials of Recovery and are the indispensable tools of a rich, successful and rewarding experience.**

Table Talk

b. **CARRY THE MESSAGE TO OTHERS**

This is the step of gratitude. It means exactly what it says. Carry the message actively. Bring it to the man who needs it. We do it in many ways.

- a. By attending EVERY meeting of our own Home Group.
 - b. By making calls when asked.
 - c. By speaking at Group Meetings when asked.
 - d. By supporting our Group financially to make meetings possible.
 - e. By assisting at meetings when asked.
 - f. By setting good example of complete sobriety.
 - g. By owning, and loaning to new members, our own copy of the Big A.A. Book.
 - h. By encouraging those who find the way difficult.
 - i. By serving as an officer or on a group committee or special assignment when asked.
 - j. By doing all the foregoing cheerfully and willingly..
- k. We do any and all of the foregoing at some sacrifice to OURSELVES WITH DEFINITE THOUGH OF DEVELOPING unselfishness in our own character.

3. WE PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS. This last part of the TWELFTH STEP is the real purpose that all of the twelve steps lead to -- a new "Way Of Life"; a "Design For Living". It shows how to live rightly, think rightly and to achieve happiness.

HOW DO WE GO ABOUT IT?

- a. We resolve to live our life one day at a time -- just 24 hours.
- b. We pray *each* day for guidance that day.
- c. We pray each night -- thanks for that day.
- d. We resolve to keep our heads and to forego any anger, no matter what situation arises.
- e. We are patient.
- f. We keep calm -- relaxed.
- g. Now, and most important, whatever little ordinary situation as well as BIG situations arise, we look at it calmly and fairly, with an open mind. Then act on it in accordance with the simple true principles that A.A. has taught us and will teach us.

In other words, our Sobriety is only a correction of our worst and most evident faults. Our living each day according to the principles of A.A. will also correct all of our lesser faults and will gradually eliminate, one by one, all of the defects in our character that cause friction, discontents, and unhappy rebellious moods that led right back to our very chief fault of drinking.

* * *

ASK QUESTIONS

No question pertaining to drinking -- or stopping drinking -- is silly or irrelevant. The matter is TOO SERIOUS. In A.A. we learn by questions and answers. Any questions we ask may help someone else. We learn by exchanging our thoughts and our experience with each other.

GIVE YOUR VIEWPOINT

Table Talk

DISCUSSION NO. 5

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the unity, service and tradition phase of the program and is not intended to replace or supplant--

- a. **The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.**
- b. **Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.**
- c. **Study of the Program.**
- d. **Daily practice of the program.**
- e. **Reading of helpful printed matter on Alcoholism.**
- f. **Informal discussion with other members.**

This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction -- a help -- a brief course in the fundamentals.

* * *

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF A.A.

THE A.A. TRADITION

To those in its fold, Alcoholics Anonymous has made the difference between misery and sobriety, and often the difference between life and death. A.A. can, of course, mean just as much to uncounted alcoholics not yet reached.

Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together, else most of us will finally die alone.

The "12 Traditions" of Alcoholics Anonymous are, we A.A.'s believe, the best answers that our experience has yet given to those ever urgent questions, "How can A.A. best function?" and, "How can A.A. best stay whole and so survive?"

On the next page, A.A.'s "12 Traditions" are seen in their so-called "short form", the form in general use today. This is a condensed version of the original "long form" A.A. Traditions as first printed in 1945. Because the "long form" is more explicit and of possible historic value, it is also reproduced.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

From the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, page 564

One - *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.*

Two - *For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.*

Three - *The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.*

Four - *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.*

Five - *Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*

Six - *An A.A. group must never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*

Seven - *Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*

Table Talk

Eight - *Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*

Nine - *A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*

Ten - *Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*

Eleven - *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.*

Twelve - *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*

* * *

THE TWELVE. TRADITIONS (The Long Form)

From the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, page 565

Our A.A. experience has taught us that:

1. Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.
3. Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.
4. With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.
5. Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to AA should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management about be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A. -- medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.
7. The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from

Table Talk

any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. "12th Step" work is never to be paid for.
9. Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principle newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.
10. No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues -- particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.
11. Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.
12. And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

* * *

Table Talk

The A.A. CREDO

I AM RESPONSIBLE...

when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help,

I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.

And for that, I am responsible.

* * *

All information contained herein is the result of the combined efforts of experienced study-table moderators of groups across America and around the world, in all countries everywhere.

World society has welcomed back into its fold millions of once hopeless alcoholics and there is room and a welcome for many millions more. The precepts of the A.A. way of life is your key to a bountiful, useful existence and a storehouse of genuine friends. Attend meetings and read the Big Book often.

Table Talk

The Man In The Glass

*When you get what you want in your struggle for wealth
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself
And see what the man has to say.
For it isn't your father or mother or wife
Whom judgment on you must pass,
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.
Some people might think you're a straight-shootin' chum
And call you a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.
He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest,
For he's with you clear to the end,
and you've passed your most dangerous test
If the guy in the glass is your friend.
You may fool the whole world down the pathways of years,
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartache and tears,
If you've cheated the man in the glass.*

Author Unknown

Table Talk

The Touch of the Masters' Hand

*It was battered and scarred,
And the auctioneer thought it
hardly worth his while
To waste his time on the old violin,
but he held it up with a smile.
"What am I bid, good people", he cried,
"Who starts the bidding for me?"
"One dollar, one dollar, Do I hear two?"
"Two dollars, who makes it three?"
"Three dollars once, three dollars twice,
going for three",*

*But, No,
From the room far back a grey bearded man
Came forward and picked up the bow,
Then wiping the dust from the old violin
And tightening up the strings,
He played a melody, pure and sweet
As sweet as the angel sings.
The music ceased and the auctioneer
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said "What now am I bid for this old violin?"
As he held it aloft with its' bow.
"One thousand, one thousand, Do I hear two?"
"Two thousand, Who makes it three?"
"Three thousand once, three thousand twice,
Going and gone", said he.
The audience cheered,
But some of them cried,
"We just don't understand."
"What changed its' worth?"
Swift came the reply.
"The Touch of the Masters Hand."
And many a man with life out of tune
All battered with bourbon and gin
Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd
Much like that old violin
A mess of pottage, a glass of wine,
A game and he travels on.
He is going once, he is going twice,
He is going and almost gone.
But the Master comes,
And the foolish crowd never can quite understand,
The worth of a soul and the change that is wrought*

By the Touch of the Masters' Hand.

Author Unknown , As quoted by Joe Q. , March 1974

Table Talk

"Oh, my God, Why must it hurt so?"

*My child, you speak to me with words,
Because that is how you have learned to speak.
But I speak to you with feelings,
Feelings that you can recognize.
Sometimes I speak to you with Joy,
And feelings of Love and Peace and Serenity,
Of Comfort and a Knowingness about Yourself.
These feelings are those I would have you have,
As you follow My Path which I have set before you.
There are times, however,
When you set out on a path on your own,
A path that you need to travel.
But in that path that is not My Path,
I must warn you at times of your danger.
And it is at those times that you know Pain,
Feelings of Aloneness, Despair and Agony.
These feelings, well,
They are incomprehensible and demoralizing.
Sometimes the pain becomes very acute,
But that is the feeling that I must give you,
So that you will understand that you have strayed from My Path,
And that I wish for you to return.
You ask me why it must hurt so.*

*Because, **MY CHILD,**
I'VE GOT TO GET YOU BACK.
You see, I have set you the Path
And have given you the instructions,
But you have refused to **SEE** and to **HEAR**.
Let this be a lesson.
You that can see, **SEE**, and You that can hear, **HEAR**.*

*But,
If you can neither **SEE** nor **HEAR**, Then must you **FEEL**,
For,
From the feeling of your pain,
Will be accomplished your **SEEING** and **HEARING**,
And you will **UNDERSTAND** that
I AM LOVE*

Barefoot, 1985

Table Talk

The Quest

*I've searched,
I've searched the avenues of life,
the pristine chapels, the Bowery flophouses.
I've searched the Halls of Justice, on both sides.
I've looked under the leaves and behind the clouds.
I've searched through the rain and pain of forgotten memories,
broken promises and shattered dreams.
I've yearned for the answers to all the questions,
some as yet unasked.
I've loved, the earth, the sky, and all the animals,
and,
I've hated myself!
I've dreamed,
I've dreamed of dancing on moonlight and traveling to the stars.
I've dreamed of worldly delights, while searching through the bars.
I've dreamed of better worlds, with peace and tranquillity.
I've seen the cold shoulder of inhumanity,
and,
Sometimes I've found it to be mine.
I've been,
I've been in and out of jails, in and out of Hell.
I've been ostracized, penalized, deluded, denuded,
and institutionalized.
I've seen,
I've seen the deathly gray pall of time passing uselessly by.
I've seen the fire of a new dawn,
when,
Through an alcoholics' haze,
I witnessed the birth of a new life,
My own!
And now,
I have seen --**GOD**-- and --**MYSELF**--,
and,
I am **FREE**,
FREE to be ME.*

by Paul W., 1985

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