

“THE BIG BOOK COMES ALIVE”

HANDOUT MATERIAL

INTRODUCTION

We don't believe in sitting around "waiting for the miracle to happen." We believe in being active participants in our own spiritual experience. The REAL "miracle of AA" is that through a mysterious and wonderful Grace, we alcoholics become eagerly ready to experience the gifts of recovery through a program of ACTION. This collection of material, and our presentation of it, has been derived from myriad sources. It is designed as a body of material for those seeking to live in the SOLUTION.

Most of us are, to one degree or another, the product of the type of AA we come from. The creation and assimilation of this material represents an ongoing commitment to grow in effectiveness and understanding as we learn to "create the Fellowship we crave." We recognize, through an unsuspected inner resource, a kindred spirit in our fellow travelers which makes for an enthusiastic journey. We believe that "God will constantly disclose more to you and to us," so we openly welcome any and all input or suggestions about this shared experience. Hopefully, our conscious awareness is always growing.

This gift of recovery is for fun and for free, so let's DO IT! And we encourage you to PLEASE read the following pages – "Gresham's Law and AA" – as it clearly describes some AA "turning points" and amplifies some important points we believe to be true.

A PRAYER

I now pray that I be given the capacity to set aside everything I think I know about God, about me, about my fellow man, about the Twelve Steps, and please allow me to gain a fresh new vision, perspective and understanding of what God, what me, what my fellow man and The Twelve Steps are all about. AMEN.

We belong to the Men's International DO-IT-OR-DIE Step Application Group
www.msag.org

UNTREATED ALCOHOLISM - WHO ME? - SOME QUESTIONS

- Do you have a sponsor?
- If no, why not?
- If yes, what is the EXACT NATURE of the relationship?
- If yes, how often do you call (or get together) with him?
- If yes, when, EXACTLY, was the last time?
- What is your idea of an “effective sponsor?”
- What is your idea of an “effective sponsee?”
- How many AA related telephone calls did you receive yesterday?
- Last week?
- Last Month?
- How many AA related telephone calls did you make yesterday?
- Last week?
- Last month?
- Are you sponsoring any people?
- If no, why not?
- If yes, how many?
- If yes, how often do you get together for that SPECIFIC relationship.
- Have you DONE the Steps?
- If no, why not?
- If yes, how long ago?
- How much time did your 4th Step take?
- How long, in hours, was your Fifth Step.
- Have you held on to some “dirty little rotten secret(s)”?
- Have you HEARD a Fifth Step?
- How much time have you devoted to Steps 6 and 7?
- Did you make a Step 8 list?
- How long was your Step 8 list?
- Have you done your utmost to make AMENDS (vs. “Apologize”)
- Write a few paragraphs on Step 10.
- Do you Pray?
- Do you Meditate?
- If not, why not?
- If so, how often?
- Describe the results of your meditation.
- Have you had a spiritual awakening?
- Describe what you believe to be that experience.
- Are you committed to helping others?
- Are you a member of a Group?
- Do you consider yourself an ACTIVE MEMBER of that Group?
- Do you believe that “sober” includes ALL OTHER MIND/MOOD altering drugs?
- Do you experience any of the “bedevilment’s” described on Page 52 of the *Big Book*?
- Having trouble with personal relationships?
- Trouble controlling your emotional nature?
- Are you a prey to misery?
- Are you prone to depression?
- Are you having trouble “making a living”?
- Do you feel “useless”?
- Are you filled with FEAR?
- Are you UNHAPPY?
- Do you feel you can be of REAL HELP to other people?
- and
- Is your sex life “open” or “secret”? Is it in alignment with your ideal?

GRESHAM'S LAW & ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR
CUP OF COFFEE ?
STRONG? - MEDIUM? - WEAK?



GRESHAM'S LAW - THAT BAD CURRENCY DRIVES OUT GOOD - HAS BEEN OPERATIVE IN THE LIFE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. WEAK AA IS TENDING TO DRIVE OUT STRONG AA.

This article originally appeared in the July 1976 issue of "24 Magazine," with the author unknown. Permission was given to reprint. We have placed this material on our "required reading" list for anyone interested in why AA is not as effective now as it was in prior years, and especially for those people experiencing a "flat recovery," suicidal thoughts, relapse, or repeated relapse.

There are three ways to work the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. (1) The strong, original way, proved powerfully and reliably effective over forty years. (2) A medium way - not so strong, not so safe, not so sure, not so good, but still effective. And (3) a weak way, which turns out to be really no way at all but literally a heresy, a false teaching, a twisting corruption of what the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous clearly stated the program to be.

As an eleven year member of Alcoholics Anonymous, I am still awed by the combination of simplicity, practicality, and profundity built into the Twelve Steps; the AA recovery plan.

This audacious blueprint for life change was drawn up in 1939 by a former dead-

end drunk serving as spokesman for an unknown, unproven society of 100 reformed problem drinkers, many of whom were still in the relatively early stages of recovery from alcohol addiction.

Yet for all their boldness of scope, the Steps are so plainly worded, and so well-explained in chapters five and following of "Alcoholics Anonymous" the AA "Big Book," that they can be done by anyone. And, therein lies their greatest genius. There is no prior requirement of purity of life or advancement of learning. Just a willingness to admit personal defeat and a sincere desire to change.

The Twelve Steps sharply contradict the secular psychological axiom that where the level of performance is low you must set a low level of aspiration in order to gain a positive result in life. By this view, the proper approach for the early AAs would have been to put together a program aimed certainly no higher than alcohol abstinence and a return to life as it had been in the pre-alcoholic days, life as ordinary men and women of the world. But these newly sobered-up drunks set out to become totally committed men and women of God.

The authors of the Big Book knew that this radical recovery plan was apt to jar many of the newcomers they were trying to reach with their message and they made two moves to sugarcoat their pill. First, they put the following disclaimer immediately after listing the Twelve Steps in chapter five: "Many of us exclaimed, 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."

That short paragraph was a stroke of inspiration, especially the phrase, "We are not saints." It has eased thousands of new, half-convinced AA members (myself included) past the fact that we were headed, under the guidance of the Steps, in the completely unfamiliar direction of spiritual perfection.

Most of us began practicing the Steps without realizing their full implications. Experience quickly taught us that they worked. They got us sober and enabled us to stay sober. From our intensely pragmatic standpoint, that was what mattered. We were content to enjoy our sobriety and leave all debates as to why the Steps worked to non-alcoholic theorizers - whose lives did not hang in the balance if they got themselves confused and came to some wrong conclusions.

AA's founders did something else to keep the spiritual rigor and power of the Twelve Steps from scaring off new prospects. They put the Steps forth as suggestions rather than as directives. The sentence which introduces the Steps in chapter five of the Big Book says, "Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery." This idea had enormous appeal throughout the AA movement from the time the Big Book was first published. We drunks hate to be told to do anything. The freedom to take the Steps at their own pace and in their own way quickly grew to be deeply cherished among AA members.

Before we explore the results of this permissive approach to the Steps, there is one oddity worth noting. AA existed for four full years before the Steps were put in their final written form. During that time there was a program and it was sobering up alcoholics. It consisted of two parts: a Six-step word-of-mouth program, and the Four Absolutes - absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love - taken over from the Oxford Group, the evangelical Christian movement out of which AA was born. The six steps of the word-of-mouth program from the early pioneering years of Alcoholics Anonymous as given in "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age" are:

1. We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol.
2. We made a moral inventory of our defects or sins.
3. We confessed or shared our shortcomings with another person in confidence.
4. We made restitution to all those we had harmed by our drinking.
5. We tried to help other alcoholics with no thought of reward in money or prestige.
6. We prayed to whatever God we thought there was for power to practice these precepts.

In those early days of AA there was no talk of suggestions. The basic points of the program were regarded by all the older members as directives, as indispensable essentials, and were passed on to newcomers as such.

When Bill first formulated the Twelve Steps, he conceived of them, too, as instructions, not as suggestions. When the idea of presenting the Steps as suggestions came up, Bill for a long time flatly opposed it. Finally - and reluctantly - he agreed. In "*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*" he related how this concession enabled countless AA's to approach the fellowship who would otherwise have been turned off AA - and back to active alcoholism.

Still, Bill was a man whose watchword was prudence and who went out of his way to steer clear of destructive controversy. One cannot help wondering if his feelings on the decision to present the Twelve Steps in the form of suggestions were not a bit more ambiguous than he was willing to let on in public once the compromise had been reached. There is no denying that the paragraphs of chapter five of the Big Book which introduce the Twelve Steps are full of language that would be utterly appropriate as a preamble to a set of action directions, but is not nearly as fitting as an introduction to a group of suggestions. Here is the beginning of chapter five, with the key words and phrases underlined:

"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...”

Granting that Bill ended up fully reconciled to the compromise, his initial misgivings may turn out in the long run to have been prophetic. At the time, however, there were no indications whatsoever that the permissive, suggestions only approach was anything but a boon to the movement.

In 1938 and 1939 when the Big Book was being written, there were 100 members in the fellowship. By 1945 active AA membership was up to 13,000. The primary reason for this explosive increase was that the program - the Steps - were a winning formula; they worked, and there was a big need for them out there in the population. America was boozy and was spawning a great many alcoholics.

Highly favorable press coverage of the AA story was also a major factor in the spectacular growth pattern. A series of enthusiastic articles on AA appeared in the fall of 1939 in the Cleveland "Plain Dealer." These pieces produced a flood of new AA members in the Cleveland area. This sudden expansion was the first tangible evidence that AA had the potential to grow into a movement of major proportions.

The sequence of events during this period is significant. The Big Book was published in April of 1939, and in it the suggestions-only approach to the Steps was disseminated for the first time. A few months later the "Plain Dealer" articles ran, and Cleveland AA's found themselves relating to new prospects on an unprecedented scale. It suddenly became attractive, in a way it had not been before when the fellowship was smaller and more intimate, to ease up a bit on the idea that all the principles should be practiced all the time by all the members. More and more emphasis began to be placed on the fact that the Steps were to be considered as suggestions only. At this time, and through this set of circumstances, the "cafeteria style" take-what-you-like-and-leave-the-rest approach to the Twelve Steps came into practice.

And it seemed to work. It turned out that many newcomers could get sober and stay sober without anything like the full and intensive practice of the whole program that had been considered a life-or-death necessity in the early years. In fact, alcoholics in significant numbers began to demonstrate that they could stay off booze on no more than an admission of powerlessness, some work with other alcoholics, and regular attendance at AA meetings.

This is not to say that all AA's began to take this super-permissive approach to the Twelve Steps. A great many continued to opt for the original, full program approach. But now for the first time the workability of other, less rigorous approaches was established, and a tendency had emerged which was to become

more pronounced as time went on.

At first this seemed like an unmixed blessing. After all, those who chose actively to practice all of the Twelve Steps were as free as ever to do so. Those who preferred working with some, or just a couple, of the Steps were staying sober too. And AA was attracting more and more new members and more and more favorable recognition. In 1941, Jack Alexander's article on Alcoholics Anonymous was published in the "Saturday Evening Post." AA membership at the time stood at 2,000. In the next nine months it jumped 400%.

By now it was possible to distinguish three variant practices of the AA program which we have labeled the strong-cup-of-coffee, medium-cup-of-coffee, and weak-cup-of-coffee approaches. Strong AA was the original, undiluted, dosage of the spiritual principles. Strong AA's took all twelve of the Steps - and kept on taking them. They did not stop with the admission of powerlessness over alcohol, but went on right away to turn their wills and lives over to God's care. They began to practice rigorous honesty in all their affairs. In short order they proceeded to take a moral inventory, admit all their wrongs to at least one other person, take positive and forceful action in making such restitution as was possible for those wrongs, continued taking inventory, admitting their faults, and making restitution on a regular basis, pray and meditate every day, go to two or more AA meetings weekly, and actively work the Twelfth Step, carrying the AA message to others in trouble.

The medium AA's started off with a bang, pretty much like the strong AA's, except they hedged or procrastinated a bit on parts of the program that they feared or did not like - maybe the God Steps, maybe the inventory Steps, depending on their particular nervousness or dislikes. But after they had stayed sober for a while, the medium AA's eased up and settled into a practice of the program that went something like this: an AA meeting a week; occasional Twelfth Step work (leaving more and more of that to the "newer fellows" as time went on); some work with the Steps (but not like before); less and less inventory (as they became more and more "respectable"); some prayer and meditation still, but not on a daily basis any more (not enough time, due to the encroachment of business engagements, social activities, and other baggage that went along with the return to normal life in the workaday world).

The weak AA's were a varied lot. The thing common to all of them was that they left big chunks of the program totally and permanently out of their reckoning right from the outset - sometimes the God Steps, sometimes the inventory Steps, often both. Weak AA's tended to talk in terms like, "All you need to do to stay sober is go to meetings and stay away from the first drink." Most of the weak AA's who were successful in staying sober were pretty faithful meeting-goers. Since they were doing so little with the principles, their sobriety and their survival depended more exclusively than did those of the strong and medium AA's on constant exposure to the people of AA.

The fact is that only the strong-cup-of-coffee-ers were practicing the program as it

had been laid out in the Big Book. Granting that the medium and weak AA's had every right as AA members to practice the principles any way they wanted (including hardly any at all), since the Steps were "suggestions only" - still, the way the first members had done it, and the way the Big Book had recorded it was the strong-cup-of-coffee way.

The medium approach had - and still has - a real, constructive place in the AA recovery scheme, in that it can be used as a temporary platform for reluctant beginners. The medium-cup-of-coffee option enables many who initially are not up to the strong approach to gain a foothold in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

But medium AA can, and often does, become a trap. It is no place for an AA member to try to settle out permanently. People who stick too long in medium AA pass the point where they might be encouraged to step up to strong AA and end up sliding back into weak AA.

Weak AA has none of the redeeming features of medium AA. It is clearly at odds with the program as outlined in the Big Book. It bases itself on a flat and unnegotiable refusal to work with vital recovery principles. Weak AA's cop out and stay copped out on most of the Twelve Steps. They water down the program to the point where there really is no program in the sense that the first members of AA understood the program. A more inclusive, more accurate, and more descriptive term than "weak AA" for this practice is "copped-out and watered-down AA", or COWD AA for short. With the passage of time, a definite evolution has taken place in AA in the respective popularity and acceptability of the strong and COWD approaches.

In the first years of their existence, the COWD AA's tended to feel obligated to defend and sing the praises of their "heterodox" approaches and even to chide the strong AA's a bit for being rigid and holier-than-thou. The strong AA's, for their part, tended to be more relaxed and tolerant, less strident, less defensive. After all, their method was obviously safer since it involved taking more of the medicine. And it was obviously the original and genuine article as the Big Book eloquently attested

But this juxtaposition of attitudes came to have a peculiar effect in a movement which prided itself on its good-natured inclination to let all kinds of maverick opinions and practices have their say and their way. The loudest voices came to be the voices of heterodoxy, and these came in time to have the greatest impact on newcomers. Copped-out and watered-down AA came to be the "in" thing, the wave of the future; strong AA came to be regarded - not universally, but widely - as a bit stodgy and a bit passé.

The COWD AA's had in a sense proven Bill and the first hundred AA's wrong. In the introduction to the Twelve Steps, the statement: "...we thought we could find an easier, softer way, but we could not..." was an unequivocal assertion that it was necessary to practice all the Steps. But the COWD AA's did not practice all the

Steps, and they were staying sober. They had found an easier, softer way. Human nature being what it is, it was inevitable that the less demanding, medium-to-weak approach would grow in popularity while the older, more rigorous approach would decline. Who wants to do things the hard way when they do not have to? Who wants to drive a car with standard shift when the model with automatic is a hundred dollars cheaper?

AA has been in existence now more than forty years. There is still widespread lip service in the movement to the importance of working all the Steps and practicing rigorous honesty in all one's affairs. But as a matter of fact, precious few AA's continue to attempt seriously and consistently to DO these things on a daily basis - not after their first months of sobriety in the fellowship.

Reversion to a lower, more "normal" level of aspiration is the order of the day. Those who do continue to practice strong AA have to be careful how they talk about what they are doing in AA meetings. In many places, too much or too serious talk about God is considered bad form. The same is true about talk on the subjects of confession, restitution, and rigorous honesty - especially where they affect such difficult and sensitive life areas as job applications, tax returns, business dealings, and sex relations.

But if weak AA works - if it produces recovery - what fault is there to find with it? Maybe this is a case where heterodoxy turns out to be superior to orthodoxy. Why should anyone go to the extra bother of practicing strong AA? For one very good reason. Weak AA brings about a far less profound life alteration than strong AA does. In many cases that relatively superficial change is not enough to crack the alcoholic pattern. In many other cases, it results in an apparent recovery which does not last, but sooner or later eventuates in a relapse into drinking.

What the original AAs were shooting for - and what they aimed their program at - was not mere sobriety. That would have been the "common-sense" approach, the way of worldly wisdom, the reasonable-level-of-aspiration gambit. But the founders of AA were men moved by inspiration. They were coming at the problem with the uncommon sense of men under guidance.

The common-sense approach had already been tried and it had failed. If you set a drunk's level of aspiration at mere abstinence - "Why don't you be a good fellow, use your will power; and give the stuff up" - it did not work. The poor candidate for reform was back drinking again in short order. The discovery that launched AA in the first place was that if an alcoholic were somehow to be rocketed into a state way beyond abstinence, if he were to achieve a real spiritual conversion, an utterly new relationship with God, then permanent abstinence would automatically occur as a blessed and life-saving by-product. That was how it happened with Bill. That was how it happened with Dr. Bob. That was how it happened with most of the first hundred members. That was how the authors of the Big Book thought it would have to happen with everyone.

Originally, the Twelfth Step read: "Having had a spiritual experience as the result

of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs". Two key phrases were "spiritual experience" and "as the result of these Steps". The assumption was: no spiritual experience - no recovery. It was also assumed that there were not a number of different results from working the Steps; there was one result - "the" result - and that was spiritual experience. To the first members, spiritual experience meant that God had touched your life - directly, tangibly - and turned it around.

Sometime between 1939, when the "Plain Dealer" article was published, and 1941, when the Alexander piece ran in the "Post", a major shift in philosophy occurred. No one in AA was much aware that it was taking place at the time, and to this day the process that went on remains almost totally unacknowledged throughout the fellowship. What changed was the importance of the roles assigned respectively to the recovery principles and the recovery fellowship in AA.

Up until 1939, AA was a small, unknown organization whose success record, though excellent, applied only over a tiny group of cases, and had not yet stood the test of time. Recovering alcoholics in the young movement relied upon each other and worked closely with one another. But the principles were the primary life transformers. The movement as such was not large enough or well enough established that it could be leaned on in lieu of faithful work with the Steps.

After AA became big, after it gained national recognition as a success, a new relationship became possible with it, one which had not previously been an option, and which the founders had not really foreseen. It became possible for an alcoholic to come to meetings and get sober without undergoing a real spiritual conversion, simply by the process of mimesis, or imitation - by the practice of something no more spiritual than the principle of when-in-Rome-do-as-the-Romans-do.

Here is how AA-by-mimesis worked. The newcomer was joining himself to a big, successful organization, like the Elks or the Kiwanis. One of the customs of this particular club was that you did not drink; so if the newcomer liked the people he had met in AA and wanted to stay associated with them, he gave up drinking. He made AA meetings and AA people the focus of his social life and his leisure-time activities and stayed sober, more off the power of the pack than anything else.

The true nature of this quite other, and quite non-spiritual, recovery option was never clearly faced and admitted within the fellowship. Instead, an attempt was made to broaden the meaning of the term "spiritual" to include both kinds of recovered alcoholics: the sober-by-conversion alcoholics - those who as the result of working the Steps had had a spiritual experience and become transformed human beings, seriously involved with regenerative life and ideas - and the sober-by-imitation alcoholics - those who had remained essentially the same type of people they had been before coming into AA, except that they had joined a new organization, made a new set of friends, and given up drinking in conformity to their new social setup.

There is only one term in the Twelve Steps that has been changed since the Big Book was first published in 1939. That term is "spiritual experience" in the Twelfth Step. A member of my home AA group, who first came into the fellowship in 1941, tells it this way: "When I first came in, they were still talking about 'spiritual experience'. A year or two later they started calling it 'spiritual awakening'." It was at this time that the official version of the Twelfth Step was changed to read: "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps ..." The term spiritual experience, which had been perfectly acceptable in the early years when the fellowship was small and explicitly conversion-oriented, came to be viewed as too narrow and prejudicial against the less-profound life changes resulting from mimesis-oriented AA, which were coming to be the majority recovery pattern in AA. An explanatory note was added to the Big Book, as follows:

"The terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening" are used many times in this book, which upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.

"Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous.

"In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming "God-consciousness" followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook.

"Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the "educational variety" because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally 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 years 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 themselves.

"Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it "God consciousness."

"Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all 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 spirituality of the program. Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable."

When you compare this statement to that which introduced the Twelve Steps in chapter five, the difference in tone is astonishing. Chapter five rings with a series of booming affirmations that the goal of the program is a life given to God and the way is an uncompromisingly spiritual one. In the later-added appendix there is virtually a full retreat from the earlier vigor and un-self-conscious joy in God-commitment. The stated purpose of this appendix is to reassure people that the spiritual change accompanying an AA recovery need not be in the form of a

sudden upheaval. The point needed making and was well made.

But a further point was also made - not directly, but by implication - in the defensive, back-pedaling, almost apologetic treatment of the whole subject of religious experience. That point was the following: the authors and publishers of the Big Book, unofficial spokesmen for the movement, were responding to a change in the AA recovery pattern by lowering the spiritual level of aspiration of the society, a move they would not have dared to make in the early days but could, and even felt they must, make now that the society had become large and gained a reputation for respectability and reasonableness. The facts of the situation in AA which prompted the rewording of the Twelfth Step and the adding of the explanatory appendix to the Big Book could have been summarized in this way:

"It is now possible to recover in one of two ways in AA. Option one is the original, spiritual experience way which follows from working all of the Steps. Option two is the way of partial practice of the Steps, and primary dependence on the social, fellowship-related aspects of life in AA. This second approach generally does not produce a spiritual experience as strong, full-program AA practice does. It also violates our tradition that we should always place principles before personalities. But in its favor, it requires less commitment and less work; it involves less in the way of life rearrangement; and it has proven itself sufficient in many cases to produce lasting abstinence from drinking." But no such statement was ever made, and the switch in terms from spiritual experience to spiritual awakening had the net effect of clouding in everyone's mind the real nature of the change which had come about.

It was not a matter of conscious deception on anyone's part. It was just a failure to see a dividing into two camps when it had occurred. This would have been an easy mistake in any case for those living through that period in AA's history, a quite understandable failure to see a trend developing, comparable to a mother's inability to notice growth changes in her own child. But in a movement committed almost before all else to the avoidance of controversy, blindness to this split was all but inevitable.

The drawback to the original, rigorous, strong-cup-of-coffee approach to the AA program was that it required new members to plunge into a drastic program of spiritual transformation, a course which has never in history had appeal with large masses of people. Had the original approach remained the only approach, it is doubtful that AA would have reached anything like its present size of 850,000 members. (1976)

But the weak-cup-of-coffee practice had even more serious flaws built into it. The relatively superficial life change which it produces is sufficient to get some alcoholics sober. It is not adequate - it is not effective - it simply doesn't work - for a very large number of others. This is particularly evident with the "hard" cases - the alcoholics who have been badly beat up physically and mentally before they arrive at their first AA meeting; the people whose alcoholism is complicated with

drug abuse, perversion, criminal or psychotic tendencies, or a streak of psychopathology; and the "slippers," those who have developed a pattern of hanging around AA, staying sober for periods, but relapsing repeatedly into drinking. (Generally, the slippers are alcoholics with psychopathic tendencies who keep coming back to AA but are unwilling or unable to work with root principles, notably rigorous honesty.) Weak AA does not touch most of these people. They cannot stay sober that way.

Yet if these hard cases find their way into an environment where strong AA, and nothing but strong AA, is being practiced, many of them are able to achieve lasting sobriety. The East Ridge Community in upstate New York has worked with hundreds of these tough drunks over the past twelve years. Strong AA is the standard fare at East Ridge, and they have a recovery rate of over seventy percent with these so-called AA failures. No success turns to success for the lion's share of them when weak AA is replaced with strong AA.

There is another, more insidious, danger built into weak AA. In many cases the "recovery" produced by watered-down approaches to the Twelve Steps fails to hold up over the long haul. What looked in the beginning like an easier, softer way to maintain happy sobriety yields progressively less and less contentment, finally ending in a complete reversal of momentum and a relapse into serious personal misery. The end result may be a return to active alcoholism; or, short of that total disaster, it may be a sinking out into a life of discontented abstinence, marred by some combination of tension, resentment, depression, compulsive sick sex, and an overall sense of meaninglessness. Either way, it is a final failure to reap the benefits of the AA program; it is, in the last analysis, a failure to recover.

Two disturbing tendencies are noticeable in contemporary AA. One is toward a lower recovery rate overall. For the first twenty years, the standard AA recovery estimate was seventy-five percent. AA experience was that fifty percent of the alcoholics who came to AA got sober right away and stayed sober. Another twenty-five percent had trouble for a while but eventually got sober for good, and the remaining twenty-five percent never made a recovery. Then there was a period of some years when AA headquarters stopped making the seventy-five percent recovery claim in their official literature. In 1968, AA's General Service Organization published a survey indicating an overall recovery rate of about sixty-seven percent. The net of all this seems to be that as AA has gotten bigger and older, its effectiveness has dropped from about three in four to about two in three. (Note: two in three was in 1976 - our data shows numbers much LESS in 1997 - 1 in 15)

The second unhealthy trend movement-wise is not backed by figures, but it is clear enough to any careful observer of the AA scene. As the fellowship grows older in time, its class of old-timers, alcoholics sober ten years and longer, grows. And the question of the staying power of an AA recovery looms even larger. It is an unhappy fact that growing numbers of these old-timers find the joy going out of their sobriety, that many of them search around frantically for ways to recapture the old zest for booze-free living, often ending up in such blind alleys as lunatic religions, dangerous pop psychological fads, or chemical alternatives like acid, pot, tranquilizers, and mood elevators. And far too many end up either back drinking

or, what is almost as sad, sunk in despondency, hostility, bizarre acting-out patterns of one sort or another, or just plain, devastating boredom.

All of this is unnecessary. The gradually shrinking recovery rate and the old-timer blues do not require a complex or an innovative solution. The answer lies in a return to original, strong AA. The men who wrote the Big Book were, as it turns out, right after all. There is no easier, softer way. The extra work and commitment required by the full program approach pay enormous dividends. They make sobriety fun because they do not make sobriety an end in itself. Mere non-drinking is a very negative kind of life goal. Even the power of a world-scale society of non-drinkers can be in and of itself only a temporary and limited deterrent for most alcoholics.

The majority of those who become addicted are people with a mystical streak, an appetite for inexhaustible bliss. We sought in bottles what can only be found in spiritual experience. AA worked in the first place because its Twelve Steps were a workable set of guidelines to spiritual experience. Growth of the movement made possible for a time a kind of parasitism in which partial practitioners and non-practitioners of the spiritual principles were able to feed off the strength of those who had undergone real spiritual experiences. But at this point in time, (1976) the parasites have already drained the host organism of a considerable portion of its life force.

It is late in the day to be sounding a call for a return to the original way, the way of faithful practice of the full program. Still, a great deal of life is left in the fellowship, and a major revival is possible if enough of us see our dangerous situation, personally and as a fellowship, in time. What we need to do is clear enough. It is spelled out in the first seven chapters of the Big Book. What it all boils down to - especially for us old-timers - is a willingness to continue practicing all the principles in all our affairs today, rather than resting on our laurels, taking our stand on what we did way back when, in our first weeks and months of sobriety.

But we must not fail to face squarely the need for change, the need for re-dedication. Complacency, smugness in our record of success, is our greatest enemy. If we, as a recovered-addict society, are unwilling to reverse our present course, the outlook is clear enough. We stand to recapitulate in less than a century what the Christian church has spent the last two thousand years demonstrating: that even the best of human institutions tend to deteriorate in time; and that size in spiritual organizations is all too often achieved at the expense of compromise of basic principles and the progressive abandonment of original goals and practices.

I owe my life to AA. I hope we have the vision, and the humility, to change. I know we can if we will. This much is certain: the Twelve Steps are as inspired, as effective, as un-compromised, and as practicable now as they were when they were first put in writing thirty-seven years ago. (1976)

SOME BIG BOOK DEFINITIONS

anger: a strong feeling of displeasure or antagonism.
alcohol: A depressive drug. A sedative.
allergy: an abnormal reaction to food or chemical substance.
agnostic: a person who believes that nothing can be known about God.
atheist: a person who believes God does not exist.
believe: to suspect that something is true, or accept that possibility.
craving: an overpowering desire. (*Big Book* - after starting to drink)
decision: to "cut into" or "cut in two." To gather facts and select which are going to be acted upon.
Humor - ALL decisions are based on inadequate information.
defect: imperfection, shortcoming.
disease: (dis-ease) a condition that separates a person from normal health patterns.
dishonesty: willful perversion of truth in order to deceive.
envy: painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another.
exact: accurate, precise, methodical.
fault: something done wrongly; an error or mistake.
faith: confidence, sureness, credulity, reliance, trust.
fear: an unpleasant emotion brought on by negative anticipation. Guilt stems from fear of the past, dread from fear of the future.
frightened: a temporary or continual state of fear.
greed: excessive desire to acquire certain things.
honest: truthfulness. Fair and just - not cheating or stealing.
inconsiderate: without thought or consideration of others.
insanity: *Big Book* - the peculiar mental state alcoholics get into before the first drink.
inventory: a written list
life (lives): an individual's actions. The manner of one's existence.
lust: excessive desire or seeming need (usually sex).
manifestation: the "display" or evidence of something else.
mistake: error, fault, inaccuracy.
moral: truth, inner meaning, scrupulous.
nature: essential qualities or components.
obsession: to fill the mind continually. To preoccupy or haunt to the exclusion of contrary ideas.
phenomenon: some unique event that we may see but may not understand.
powerless (over alcohol): *Big Book* - cannot drink as the result of an allergy manifested by craving, and cannot stop (or stay stopped) as the result of a mental obsession.
pride: excessive and unjustified opinion of oneself; too high (self-love) or too low (self-hate).
resentment: from the preface "re" (repeating or over and over,) and "sentire," (to feel). Indignant or bitter feelings. Often followed by "at."
sanity: from "sanitas" (whole). Mental health. The tendency to avoid extreme views.
selfish: deficient in the consideration for others.
self-centered: preoccupied with ones' own personality or affairs.
self-seeking: excessive caring about one's own welfare before that of others.
shortcoming: failure to come up to a standard. Defect.
sloth: having no inclination to act or put forth effort.
will: thinking. The faculty by which a person decides.
will power: control exercised over impulse; self-control.
willing: cheerful intention; gladly ready (to act).
wrong: acting, judging, or believing incorrectly. In error.
vital: necessary (for life), indispensable.

WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY - 1939:

alcohol: spirituous or intoxicating element in fermented liquors. Pure or rectified spirits of wine.
spirit: the soul, courage, vivacity, alcohol.

Recover**ED** ??????? ?!!!!!!!

We are often asked how we dare refer to ourselves as recoverED alcoholics. The degree of resistance and even anger that this phrase elicits is both alarming and amusing. This strident and oftentimes emotional reaction may come from an experience of a fear-based fellowship ☹ it does not come from anything found in the program. Unfortunately, the feeling of being threatened by the good news, by the light, tends to limit our experience of the amazing spiritual adventure. We have even been told that this was the wrong message. On the contrary, this IS the AA message because it is **THE** message of the Big Book.

On page 45, the Problem is defined as a “lack of power”. The main object of this book is to “...enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” If we follow the planned program of action as outlined in pages 45 through 85, we arrive at perhaps the greatest promise of them all: “Sanity will have returned...the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us.” At this juncture of the Process, lack of power moves from WAS our problem, to IS no longer our problem and we have **recoverED** from alcoholism by tapping into an “unsuspected inner resource” through the vehicle of the STEPS.

The theme of the Big Book is permanent recovery. It simply cannot be misconstrued. But don't take our word for it. Here are just a few of the places where the word “recoverED” is used:

Title Page: ☹ The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism

XIII: line 4 ☹ To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.

XV: line 12 ☹ In that brief space....membership is far above 150,000 recovered alcoholics.

XXIII: line 22 ☹ This man and over one hundred others appear to have recovered.

17: line 3 ☹ Nearly all have recovered. They have solved the drink problem.

20: line 6 ☹ ...we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body.

29: line 3 ☹ Further on, clear cut directions are given showing how we recovered.

44: line 25 ☹ If a mere code of morals ...were sufficient...many of us would have recovered long ago.

90: line 23 ☹ If he says yes...drawn to you as a person who has recovered.

113: line 8 ☹ ...thousands of men...have recovered.

132: line 30 🗨️ We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others.

133: line 14 🗨️ We, who have recovered...are miracles of mental health.

165: line 2 🗨️ Personal Stories. How Forty Three Alcoholics Recovered From Their Malady

RecoverED does not mean that our physical allergy to alcohol has disappeared. We are and always will be alcoholic. We will forever be powerless over the second drink. It simply means that “as long as we keep in fit spiritual condition” we will “react sanely and normally” and “We [will] feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality – safe and protected.” RecoverED does not mean we have been cured.

RecoverED means that we have been given a gift. We have been given a “daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” This is very, very good news.

This is the news that helps us to learn how to LIVE OUT LOUD.

This is the news that begins our transformation from children of the night to children of the light.

THE 1, 2, 3 OF ALL PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Know EXACT NATURE Problem	2. "Self evident" SOLUTION	3. "Program" of ACTION
1. ALCOHOLISM EXACT NATURE = POWERLESS	2. "Self-evident" SOLUTION is to find POWER	3. Find the POWER through PROGRAM of STEPS
DOCTOR'S. OPINION Chapter 1 – Bill's Story	Chapter 2 – There is A Solution Chapter 3 – More About Alcoholism Chapter 4 – We Agnostics	Chapter 5 – How It Works Chapter 6 – Into Action Chapter 7 – Working With Others
STEP 1	STEP 2	STEPS 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

"Lack of Power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power? Well, that's EXACTLY what this book is about. Its MAIN OBJECT is to enable you to FIND A POWER greater than yourself which WILL SOLVE YOUR PROBLEM." (Big Book, page 45 - caps added)

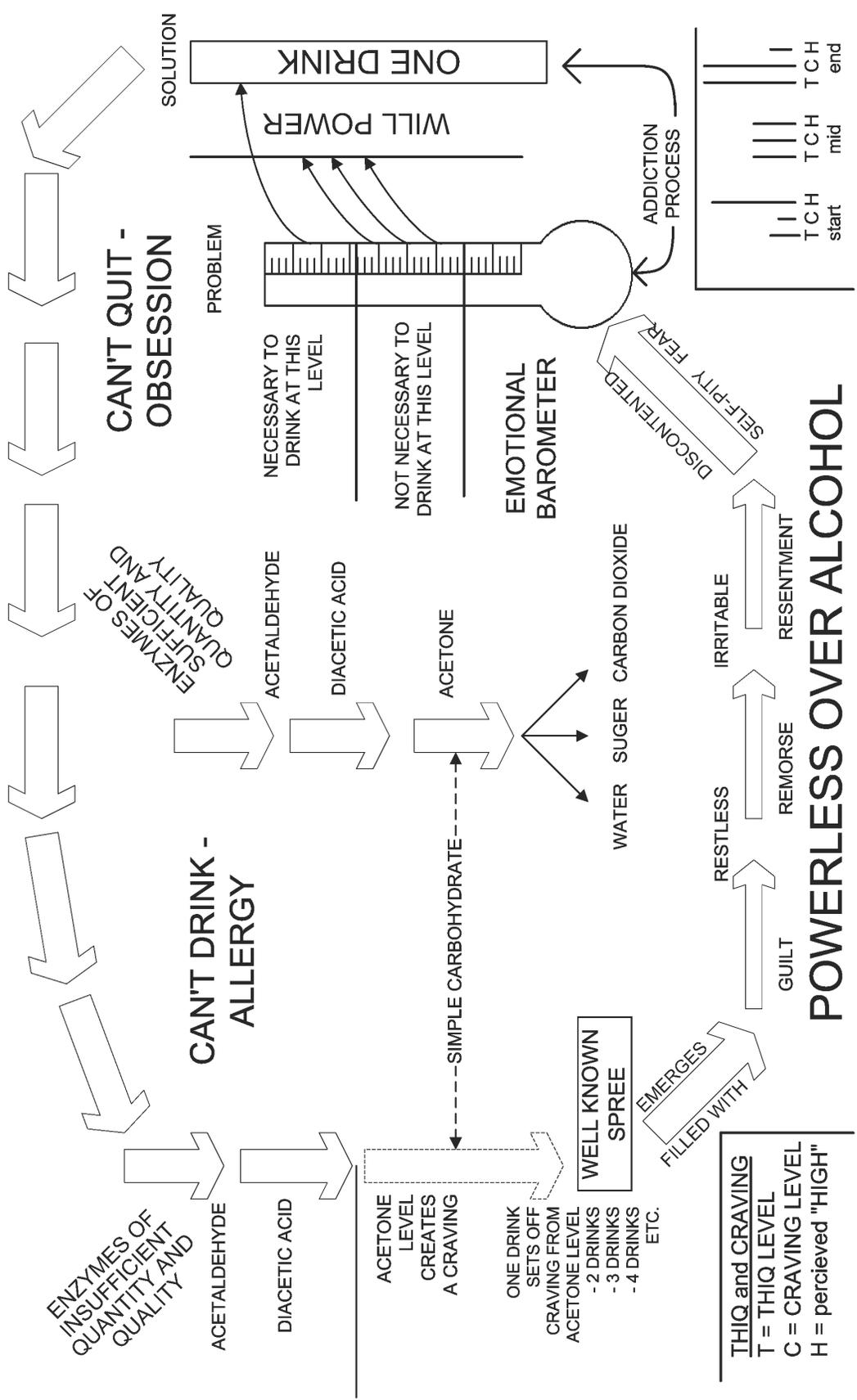
DISEASE CONCEPT OF ALCOHOLISM

PHYSICAL

ONE DOES NOT DRINK SAFELY
OR HE IS AT DIS-EASE

MENTAL

NINE DRINK SAFELY
THEY ARE AT EASE



Disease Concept of Alcoholism

“God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.” (*Big Book* page 164)

“Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows ... We learned that we had to concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.” (*Big Book* page 30)

“...an allergy which **differentiates these people**, and sets them apart as a **distinct entity**.” (*Big Book* - “*The Doctor’s Opinion*” page xxviii)

The following material is designed to elaborate on the disease concept of alcoholism as put forth by Dr. Silkworth in “*The Doctor’s Opinion*.” When the *Big Book* was first published in 1939, the suggestion that alcoholism is a disease was so radical that Dr. Silkworth declined the use of his name. It is amazing to note, that in the subsequent decades, our ever-widening knowledge base has not been able to contradict or erode the doctor’s original premise. On the contrary, it has provided an even greater opportunity to understand the essential differences between us and non-alcoholics. We have come to believe through experience that without a thorough understanding of the ‘**exact nature of the malady**’ or **THE PROBLEM** - there is little hope we will dare to take the action necessary to experience **THE SOLUTION**.

“In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.” (AA’s view in “*The Doctor’s Opinion*” page xxiv)

We are confident that with a deeper awareness of what is REALLY meant with “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol” we will be more likely to come to terms with the unmanageability of our lives, described so well on page 52 of the *Big Book*. “We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn’t control our emotional natures, we were prey to misery and depression, we couldn’t make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn’t seem to be of real help to other people.” We add “We were not comfortable with our sex life,” and think of these as the “criteria” for untreated alcoholism.

The first part of Step 1 helps us ‘buy into’ Sobriety.

The second part of Step 1 helps us ‘buy into’ Recovery.

Approached with a ‘beginner’s mind’, we have found this material indispensable in showing “other alcoholics **precisely** how we have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.”

The following information comes from an article written by Dr. David L. Ohlms, entitled “The Disease Concept of Alcoholism.” Dr. Ohlms has developed a national

reputation in the field of alcoholism, taking off from Dr. Silkworth's "theory." We offer it here in the spirit of the *Big Book* (page 31) "Science may one day accomplish this..."

"There is good news about one of mankind's oldest diseases - alcoholism. Not too many years ago nearly everybody thought it was hopeless. We don't think so any more.

"The story begins in the late 1930's when people who were suffering and dying from alcoholism got tired of going to professionals because the professionals couldn't seem to help them - the alcoholics just kept on dying. Or wound up in lunatic asylums or jails. So alcoholics banded together and formed an organization to help themselves - Alcoholics Anonymous - and lo and behold, they did discover a way to stop dying and make themselves better.

"AA members not only stopped dying and got healthier, they discovered a method that let them give up drinking and lead as normal a life as anyone else. That's the second part of the good news. But in order to help fellow alcoholics, AA first had to decide that alcoholism was a treatable disease. Let's go back to that half of the good news now.

"You have to remember that early AA members weren't research scientists - they were businessmen, salesmen, carpenters, waitresses - and they were all seemingly hopeless drunks who only recently had been able to stop drinking. But the AA program was so successful that finally after several decades, medical science felt forced to take a good look at it. Why did it work? Why was it that these ordinary people, doing what they did, were able to get well, while we professionals, treating medically and psychiatrically, seemed to make them sicker rather than better?

"The first thing we noticed was that AA people were saying that alcoholism is a primary disease. It is its own disease. It causes its own symptoms - it is not itself a symptom of some other disease - and AA treated it this way. And medical science finally had to admit that AA was right! In 1956 the American Medical Association officially recognized alcoholism as a true disease - an entity of and by itself, that created its own problems, its own symptoms, that had its own treatment - and the AMA published this view in a major paper.

"Now in order to go on with our story, we need to say something here about disease. I think we need to define it, and that's not easy to do. Here's one I like out of a 99 cent pocket dictionary: "A disease is anything that interferes with the ability of the human being to function normally". Whatever it is, however you caught it, a disease prevents you from living your life as efficiently as you ordinarily would.

"The definition I like to use for alcoholism is: a chronic, progressive, incurable disease characterized by loss of control over alcohol and other sedatives. Let's take a look at what this really means. CHRONIC is self-explanatory. It lasts a long time. PROGRESSIVE is fascinating. It's one of the unique features of the illness, and one of the reasons why most people in the helping professions - medicine, counseling, etc. - don't like alcoholics. It goes on and on and on. And it demoralizes everyone involved. It tends to make them say "What's the use?" almost from the beginning. So while the disease gets worse as the alcoholic continues to drink, what about the fellow who resumes his drinking after even a prolonged period of sobriety? Within a short period of time, the symptoms that the alcoholic will show are the same symptoms showed when drinking was stopped 10, 15 or 25 years before. And usually worse. It's as if those years

meant absolutely nothing. I know this is shocking - it has almost a hint of the supernatural - but later I think I can give you a scientific explanation as to why it is a medical fact.

“INCURABLE disease simply means that an alcoholic cannot be taught to handle controlled social drinking. Science has so far given us no cure for alcoholism. LOSS OF CONTROL is what makes this disease different from other chronic, incurable diseases such as diabetes. Loss of control does not mean that when an alcoholic takes a drink - every time he takes a drink - he’s going to drink to excess and get drunk. Loss of control means that once an alcoholic takes that first drink, he can’t predict with any reliability whether he’s going to have a normal or abnormal drinking episode. He’s lost the ability to predict his drinking behavior. He no longer controls alcohol, as most of us do; it controls him.

“The alcoholic has lost control over not just the drug alcohol - for alcohol is basically nothing more than a widely-available, socially acceptable, non-prescription and inexpensive sedative. He’s lost control over all other sedative drugs as well. Most alcoholics, in my experience, run back and forth from alcohol to some form of tranquilizer. It is a vicious cycle and a significant number of alcoholics will eventually have their minds destroyed by the disease. About 34 out of 36 will be killed by it in one way or another. One out of 36 will get treatment, will recover and get well. That’s a tragic statistic. It’s tragic because it’s unnecessary. For middle-stage alcoholics, recovery rates are as high as 80%. Late-stage recovery rates run from 25% to 35%. By “recovery”, I mean people regaining their health and going back to normal, functioning, working lives. There are very few chronic, progressive, incurable illnesses where 25% to 80% of those who have found treatment can get well again.

“The cause for alcoholism, like many other diseases, has yet to be proven. However, heredity studies, done all over the world, clearly show that genetics is far more significant in determining whether or not you’ll be an alcoholic than any combination of social or environmental factors combined. Now I’m not saying a person is born an alcoholic. No. I’ve never met an alcoholic who didn’t drink. But I think it’s conclusive that some people are indeed predisposed to alcoholism because of their heredity; and if they ever start drinking, they run an unbelievably high risk of developing the disease.

“Of course, in medicine we have a lot of diseases that work that way. Diabetes has a high family predisposition, for example. When science notices a family predisposition toward a disease, it will look for some abnormality in body chemistry. What about the body chemistry of the alcoholic? The key discovery came by complete accident. A medical scientist named Virginia Davis was doing cancer research in Houston, Texas. For her studies, she needed fresh human brains – which are not widely available. So she’d ride out with the Houston police in the early morning and collect the bodies of winos who had died on Skid Row the night before. The warm bodies were rushed back to the hospital, where the brains were removed.

“One day Virginia was talking to some doctors in the hospital cafeteria. She was telling them about some finding of her laboratory studies, and she said: “You know, I never realized that all those winos used heroin as well as booze.” The doctors laughed. “Come on, Virginia,” they told her. “These guys don’t use heroin. They can barely afford a bottle of cheap muscatel.” She had discovered in the brains of those chronic alcoholics a substance that is, in fact, closely related to heroin. This substance, long known to scientists is called Tetrahydroisoquinoline - or (fortunately) THIQ for short. When a person shoots heroin into his body, some of it breaks down and turns into this THIQ. But then these people hadn’t been using heroin; they had just been simple alcoholics. So how

did the THIQ get there?

“When the normal adult drinker takes in alcohol, it’s very rapidly eliminated at the rate of about one ounce per hour. The body first converts the alcohol into something called acetaldehyde. This is very toxic stuff, and if it were to build up inside us, we would get violently sick; and indeed we could die. But Mother Nature helps us to get rid of acetaldehyde very quickly. She efficiently changes it into acetic acid, which we will know as vinegar, and then changes it a couple of more times - into carbon dioxide and water - which is happily eliminated through the kidneys and lungs. That’s what happens to normal drinkers. It also happens with alcoholic drinkers, BUT they get what we might call a P.S.

“What Virginia discovered in Houston, which has been extensively confirmed since, is that something additional happens in the alcoholic. In them, a very small amount of poisonous acetaldehyde is NOT eliminated; instead it goes to the brain where, through a very complicated biochemical process, it winds up as this THIQ. THIQ is manufactured right in the brain, and it only occurs in the brain of the alcoholic drinker; it does NOT happen in the brain of the normal social drinker of alcohol. THIQ has been found to be highly addictive. It was tried in experimental use with animals during W.W.II, when we were looking for a pain killer less addicting than morphine. THIQ was a pretty good pain killer, all right, but it turned out to be much more addicting than morphine. There are, as you might know, certain kinds of rats that cannot be made to drink alcohol. Put them in a cage with a very weak solution of vodka and water; they will literally thirst to death before they agree to drink it. But if you take the same rat and put an unbelievably minute quantity of THIQ in its brain - the animal will immediately develop a preference for alcohol over water. In fact he’ll be happier if you mix his drink with less and less water. So we’ve taken a teetotaling rat and turned him into an alcoholic rat. All we needed was smidgen of THIQ.

“Other studies have been done with monkeys, our close animal relatives in medical terms. We’ve learned that once THIQ is injected into a monkey’s brain, it stays there. You can keep a THIQ’ed monkey dry, off alcohol, for as long as 7 years; then when you study his brain, that weird stuff is still there. This takes us back to the progressiveness of the disease. Remember that person who’s been sober for 10 or 25 years, and then suddenly starts drinking again? The alcoholic will immediately show the same symptoms displayed years before! - and it’s no wonder. The human alcoholic is still carrying THIQ like those man-made, alcoholic monkeys and rats.

“Now alcoholics don’t intend to make THIQ when they start drinking. They don’t mean for their brains to manufacture something stronger than morphine. Most normal folks take a drink now and then, and the young alcoholics-to-be want to be normal. So they take a drink now and then, too. But they don’t know about the predisposition toward THIQ-making their brain chemistry has inherited. In their drinking careers, as THIQ piles up, the alcoholic will cross over a shadowy line into a whole new way of life. Some predisposed people cross the line while they’re teenagers - or earlier! It won’t occur in others until they’re 30 or 40 or maybe even retired. But once it does happen, the alcoholic will be as hooked on alcohol as he would have been hooked on heroin if he’d been shooting that instead - and for very similar chemical reasons.

“Alcoholism is a disease - and that’s good news. Alcoholism is not the alcoholic’s fault - and that’s good news too. The alcoholic patients I see are usually hugely relieved to hear that it’s not their fault, because they’ve been carrying tons of guilt along with the alcoholism - and that guilt was often worse than useless. Now instead of guilt, the alcoholic person knows the facts, he or she can, with treatment,

learn how to live like normal, healthy grown-ups again. That's good news for all of us. That's the best news any human being can ever expect."

Food for thought:

Most alcoholics reach out or arrive at our doorstep with three things intact:" (A) the illness of ALCOHOLISM, (b) ignorance and misinformation as to the EXACT NATURE of the malady, and (c) a BAG FULL of SECRETS.

There is a widely held misconception that taking a new person to a few AA meetings or giving them a *Big Book* will "plant the seed," and really "screw up their drinking." Our own experience has proven THIS IS NOT SO.

In our basic text, we will find the following statement: "*But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with the facts about himself, can generally win the confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours.*" (*Big Book* page 18 *italics* - underline added)

It is interesting to note that in the "*original manuscript*" this read: "...who is properly armed with CERTAIN MEDICAL INFORMATION..." (caps and underlining added)

We find validation of this in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*: "It was then discovered that when one alcoholic had planted in the mind of another the true nature of his malady, that person could never be the same again." (Page 23)

"IN A FEW HOURS" we can address two of the three items mentioned above! We can then, and only then, move on to discussions and sharing of the Spiritual Solution which will take care of the illness AND the "bag of secrets."

When this material is in place, and we are confident that it is understood, we dare to go so far as to explain to the new person that though they may be held ACCOUNTABLE for their past actions, they are not RESPONSIBLE.

The other side of the coin is, now that they DO understand the "Disease Concept of Alcoholism" and that there is a "Spiritual Solution," they are 100% ACCOUNTABLE and 100% RESPONSIBLE.

"For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead." (*Big Book* ... you find the page !)

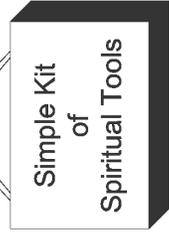
WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

FELLOWSHIP SUPPORTS US

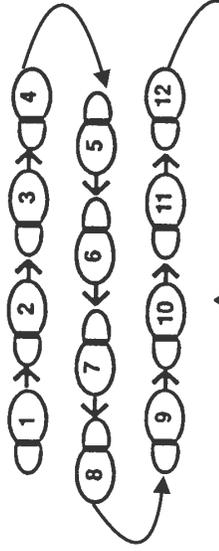
WILLINGNESS → INVESTIGATION

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING CHANGES US

BELIEVE

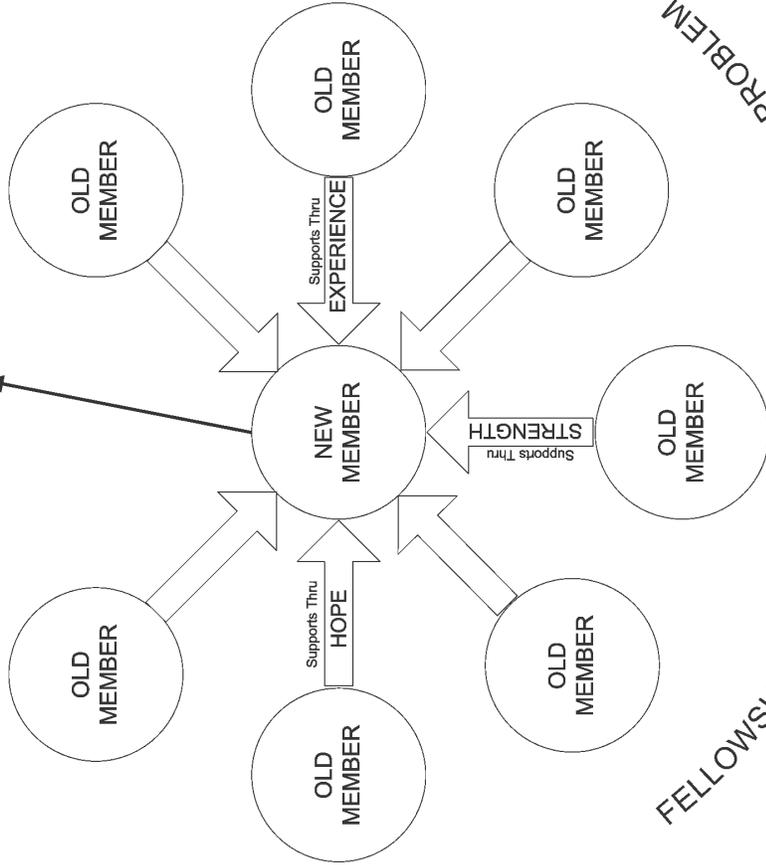


TWELVE STEPS



Revolutionizes our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows, and toward God's Universe

PERSONALITY CHANGE SUFFICIENT TO RECOVER FROM ALCOHOLISM



FELLOWSHIP OF THOSE WHO SUFFER THE SAME PROBLEM

Promises ... Promises **147** of them! - That's GOOD NEWS! That's **HOPE**

Page	Line	Promises
XII	4	...who have recovered. To show other alcoholics...(2)
XXVII	11	...find himself easily able to control his desire...
XXX	4	...he is as fine a specimen...
11	20	...raised from the dead...
11	34	...inwardly reorganized. ...different footing. ...best...(3)
13	30	...promised... ...all my problems. (2)
15	18	...design for living that works in rough going.
15	22	...The joy of living...overcome among us (7)
16	10	...vast amount of fun about it all..
16	15	...need look no further for Utopia.
17	5	...recovered. ...Solved the drink problem. ...There exists...(3+)
17	24	...a way out... ...join... ...this is the great news... (3)
25	14	...found much of heaven... ...fourth dimension... ...fact... (3+)
26	32	...free man... .. nor is he confined... ...go anywhere... (3)
28	8	...A new life has been given us...
42	33	...all my problems... more satisfying... (2)
46	26	...we began to be possessed by a new sense of power...
47	17	...he is on his way...wonderfully effective...structure
50	17	...on one proposition...was so unsatisfactory (7)
52	25	...when we saw others solve...the God idea did. (2)
55	23	...If our testimony...you cannot fail. (2)
57	11	...Even so has God restored...to us! (2)
58	3	...Rarely have we seen...path
58	13	...There are those too...recover...honest.
63	2	...When we sincerely...remarkable things followed.
63	9	...As we felt new power...We were reborn. (8)
63	30	...This was only ... at once.
68	27	...At once, we commence to outgrow fear.
75	15	...We can look...Spirit of the Universe. (8)
78	9	...Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress.
83	30	...If we are painstaking...do for ourselves (16-19)
84	15	...They will always materialize if we work for them.
84	31	...And we have ceased...fit spiritual condition. (12-15)
85	27	...If we have carefully...His Spirit into us.
86	2	...It works...if we work at it.
86	26	...Our thought-live...wrong motives.
86	31	...Here we ask God...part of the mind. (3)
87	9	...Nevertheless...rely upon it.
87	34	...We constantly...to suit ourselves...it really does. (9)
89	10	...Life will take on new meaning.
93	2	...he has become...how you got well.
95	30	...We have no monopoly...worked with us.
100	6	...Both you and the new...present circumstances. (3)

100	32	...Assuming we are...his spiritual status. (3)
102	21	...Now you are getting back into the social life of this world.
108	15	...Today most of our men...than ever before.
117	18	...You will make mistakes...emerge when they are overcome.
120	5	...You will lose the old life to find one much better.
132	18	...We absolutely insist on enjoying life.
132	27	...So we think cheerfulness...the power to help others. (2)
133	3	...We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free.
133	15	...We who have recovered...miracles of mental health. (2)
134	13	...Some of us had this experience...intimacy than ever.
150	3	...They have a new attitude...from a living death. (2)
152	12	...We have shown how we got out from under.
152	18	...Yes, there is a substitute...and so will you. (7)
153	7	...It may seem incredible...recovery proves that! (2)
156	13	...As we shall see...have been repaired in four.
158	23	...He never drank again. He too...his community. (?)
159	13	...These men...in giving themselves for others. (2)
162	31	...Thus we grow...need to begin.
163	6	...You forget...much greater than yourself...labor.
164	18	...See to it...This is the Great Fact for us.

By our count, I get 147 “promises:”

16 deal with “removal of the drink problem” or “sanity restored.” These are what we think of as the “criteria” for “recover**ED**.”

The other **131** deal with what we got from alcohol - when it “worked.”

If “*Dr. Bob’s Nightmare*” is included the total comes to over 150.

Clean House

Trust God

Work with Others

MAGIC

(“remarkable influence producing surprising results”-Concise Oxford Dictionary)

MAGIC” happens: when we put pen to paper

- in writing Step One
- in writing Step Two
- In writing Step Four
- In writing Step Six “list”
- In writing Step Eight “list” and our “plans and “heat factor”
- In writing Step Ten “when we retire at night”
- In writing ... letters, journalizing ...

“MAGIC” happens: when we learn to hear:

- by learning to listen ... with undivided attention
- by listening at meetings
- by listening to the new members
- by listening to the older members
- by listening to the “middle” members
- by listening to tapes
- by listening, when ONE alcoholic shares with ANother alcoholic
- by listening to a Step One and Two review
- by listening to a Third Step Decision
- by listening to a Fifth Step
- by listening to a review of Step 6
- by listening to Step Seven
- by listening to someone’s Step Eight list, plans, and heats

“MAGIC” happens: when we learn to share:

- share Step One with Another member
- share our conceptions or the “vision” of Step Two with ANother member
- share in Doing the Third Step with Another member
- share in the Fifth Step
- share at meetings
- share ONE alcoholic with ANother alcoholic in the Sprit of the 12th Step

“MAGIC” happens: when we learn to “see”:

- see the similarities amongst ourselves (rather than the differences)
- see others “catch fire” with this PROCESS and recover
- see the Changes Wrought in others
- see our own life’s “manifestations” change
- see that this process REALLY WORKS!

“MAGIC” happens: when we DO the ACTION:

- when we DO the Steps - ALL of them
- when we DO get a sponsor and commit to that relationship
- when we become an ACTIVE member of the Group
- when we ACTIVELY try to help others, especially alcoholics
- when we ACTIVELY try to RECEIVE and DO God’s Thinking

VISIONS OF HEALING

symptoms of inner peace

Tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than from fear based experiences

An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment

Loss of interest in judging other people

Loss of interest in judging self

Loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others

Loss of interest in conflict

Loss of the ability to worry – a very serious symptom

Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation

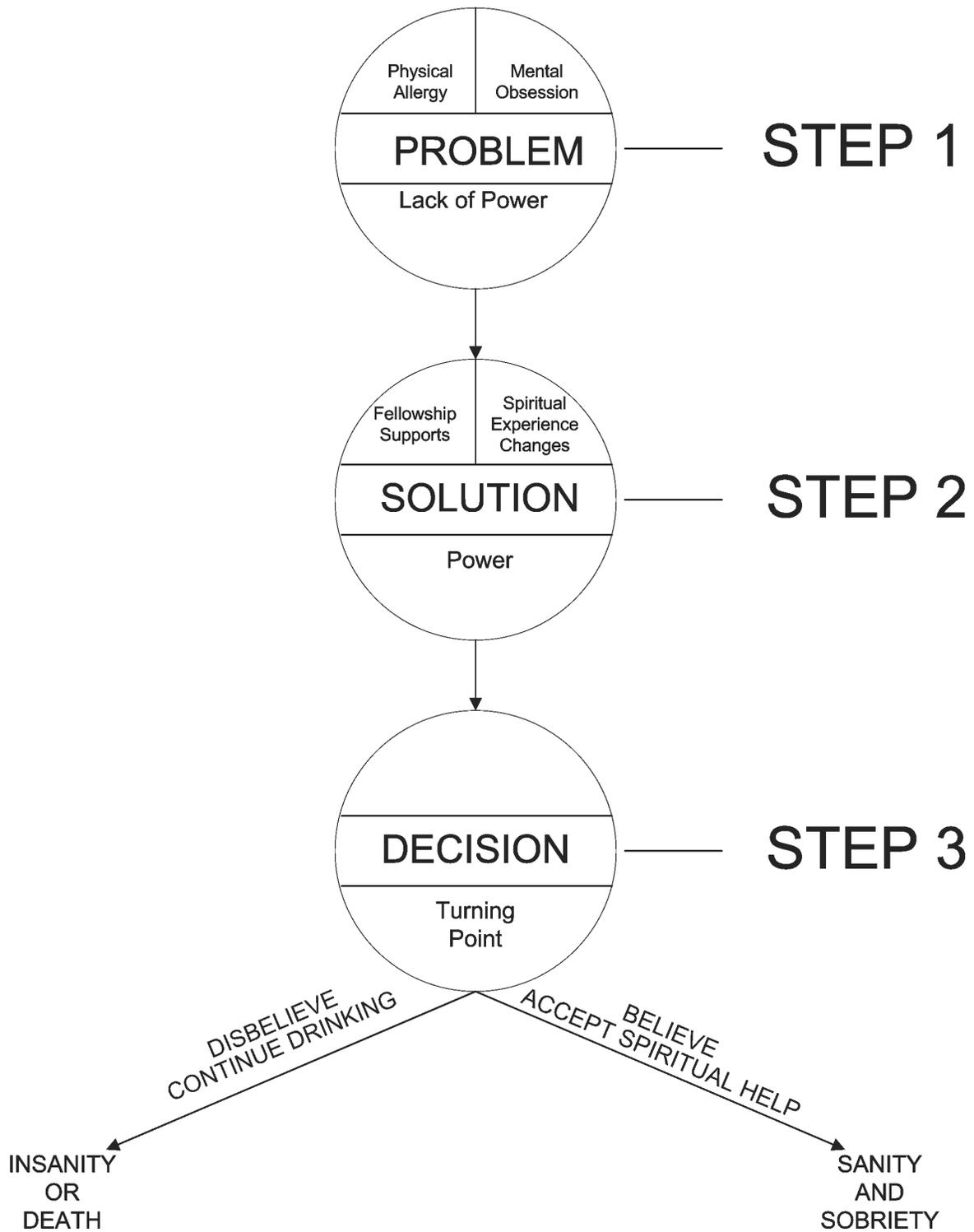
Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature

Frequent attacks of smiling through the eyes of the heart

Loss of the ability to hold back emotional displays like light-hearted laughter and compassionate tears

Increased susceptibility to love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it

ROAD CHART TO DECISION



STEP 4 - INVENTORY COMPARISON

<u>BUSINESS</u>	<u>PERSONAL</u>
Commercial Inventory = LIST	Personal Inventory = LIST
ON PAPER	ON PAPER
FACT-FINDING	SEARCHING
FACT-FACING - the way it <u>IS</u>	FEARLESS - the way it <u>IS</u>
DISCOVER THE TRUTH	MORAL = honest or TRUTHful
STOCK-IN-TRADE: GOODS IN STORE	STOCK-IN-TRADE: SELF: OUR THINKING & ACTIONS
DISCLOSE DAMAGED OR UNSALABLE GOODS	DISCLOSE THINGS BLOCKING US From the Sunlight of the Spirit (God's Will)
GET RID OF THEM PROMPTLY & WITHOUT REGRET	BECAME WILLING & ASKED GOD (steps 6 & 7) After frank discussion in Step 5
CANNOT BE FOOLED ABOUT VALUES	Move away from DELUSION, ILLUSION, RATIONALIZATION & JUSTIFICATION
NEGLECT LEADS TO BANKRUPTCY	NEGLECT LEADS US BACK TO WHERE WE CAME FROM

PROCESSING RESENTMENTS ("re" and "sentare" = to "re-FEEL")

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3	COLUMN 4
<p>List of people, institutions or principals I am angry at, feel hurt by, threatened by, am burned up at, or have a grudge against.</p>	<p>The reasons why I am angry</p>	<p>Was it my self-esteem, my security, my ambitions, my personal or sex relations which have been interfered with? (Review "3 Basic Instincts" page 26.)</p>	<p>Putting out of my mind the wrongs others have done, I now look for my own mistakes. Where might I have been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened or inconsiderate?</p>
<p>P R A Y E R *</p>			

* We ask God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. ... This is a sick person. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done. -- Alcoholics Anonymous page 67

FEAR INVENTORY

COLUMN 1

COLUMN 2

COLUMN 3

<p>My Fears: a) from the resentment sheets b) from the "Partial List of Fears (next page) c) other fears</p>	<p>Why do I have this fear? How is my "self-reliance" involved? (See "3 Basic Instincts" page 26)</p>	<p>How do I plan on trusting and relying upon God in this matter? I ask Him to remove this fear and direct my attention to what He would have me be.</p>
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A PARTIAL **FEAR** LIST

Fear of drinking	Fear of being broke
Fear of insanity	Fear of losing car, house, "stuff"
Fear of life	Fear of losing spouse, friend
Fear of injury	Fear of failure (SUCCESS)
Fear of blindness	Fear of poverty
Fear of deafness	Fear of money
Fear of death	Fear of wealth
Fear of cancer	Fear of law
Fear of dentists	Fear of court
Fear of doctors	Fear of police
Fear of hospitalization	Fear of jail
Fear of pain	Fear of Income Tax People
Fear of psychiatrists	Fear of Making Direct Amends
Fear of Step 3	Fear of Surgery
Fear of Step 4	Fear of sex (INTIMACY)
Fear of Step 5	Fear of Love
Fear of Step 9	Fear of FEAR
Fear of Loss of Love	Fear of impotency
Fear of Loss of spouse / partner	Fear of commitment
Fear of detachment	Fear of sponsor
Fear of rejection	Fear of AA
Fear of criticism	Fear of GOD
Fear of loneliness	Fear of churches
Fear of crowds	Fear of candle-light meetings
Fear of public speaking	Fear of confined spaces
Fear of flying	Fear of eye to eye contact
Fear of the dark	Fear of "burning in hell"
Fear of heights	Fear of "the realm of the spirit"
Fear of fire	Fear of psychic experiences
Fear of being fired	Fear of water
Fear of being laid off	Fear of snakes
Fear of financial insecurity	Fear of animals, dogs, cats
Fear of old age	Fear of BEING CAUGHT at <u>ANYTHING</u>
Fear of sorrow	Fear of <u>"IF YOU KNEW THIS ABOUT ME"</u>

SEX INVENTORY

COLUMN 1

COLUMN 2

COLUMN 3

Where have I been selfish in my sex conduct?
 Where have I been dishonest in my sex conduct?
 Where have I been inconsiderate in my sex conduct?
 Who have I hurt?
 Where have I aroused unjustifiable jealousy?
 Where have I aroused suspicion?
 Where have I aroused bitterness?

Where was I at fault?

What should I have done instead?
 What commitments am I prepared to make so that I may grow toward my "ideal"?
 Am I prepared to make amends?
 Am I willing to ask God about each specific matter?

STEP 4 “STUFF”

We have called this “stuff” rather than a “guide” or “interpretation” or any number of other terms. Some of it is quoted from AA textbooks, some from other AA members, some from Step-working Alanon members, some from other Fellowship members and a lot from our own collective experience in Doing and HEARing numerous Step 5’s.

Invariably there will be those that object and say: “This isn’t AA.” Others will ask: “What’s all this childhood crap?” Another faction objects to so many questions about sex. We believe that most of these objections and arguments stem from “untreated alcoholism,” and all we suggest is: “If it bothers you so much, why don’t you write about why it pisses you off so much and share all that with God and another human being?” We are sharing our experience.

We alcoholics (and addicts too!) are naturally very rebellious at being “told” we must DO anything, yet some desire to experience **recovery** rather than mere “relief” has brought you thus far. We are not attempting to do anything but present this material in the form of HOW we have evolved into DOing it. It is our hope that the “suggestions” and questions presented here will not offend you and will help on your Journey.

Recovery involves experiencing not just the “12 promises” that are so often read at meetings, but all 147 that are described in the *Big Book*.

We will be urging you to do several things to help the inventory process along and help side-step the pitfalls of fear, delay, misinformation, and outright procrastination; but first, a check-up on prior Steps:

1. Have you a **written** “Step 1?” We encourage writing about (and saving) an emotional description of how you experienced defeat, the events that brought you to reach out for help. If you are a “retread” write your description about relapse. What makes this time different?
2. Have you a **written** “Step 2?” We suggest this as a written form of a future “vision.” What would it be like to experience the majority of the 147 promises? What would have to happen to be “restored to sanity”? What would freedom from people and fear be like? Write about the “fourth dimension of existence” and having a “vital sixth sense.” What would exist in the heart of one who could quietly and confidently introduce themselves as a “recovered alcoholic”? Conscious contact? A life that included prayer and meditation? What would it be like to *KNOW* that you were walking hand-in-hand with the “Spirit of the Universe?”
3. Have you “done” the 3rd Step with someone - out loud? As an integral part of this Step, we ask for a written list of about a dozen “commitments.” Items such as: DO the Steps, join a group, get a sponsor, phone another person in recovery every day, attend two (or three or ??) meetings a week, DO the Steps

twice a year, subscribe to (& read!) the *Grapevine*, initiate a reading program, read a Fellowship pamphlet a week, join the local club, and a commitment to review this material on a regular basis with someone else. Especially helpful is a commitment to help someone else DO the Steps as soon as the opportunity presents itself. (“Magic” happens in the HEARing of 5th Steps.)

4. Have you made an appointment for the 5th Step? This will give a “time frame” in which to DO the 4th Step. Anywhere from three or four days to a month at the most. Let’s not make this into something it wasn’t intended to be! Please see the first few lines of page 292 in the Big Book.

We believe it is a life-saver to “buy into” the idea of working and re-working the Steps on a regular basis. Just as it was impossible to stay drunk on yesterday’s booze, nourished on yesterday’s food, it is difficult at best to keep “spiritually fit” on some Steps that were done 2, 5, 10, or more years ago - unless they were done *perfectly!* We haven’t come across that person yet! This attitude of commitment to working and re-working the Steps helps us from having to do everything “perfectly” the first time, and reduces some of the pressure.

We are convinced that the “intention” of the *Big Book* was for alcoholics to hear the 5th Steps of other alcoholics. By doing so, we often can strip away some more layers of our “terminal uniqueness” and come closer to understanding that we are indeed “cut from the same cloth and tarred with the same brush.” (See *Big Book* page 96, 2nd paragraph. and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 57, last 5 lines.) We also recommend a careful study of the AA pamphlet “A Member’s Eye View.”

Our experience has permitted us to witness much that falls into the sort of stuff the first paragraph on page 73 of the *Big Book* talks about ... “hanging on to some of the worst items in stock.” The later book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, has a variety of general questions we can ask ourselves as we go about Step 4. In the material that follows, you will find repeated suggestions to study both textbooks, not just for this Step, but for all your recovery process. As the result of *hearing* many 5th Steps, it has been found very beneficial to ask more specific questions than those posed in the texts.

It is our opinion that all this material will help in the discovery of the “real you” by stripping away “who you ain’t” and disclosing the four “building blocks” of the personality:

- (a) The ability to resist temptation.
- (b) How we “process” guilt.
- (c) The internalization of a belief system.
- (d) Sexual role identity.

The following material is by Bill W. (one of AA’s co-founders) and can be found in older copies of the *Public Information Workbook - Section VII - Presentations*, pages 60-62. (Underlining has been added.)

“There is considerable agreement among my professional colleagues, as well as

among AA's about the emotional problems at the bottom of alcoholism. The taproots are variously described as insecurity or anxiety – some sense of inadequacy, inferiority, or unworthiness, some sense of threat to self-esteem. It is believed that these roots generally go back to childhood years."

"... As an adult the person will still be driven, unconsciously, to repeat patterns which seemed to give him reassurance in childhood years. ... The AA program works so well, I believe, because it puts the finger on the underlying personality patterns and calls for a willingness to change them ... the old patterns for obtaining a substitute sense of adequacy and worth are given up."

"... AA shows that by letting go of the old ego, a person is enabled to find his true self. (By losing self he finds self.) ... It is a way which requires no alcohol to make it work, because it attunes the person to life as he was meant to be attuned."

"... This ties in with Step Three ... As long as there is an unwillingness to give up the desire for gaining some glory through AA, the "letting go" process is obviously incomplete ... other values like power, money, and other symbols of "success" ... were poor, un-nourishing substitute goods. None of them satisfied the real hunger – the hunger of spirit for an outgoing, satisfying relationship to other people and to life. The AA solution is to set about satisfying the real hunger."

"... displace these substitute spiritual foods ... and replace them with a diet that's adequate. And the diet which meets our real needs – which truly satisfies our spirits – consists of whole-hearted, deep running, positive relationships to other persons, to our work, to life, and to God."

We suggest using some kind of a notebook for this step. The BIG BOOK says on eight different occasions that we WRITE OUT Step 4. Trust that there is some degree of release in getting all this material down on paper.

We have found no contradiction incorporating this material with the 4 or 5-column "inventory sheets" used in many Big Book Studies. Just open your notebook and use the two page width to create the columns. As you come up with a resentment, fear, sex issue, or harm done to another person, add it to Column 1. - (See last 2 pages of these sheets.) When you are done with all the questions, "process" the material through the other columns. We are certain you will be better able to "swallow and digest some big chunks of truth about yourself." (*Big Book p. 71*)

When we stop drinking (and/or using), many of the more conspicuous problems that were caused by our actual drinking will disappear. But we are still left with the state of mind that had us pick up the first drink. We still have all the pains of the past - our fears, our guilts, our shames, our regrets, our emotional reactions to life, and our patterns. These were often felt so strongly by us that we needed something to relieve that pain, and nothing seemed to help as much as a few drinks. For a long time this answer to our pain worked, and, at times, our mind can have a great deal of difficulty remembering that it doesn't work the way it used to. THAT is the problem that this "treatment" addresses.

Many of us were often very capable at quitting drinking. We just couldn't stay quit! In taking the Steps, we are doing some new things which are designed to bring about what Dr. Silkworth called a "psychic change." When this change, also referred to as a "vital spiritual experience" happens, we no longer NEED to drink. The problem has been removed. Not by us through our will power or our "heroic" efforts at the Steps, but by some Power greater than human power. We are positive that your understanding of all this will unfold as you continue on the Path.

We've found that it isn't necessary to be of "purest intent" when you do Step 4, or what your ideas are as to what it will do for you and how that will be done. "Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings, which the process requires for its successful consummation." (BB p. 25)

WHAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU TAKE THE STEPS HONESTLY AND TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. Please don't rationalize that "you'll take it better if you take it later ... or "after I've been in AA a little longer", or any of the other wonderful rationalizations that many of us who have gone before you have used or "bought into." Three "killers" - booze, "our" way, and misinformation!

As alcoholics or addicts, most of us wanted to excel – really excel – at some activity or other. May we suggest this: If you ever decided to get with it (not perfectly, but the BEST you can honestly do), this undertaking is a good time to express that yearning. Thorough 4th and 5th Steps will get you more relief and comfort than you have any way of knowing. This is the thing that can lead to a real joy in living ... the sort that you may not have experienced since early childhood (if then) ... something that you have been searching for in the BOTTLE but couldn't quite find. BUT, don't stop there, remember there are 12 Steps!

Step 2 does NOT say, "Came to believe IN a Power greater than ourselves", but, "Came to believe THAT a Power greater than ourselves..." could help us become sane, happy people. For instance, the group is greater than I am as an individual ... which would make it a greater power.

It is very hard to deny that there is "something" at work in the lives of those people you see living sober (& clean!), happy, contented, purposeful lives. What ever you look to as a HIGHER POWER, you must remember, that in Step 3 you made a DECISION, just a DECISION, nothing more, to go in search of that POWER, IN WHOM YOU COULD ENTRUST YOUR WILL AND YOUR LIFE, which means your thinking and your actions. Whether or not you even believe IN a Higher Power at this point has nothing to do with it. Page 64 in the *BIG BOOK* 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."

The *Big Book* suggests that we take Step 4 “at once” after Step 3. You’re starting now to take step FOUR, so set up an appointment RIGHT AWAY to take your 5th STEP. Allow no more than a month to finish Step 4. (And don’t put off starting Step 4 because you haven’t found the person to take Step 5 with. If you can’t find anyone, phone one of us - that’s WHY our numbers are on the 1st page!)

Let us stress: you are NOT being graded on spelling, punctuation, or grammar. This 4th Step is for your eyes only. You’re going to tell it to someone, but this is FOR YOU. If you want to erase or scratch through something, DON’T DO IT. It might be one of the keys that would unlock some part of your personality that is now hidden from you. And remember, you can’t make a PERFECT inventory, but you CAN do your honest best.

The book, *TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS* states: “Creation gave us instincts for a purpose. Without them we wouldn’t be complete human beings. If men and women didn’t exert themselves to be secure in their persons, made no effort to harvest food or construct shelter, there would be no survival. If they didn’t reproduce, the earth wouldn’t be populated. If there were no social instinct, if men cared nothing for the society of one another, there would be no society. So these desires ... for the sex relation, for material and emotional security, and for companionship ... are perfectly necessary and right, and surely God-given.” (p.43)

It is when these instincts are warped and bent out of shape that we get in trouble, for their distortion brings pain. That first drink helped to obliterate such pain. And this is what your inventory is about ... to help you recognize those instincts of yours that are warped and out of control, and develop awareness of yourself and your reactions.

You will be asked to write about all the resentments, fears, guilt’s, hates, sex conduct / hang-ups, and harms done to others that you can remember. What you want to be aware of is your REACTION to what happened to you. A moral inventory deals with Truth; and feelings, both good and bad, are part of that Truth. The inventory process is designed to help us move beyond mere reflection about what we did or what was done to us, and come to *understand* that our reactions to those events and our current feelings about them are all ours. We attempt to see our part in all this. **This understanding will come more in the form of a Gift than the result of mere mental process, so please don’t try to force comprehension.**

Questions will ask you to write down the things that you remember (and may still feel) about the pains of embarrassment, fear, or guilt. Where were you at fault and what is it about it that hurts you now. *TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS* (p.51) reads “Since STEP FOUR is but the beginning of a lifetime practice, it can be suggested that he first have a look at those personal flaws which are acutely troublesome and fairly obvious.”

If you find that any question awakens some painful or distressing memory, write about it even if it is not an answer to that particular question.

SEARCH OUT AND FEARLESSLY PUT DOWN ON PAPER those things that are painful, embarrassing, fill you with fear, shame, or any other uncomfortable feelings (which could be guilt, rage, feelings of inferiority, etc.)

This is a long outline. Don't let it scare or dissuade you. Take each numbered question and in your own words write out YOUR numbered answer (let it ALL hang out!). Do not tear up any part of it. If you feel the statement you made is wrong, make a notation as to WHY it is wrong. Ask for Help to be honest and fearless. Trust us when we tell you that YOUR REWARDS WILL BE GREAT. Just do your best – your honest best. The same about memory. No one is capable of remembering every incident of their lives, so just deal with what you ARE capable of remembering.

Please keep in mind that the 4th Step is not dealing with CHANGING anything, although it is probably one of the oldest known “psychological facts” that a lot of material will lose some of its power over us when we get it down on paper. An inventory is only a list of our feelings and acts from the beginning until now. “We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty.” *BIG BOOK* (p.65) (It's NOT the format, just honest and thorough!)

Many have found that it helps to carry around a pocket size notebook so that they could jot down everything that pops into their head. It will be useful to you in your inventory. It really doesn't matter if you write information down that could be slightly incorrect insofar as dates, places, et cetera. JUST GET IT DOWN. Arrange to have a safe place to put your 4th Step Inventory. Nothing should be left out because “someone might see it who isn't supposed to.” Remember, in Step 4 we put down all the things that we wince at ... just remembering them, we screw our eyes closed and think “oh, no!” or “oh, damn, not that!” This is the stuff we fondly call “The Bag of Secrets”. JUST WRITE IT DOWN. IT'S NOT HURTING ANYONE BUT YOU.

Read what the *BIG BOOK* has to say about the 4th Step (p. 64-71). And the *TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS*, (p. 43-55).

The *BIG BOOK* refers to the, “... wreckage of your past ...” and from this we are tempted to deal only with the problems left in the wake of our alcoholism. The problems outside of us. The problems that were created as the RESULT of our drinking, BUT Step 4 and Step 5 deal with HOW the past has affected our world WITHIN. How our negative and/or distorted feelings about ourselves and others have wrecked us spiritually, mentally, and physically. The *BIG BOOK* instructs us to WRITE about fears, resentments, sex and sex hang-ups, and harms done to others.

Most of our patterns are set up in childhood and early adolescence, consequently, there are a lot of questions in these areas. They are divided in three parts: (1.) Childhood (2.) Adolescence (3.) Adulthood. Feel free to go from (3) → (2) → (1) if it's easier, or you're concerned about abiding by the instruction “we went back

through our lives.”

Thoroughness ought to be the watchword when taking inventory. We write it out to try and get clear thinking and an honest appraisal. It is our first TANGIBLE evidence or our complete willingness to move forward.

SOME FINAL WORDS:

Please try and stop believing that you need to get in the right mood to take this Step; you're in the right mood to take this Step when you are ready to quit hurting and you want to get well. Most of us have repeatedly tried to “think our way into right action.” Now, we are being asked to “act our way into right thinking.” We who have taken the Steps can tell you that THEY WORK.

A lot of us spend a lot of time dwelling on HOW this works and WHY this works. All we know is: “the only things that have the capacity to eat us alive are the things we cannot or will not share.” An old AA saying is: “analysis leads to paralysis!” We are certain that what you will “find” is not mere “relief” but **recovery with a real joy in living.**

Believe us, you can “get it”, and a giant step toward getting there is to DUMP THE ACCUMULATED GARBAGE THAT YOU ARE NOW CARRYING AROUND. So, get your pen and paper ready to begin! If the load gets unbearably heavy part way through, DUMP IT, then carry on with the rest.

If a question is truly not applicable, answer so (i.e. N/A). If you honestly don't know the answer to a question, then just indicate that you don't know. BUT, try and answer each question the best way you can. And remember, if any question suggests an area of discomfort (trouble), then WRITE IT OUT – GET IT DOWN ON PAPER !!!!

To encourage you as you embark on this part of your Journey, we'd like to share a little four-part thing called “THE SECRET.”

1. Start where you are at.
2. Do what you can do gracefully.
3. Step out in confidence.
- 4 EXPECT God's help.

O.K. SO FAR? WE HOPE SO! NOW PICK UP THE 800 POUND PEN!

That's where you're at!

CHILDHOOD (If this print is too small, buy some reading glasses!)

1. What kind of relationship did your mother have with her parents?
2. What kind of relationship did your father have with his parents?
3. Were you wanted at birth?
4. Write out the circumstances of your family at the time of your birth. Things such as: family size, age differences, financial status. Was there laughter? Arguing? Depression? Were other relatives or people living with you? In general describe what you think your family thought of you.
5. How old were you at the birth of brothers and sisters? How did you feel about the new arrivals? Were either of your parents sick enough to need hospitalization?
6. Were you separated from any important family member? Was there fear or guilt about this separation ... in other words, did YOU feel responsible?
7. Were you threatened if you misbehaved by the Bogey Man, or the Devil, or _____? If so, what were your fears in this regard? Are they still in your life today?
8. A child is made to feel guilty about his or her normal sexual curiosities. This comes about by his being caught and punished for touching himself, or being caught masturbating, or playing "doctor", or for participating in group masturbation. Many parents tell children that sexual feelings are evil and must be punished. With no sex education, and given this sort of teaching, a child will naturally distort what he knows about sex. When a child is exposed to fully developed nude persons (for instance in the bathroom at home, or in public), he or she may begin to feel inadequate because he has not yet developed. These feelings may carry over into feelings of inadequacy in adult life, even when the person is a thoroughly developed adult. Write down ANY of the above that makes you feel uneasy.
9. Were you afraid of the dark?
10. Were you afraid to fight? Or were you afraid NOT to fight because of pressure by father or older brothers or others?
11. How did your parents punish you? How did you react to punishment?
12. What kind of marriage do you THINK your parents had? If they fought, did you resent it? Did it scare you? Were you used to break up their fights? To take one side or the other? Or, were they so close you couldn't feel a part of them.
13. If your parents were from different religions, did you feel confused about it?
14. Were you afraid of storms?
15. List all the feelings of guilt, fear, resentments you had towards each person in your family, relatives, neighborhood friends etc.
16. List the first time you ever stole anything. Inventory all your thefts.
17. How old were you when you first masturbated? Were you ever caught and made to feel guilty? Did you feel guilty even though you weren't caught?
18. What other sexual activity were you involved in and not comfortable with? (Homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, animal, any other members of family, sodomy ... ANYTHING else)
19. If you were named after someone, what was that person like?
20. Did your family move often? If so, did you make friends and then have to break off the relationship so often that you became afraid to get too close?
21. Do you remember starting school? What were your feelings?
22. Try to remember each successive grade in school and as you do, write out the

- resentments you felt towards teachers, pupils, anyone. Any fights, slights, hurts, embarrassments ... PUT IT DOWN ON PAPER.
23. Did you resent church, police, stores or other "institutions"? If so, list them. No resentment is too small to mention. The BIG BOOK states, "Resentment is the number one offender..." (p. 64)
 24. What kind of language did your parents use? Were you ashamed of them for this or anything else?
 25. Did you ever see your parents in the nude? What were your feelings?
 26. Did you ever see or hear your parents having sex? What were your feelings?
 27. In every family, a child usually has certain chores assigned. What were yours? Were they fair? Did you do them because of fear, responsibility, or just to please your parents?
 28. Did your parents seem to like your friends better than they did you? And did your friends seem to like your parents better than they did you? Did you resent this?
 29. Any bad experiences at Sunday School? Or at a summer camp?
 30. Were you an only child? Did you resent this or did you enjoy it? (brother John's experience with this: "As a single child, I learned a lot about 'take,' a little bit about 'give,' and absolutely nothing about 'share'.")
 31. Did your parents want a child of the opposite sex when they had you? And did they name you, or dress you to match their sex choice?
 32. Did your appearance, (looks, dress etc.) embarrass you?
 33. Did you feel that you were "different" from your class mates?
 34. Write down any other childhood memories that were/are painful.
 35. Which of these questions about childhood were the toughest for you? Do you know why?

ADOLESCENCE:

Many of us have experienced sexual experiences abnormal to our identity. (Heterosexual identity having homosexual experiences, and, for gay people, the opposite.) Many people partially form their sexual role identity early in childhood and are later consumed with guilt and shame because they feel it is "abnormal," "weird," or "kinky." These events and feelings can often become the basis for the "bag of secrets" that we are so reluctant to share. Please bear in mind that the purpose of this is not to JUDGE or CONDEMN anything. It's a search for the Truth - what is IS and what ain't AIN'T! Also, a sexually immature person can rely on the misguided sex information obtained from peers. If you are bi-sexual or gay, keeping this to yourself only is not being in the "closet", but in a coffin. NOW is the time to prepare for sharing this with another human being.

36. What has been YOUR experience concerning the above?
37. What is your sexual identity.

Some girls are taught that men are interested in sex only, and some boys that they must be the greatest of all time. There is often an unspoken message that sex is dirty, bad, evil, sinful; therefore you should save it for the one you love! These attitudes are destructive and damaging to the total person.

38. Have you ever experienced these attitudes? Is there a pattern? How has it

- affected you?
39. Did you have friends? What kind of friend were you?
 40. What interest or lack of interest did you have in school? How was your social life? Did you participate in sports? What were the reasons for your participation or lack of it?
 41. Were you a trouble maker? If so, in what way? Did you destroy property?
 42. Did you resent leaders - either physical or mental? Did you resent not being the most handsome or beautiful person at school?
 43. Did you feel you were a coward because you didn't want to fight? Or did you like to fight? Were you a bully?
 44. Did you feel embarrassed because others made fun of you and/or avoided you?
 45. Were you exposed to other children in gym class or the restrooms who were older than you and more developed physically. Some people don't develop physically until late adolescence. Were you like that?
 46. Some people feel inadequate as adults because they were at one time exposed to youngsters more developed than they were. If you feel uptight in this area, write about your feelings.
 47. Did you resent not being part of a crowd? Or, not being a leader? Or not being "in"?
 48. Were you shy or outgoing? How are you now? Does any particular type of person make you shy? Make you feel inadequate? Make you feel intimidated?
 49. If you dropped out of school, explain your feelings and reasons. Would you really like to have more education? What have you done about it? If nothing, WHY?
 50. Did anything happen to you in high school that was a continuing source of shame?
 51. Did your parents compare you to other family members or friends? Did you resent them for wanting you to be like someone else?
 52. How did you get the attention of your family? (Did you pout, sulk, be a good child, have temper tantrums, act like a dummy?)
 53. Do you remember the kind of lies you told (if any)? How did you feel when you got caught lying?
 54. What was the most embarrassing incident of adolescence? Were there any others that you really remember? Please write about them.
 55. Were you jealous or envious of others? Why?

If any mention of sex, sexual attraction, or sexy feelings were discounted and put down in your family, there is a strong possibility that you will feel guilty about them. We "catch" attitudes. A boy who is pushed to always do better (be top dog), or is criticized no matter what he does, may find himself having trouble in his sexual performance. Or a girl who has been told that it's not OK to dress and / or feel attractive, may grow up to dislike her own body or distrust her feelings. These attitudes can create unnatural or uncomfortable sexual behavior. And any sexual thoughts / feelings / identity that we think of as "abnormal" will produce guilt and shame. It is not judgment here, but an attempt to access these feelings which are often hidden.

56. Did you "catch" any of these attitudes? Can you see it cropping up in your life now?
57. First sexual experience. What were your feelings? Did you feel guilty? Did you

- feel disappointed? Be as explicit about the feelings as you can.
58. List in detail any sexual experiences that you were and are NOT comfortable with; masturbation, fantasies; or any other sexual activity you particularly remember – keep in mind that we are not concerned about with whom or on what date, or how often, but rather how did you feel about the experience. No one is going to judge you on this.
 59. If you got someone pregnant, or became pregnant yourself, what did you do and how did you feel about your actions?
 60. Were you ashamed of your parents? Were they too old, too fat, too sloppy, too drunk, too whatever?
 61. Did you have the kind of clothes that other kids wore?
 62. Was there enough money for the things you needed, and if not, were you resentful of that? If there was, did you take it too much for granted? Did you feel any brothers or sisters got more than you did?
 63. Write out your feelings about money as an adolescent.
 64. Were you the kind of child you would want to have?
 65. Were you a thief?
 66. Did you ever skip a grade in school? If so, did you have trouble catching up emotionally? How did you act? How did you feel – did you feel uncomfortable because you were younger than the other students?
 67. Were you undependable as a friend – breaking off relationships without any explanation when something or someone who seemed better came along?
 68. Did you play one member of your family against another?
 69. What was the best experience you had? The worst?
 70. We've covered a lot of ground on these questions. Now, is there's ANYTHING that made you particularly uncomfortable, even when writing about it? Have you put down EVERYTHING that has bugged you, made you feel angry, guilty or ashamed (even the simplest, most nit-picking things are important if they trouble you). Put it DOWN.

ADULTHOOD

71. When, and how, and in just what instances did the selfish pursuit of sex relations damage other people and yourself? What people were hurt, and how badly?
72. Did you spoil a marriage(s) and/or injure your children?
73. Did you jeopardize your standing in the community? In business?
74. Just how did you react to those situations at the time? Did you burn with guilt that nothing could extinguish? Or, did you insist that you were the pursued and not the pursuer, and thus absolve yourself?
75. How have you reacted to frustration in sexual matters? When denied, did you become vengeful or depressed? Did you “take it out” on other people? If there was rejection or coldness at home, did you use this as a reason for promiscuity?
76. Many people who are lonely and don't really know how to love get involved senselessly in sexcapades. The temporary loss of loneliness makes one call sex “love”. When the sex partner is gone, it makes for an even greater feeling of loneliness. Have you ever experienced this? Better to try to relate in other areas first, for a more permanent relationship. If you married a cold, unloving person, ask yourself why you chose that one to be your mate. Did you use it as

- an excuse to find new romances? Was your mother or father cold and unloving and is this your chance to get even with them through your spouse?
77. Why did you get married? Was it for the right reasons? Or why haven't you gotten married? Did you marry earlier than your peer group? Later?
 78. Do you resent the responsibilities of marriage and family?
 79. If married, do you allow your family to come between you and your spouse or partner?
 80. Are you still a baby in your parents eyes and take advantage of this? Are you a baby in the eyes of your spouse or partner?
 81. Did your parents "get you out of trouble" that you should have been able to handle yourself?
 82. Do you gossip about others?
 83. Are laws made for other people? Do you believe that you should have the right to make up your own laws as you go along?
 84. If revenge were possible right now, who would be the top people on your list? Why?
 85. What are your present feelings about sex, parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, friends, your children, your spouse or partner, your intimate friends, your job, upon being an alcoholic, finances, divorce or marriage (depending upon your status), etc.
 86. What are your hopes and goals?
 87. Do you use sex as a punishment or reward?
 88. How much time do you spend with your family? With AA?
 89. What is your greatest fear?
 90. What is your sex life like? Is it as mature as you might want it to be? Are you careless of your partner's feelings?
 91. Write out your idea of a healthy sex life.
 92. Write out ALL sexual experiences that are unsettling to YOU (same sex, opposite sex, members of your family, animals, fantasy, threesomes, bondage, inflicting pain, cross-dressing, etc.)
 93. Do you engage in sex in order to build your own ego by feeling of conquest?
 94. Are you afraid of being sexually rejected?
 95. Are you ashamed of your body or the way you look? Write out what's wrong with you.
 96. Write out your feelings of pride about any of these questions (the best things about you physically). Now write about the things about yourself that you are ashamed of.
 97. Do you manipulate or "use" people to get what you want?
 98. Do you gossip or perform character assassination on another in order to "make" it in the business or social world? Or do you do this in an effort to feel superior (to the one you gossiped about)?
 99. If you are a thief, what have you stolen? Don't forget to include your employer's time and the good feelings others had and you destroyed.
 100. Do you have a pattern of getting sick? Be honest. Do you use illness as an excuse to avoid responsibilities or get attention or sympathy - or to get out of a jam?
 101. In business relationships, write out your resentments toward bosses and co-workers. Do you feel jealous of them? Are you concerned that others in your office will get more money or prestige than you will?
 102. List all the negative feelings you have about the people involved in your work

- life.
103. Are you indifferent and careless of your job? (Do you maybe think you should be the boss?) Do you believe they shouldn't expect so much of you?
 104. If you are separated or divorced, write out negative feelings about the situation and the people involved.
 105. Write out resentments, fears, and guilts concerning your relationship with your spouse (including feelings about your children).
 106. Have you set up a game where your children are forced to make a decision on which parent they love the best?
 107. If married, write out EXACTLY how you feel about your wife and children. Are they living up to your expectations? What are your expectations? Are they unreasonable? How do you think you would be different if they were out of your life?
 108. Do you feel that no one really understands you? (If they only knew what you had been through they wouldn't expect so much from you).
 109. Do you still feel different from other AA members – apart from?
 110. Do you feel superior or inferior? (Geoff felt "sideways"! He's really DIFFERENT!)
 111. Do you avoid looking at yourself by statements such as, "at least I'm not that flaky"?
 112. Do you judge or make fun of people who appear to be less fortunate mentally, physically, or morally than you THINK you are?
 113. Do you compare yourself to others to make yourself suffer by picking people who are further along the program than you, or people who are talented in areas you are not? The only person you can adequately compare yourself to is yourself.
 114. How were you five days ago, five weeks ago, five months ago, at your first AA meeting, and how are you now? Can you forget how other people are and work on yourself.
 115. List every act you swore you would take to the grave, disclosing to no one. Be open and honest. Remember life gave you good and bad experiences. Usually the things you are the most ashamed of are the very acts that will make you try to grow into something better. If you want freedom, you have to let go of it all. "...We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it ... No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others." (BB P. 83-84) If you want to help bring peace to lives of the people you will be dealing with later, you must find it in you own life first.
 116. Are you afraid of getting too close to another person for the fear of being rejected? Do you reject others before they can reject you? (Just like a lot of us quit before getting fired!)
 117. Define love. What do you feel it is?
 118. In what ways are you a responsible person?
 119. Are you a tightwad? What are your fears concerning money? Do you spend money with no thought of tomorrow?
 120. Is your personal appearance particularly careless or prideful? On sight, do you judge people by their appearance? (Whether sloppy or neat)
 121. What things make you feel greedy, envious, angry?
 122. Are you scornful of ideas that weren't your own?
 123. Do you tell others how bad you have been or are (this is pride in reverse - a good tool if you like self pity or depression)? Or do you go to the other extreme

- and tell people how great you are or were (a good way to give your ego a false sense of security; however, when the security topples, you are back in depression, loneliness, and not OK.)
124. Write your feelings for parents, brothers, sisters, other family members NOW. What resentments, hates, envies, jealousies, or other negative feelings do you still have?
 125. What makes you feel guilty? What are you GUILTY of - NOW?
 126. Do you pad your expense account or use food allowances to buy things just for yourself? If no expense account, do you spend inappropriately on yourself?
 127. Do you feel resentful towards any other AA member(s)?
 128. What kind of things do you lie about most?
 129. Do you still need to play the "Big Shot"? In AA? At work? AT HOME?
 130. Are you hurt when people turn away from you and won't play your games?
 131. Do you resent not getting as much attention as you did when you were new in AA?
 132. Do you help protect the new members? With new members, do you "take the lead" in developing and insisting on platonic relationships rather than something heavy that might get out of hand? Or do you use their weakness when new to indulge in your sexual gratification? Does just the consideration of this make you feel guilty for having such thoughts.
 133. Are you aware of how much energy a "relationship" takes?
 134. What kind of things do you spend most time worrying about – the future or the past?
 135. Do you find yourself punishing your children the way your parents punished you?
 136. Have you been so busy trying to make money that your family sees little of you? Do you say, "I give my family everything they want, but they aren't ever satisfied?"
 137. Are you still working to build your own ego? (Prestige. Power, position, money)
 138. When your spouse or partner turns cold, do you spend more time with him or her, or do you turn to someone else, someone more "understanding"?
 139. Do you spend too much time at AA?
 140. Do you take at least one night of the week for the family only?
 141. Have communications with your family become so intolerable that you are depending on AA members to get your necessary strokes?
 142. Do you feel that you somehow have to prove that you are worthy of love from others, either in AA or elsewhere? Elaborate on this.
 143. Are you cold and indifferent to your family, friends, work, your own needs?
 144. Are you loaded with a sense of guilt for putting people through so much hell?
 145. Do you threaten others by saying that you can't stay sober if you don't get your family back, your own way, etc.?
 146. Are you involved in a love affair that could bring yourself or others harm?
 147. Do you argue with people? Is it important for you to be "right"? Do you become angry when people don't see things the way you do?
 148. Do you pass along gossip or make up things about other people's behavior?
 149. Do you worry about other people's Higher Power not being as good as yours, or maybe even better? Are you comparing yourself with others in spiritual growth? Do you feel superior spiritually? Inferior?
 150. Do you still feel guilty about your sexual role identity, your fantasies, masturbation?

151. Do you feel superior because you have more education, money, brains, the right color skin, social background, vocation, or any other seeming advantages? List your feeling of superiority.
152. Do you feel inferior because you have less of all of the above? List your feeling of inferiority.
153. Do you think you are superior to the general run of people? Please list in what ways you are different.
154. Do you have a hard time getting places on time? Are you punctual?
155. Do you resent others who don't seem to have problems finding happiness? Are you still judging the outside of others by the inside of you? Have you bothered to ask the people who seem happy how they got that way?
156. Do you still envy people who can drink?
157. Are you hostile because you don't like the hand life has dealt you?
158. What are your present fears? List them. (Please see "FEAR" sheet)
159. How do you presently get people's attention: pouting, sulking, temper tantrums, being extra good (and letting them know it), playing stupid (dummy), frustrating others' activities, bitching, so that others will know how bad YOU feel.

AND NOW, SOME FINAL QUESTIONS

160. In addition to your drinking and/or drug problem, what character defects contribute(d) to your financial instability?
161. Did fear and inferiority about fitness for your job destroy your confidence and fill you with conflict?
162. Did you try to cover up feelings of inadequacy by bluffing, cheating, lying, or evading responsibility? Or by complaining that others failed to recognize your truly exceptional abilities?
163. Did (or do) you over value yourself?
164. Did (or do) you have such unprincipled ambition that you double-crossed and undercut your associates?
165. Were you extravagant? Did you recklessly borrow money, caring little whether it was repaid or not? How about reckless spending too?
166. Were you a pinchpenny refusing to support your family properly? Or were you dependent on someone else to support you financially? How did you feel about this?
167. Did you try to cut corners financially? What about the "quick money" deals – the long shot "sure thing" that would rocket you to riches? Business women in AA will naturally find that many of these questions apply to them too. But the alcoholic housewife can also make the family financially insecure. She can juggle charge accounts, manipulate the food budget, spend her afternoons gambling, and run her husband into debt by irresponsibility, waste and extravagance.

The most common symptoms of emotional insecurity are worry, anger, self pity and depression. These stem from causes which sometimes seem to be within us, and at other times come from without. To take inventory in this respect we ought to consider carefully all personal relationships which bring continuous and recurring troubles. It should be remembered that this kind of insecurity may arise in any area where instincts are threatened. Questioning directed to this end might

run like this:

168. Looking at both past and present, what sex situations have caused you anxiety, bitterness, frustration, or depression? Appraising each situation fairly, can you see where you have been at fault? Did these perplexities beset you because of selfishness or unreasonable demands? Or, if your disturbance was seemingly caused by the behavior of others, why do you lack the ability to accept conditions you cannot change?

These are the sort of fundamental inquiries that may be able to alter our own conduct and so adjust yourself serenely to self discipline. Suppose that financial insecurity constantly arouses these same feelings, you can ask yourself to what extent have your own mistakes fed gnawing anxieties, and if the action of others are part of the cause, what can you do about that?

169. If you are unable to change the present state of affairs, are you willing to take the measures necessary to shape your life to conditions as they are?
170. What is your relationship with the TAX MAN? Do you FEAR the tax people? When did you last file a tax return? Do they say you owe them money? What ACTION have you taken? What ACTION are you prepared to take?
171. The final question? Is there anything that you KNOW about you or what you've thought or done that you are planning to "withhold." Remember, we are only as sick as our secrets, and it's NOT the deeds or thoughts but the fact that they ARE SECRETS that eats us and blocks us from "The Sunlight of the Spirit." Please ask for some Help and write it NOW.

May your Journey be filled with Peace

NAMASTE

“Until we had talked with complete candor of our CONFLICTS, and had listened to someone else do the same, we still didn’t belong...It was the beginning of true kinship with man and God.” (12 & 12 page 57)

Topics to WRITE about - pick ones that have a “barb”(i.e. - piss you off!)

1. Resentments
2. Fears (there’s also a separate list)
3. Sex
4. Conflict/Relationship with God
5. Conflict/Relationship with AA
6. Conflict/Relationship with other AA members
7. Conflict/Relationship with AA home group
8. No home group - why?
9. Conflict/Relationship with AA Literature
10. Conflict/Relationship with AA Sponsor
11. No sponsor - why?
12. Conflict/Relationship with job
13. Conflict/Relationship with job - co-workers
14. Conflict/Relationship with job - employer
15. Conflict/Relationship with wife/girlfriend/partner
16. Conflict/Relationship with self-image
17. Conflict/Relationship with SEX - archives (old stuff)
18. Conflict/Relationship with SEX - current stuff
19. Conflict/Relationship with SEX IDEAL
20. Cash register honesty - Am I CLEAN?
21. Sacrificing Honesty for the APPROVAL of others?
22. Retrospective falsification - is my story REALLY the way I tell it?
23. Conflicts and old ideas with things mother told me
24. Conflicts and old ideas with things father told me
25. Conflicts and old ideas with things grandparents told me
26. Conflicts and old ideas with things teachers told me
27. Conflicts and old ideas with things preachers told me
28. Conflicts and old ideas with things friends or relatives told me
29. Am I comfortable in my own skin?
30. Can I tolerate solitude?
31. Deep down, do I believe I have a message to carry?
32. Do I feel that I am a member of AA, or just a “sober visitor”?
33. Do I project negativity a lot of the time?
34. Am I complacent with sobriety/AA/God/Life/THE GIFT OF GRACE?

The “WORK” is in silence - a solo journey with you and God
The HEALING is in the SHARING

HEARING OF 5th STEPS

Big Book - Chapter Seven - "Working With Others" (page 96):

"Suppose you are making your second visit to a man. He has read this volume and says he is prepared to go through with the Twelve Steps of the program of recovery. Having had the experience yourself, you can give him much practical advice. Let him know you are available if he wishes to make a decision and tell his story ..."

We find reference to Doing the Third Step with your new man and offering to HEAR his Fifth Step. All the references in Chapter 6 to doing it with non alcoholics are there because there was no Fellowship - the book was for "mail order" sobriety; it was hoping you, the reader, would begin to "create the Fellowship you crave."

In *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Bill writes on Step Five:

"We shall want to speak with someone ... who has not only stayed dry..." and "Until we talked with complete candor of our inner conflicts, and had listened to someone else do the same, we still didn't belong."

Here we find more information along the same lines, encouraging us to HEAR a Fifth Step so we can "belong." It is our opinion that the "Step process" is incomplete without HEARING at least one Fifth Step. Little is written in our "textbooks" on this, so we are sharing here a course of action that has worked effectively for us.

In our view, to qualify, it helps to have done a 4th & 5th Step (& preferably not stopped there!). We have met many who have avoided this opportunity (responsibility) for Spiritual growth through fear, laziness or disinterest. Another often used "reason" for not hearing a Fifth Step is something like: "Well, I really don't know him that well." That can be turned to an advantage in the fact that you can be even more objective, which is defined as impartial, fair or unbiased. Of course, when this process is done, you will know him (her) as a reflection of yourself! We could write pages (maybe a book) on how we are "all cut from the same cloth" and "tarred with the same brush." These are experiential conclusions that will come after you have heard a Fifth Step.

We are doing more than just hearing. We believe that we are asking to be a "channel" for God in this highly personal aspect of another persons recovery. It is an attempt to get "ourselves out of the way" for as long as it takes. We are not being asked to "play the role" of doctor, minister, psychiatrist, judge or counselor. In fact, it's a good idea to qualify ourselves out loud that we DO NOT possess these qualifications. Merely one alcoholic with another alcoholic attempting to get closer to Him by DOing the Steps.

Praying for Guidance and Direction, we "set the stage" by taking the phone off the

hook or turning the ringer off. If there is a likelihood of knocks on the door, leave a note asking not to be disturbed. Together, we pray to have God join us, to bring about this “channel” state of consciousness. We pray for our hearts and minds to be open, that we be given whatever is necessary to accomplish our individual roles.

Ask if you may take notes. Ask if you may give “feedback.” Most people are pleased that we are willing to make more of an effort than “just listen.” Notes help us for several reasons; we don’t have to keep trying to remember stuff, which allows more of our undivided attention. We will, with no seeming effort, often be able to detect patterns of behavior that “just seem to appear” from these notes. Often certain words will “leap out” and form the basis of a “Step 6 & 7 list.” We make certain that they know the notes will become their property as soon as we are done.

The “feedback?” If we are trying to be like a “conference call to God” then just do what “feels” right. We gently share what has been “revealed” to us in the HEARing. It may seem prudent to ask: “Is there any last dirty rotten little secret that you are withholding and will take YOU to the grave?”

Moving toward “Trusting God” is an experiential process. To quote a line from the *Big Book* on page 63: “He provided what we needed if we kept close to Him and performed His work well.”

When done, we pray together in the Spirit of Thankfulness for this priceless opportunity to clean house, “live out loud” for perhaps the first time in our lives, and move another Step along the Path. Next, the questions on page 75 of the *Big Book* “Returning home ...” are answered. (Again: the *Big Book* was written for “mail order” sobriety - there was no Fellowship.)

At this point, we allow the “giver” of the 5th Step the opportunity to decide if they would like to perform a “ceremonial burning” of the paperwork (including notes but excluding Step 6 and 8 “lists”). If these have not been organized, we let this be the opportunity to do so. Regardless of what course is decided, we, as the HEARers of Step 5, thank the “giver” for their trust and dedication to action. We ask that we be called if “more is revealed” and openly share in their exhilaration as the dark burdens are lifted.

Time? Step 5 takes as long as it takes. We usually set aside the entire day, so there is no haste to be “done” at any certain time. We do all that we can to avoid rigidity and expectations. We Trust God with the rest. If we need to eat, we eat. If we need to rest, we rest. Sometimes it “feels right” to take a break. We must remind ourselves often that this Step is a process that means the difference between life and death - or insanity / incarceration; between happiness and misery; between isolation and a sense of unity.

Results? What we experience is very individual, so we try not to “set ourselves up” with a list of expectations. Generally, the “giver” feels a very strong sense of

relief and the “hearer” feels tired and spiritually energized at the same time. Please remember, there’s no such thing as a BAD Fifth Step for either party if this is approached from a Spiritual Perspective. We remind ourselves that this is a very individual experience.

Specific results for those HEARING 5th Steps are: a sense of belonging, a spiritual reminder that we are more alike than different, and a deeper sense of commitment, understanding and effectiveness. Prejudice becomes transformed into compassion, and the power of “shared suffering” cuts through resentment with ease. This can be a landmark on the road to spiritual humility; by placing ourselves in God’s Hands we begin to truly experience “freedom from the bondage of SELF.”

It’s about Spirituality.

It’s about Brotherly Love.

It’s about Compassion.

It’s about Understanding.

It’s about Love.

It’s about the ‘magic’ of one alcoholic with ANother alcoholic.

It’s about Forgiveness.

It’s about God.

It’s about the preparation to be of Service to others and ...

Like the rest of the “instructions:”

JUST DO IT !

JUST HEAR IT!

It is “an experience YOU MUST NOT MISS !”

STEPS 6 and 7

From Step work to this point and “feedback” from Step 5, we can create a list of our more conspicuous defects or shortcomings. These are but human personality characteristics that often get very pronounced as the malady of alcoholism takes its course. We wholeheartedly agree that these items may be the root cause of most human suffering, but disagree with any notion that these are a causal factor in our illness.

However, if we are going to live “beyond the pale” by adapting ourselves to a Spiritual Way of Life that embraces a FOURTH dimension of existence, with a VITAL 6th sense, we must move forward beyond what would be considered “normal” ways of thinking, acting and living. Dr. Silkworth states: “... their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives.” This point is stressed by Dr. Carl Jung: “Ideas, emotions and attitudes which were once the guiding forces ... are cast aside, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them.”

The themes of the book are recoverED and permanent recovery. To this end, in Appendix II, we find: “... this book which, upon careful reading shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism ...”

We think, act, re-act, and do things for the satisfaction of desires, or the alleviation of suffering - for EFFECT. For this “phase of our development” is very difficult, often impossible, to “create” the life-or-death willingness and desperation to be released from our manifest defects such as shyness, the tendency to manipulate, or outright lying that we had “forced upon us” to park the whiskey bottle. In short, we must have God’s help. Having a list of terms meaningful to us and asking for God to enter our lives, our thinking, and our hearts for willingness is Step Six.

And we must do our part in the “work.” First, we need to truly “OWN” these aspects of ourselves and search diligently for the “payoff.” They ARE us. And each and every item on our list will be a “tool” to help us get what we want, have things our way, avoid fear, or justify our thinking and actions. When we can “see” this aspect of ourselves in this manner, there will be a far greater degree of willingness. That conclusion, which usually is the result of frank sharing with one’s sponsor, coupled with prayer and meditation can move us forward on the “path of willingness.”

When we look at most of the published “lists” for daily inventory, we see a column of “defect” words on one side and a column of their “opposites” on the other. Again, in frank discussion and prayer, it will be “revealed” sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, that in nearly all cases, the OPPOSITES will give us the same EFFECT!

When we are willing to explore this avenue of recovery and do our part, we are ready for the 7th Step Prayer. We DO this out loud, on our knees, with another member of AA - preferably our sponsor.

The “Poker Chip” Method of Step 7

We DO NOT “work on our defects.” PERIOD! Steps 6 & 7 state in terms that simply cannot be misconstrued, WHO is going to remove them - GOD. Our role in these Steps is the “entirely ready” and the “humbly asked” parts.

This is the “poker chip” method. We take poker chips, blank business cards, or pieces of paper and write the “defect” on one side and the “opposite” on the other. We put them all in a paper bag or box. We pray that God help us, Guide us, and Direct us in our work.

For the purposes of “analysis” we have been separating ourselves into compartments, pigeon holes, shoeboxes; dividing the mind and who we are for the purpose of our work. Truth is, we are a “package deal” not divisible, and you can find out for yourself as follows:

We ask God’s help and dip our hand into the bag. Taking one chip, card or piece of paper out, that becomes our “focus” for the day (or week). Trying to work on 8, 15, or 27 items at once leads to confusion, frustration and we soon give up. Akin to ONE-DAY-AT-A-TIME (or try ONE-ROOM-AT-A-TIME) we “work” on trying to BE the OPPOSITE, ONE-ITEM-AT-A-TIME.

It is only through experience that we begin to understand, however vaguely at first, how incredibly powerful this is. If a man has three “big ones;” lust, petty thievery and a severe case of phoniness, and exerts his efforts at the “chip” thievery/BUY it with sincerity - in a remarkably short time, he will discover, often to his AMAZEMENT, that his lust has simmered down and his phoniness is diminished.

Many of us have spent fruitless years of effort trying to think our way into right action. It doesn’t work. But the concept of acting our way into right thinking has a proven track record. It is formally called “learning by substitution,” and here is a chance, an opportunity to exert what efforts we can to progress along the Path to conscious Union with God and our Fellow Travelers.

STEP 7

Step 7, in our experience, is perhaps the Step most underused. All through the Process of the Steps we find powerful opportunities to grow. The continuing application of Step 7 helps produce just such an opportunity. In fact, with an open-mindedness firmly in place, there seems to be NO LIMIT to the spiritual changes we can experience. We are now beginning to prove that Step 3 was not an intellectual exercise. We are now beginning to feel the transition from an "unsuspected inner resource" to a *known* inner resource. "Lack of power, that WAS our dilemma." The development of Step 7 in our lives affords us a wonderful and simple format to help us realize that we really DO have access to a Power greater than ourselves. That we no longer suffer from a lack of power.

In our journey we have found several blocks to a full experience of this step. One of which has to do with the stigma attached to the words 'defects' and 'shortcomings'. As long as we continue to judge ourselves harshly for having these characteristics, we tend to produce a powerful negative energy which blocks the process of letting go. Once again, we are not allowing God to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. This is NOT about sin. This is NOT about fulfilling the requirements of an external moral code. This is about being sincere in prayer (or however your heart stays open) to have those things removed which "stand in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows." The commitment to become what we could not even imagine is all that's required. CHANGE = SURRENDER PLUS ACTION.

Sometimes it's fun and helpful to create a ceremony to help the surrender process. In the spirit of daring to share, here is one we have used effectively. Having written a list of fears that have been blocking us, we gather a few people around us and meditate. We allow the energy inside of us to move freely. Letting go of all resistance with our breathing, we are given an ever-increasing consciousness of the sacred place in our heart. When "entirely ready", we begin to read the fears out loud to our friends. Slowly. After each one is read aloud, we pause and feel what we feel without anticipating the result. If there is no fear inside we simply check that one off the list and go on to the next one. If however, after voicing it out loud, we still feel the fear, we leave it on the list. No judgement. Remember: the results are none of our business. The next day, after meditating, and in front of our friends, we read the ones that are still left on the list. In doing this every day for a week or two, we have found that most, if not all of our fears are taken from us. The spiritual life is NOT a theory. It works - it really does!

We have many other ceremonies that we have used, some of which are quite fun and elaborate. We allow ourselves the freedom to borrow from any spiritual practices we encounter and to create our own! We would love to share them with you and to hear of Step 7 surrender techniques that you have experienced. The main thing is to dare to believe differently, grab something that seems interesting and have fun in learning to let go of the resistance to change. Remember: the Steps are here to HELP us!!!!

Step 8

This list, hopefully made in Step 4, perhaps enlarged in Step 5, is now looked at as a separate entity. We believe it is essential to work with an experienced member or our sponsor to avoid our uncanny ability to fall prey to the pitfalls of this vital work: (a) outright avoidance, (b) attempting to rush headlong into “apologizing” for deep emotional harms, the ones we should approach when we are “CHANGED PEOPLE” (c) skirting around and procrastinating on items of “current business” - the landlord MUST be seen at the end of the month!

After reading and re-reading *Big Book* pages 76-84 (100 times is about right!) we use a simple “column” form that looks like this:

NAME	NATURE OF HARM DONE	PLAN FOR AMEND	HEAT

Under the “NAME” column, we list the people, institutions, and principles. Column 2 is “OUR SIDE OF THE STREET” - what WE DID, our thoughts, our decision, our actions and re-actions. Column 3 is a DETAILED plan of approach, action and a sample “script” of what we propose to say. The “HEAT” Column is for us to “rank” the difficulty of the amend; for example, “1” could mean “I could do this one today, and “10” being “I shall carry these to my grave.”

After an opening prayer and meditation, we carefully review this material with our sponsor or older member, agreeing to abide with any practical advice that is given to us (See *BB* page 96).

For many, it may be advisable to do the most heated amend first. By doing so, we can utilize and embrace the “spiritual momentum” created by the previous 7 Steps, and we will be taking immediate action on the most severe threats to our sobriety.

Others may be paralyzed by the fear of the most “heated,” and the tack will be to start with some of the lesser ones first. There is a method of Doing this work in 3 “heats” (a) I can do these (b) These are hard (c) These I cannot do. When Column “a” is complete, Column “b” MAGICALLY moves into the realm of “these I can do”, and Column “c” MAGICALLY moves into the category of “hard.” An experiential example of the Power working in our lives! Then with “two down” the IMPOSSIBLE becomes OK to do!

Being vigilant that we have asked God to enter into our hearts and minds and lives, that we are committed to the “willingness to go to any lengths,” we formulate a starting plan and instigate action. It is at this point that the older member concerned must employ the admonition “Quit using God ... and ask God to use us.” As the PROMISED and GUARANTEED new revelations, directions, sense of Power, and spiritual awareness arise, the list, plans, and methods are adjusted accordingly. We MUST remember (and often be motivated by) the fact that this IS a LIFE-or-DEATH matter.

Step 9: AMENDS (A mellow word for “RESTITUTION”)

The word “apologize” is used a lot in many meeting discussions where the “topic” is Step 9. It is of interest to note that one definition of APOLOGIZE is “to justify thinking or actions.” THAT is the type of thinking that we are attempting to move away FROM! The same dictionary, defines AMEND: “to set right, restore, replace or renew.” With this in mind, the *Big Book* statement on Page 83, “A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won’t fill the bill at all” takes on a deeper meaning!

In performing the ACTION of Step 9, we are, with God’s help, DOing our part in the work regarding the Spiritual Structure mentioned in our basic text: “THE NEW AND TRIUMPHANT ARCH THROUGH WHICH ... WE SHALL WALK A FREE MAN AT LAST.” (Needless to say, ladies too!) This is where we can truly begin to EXPERIENCE “The spiritual life is not a theory,” and thus be set FREE OF SELF so that we may be of maximum Service to others.

We have met countless alcoholics who have balked at this phase of the recovery process, and the results have been consistently disastrous. Some - though physically sober - have retained a high degree of the RESTLESS, IRRITABLE and DISCONTENTED nature of the untreated alcoholic, others have gotten drunk, some committed suicide, and many suffered from “THE UNLIVED LIFE”, that deviously subtle form of being shortchanged on what this wAAy of Life has to offer.

There are (to our count) **147 PROMISES** in the first 164 pages of the *Big Book*. Over 150 if we include “*Dr. Bob’s Nightmare*.” A seemingly disproportionate number are woven into Step 9. Remember, with proper guidance and Guidance, these too, shall come to pass for you. Study, discuss, pray for “CREATIVE SOLUTIONS,” and DO it. TRUST that it will come to be recognized as an opportunity “YOU MUST NOT MISS.”

Regardless which approach is used, if we have been diligent and thorough in Step work and are attempting to pass on what has been given us, we will have begun “living in the Realm of the Spirit.” Combined with prayer and meditation, this becomes a “state of conscious readiness,” that we can embrace when we “just happen” to meet some guy on the street. Or a name comes up in a dream, or just falls out of the air onto you plate! These then are the times that we will KNOW at the intuitive level that NOW is the time to take the ACTION for this person. God has paved the way! This type of awareness and readiness helps us to develop a trust of our previously UNSUSPECTED INNER RESOURCE. (See pages 569-570)

We begin to KNOW that the “vital sixth sense” does indeed exist! We begin to comprehend the concept of “Life happens FROM you, not TO you.”

An Invitation to a GREAT experiment

"We alcoholics are undisciplined."

Big Book page 88

Read pages 86 through 88 every day for 30 consecutive days

Part (a)

In the first hour of your day, READ from page 86:

"On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead ..." to the END of page 88.

And put a / line through "today" below.

Part (b)

Before going to bed, READ the paragraph on page 86:

"When we retire at night ... what corrective measures should be taken."

And put a \ line through "today" below to make an X.

In passing on what has been so freely given to us, we PROMISE that if you will simply READ this material for 30 consecutive days, your life will change. It will HAVE TO BE on a more spiritual basis.

The "catch": If you miss a day, you gotta start over! (An axiom to "EASY won't DO it"!)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

Feel better? Wanna try DOing it again?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

SHARING THE GIFT

When Bill Wilson's longtime drinking companion, Ebby Thatcher, appeared in Bill's kitchen, it forged the first link in a wonderful chain of what we now refer to as 12-Step calls. It was the first time in human history we are aware of that a solution for alcoholism was passed from one alcoholic to another. This was incredibly good news. In Bill's own words: "He had come to pass his experience along to me – if I cared to have it. I was shocked, but interested. Certainly I was interested. I had to be, for I was hopeless."

Later, while Bill was still in his hospital bed recovering from alcohol withdrawal, he remembered some of Ebby's words: "My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these [spiritual] principles in all my affairs. Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. ... For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead." Here, on page 14 of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, we find the first of what will be many references to the fact that working with others is **NOT** a recovery option.

Flush with his 'religious conversion' experience in the hospital, Bill set out to fulfill Ebby's edict. His attempts to 'convert' other alcoholics succeeded only in keeping himself sober. Bill failed completely with his first 64 prospects. Bill shared his discouragement with Dr. Silkworth and was told that unless he first discussed the PROBLEM in depth, the alcoholic was not likely to buy in to the SOLUTION. Bill had forgotten that Dr. Silkworth had first told him his "theory" – the disease concept of alcoholism – prior to Ebby outlining the solution and program of action. He had failed to "pass on" the exact nature of the malady. Once that piece of the puzzle was in place, his efforts no longer fell on deaf ears. Our book refers to that as: "properly armed with the facts about himself". It is interesting to note that in the original manuscript the passage reads: "...certain medical information."

When Bill reached out to Dr. Bob Smith unsolicited, it created a profound effect. In Dr. Bob's own words: "He gave me information about the subject of alcoholism which was undoubtedly helpful. Of far more importance was the fact that he was the first living human with whom I had ever talked, who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience." The fire that was lit in Dr. Bob was to be carried directly to over 5,000 alcoholics through the use of the 12-Step call. Some came from requests and others were unannounced visits. Indeed, out of the 43 personal stories in the Big Book, 27 of them began their sober adventure as a direct result of an unsolicited 12-Step call.

Chapter 7, first paragraph: "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our *twelfth suggestion*: Carry this message TO other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill". Over the years, as AA has moved from a program-based spiritual entity, to a fellowship-based social entity, the fabric of this step has been frayed.

Meetings, meetings and more meetings are pushed as THE ticket to recovery, while the action of the 12 Steps, particularly working with others has been pushed into the background. As a result, the powerful spiritual enthusiasm which is a by-product of 12-Step work, particularly the 12-Step call itself, seems difficult to experience. How many of us at one time or another have asked the secret question, "Is this all there is?" How many of us have felt that we were getting short changed in our recovery? How many of us have dared to wonder if the experience of the first 100 wasn't indeed closed off to us? That the phrase, "...we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed" were just words on a page? We believe that these are common concerns among many of us. Placing spiritual enthusiasm aside, just the relative percentage of permanent recoveries we experience today versus 30 or 40 years ago is alarming enough.

The commonly heard reasons for these realities sound like the rationalizations and justifications of the untreated alcoholic. Finger pointing to the external. It's because of the court slips, the treatment centers, the young people, the drugs, etc. ad-nauseum. In daring to follow the same directions in our group inventories as we do with our individual inventories, we believe the answer may lie with having dropped the ball when it comes to our primary purpose: Carrying the message TO the alcoholic.

As we travel around, we find there is a fresh new hunger alive and growing in Alcoholics Anonymous. "Surely you will meet some of us," is a promise that's coming true. The joy and spiritual power many of us have felt in sharing this gift with others is contagious.

"But why shouldn't we laugh? We have recoverED, and been given the power to help others. We find there are just as many, if not more, opportunities for 12-Step calls as ever before. When placed in front of an alcoholic, who is alone and terrified, we get the strong sense that we are privileged to be at the right place at the right time doing the right thing. The illusion that we are somehow separate from our fellows is smashed. The realization that this new power we have been given can be used to help heal others comes strongly. The experience of working with suffering alcoholics draws us nearer to that profound sense of gratitude and helps provide us with a wonderful opportunity to honor that power which has restored us to sanity. We become **active** co-creators in our own spiritual experience.

Before we go out on a call, many of us pause to say thanks in prayer and to ask that our motives be grounded in selflessness. In addition, many of us take a few minutes to re-read Chapter 7 "Working With Others." There are many great directions in this chapter coming from the experience of the first 100. In the ensuing decades, there have been 2 major shifts that were not realities when the Big Book was written. Roughly 90% of all 12-Step calls today are made to people who have been to AA previously and roughly 80% to people who are dually addicted. The dual addiction aspect can be easily surmounted with more

information on drug as well as alcohol withdrawal. The detoxification process may be a little more complicated, that's all. However, the call to the person who has already been to AA provides us with a greater challenge. Virtually all the information concerning 12-Step calls found in our basic text assumes that the person we are seeing has never heard of AA before. It was written from the point of view that we are to be delivering new information. The prospect was immediately excited that there may be a way out he had never heard of before. The question now is, what do we say to the man who has already heard the usual identification pitch? For whom establishing rapport is not enough?

From one of our members:

Several months ago, I knocked on a motel door at 3 am. A shaken man fearfully asked me inside. I reached out my hand and introduced myself as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. "Yeah I know," he said. "I tried it before and it didn't work." After pouring the wine down the sink and getting on our knees, we began to talk. One alcoholic to ANother. This man had been sober before. "Sobriety wasn't enough," he said. I agreed and we began to talk about RECOVERY. We talked about alcoholism as a disease and that while we had once used alcohol as a treatment, our physical, emotional and spiritual decay rendered drinking no longer effective. We agreed that, based on sad experience, "putting the plug in the jug" hardly sufficed for a real alcoholic. "Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices." I related some of my own experience and that **I had felt no sense of power until I had surrendered to the spiritual action inherent in the process.** He related that he had attended meetings regularly and stayed sober but never felt happy or free and eventually returned to drink. This scenario is all too common. The phrase, "Alcoholics Anonymous" is the title of a textbook. It is not endless meetings. When we greet a man with "Hey, I'll take you to a meeting," are we not sending the wrong message? Especially to a man who could not stay sober on fellowship support in the past? Perhaps we should try to find out what he did NOT try and focus on that instead.

When the new man says, "I've tried AA and it doesn't work", what do we tell him? When he says, "I've been sober before and it wasn't enough," how shall we respond? We believe we must try to open the window of distinction between sobriety and recovery. The "something new" for him will be the inner feeling of peace he receives by doing the steps. The peace he never found by 'plug in the jug' and 'lots of meetings' instructions from the past. Alcohol is the symptom for our disease called alcoholism. Let's give the new man some fresh hope to chew on. And, let's try to insure that when we do take him to meet the members of our Home Group, he will find a safe haven from the wars that he has survived.

From Dr. Bob's Nightmare:

"I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.

2. It is a pleasure.
3. Because in so doing I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.

From page 129: "It is well to let him go as far as he likes in helping other alcoholics. During those first days of convalescence, this will do more to insure his sobriety than anything else." Perhaps the greatest sense of joy of all is to be out on a 12-Step call with someone who is new to the program himself. To be there to witness such power in action is nothing short of a miraculous hair-raising opportunity. Don't miss it!

Every Step in our wonderful 12-Step process points directly to Step 12. The whole purpose of the previous 11 is to arrive at the threshold of Step 12. We are delivered to recovery so that we may share our experience with others. There are 147 promises in the Big Book. We have been given so much. The greatest gift of all is that we have been placed in a position of usefulness to others. We invite you to help us celebrate this gift!

From page 102: "Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed."

TRUST THE PROCESS

We often hear that this is a journey rather than a destination.

We each must begin our own journey from *exactly* where we are by taking a single step. Your journey will be yours and yours alone. It will not be the same as any other's journey and it should not be since we are different people with different experiences. You should never be discouraged or ashamed because your journey is different in any way from another's journey. What someone else experiences or feels or finds or stumbles over on their journey should not make any difference to your journey. Your journey is unique to you and will take you *exactly* where you are supposed to go at *exactly* the right time.

What matters is that your journey has begun. Cherish it, always.

EXPERIENCE THE JOURNEY

“GOD WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO CREATE THE FELLOWSHIP YOU CRAVE”

BB p. 164

Our Group Inventory

- Is everyone equally welcomed? Clean or dirty? Smelling of booze or not? Is our group frightened by the newly sober?
- Will the new person be bombarded with misinformation? “There are two things that kill alcoholics – liquor and misinformation in AA.” {Wino Joe L.}
- Is the message “sit around and wait for the miracle?” Or is it TAKE ACTION and help others to TAKE ACTION?
- Is the Problem made abundantly clear? Does our Group ensure that the new member is informed in detail about the EXACT NATURE of alcoholism?
- Does our Group have an adequate cross-section of alcoholics with whom the newcomer can identify? Are there deliberate attempts to make identification with the new prospect?
- Do cliques in our group tend to create a social maze for the new person to crawl through?
- Is the SOLUTION for the PROBLEM made abundantly clear? Do the members show by example the necessity and value for intense and frequent Step Work?
- Is the hope of a Spiritual Experience ever present in our Group?
- Do we pray together? Do we help the new member with their fear of prayer?
- Is there a genuine warm feeling of love and support?
- Is open, deep and honest sharing promoted as a healing tool?
- Do we have an adequate supply of willing sponsors who have a working knowledge of the Big Book? Does our Group actively promote sponsorship?
- For the person coming back for the 2nd, 3rd or xth time, will the atmosphere be fresh and full of promise?
- Is our Group full of “frothy emotional appeal” or does its “message have depth and weight”? Is it RELIEF based or RECOVERY based?
- Does our Group welcome family and friends into its activities?
- Is our Group creating traditions distinct and recognizable as its own?
- Does our Group hold its members accountable?

- Does our Group recognize and honor the reticence of many new members in being asked to share?
- Does our Group know how to cry? To laugh?

Through a commitment to being an active co-creator in our own spiritual experience, we have been given the fellowship we crave. However, we certainly do not have a 'corner on the market'. Indeed much of our strength comes from our diversity. We know only a little. If we stay open to the process, more is constantly being revealed.

We look forward to hearing from you and sharing with you our action toward fulfilling our primary purpose: staying sober and carrying the message TO the alcoholic.

“Our deepest fear is not that we’re inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn’t serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We were born to manifest the glory of God that’s within us. It is not just in some of us. It’s in everyone. And as we let our light shine we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

from the Inaugural Address of Nelson Mandela

LOVE AND ACTION

TRUST THE PROCESS