

The Little Red Book

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Author's Note

The Little Red Book evolved from a series of notes originally prepared as Twelve Step suggestions for AA beginners. It aids in the study of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and contains many helpful topics for discussion meetings. Its distribution is prompted by a desire to “carry [the] message to alcoholics” in gratitude of our daily reprieve from insanity or alcoholic death.

Many groups, in meeting the AA need for instruction of new members, have adopted this brief summarization of the AA recovery program expounded in the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*,* as an outline for study of that book. Worthwhile results have followed the inauguration of weekly classes devoted to guidance of new members in their quest for a better understanding of the Twelve Steps as a way of life for recovery from alcoholism.

These classes, directed by qualified members, have created a solidarity of understanding within our fellowship. They have brought a closer adherence to the Big Book, better understanding and application of its philosophy, more effective sponsorship, and much higher ratio of sobriety among our members.

We hope *The Little Red Book* opens new avenues of thought and helps the AA member arrive at his or her successful interpretation of the program.

The Little Red Book makes frequent reference to basic matter in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Third Edition.

*The Big Book is *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd ed., published by A.A. World Services, Inc., New York, NY. Available through Hazelden Educational Materials, Center City, MN.

Introduction

This introduction to the Twelve Steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous program is offered to all alcoholic men and women whose “lives have become unmanageable” because of their powerlessness over alcohol.

The purpose of this interpretation is to help members quickly work out an acceptable twenty-four-hour schedule of AA living. This subject matter is founded on basic information from the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

All supplementary matter is based on practical experience from the lives of fellow alcoholics who have found peace of mind and contented sobriety by a planned way of spiritual life set forth in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

We too often fail to realize the extent to which we are physically, mentally, and spiritually ill. Through ignorance we dwarf parts of our program to suit our distorted viewpoint.

It is obvious that much good can be accomplished by sharing with others the fund of knowledge that successful older members have gained by experience. The purpose of this introduction and the objective of this interpretation are toward that end.

As uncontrolled drinkers, few of us realized the danger of our position or how much alcoholism had damaged and deteriorated our minds and bodies. We didn't realize the full significance and effectiveness of our simple program without the help and cooperation of understanding members who had arrested their alcoholism.

Recovery through the AA program is simple. It needs little interpretation in itself. It will work if we live it. The barriers to success are ignorance of our illness, reservations, indifference, dishonesty, and brain damage.

AA is not religion. It is not accountable to organized religion, medicine, or psychology. AA has, however, drawn therapeutic virtues from these disciplines, molding them into a “design for living” by which we can live in contented sobriety and be restored to service and respect in society.

The AA program is designed for uncontrolled drinkers who sincerely desire sobriety and are willing to go to any length to get it. But the program invariably fails alcoholics who merely seek knowledge to control their drinking.

Stringent honesty is an absolute requirement of rehabilitation. An urgent desire to get well and a belief in a Power greater than ourselves are also essential to success.

Spiritual concepts must be embraced, but these do not involve organized religion. Although we must believe in this *Higher Power*, it is our privilege to interpret it according to our understanding.*

The alcoholics who have recovered through the Alcoholics Anonymous fellowship internationally disprove the age-old conviction that all alcoholics are untrustworthy and destined to remain hopeless drunken sots. Hundreds of thousands have disproved this, and thousands of new alcoholics are daily proving that by living the AA philosophy, alcoholism can be arrested.

Daily sobriety is the simple aim of AA. But plain sobriety is not enough. We must acquire honesty, humility, appreciation, and kill self-centeredness to keep sober.

For those who are willing to accept the AA program as a means of recovery from alcoholism, we recommend a close study of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Study it repeatedly.

Alcoholics Anonymous has all our answers; it was written by alcoholics for alcoholics and is based on the trials and experiences of the first one hundred Alcoholics Anonymous members. They worked out a recovery program that has proved to be sound and effective in the lives of millions of alcoholics.

By using this as our textbook, regularly attending AA meetings, and referring to the interpretations of the Twelve Steps as we progress, we will lay a strong foundation upon which we can rehabilitate our lives.

We are not disturbed by the realization that strict adherence to this program demands perfection. We know perfection is impossible. We merely strive toward perfecting ourselves in a way of life that is necessary to bring contented sobriety, health, and sane behavior to alcoholics who wish to recover from the fatal and incurable illness, alcoholism.

Aids to Contented Sobriety

Vital factors contributing to the long records of contented sobriety in the lives of thousands of AA members are their humility, honesty, faith, courage, gratitude, and service. The following AA definitions will be helpful in working out an acceptable understanding of these vital factors.

Humility

A true evaluation of conditions as they are; willingness to face facts; recognition of our alcoholic status; freedom from false pride and arrogance; understanding of the proper relationship between ourselves and a Higher Power, between ourselves and fellow human beings; acceptance and practice of this relationship throughout every twenty-four-hour period.

Honesty

Freedom from self-deception; trustworthiness in thought and action; sincerity in our desire to recover from alcoholism; willingness to admit a wrong; fair-ness in all our dealings with others; refusal to sneak that first drink.

Faith

Reliance, hope, and trust in the AA program; belief that we can recover as other members are doing and that practice of the Twelve Steps is necessary to happy, contented sobriety; willingness to draw on help from a Higher Power.

Courage

A quality of mind which enables us to deal with the problems and realities of life without reliance on alcohol; fortitude to endure the things we cannot change; a determination to stand our ground asking God's help with all issues, pleasant or otherwise, that might return us to drinking; fearlessness in the practice of faith, humility, honesty, and self-denial.

Gratitude

Gratitude continues the miracle of our sobriety. Gratitude is a healthy mental attitude; as we develop gratitude we enlarge our capacity for happiness, service, and contented sobriety. A lack of gratitude may lead to that first drink; gratitude and sobriety go hand in hand.

Service

Service to God and our fellow human beings is the key to AA success. Helping other alcoholics who need and want help gives us the tolerance and humility necessary to contented sobriety. Service combats self-centeredness. It reminds us of our powerlessness over alcohol. Intelligent, unselfish service is the lifeblood of the AA fellowship.