

Big Book Sponsorship

The Twelve Step Program - Big Book Guide



It only takes a day to learn 'how it works' and a lifetime to practice it!

Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| Step 1..... | 4 |
| Essentials of Recovery..... | 6 |
| Step 2..... | 8 |
| Step 3..... | 9 |
| Step 4..... | 11 |
| Step 5..... | 17 |
| Step 6..... | 19 |
| Step 7..... | 20 |
| Step 8..... | 21 |
| Step 9..... | 22 |
| Step 10..... | 25 |
| Step 11..... | 27 |
| Step 12..... | 29 |
| Summary..... | 30 |

You are going to become a sponsor/teacher.

Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough (AA p. 97).

To show other alcoholics (*addicts*) precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book. For them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary. (AA p. xiii, 4th ed.)

Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to *them*. It is important for *them* to realize that your attempt to pass this on to *them* plays a vital part in your recovery. Actually, *they* may be helping you more than you are helping *them*. Make it plain *they are* under no obligation to you, that you hope only that *they* will try to help other alcoholics (*addicts*) when *they escape their* own difficulties. Suggest how important it is that *they* place the welfare of other people ahead of *their* own. (AA p. 94)

This Twelve Step Workbook Guide substitutes terms and phrases related to alcoholism to include ANY obsessive-compulsive addiction patterns such as, cocaine and all mind altering substances, sugar/food, nicotine, gambling, sex/love/pornography, self-harm/mutilation, anorexia, bulimia, over-spending/debting, cluttering/hoarding, emotions, codependency—and anyone can certainly increase this list and all are welcome. Our format quotes from the book, Alcoholics Anonymous, our basic recovery text. Our notes, commentary, and gender-inclusive changes are formatted in italics. For further study, it is suggested that you get a copy of the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. (2001. 4th ed. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc. New York.)

Step 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol (*substances, obsessive-compulsive behaviour*), that our lives had become unmanageable.

Self-Diagnosis

Men and women drink (*use or act-out*) essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. (*substances, obsessive-compulsive behaviour*) (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*) The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious (*yes-no?*), they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic (*addict*) life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks--drinks (*hits, puffs, bites, bets, acts, cuts, etc.*) which they see others taking (*doing*) with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*), and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink (*use or act-out*) again (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*) This is repeated over and over (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*), and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery. (AA. p. xxviii 4th ed.)

No person likes to think *they are* bodily and mentally different from *their* fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking (*using, acting out*) careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink (*use, act-out*) like other people. (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*) The idea that somehow, someday *they* will control and enjoy *their* drinking (*using, obsessive-compulsive behavior*) is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker (*user, obsessive-compulsive*). (*Is this you - yes-no?*) The persistence of this illusion (*lie*) is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death. (AA p. 30)

We alcoholics (*addicts*) are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking (*using, acting-out behaviour*). (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*) We know that no real alcoholic (*addict*) ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals usually brief were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*) We are convinced to a

Big Book Sponsorship Guide

person that alcoholics (addicts) of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better. (Is this your experience - yes-no?) (AA p. 30)

This is by no means a comprehensive picture of the true alcoholic (*addict*), as our behavior patterns vary. But this description should identify them roughly (AA p. 22). (*yes-no?*)

If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely (*Do you honestly want to stop drinking, using or acting out - yes-no? and, based on your experience, have you been able to stay stopped - yes-no?*), or if when drinking (*using or acting out*), you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic (*addict*) (*Do you exhibit little control, when drinking, using or acting out - yes-no?*). If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer (AA p. 44).

Step 1 Instruction

We learned that we had to fully concede (*admit*) to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics (*addicts*). (*Do you admit it - yes-no?*) This is the first step in recovery. The delusion (*lie*) that we are like other people (*non-alcoholic/addict*), or presently may be, has to be smashed (AA p. 30). (*Are you convinced that you are a real alcoholic/addict - yes-no?*) *If you answered yes, then you have taken step one!*

There is a solution...

If you are as seriously alcoholic (*addicted*) as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible (*Is life becoming impossible? yes-no?*), and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help (*Are you ready to accept spiritual help - yes-no?*). This we did because we honestly wanted to, and were willing to make the effort (AA p. 25-26). (*Are you willing to make the effort - yes-no?*)

The Essentials of Recovery

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... We thought we could find an easier softer way. But we could not... Half measures availed us nothing. (AA p. 58-59)

Of alcoholics who came to A.A. and really tried, 50% got sober at once and remained that way; 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with A.A. showed improvement. Other thousands came to a few A.A. meetings and at first decided they didn't want the program. But great numbers of these--about two out of three--began to return as time passed (AA p. xx, 4th ed.).

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. (AA p. 568 4th ed.)

Willingness: *Are you willing to show-up and do the work? (yes-no?)*

Honesty: *Will you answer questions honestly with a simple yes or no? (yes-no?)*

Open mindedness: *Will you lay aside any prejudices, experience the program and assess the results for yourself? (yes-no?)*

Our job is to explain our approach and win their confidence.

But the ex-problem drinker (*addict or obsessive-compulsive personality*) who has found this solution (*our recipe*), who is properly armed with facts about them self, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic (*addict*) in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished.

Big Book Sponsorship Guide

That the *person* who is making the approach has had the same difficulty (*lack of control*), that *they* obviously know what *they are* talking about, that *their* whole department shouts at the new prospect that *they are a person* with a real answer, that *they have* no attitude of Holier Than Thou (*we are not saints, crusaders or mission makers*), nothing whatever except the sincere desire to be helpful; that there are no fees to pay (*big book sponsorship is free*), no axes to grind (*no windy arguments or frothy debates*), no people to please (*no "ass-kissing"*), no lectures to be endured (*we don't run your life*)—these are the conditions we have found most effective. After such an approach many take up their beds and walk again. (AA p. 18-19)

Does your prospect want to quit?

If *they do* not want to stop drinking (*using, acting out in a obsessive-compulsive behavior*), don't waste time trying to persuade *them*. You may spoil a later opportunity. (AA p. 90)

We, in our turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of *a drowning person* (AA p. 28). The more hopeless *they feel*, the better. *They* will be more likely to follow your suggestions. (AA p. 94) (*Are you desperate - yes-no?*)

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. (AA p. 58). Ask *them (newcomer)* if *they want* to quit for good and if *they* would go to any extreme to do so. (*Are you willing to thoroughly follow the instructions in the Big Book of A.A. - yes-no?*) If *they say* yes, then *their* attention should be drawn to you as a person who has recovered (AA p. 90).

Tell the newcomer your "war story"

Tell *them* enough about your drinking (*using or acting-out*) habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage *them* to speak of themselves. (AA p. 91) Tell *them* how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give *them* an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show *them* how the mental twist which leads to the first drink (*toke, hit, bet, puff, bite, cut, care, act, etc.*) of the spree. (AA p. 92).

Step 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Lack of power, that was our dilemma. (*yes-no?*) 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. (AA p. 45)

...deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there. For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself. We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us. We can only clear the ground a bit. If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway. With this attitude you cannot fail. The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you (AA p. 55). Some of us grow into it more slowly. But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him. When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us! (AA p. 57)

Step 2 Instruction

We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" (*yes-no?*) As soon as a *person* can say that *they do* believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure *them* that *they are on their way*. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built. (AA p. 47)

If you answered yes, congratulations you have taken step two and we emphatically assure you are now on your way!

Step 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection. Our description of the alcoholic (*addict*)... our personal adventure before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- a. That we were alcoholics (*addicts*) and could not manage our own lives.
(*Is this you - yes-no?*)
- b. That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism (*addiction*).
(*Are you beyond human aid - yes-no?*)
- c. That God could and would if He were sought.
(*Are you willing to believe - yes-no?*)

Being convinced (*of a, b and c*), we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood Him. Just what do we mean by that, and just what do we do?

The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. (*Are you convinced - yes-no?*) (AA p. 60)

Selfishness, self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic (*addict*) is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though *they* usually *do not* think so. Above everything, we alcoholics (*addicts*) must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them

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even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help.

This is the how and the why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. (*Would you agree - yes-no?*) Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director (*yes-no?*). He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom. (AA p. 61-62)

Step 3 Paycheck

When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our own little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn. (AA p. 63)

Step 3 Instruction

We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him: "God, I offer myself to Thee -- to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him. (*yes-no?*) (AA p. 63)

If you can answer yes, then let us take this prayer together and we will have taken step three.

Step 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision^{Step 3} was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once (*fast*) followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor (*substances, acting-out behaviour*) was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions. Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four... We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations. (AA p. 63-64)

Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics (*addicts*) than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, (*pride, self-pity, jealousy, suspicion, envy, selfishness, self-seeking, self-centeredness, dishonesty, anger, impatience, fear, intolerance, infidelity, inconsideration, slander, prejudice, etc.*) for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. (*Would you agree - yes-no?*) When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry (*Column 1*). We asked ourselves why we were angry (*Column 2*). In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships, (including sex) were hurt or threatened. (*Column 3*) So we were sore. We were "burned up." On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with? (*Column 3*) (AA p. 64-65)

We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully. (AA p. 65)

Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done (*Column 2*), we resolutely looked for our own mistakes (*Column 4*). Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? (*Column 4*) Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other

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person (*Column 1*) involved entirely. Where were we to blame? (*Column 4*) The inventory was ours, not the other person's. When we saw our faults we listed them (*Column 4*). We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs (*Column 4*) honestly and were willing to set these matters straight (*Column 5*). (AA p. 67)

We reviewed our fears thoroughly (*5 Columns*). We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them (*Column 2*). Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? (AA p. 68)

We reviewed our own conduct (*All harms to others including sex conduct*) over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? (*Column 4*) Whom had we hurt? (*Column 1*) Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? (*Column 2*) Where were we at fault (*Column 4*), what should we have done instead? (*Column 5*) We got this all down on paper and looked at it. (AA p. 69)

Step 4 Instruction

If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments (*5 Columns*). We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness....We have listed the people (*Column 1*) we have hurt by our conduct (*Column 4*), and are willing to straighten out the past if we can (*Column 5*)... If you have already made a decision^{Step 3}, and an inventory^{Step 4} of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself. (AA p. 70-71)

Keep in mind that it is not necessary, for newcomers to talk about every resentment or selfish act, or each person he or she has ever lied to or harmed for the inventory to be thorough. The objective is to get to "causes and conditions". Sometimes it takes only a few incidents to make clear which short-comings have kept the newcomer blocked from an intimate, two-way relationship with the "One who has all power."

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RESENTMENTS: We were usually as definite as this example: (p. 65, A.A. 4th Edition)

| Column 1 | Column 2 | Column 3 | Column 4 (Blocks) | Column 5 (Power) |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| People, Institutions & Principles Towards whom am I angry? | The Cause Why am I angry? | This affects, threatens, hurts or interferes with my... self-esteem, security, ambitions pocket book, relationships (including sex) | Where am I at fault? Where am I to blame? What are my mistakes? <i>Identify character defects, liabilities, shortcomings, blocks i.e. false pride, jealousy, lust, dishonesty, envy, greed, fear, sloth, hate, selfishness, impatience, etc.</i> | What should I have done instead? <i>Identify assets to strive for i.e. humility, trust, intimacy, honesty, contentment, generosity, love, zeal, forgiveness, unselfishness, patience, etc.</i> |
| Mr. Brown (Resentment) | His attention to my wife. Told my wife of my mistress. Brown may get my job at the office. | Sex relations Self-esteem <i>Ambitions?</i> <i>Pocket book?</i> <i>Security?</i> | <i>Anger</i> <i>Dishonesty</i> <i>False Pride</i> <i>Selfishness</i> <i>Self-Seeking</i> <i>Infidelity</i> <i>Lust</i> <i>Jealousy</i> <i>Fear of..</i> | <i>Love & Forgiveness</i> <i>Honesty</i> <i>Humility</i> <i>Unselfishness</i> <i>Helpfulness to Others</i> <i>Faithfulness to wife</i> <i>Intimacy</i> <i>Trust</i> <i>Faith in God</i> |
| Mrs. Jones (Resentment) | She's a nut -- she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. He's my friend. She's a gossip. | Personal relationships Self-esteem | <i>Anger</i> <i>False Pride</i> <i>Jealousy & Suspicion</i> <i>Intolerance</i> <i>Selfishness</i> <i>Fear of..</i> | <i>Love & Forgiveness</i> <i>Humility</i> <i>Trust</i> <i>Tolerance</i> <i>Unselfishness</i> <i>Faith in God</i> |
| My employer (Resentment) | Unreasonable -- Unjust -- Overbearing -- Threatens to fire me for my drinking and padding my expense account. | Self-esteem Security <i>Pocket book</i> <i>Ambitions</i> | <i>Anger</i> <i>False Pride</i> <i>Dishonesty & Stealing</i> <i>Greed</i> <i>Laziness & Sloth</i> <i>Selfishness</i> <i>Self-seeking</i> <i>Fear of..</i> | <i>Love & Forgiveness</i> <i>Humility</i> <i>Honesty & Restitution</i> <i>Generosity</i> <i>Action, Zeal</i> <i>Unselfishness</i> <i>Be Helpful</i> <i>Faith in God</i> |
| My wife (Resentment) | Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name. | Personal relationships Sex relations Security | <i>Anger</i> <i>False Pride</i> <i>Jealousy & Suspicion</i> <i>Dishonesty</i> <i>Infidelity</i> <i>Fear of..</i> | <i>Love & Forgiveness</i> <i>Humility</i> <i>Trust</i> <i>Honesty</i> <i>Faithfulness to wife</i> <i>Faith in God</i> |
| | | | | |

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RESENTMENTS: We were usually as definite as this example:

| Column 1 | Column 2 | Column 3 | Column 4 (Blocks) | Column 5 (Power) |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>People, Institutions & Principles</p> <p>Towards whom am I angry?</p> | <p>The Cause</p> <p>Why am I angry?</p> | <p>This affects, threatens, hurts or interferes with my...self-esteem, security, ambitions, pocket book, relationships (including sex)</p> | <p>Where am I at fault? Where am I to blame? What are my mistakes?</p> <p><i>Identify character defects, liabilities, shortcomings, blocks i.e. false pride, jealousy, lust, dishonesty, envy, greed, fear, sloth, hate, selfishness, impatience, etc.</i></p> | <p>What should I have done instead?</p> <p><i>Identify assets to strive for i.e. humility, trust, intimacy, honesty, contentment, generosity, love, zeal, forgiveness, unselfishness, patience, etc.</i></p> |
| | | | | |

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FEARS: We were usually as definite as this example:

| Column 1 | Column 2 | Column 3 | Column 4 (Blocks) | Column 5 (Power) |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| People, Institutions & Principles Who or What am I afraid of? What am I afraid of losing or not getting? | The Cause Why am I fearful? | This affects, threatens, hurts or interferes with my... self-esteem, security, ambitions, pocket book, relationships (including sex) | Where am I at fault? Where am I to blame? What are my mistakes? <i>Identify character defects, liabilities, shortcomings, blocks i.e. false pride, jealousy, lust, dishonesty, envy, greed, fear, sloth, hate, selfishness, impatience, etc.</i> | What should I have done instead? <i>Identify assets to strive for i.e. humility, trust, intimacy, honesty, contentment, generosity, love, zeal, forgiveness, unselfishness, patience, etc.</i> |
| <i>Fear of no control</i> | <i>Other people make mistakes and are incompetent - if I want anything done right I must do it myself!</i> | <i>Self-esteem Security Ambitions Pocket book Personal relationships</i> | <i>Arrogance Intolerance Inconsideration Bullying & Abusive Selfishness Self Seeking Jealousy, Suspicion</i> | <i>Humility Tolerance, Acceptance Be considerate Be kind and courteous Unselfishness Be helpful to others Trust & Faith in God</i> |
| | | | | |

HARMFUL CONDUCT (Including SEX): We were usually as definite as this example:

| Column 1 | Column 2 | Column 3 | Column 4 (Blocks) | Column 5 (Power) |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| <p>People, Institutions & Principles</p> <p>Whom have I hurt?</p> | <p>How did I harm them? Did I unjustifiably arouse:</p> <p>Jealousy? Suspicion? Bitterness?</p> | <p>What did I affect, threaten, hurt or interfere with?</p> <p>Self-esteem, security, ambitions, pocket book, relationships (including sex)?</p> | <p>Where am I at fault? Where am I to blame? What are my mistakes?</p> <p>Identify character defects, liabilities, shortcomings, blocks i.e. false pride, jealousy, lust, dishonesty, envy, greed, fear, sloth, hate, selfishness, impatience, etc.</p> | <p>What should I have done instead?</p> <p>Identify assets to strive for i.e. humility, trust, intimacy, honesty, contentment, generosity, love, zeal, forgiveness, unselfishness, patience, etc.</p> |
| <p><i>Spouse (Sex Conduct)</i></p> | <p><i>Had an affair, I aroused jealousy, resentment, distrust. She felt inadequate.</i></p> | <p><i>Self-esteem Sex relationships</i></p> | <p><i>False Pride Lust Infidelity Dishonesty Selfishness Self Seeking Inconsideration Fear of...</i></p> | <p><i>Humility Intimacy Faithfulness Honesty Unselfishness Be Helpful to Others Consideration Faith in God</i></p> |
| <p><i>My employer</i></p> | <p><i>Stole products from the store. Slandered his name.</i></p> | <p><i>Pocket book Self-esteem Relationships</i></p> | <p><i>Dishonesty, Stealing Selfishness Self-seeking Slander Resentment, Anger Greed Fear of not having enough</i></p> | <p><i>Honesty, Restitution Unselfishness Be helpful to others Speak well of others Forgiveness Generosity Faith in God</i></p> |
| | | | | |

Step 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path (*Column 4*). We have admitted certain defects (*Column 4*); we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory (*Column 4*). Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects (*Column 4*). This brings us to the Fifth Step in the program of recovery....

This is perhaps difficult, especially discussing our defects (*Column 4*) with another person.... If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking (*using, acting-out*) (AA p.72). We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority (*for criminal matters—see a lawyer; for mental-emotional issues—see a therapist; for medical issues see a doctor*) whose duty it is to receive it. Such parts of our story we tell to someone who will understand yet be unaffected (AA p.74).

Step 5 Instruction

...talk to the right person. It is important that *they* may be able to keep a confidence; that they understand and approve what we are driving at; that *they* will not try to change our plan. When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk... We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character (*Column 4*), every dark cranny of the past (*Are you willing to do this - yes-no?*). (AA p.74-75)

Step 5 Paycheck

Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink (*substance, acting-out*) problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe. (AA p 75)

My Moral Inventory Checklist

***Self-will (Column 4) Step 4 & 5
(NO POWER)***

***God's will (Column 5) Steps 8 & 9
(POWER!)***

My liabilities, blocks, character defects...

- False Pride, Arrogance, Self-loathing
- Jealousy, Distrust, Suspicion
- Envy
- Selfishness
- Self-seeking
- Dishonesty, Stealing, Lying
- Intolerance, Inconsideration
- Greed
- Lust, Infidelity
- Hate, Anger, Resentment
- Sloth, Laziness, Procrastination
- Impatience
- Fear of...
- Irresponsible, Blaming Others
- _____
- _____
- _____

The assets I need to strive for...

- Humility
- Trust
- Contentment
- Unselfishness
- Helpful to others
- Honesty, Integrity, Restitution
- Tolerance, Acceptance, Tact
- Generosity
- Intimacy, Chaste, Faithfulness
- Forgiveness
- Activity, Zeal, Promptness
- Patience
- Love
- Responsible, Accountable
- _____
- _____
- _____

Step 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done (*All 5 Columns*). (AA p. 75)

Is our work solid so far - *yes-no?* Are the stones (*Steps 1-5*) properly in place? (*yes-no?*) Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? (*yes-no?*) Have we tried to make mortar without sand? (*yes-no?*) If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. (AA p. 75)

Step 6 Instruction

We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things (*Column 4*) which we have admitted are objectionable? (AA p. 76)

Can He now take them all (*Column 4*), every one?
(*Are you now ready to have God remove all these defects - yes-no?*)

If we still cling to something (*Column 4*) we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing. (AA p. 76)

When you can answer yes, then you will have taken step six.

Step 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step 7 Instruction

When ready, we say something like this:

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character...

(Column 4 -- list character defects, for example, "God, please remove my dishonesty, resentment, selfishness, fear....")

...which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength...

(Column 5 -- list assets to strive for..."God, strengthen my honesty, forgiveness, unselfishness and love...")

...as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."

We have then taken Step Seven. (AA p. 76)

Step 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Now we need more action, without which we find that "Faith without works is dead." Let's look at Steps Eight and Nine. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory - *(yes-no?)*
(AA p. 76).

| <p>(Step 8) List Persons and Institutions (Column 1) I have harmed and to whom do I need to make a direct amends? What did my conduct (Column 4) arouse (Column 2)? How did I affect them? (Column 3)</p> | <p>(Step 9) What I should have done instead (Column 5) What do I need to do to straighten out the past? What behaviour will convince them more than my words?</p> |
|---|--|
| <p><i>(Example) Spouse (Relationship Conduct) (Column 1) Infidelity, dishonesty, inconsideration, selfishness, self-seeking. (Column 4) I affected their self-esteem and sex relationships. (Column 3) I aroused bitterness, jealousy, resentment, and feelings of inadequacy (Column 2 - harm done to others).</i></p> | <p><i>Show appreciation to my spouse by being faithful, honest, and unselfish and helpful. I will practice intimacy and be considerate of my spouse's needs and desires. I will spend more time with my spouse and I will practice these principles on an ongoing basis.</i></p> |
| <p><i>(Example) Former employer (Column 1) I was angry and resentful and was verbally abusive. I was dishonest. I slandered their name to others. I stole from this person. (Column 4) I affected their pocketbook, relationships and security. (Column 3) I aroused feelings of resentment (Column 2 - harm done to others).</i></p> | <p><i>I will forgive. I will admit all my wrong doings in person. I will make restitution on what I stole. I will stop slandering their name and speak well of them. I will ask the person what more can I do to right the wrong I have done.</i></p> |
| | |

Step 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. (*yes-no?*) Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol (*drugs, obsessive-compulsive behaviours*). (AA p. 76)

The rule is we must be hard on our self, but always considerate of others. (AA p. 74)

Item 1 - Resentments

Probably there are still some misgivings (*yes-no?*)...The question of how to approach the *person* we hated will arise. It may be *they have* done us more harm than we have done *them* and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward *them*, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults (*Column 4*). Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. We go to *them* in a helpful and forgiving spirit (*Column 5*), confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret (*Column 4*). Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue...We are there to sweep off our side of the street...*Their* faults (*Column 2*) are not discussed. We stick to our own (*Column 4*). (AA p. 76-78)

Anger/Resentment Forgiveness Prayer

This was our course: We realized that the people (*Column 1*) who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. (*Would you agree - yes-no?*) Though we did not like their symptoms (*Column 2*) and the way these disturbed us (*Column 3*), they, like ourselves, were sick too. (*Would you agree - yes-no?*) We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience (*Column 5*) that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick *person*. How can I be helpful (*Column 5*) to *this person*? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done." (AA p. 66-67)

Item 2 - Money

Most alcoholics (*addicts*) owe money (*yes-no?*) We do not dodge our creditors... We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink (*use, act-out*) if we are afraid to face them. (AA p. 78)

Item 3 - Criminal Offenses

Perhaps we have committed a criminal offense which might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities (*yes-no?*)... Although these reparations take innumerable forms (*Column 5*), there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths (*follow the recipe*) to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing (*Column 5*), no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything. (AA p. 78-79)

Remove Fear Prayer

Instead we let Him demonstrate (*Column 5*), through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be (*Column 5*). At once, we commence to outgrow fear. (AA p. 68)

Item 4 - Sex Relationships

The chances are that we have domestic troubles (*yes-no?*) Perhaps we are mixed up with women (*others*) in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised. (AA p. 80-81)

Prayer for Sex Amends

We asked God to mold our ideals (*Column 5*) and help us to live up to them... In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it... We earnestly pray for the right ideal (*Column 5*), for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache. (AA p. 69-70)

Step 9 Instruction

Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink. (AA p. 80)

Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all... The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it... Our behavior (*Column 5*) will convince them more than our words. We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness (*addiction*) would make a skeptic out of anyone.

There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen - we sent them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble (*Column 5*) without being servile (*grovelling*) or scraping (*awkward*) (*Column 4*). As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone. (AA p. 83)

Step 9 Paycheck

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. (AA p. 83-84)

(Do you want this experience in your life - yes-no?)

Step 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step Ten suggests we continue to take personal inventory^{step 4} and continue to set right any new mistakes^{steps 8,9} as we go along. (*Are you willing to do this - yes-no?*) We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. (*Are you willing to do this - yes-no?*) We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear.^{step 4} When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.^{steps 3,7} We discuss them with someone immediately^{step 5} and make amends^{steps 8,9} quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.^{step 12} Love and tolerance (*Column 5*) of others is our code. (AA p. 84)

Step 10 Paycheck

And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone, even alcohol (*substances, obsessive-compulsive behaviour*). For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor (*using, acting-out*). If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor (*substances, obsessive-compulsive behaviour*) has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition. (AA p. 84-85)

My Daily (Step 10) Personal Inventory

| LIABILITIES to watch for: Check for each day for: SELF-WILL (Column 4) <i>NO POWER</i> | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|--|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1. Resentment | | | | | | | |
| 2. False Pride, Arrogance, Self-loathing | | | | | | | |
| 3. Envy | | | | | | | |
| 4. Jealousy, Distrust, Suspicion | | | | | | | |
| 5. Dishonesty, Lying, Exaggeration, Stealing | | | | | | | |
| 6. Selfishness, Self-Seeking, Self-Centeredness | | | | | | | |
| 7. Laziness, Sloth, Boredom | | | | | | | |
| 8. Inconsideration, Intolerance | | | | | | | |
| 9. Lust, Infidelity | | | | | | | |
| 10. Immoral Thinking, Vulgar Talk | | | | | | | |
| 11. Hate, Wrath, Anger, Irritability | | | | | | | |
| 12. Greed (money) or Gluttony (food) | | | | | | | |
| 13. Slander, Gossip, Spreading Rumors | | | | | | | |
| 14. Impatience | | | | | | | |
| 15. Fear of... | | | | | | | |
| ASSETS to strive for: Check for each day for: GOD'S WILL (Column 5) <i>POWER</i> | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
| 1. Forgiveness | | | | | | | |
| 2. Humility | | | | | | | |
| 3. Contentment | | | | | | | |
| 4. Trust | | | | | | | |
| 5. Honesty, Integrity | | | | | | | |
| 6. Unselfishness | | | | | | | |
| 7. Activity, Zeal, Promptness | | | | | | | |
| 8. Tolerance, Acceptance | | | | | | | |
| 9. Intimacy, Chaste | | | | | | | |
| 10. Purity | | | | | | | |
| 11. Love, Kindness | | | | | | | |
| 12. Generosity | | | | | | | |
| 13. Praise Others, Look For The Good In Others | | | | | | | |
| 14. Patience | | | | | | | |
| 15. Faith, Trust God | | | | | | | |

Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Step Eleven suggests prayer (*talking to God*) and meditation (*listening to God*). (AA p. 85) (*Are you willing to do this - yes-no?*)

Step 11 Instruction

PM Focus

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?^{step 10} Do we owe an apology?^{step 8,9} Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once?^{step 5} Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?^{step 12} But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection (*Column 4*), for that would diminish our usefulness to others.^{step 12} After making our review we ask God's forgiveness^{step 7} and inquire what corrective measures^{steps 8,9} should be taken. (AA p. 86)

AM Focus

On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. (*Column 5*) Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking^{step 3}, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives (*Column 4*)^{step 10}. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane (*Column 5*) when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives (*Column 4*). (AA p. 86)

Mid-day Focus

In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and

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take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. (AA p. 86)

We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step (*Column 5*) is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will (*Column 4*), and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. (AA p. 87)

Step 11 Paycheck

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done" (*Column 5*). We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions (*Column 4*). We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves. It works - it really does. (AA p. 87 - 88)

Step 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics (*addicts*), and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking (*using, acting out*) as intensive work with other alcoholics (*addicts*). It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics (*addicts*)! (*Are you willing to do this - yes-no?*) You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill. (AA p. 89)

This seemed to prove that one alcoholic (*addict*) could affect another as no nonalcoholic (*non-addict*) could. It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic (*addict*) with another, was vital to permanent recovery. (p. xvi - xvii, 4th ed.)

...I soon found that when all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic (*addict*) would save the day. (AA p.15)

...the broker had worked hard with many alcoholics (*addicts*) on the theory that only an alcoholic (*addict*) could help an alcoholic (*addict*), but he had succeeded only in keeping sober (*clean*) himself. He suddenly realized that in order to save himself he must carry his message to another alcoholic (*addict*). (AA p.xvi, 4th ed.)

We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others. (AA p.132)

But if you are shaky you had better work with another alcoholic (*addict*) instead (AA p. 102).

It is important for *them* (*newcomer*) to realize that your attempt to pass this (*our recipe*) on to *them* plays a vital part in your recovery. Actually, *they* may be helping you more than you are helping *them*. (AA p. 94)

Step 12 Paycheck

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends -- this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives. (AA p. 89)

Summary

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol (*substances, obsessive-compulsive behaviour*) is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism (*addiction*). What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. "How can I best serve Thee, Thy will (not mine) be done." These are thoughts (*Column 5*) which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will. (AA p. 85)

Thus we grow. And so can you, though you be but one *person* with this book (*A.A. Big Book*) in your hand. We believe and hope it contains all you will need to begin. We know what you are thinking. You are saying to yourself: "I'm jittery and alone. I couldn't do that." But you can. You forget that you have just now tapped a source of power much greater than yourself. To duplicate, with such backing, what we have accomplished is only a matter of willingness, patience and labor (AA pp. 162-163).

Remember, recovery from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body is possible by working the Twelve Steps, as directed in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, everyday. There is much more work ahead, this just the beginning. Remember not to get cocky or lazy. Trust God, Clean House, Help Others.