

REVIEW: STEPS by the BIG BOOK

How can we alcoholics/addicts in
recovery live “happy, joyous, and free”?
(*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 133: 0)

**Alcoholics Anonymous is the life changing
program formed by two desperate alcoholics in
1935. The Steps are suggested guides for recovery.**

There is no rule that says anyone has to do the Steps, and there is no regulation about how they should be done. Many of us in recovery work to make the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous part of our lives by collaborating with a power greater than any one of us – an inner knowing, our own best and highest nature.

Since the way people take the Steps in AA is highly personal, we leave it to individual members to decide when they have taken each Step. The Big Book has us consider, “Is our [Step] work solid so far?” Can we “answer to our satisfaction?” (75: 3-76: 1) One measure is our own peace of mind.

This review of the 12 Steps is a scrapbook of insights borrowed from meetings and recovery literature. There are notes on Steps 1 – 3, Step 4, and Steps 5 – 12, and a summary of the Steps from the Big Book. The reference is the first 103 pages of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, fourth edition, the “basic text” (xi: 2) for the program and fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

If appropriate, simply say your own addiction in place of alcohol.

12 STEPS - ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

{Optional: the point ; [Spiritual Principles] }

STEP 1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable. [Honesty I have a problem!]

STEP 2 Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. [Hope There's help for my problem.]

STEP 3 Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him. [Trust I make a commitment to follow ALL of the suggestions.]

STEP 4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. [Courage Who am I?]

STEP 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. [Integrity I share who I am with someone else.]

STEP 6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. [Willingness As a result of Step 4, I see things about myself I would like to change.]

STEP 7 Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. [Humility I start trying to change!]

STEP 8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. [Compassion As a result of Step 4, I make a list of people that I mistreated, or for whom I had ill feelings.]

STEP 9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. [Justice If possible, I mend things with these people so that I can get rid of my bad feelings.]

STEP 10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. [Perseverance I look at ME daily. How am I doing: physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually?]

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. [Spiritual awareness I continue to grow as a human being daily.]

STEP 12 Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs. [Service I try to help other alcoholics/addicts, and to practice what I have learned in all areas of my life.]

NOTES ON STEPS 1 - 2 - 3

“It meant destruction of self-centeredness.” (14: 1)

STEP 1 When we drink, we break out in a binge

“No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. . . . I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master.” (Bill’s Story, 8: 1)

Like Bill, we are alcoholics, and we have hit bottom. The problem is our **mental obsession** that leads us to take a drink, and our resulting **physical compulsion** to drink to excess. Our minds and lives are unmanageable; we must surrender. Working Step 1 begins when we become abstinent. We have to stop our particular addictive alcoholic behaviors so that our continued acting out does not hinder our surrender. Our experience is that we do not become whole without a solution beyond ourselves.

This is a disease of isolation and loneliness. We are prisoners of our self-sufficiency, isolated inside. We admit we need to grow and that we are not free. “We are people who appear to be sure of themselves but are actually eaten alive with fear inside.” (193: 2) If anxiety is the existential basis of our addiction, then we must alter our fear, remorse, shame and guilt in order to find happiness so that we do not have to go back to drinking. [Shame: feeling disgrace for who we are in our essence.] [Guilt: feeling disgrace for how we have behaved.] As recovering alcoholics, we have to do something about being “restless, irritable and discontented” (xxviii: 4) or we will drink again.

The point is to experience a “personality change sufficient to bring about recovery.” (567: 1) Human nature, the ‘self’ and ‘instincts’ are not the problem. The problem is how we habitually **re-act** to people, places, and things in our instinctual and self-

absorbed ways, such that we risk drinking or having an emotional dry bender. How may we come to have a “profound alteration in [our] reaction to life”? (567: 4) How may we be free?

Recovery is an individual alcoholic’s experience of the transformative power that comes from actually **working the Steps**, the program of action of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Out of our discontent with the way we are, we study and practice the 12 Steps as a daily discipline in order to achieve and maintain spiritual balance.

Rather than argue with the various hypotheses of AA, we experiment by doing the Steps as written and see what the results are. A sponsor is our essential guide through the 12 Steps. It is not about our thoughts or opinions; it is about our action of working and living the Steps on a daily basis. The spiritual power, which comes from the practice of the 12 Steps within the AA fellowship, can move us to be sober and live with serenity and peace of mind.

STEP 2 We can get well; there is hope for us

“ ‘Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?’ ... It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.” (Bill’s Story, 12: 2, 12: 4)

If our problem is that we have a body which will die if we drink, and we have a mind which compels us to take that drink, then we are **powerless** indeed. We are without power. Yet the fact that we and others like us are not drinking or using, one day at a time, is proof of the action in our own lives of a solution – a power greater than any one of us.

Step 2 reminds us we are crazy to think that we need to be in control or that we can do it alone. We no longer need to live solo with the pain and insanity that have been our nature. Insanity is

when we lack perspective and things are out of proportion, and when we repeat the same mistakes over and over expecting different results. In AA we find hope that we can be restored to sanity, **we can become whole**. The hope of Step 2 follows the desperation of Step 1 as the dawn follows the dark.

AA is a spiritual, not a religious, program. Spirituality is what happens to us when we work the Steps within the AA fellowship community. Step 2 does not say: We came to believe IN a power that WOULD restore us. Step 2 describes the solution as we “came to believe THAT a power greater than ourselves COULD restore us to sanity.” (59: 2) The emphasis is not on who or what this power is, but on what this power can do for us. We begin to turn inward to find a higher power that works and feels safe. A group itself qualifies as a power greater than us, so do the spiritual principles contained in the practice of the 12 Steps. So does the understanding any one of us has of a higher power.

STEP 3 We do not need to do it alone

“I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost.” (Bill’s Story, 13: 2)

Heard in a meeting: “The problem is **Me!** The solution is **Beyond Me!** And the program of action is **Let It!**”

"Is the stone heavy? Put it down and rest."

The central affirmative action in Step 3 is a decision. We become willing to take action to do something different. We stop exhausting ourselves as if we were in charge of making things happen in this world. We loosen our grip on our fearful sense of self. **We were never meant to do it alone.**

We are asked to turn our will and lives over to the care of what we do not understand. Yet we may define our own conception of this power, as we may for our own understandings of “other spiritual expressions” and spiritual terms. (47: 1) By working Step 3 we are allowing an “unsuspected inner resource” (567-568) to care for us, not control us or conduct our lives for us. We are not giving anything away; we are not struggling to become something we are not. We are learning to cooperate with what we always were. We are complete and whole as we are; the stuff we mixed in was to survive.

We may discover that we are very sure what God is **not** for us, but not what God **is**, and that is fine. **“First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn’t work.” (62: 3)** Working Step 3 will help us discover what works best for us. We are aligning ourselves with a “Spirit of the Universe” (46: 2) – one with our own best and highest nature. Spirituality is our tool based on personal experience, which gets better the more we experiment with it and use it. Step 3 reflects a spiritual progression through practice from hope to faith to trust. The decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of a higher power of our own understanding is one we may make each day, one day at a time.

The authors of the Big Book call **Step 3 the “keystone” (62: 3) to the “wonderfully effective spiritual structure” (47: 2)** of a spiritual awakening that is being built by the discipline of the practice of the 12 Steps within the fellowship.

**How do we work Step 3?
We do it by working Steps 4 - 12.**

NOTES ON STEP 4

There is good in all of us, even the worst of us

“When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.” (64: 3)

“I ruthlessly faced my sins [blocks to spirit]. (Bill’s Story, 13: 2)

- Heard in a meeting: “We need self-acceptance before we can have self improvement.”

Problem / Solution / Program of Action

We have come a long way to reach Step 4. We now understand that our **problem** lies in being **powerless** over such recurring **mental obsessions** (mind) as the thought that we can drink again in safety, when taking that drink triggers our **physical compulsion** (body) to drink to excess.

Our **solution** is to take refuge in a power greater than any one of us which can restore us to sanity, health, and wholeness.

Our **program of action** is to turn our life and will over to such a power, of our own understanding, by the discipline of the daily practice of the Twelve Steps within the AA fellowship. The key to this action is our experience that **“our troubles...are basically of our own making.”** (62: 2) We have learned that our own **re-actions** to hard times or good times have become self-centered **thought-habits** that frequently stand in the way of recovery. We learn that with help, we can change these for our own serenity.

Kit of spiritual tools

We have been promised a “kit of spiritual tools.” (25: 1) Step 4 delivers a “process” (64: 1), a “method” (114: 1) and a “treatment” (551: 1) that we can use often on our reactions to past events and present day troubles (Step 10), so we are less likely to pick up a

drink and more likely to have peace of mind. While there is hard work ahead, we will be learning a lot about ourselves, and we do not have to dread it. Step 4 is not a test, we cannot fail it. The last thing we need is another chance to beat up on ourselves.

Character Assets

“[An] inventory...is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade.” (64: 1) We are in the business of staying sober, and the ways we think and behave are the stock in trade. We are practicing understanding the exact nature of what in our lives has not worked to give us peace of mind, and also what we have done right. We may address questions like these:

- What qualities do I like about myself? That others like?
- What are my values? Which ones am I committed to living by, and how?
- How have I shown concern for others, including myself?
- What spiritual principles am I practicing in my life?
- When have I done the right thing? What are my successes?

[For Step 4 assets see BB pages 67: 0, 1 and 70: 3.]

Blocks to our spirit

The premise of Step 4 is that we have difficulty turning our life and will over because some of our thoughts and behaviors block us from experiencing our spirit – our higher power or our own better nature. We use the Step 4 process in order to identify these habitual blocking thoughts and behaviors in any resentment, fear, or hurtful action. Once we look deeper inside for the source of our old worn out defenses, or patterns, or defects, or shortcomings, which are usually involved in the roles we played in painful life events, then we can move on and change them in the Steps that follow. This enables us to “clear a channel” choked up with self-centered, dishonest or fearful motives and permits us to return to

our search for our higher power's will, not our own, in any moment of stress. (Optional, see *12&12*, 103: 0)

What part of ourselves?

Through practice we learn to focus not so much on **who** it was that hurt or threatened us, or **how** they did that, but more on **what** part of ourselves was disturbed so that we drank, or acted as though we had been drinking. This often relates to feelings associated with our attitudes, personalities and behaviors in reaction to real or imagined threats to our security, our self esteem, or our sex / relationship instincts. We have little control over others and what they do, but we can change how we habitually re-act to life events. This is difficult for us. But, if we do not change we may drink. We have to ask for help. We find that help through the discipline of the practice of the Twelve Steps.

Where are we responsible?

Character Defects

We develop new skills in asking **where** we were responsible in the course of day to day happenings. The Big Book authors never accuse, criticize, or judge us. The purpose of this step is to help us become aware of ourselves as we were in the past and how we are today. We are invited to precisely describe our thinking and behavior. **We name our part.** We wrestle with spiritual inquiries such as where was I self-centered or dishonest or at fault? (“Dishonest or self-seeking motives” 86: 2) We must honestly ask what these terms mean to us in our own experience and in our own words. (See 47: 1; 63: 3) We set down a true picture in accurate proportion and real perspective of how we were involved.

We may have been **selfish** intentionally, or because we did not even think of the concerns of others. Certainly we have often lied or not been genuine on purpose, but we are also **dishonest** when we see things only in our own distorted way, and not as they really are. Our **self-seeking** and inconsiderate behaviors relate to where we tried to control or manipulate others, thinking that we

were better than or inferior to them. **Fear** is our number one character defect, underneath all the others. Our behaviors are driven by ancient fears for our very existence, of losing our security, of not getting our desires, and of being shown up for what we are trying to hide. These culminate in our **faults**: our instincts and emotions in collision, or deep seismic gaps between what we instinctively want for ourselves and what we wish for others.

In Step 4, we practice giving accurate descriptions of what has blocked us from our spirit. We state where we missed the mark when we could have been on target, and where we were out of bounds in this game of life. Why do we behave in these ways? Because we are alcoholic. (See 60: 2; 338)

Turnarounds

In focused meditation and prayer, we recognize that others like ourselves are sick and suffering. “We avoid retaliation.” (67: 1) We ask our higher power to help us wish for others and for ourselves that we all may have deep happiness, genuine serenity, and peace of mind. This helps return us to being right size, and gives us **a new perspective** as we join in with life. We find that we put our trust in this new faith, not by way of emotion or wishing, but by our own experience through our own practice.

Step 4 Directions

The directions for Step 4 are in the Big Book, yet surprisingly few alcoholics in recovery comprehend them, and fewer still practice them. Our goal is to do both. Our method is to follow the instructions as written and see what the results are. The reading describes what an “inventory” is. (64: 1) Then the Big Book authors look at the “things in ourselves which had been blocking us” (64: 0) from our higher power, which turns out to be “**self**, manifested in various ways.” (64: 2) This chapter specifically mentions the blocks to our Spirit of our “**resentments**” (64: 3), our “**fears**” (67: 3), and the

consequences of “our own conduct” (69: 1) in the area of “our personal **relationships (including sex).**” (64: 3 - 65: 0) For each of these three manifestations of self (anger, fear, sex) the book has us analyze our life experiences in these four ways:

1st “We set them on paper.” (64: 3) We learn that our troubles are not so much who hurt us or how they did that, but rather may stem from our own reaction to what part of ourselves is being threatened.

2nd “We considered it carefully.” (65: 3) Why work to change? We learn that we have to wrestle with these issues or we may drink again and die.

3rd “We turned back to the list.” (66: 3) When we are ready to change we learn we must **avoid retaliation**, and instead see others as being as sick and as worthy as ourselves.

4th “Referring to our list again.” (67: 2) We learn that by examining our “defects” and “shortcomings” (50: 1), our “motives” (86: 2) and the “exact nature of our wrongs” (59: 2), where we may be “**selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened,**” (67: 2) we thereby become “**willing to set these matters straight.**” (67: 2)

Each of these four workings of our lists teaches us something from our own experience that can keep us sober and open the way to our own higher power.

An optional Step 4 written inventory form for 'resentments' is included. [Check online at no charge <http://stepsbybigbook.net>, for no cost download of annotated Big Book pp. 63-67, Step 4 'fears' and 'relationships/sex' forms, written inventories for steps 1 through 8, and free group workbook.]

STEP 4 Resentment *Grudge List* (65: 1) Inventory Forms

Make multiple copies or expand these templates into your own notebook.

Who? “Who hurt or threatened me?” “*I’m resentful at...*” (65: 2)

Work down the list from top to bottom, just writing the names at this time. Ignore the Second and Third columns for now. Use multiple pages.

-
- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Person | 5. |
| Institution | |
| Principle I resent | 6. |
| 1. “ <i>Mr. Brown</i> ” (65: 2) | 7. |
| 2. | 8. |
| 3. | 9. |
| 4. | 10. Etc. |
- =====

Step 4- Resentment- Fill in Second and Third Columns

Make multiple copies or expand these templates into your own notebook.

1. Who? First Column name: “*I’m Resentful At...*” (65: 2)

“Who hurt or threatened or interfered with me?” Inventory one name at a time.

2. How? Second Column: “*The Cause...*” (65: 2)

“How did they hurt or threaten or interfere with me?”

Opposite each selected name we write down in four or five words how they hurt us that caused our anger and resentment. We write just in this second column for now.

3. What? Third Column: “*Affects My...*” (65: 2)

“What part of my Self did they hurt or threaten and that I reacted to?”

Opposite each selected name, and every *cause* listed, we succinctly write down in the third column what part of self (security, self-esteem, sex or relationships, etc.), or instinct (64: 3-65: 1), or actor’s role or character (60: 4) was hurt or threatened or in play. **Our resentments are part of our reaction to this perceived threat.**

1. First Column: “ <i>I’m resentful at</i> ”: Who? Who resent?	2. Second Column: “ <i>The cause</i> ”: How? The cause?	3. Third Column: “ <i>Affects my</i> ”: What? Part of self?
“ <i>Mr. Brown</i> ”	“ <i>Brown may get my job at the office</i> ”	“ <i>Security. Self-esteem (fear)</i> ” (65: 2)

STEP 4 Resentment Turnarounds

For every item in the Third Column we ask, “**WHERE** am I responsible?”

Make multiple copies or expand in your notebook.

For every Third Column situation or event, and reaction, fill in resentment ‘turnarounds.’

“Where am I responsible?” We write down and share precisely and in detail what our **motives** were. [See *dishonest or self-seeking motives* (86: 2)]

- “Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, [Second Column] we resolutely looked for our own mistakes.” (67: 2)
- “Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?” (67: 2)

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- **Where was I SELFISH?** (67: 2) [Concern for self regardless of others. Self-absorbed.]

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- **Where was I DISHONEST?** (67: 2) [A tendency to deceit, conceal our true character, lack perspective. We believed our own lies.]

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- **Where was I SELF-SEEKING (67: 2) or inconsiderate?** (69: 1) [Concern for self over – or under – others.]

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- **Where was I FRIGHTENED?** (67: 2) [Habitual anxiety: Afraid of losing something we have, not getting something we want, or of being found out for who we are.]

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Write our faults. “*The inventory was ours, not the other man's.*” (67: 2) “*When we saw our faults we listed them. We placed them [faults] before us in black and white.*” (67: 2)

- **Where was I at FAULT?** (67: 2) [A seismic gap between our own and others’ deeply held values, or our own instincts in collision. Out of bounds? Miss the mark?]

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(Why do we act this way? Because....see p. 338)

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WILLING to set matters straight. “*Were willing to set these matters straight.*” (67: 2)

Step 4 Resentment Turnaround Meditation / Prayer.

[Optional: God bless _____ (including myself), for they are a sick person, and but by your grace, there go I. I pray for their health, happiness, and prosperity. I pray I may show them the patience, tolerance, kindness and love I would want to be shown or that I would show a sick friend. God save me from being hurt, threatened, insulted or angry. How may I help them? May thy will, not mine be done. (See 67: 0; 552: 1)]

NOTES ON STEPS 5 - 12

Steps 5 - 8: “We are building an arch through which we shall walk...free...at last. Is our work solid so far?” (75: 3)

STEP 5 A new kind of relationship

“My schoolmate visited me and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies.” (Bill’s Story, 13: 3)

We lied to others and to ourselves for years about who we were and what we did. Now, we turn and speak straight, in true perspective, to another person. We discuss our strengths and limitations without judgment or blame. We let it all out; we get real. We share the thoughts, actions, and motives (see 86: 2) in our lives that have worked and have not worked to make us happy, joyous, and free.

We show love and respect for ourselves when we ask others to hear our Fifth Step. As we share our inventory, we become clearer about the exact nature of our old worn out defenses, our wrongs, our defects and shortcomings. Now, we focus on what is behind the patterns of our alcoholism, and the reasons why we acted out in the ways we did. Step 5 calls for courage and a sense of trust in the process of recovery. With courage, we tell the truth about who we are – then, with trust, we listen to the response. Our lonely existence of shame is replaced by humility and self acceptance.

We ourselves are the ones to decide if we have now worked the first five Steps satisfactorily. (see 76: 0) The measure is our own peace of mind.

STEP 6 **Willing to risk**

“I...became willing” (Bill’s Story, 13: 3)

- Heard in a meeting: “Step 6 is about NOT doing what the alcoholic inside ‘wants’ to do. What are you willing to give up? Are you ready for change?”

We become willing to give up our bondage of self-absorption. We are of the conviction that we are powerless over our addiction to alcohol, and that our minds and lives are unmanageable. When we try to manage life, life becomes unmanageable. Our compulsive physical cravings, our emotional obsessions, and our spiritual void lead us to be restless, irritable, and discontented. These all motivate us to react to life events with selfishness, dishonesty, self-seeking, and fear.

We are worn out.

We are dishonest when we do not see the reality of what is unfolding before us in true perspective and proportion. We are selfish and self-seeking in that our own self-centered desire, disinterest, or disgust are the criteria by which we judge and react to life. [see *12 & 12*, 92: 3 – 93: 0] We are fearful as we anticipate the sense of loss that will happen if we do not get what we desire, or lose what we have, or we are found out for who we are and what we have done. [see *12 & 12*, 76: 2]

We are exhausted.

And we drink. Or we act and think as though we have been drinking, on an emotional dry bender. Now we are exhausted with our way, we are worn out by our habitual choices; we are sick and tired of the consequences of doing things our way. Our way “did not work.” (52: 3) In Step 6, when these things become objectionable to us, we are **ready to give them up**. This is a gift of desperation. When we could not spot or note our thought-habits and behaviors, we could not get rid of them. Today, when we can see and name them, we can renounce them, turn them over and change.

STEP 7 Self-acceptance and surrender

“...to have my new found Friend take them away, root and branch.” (Bill’s Story, 13: 3)

- Heard in a meeting: "Step 7 is about DOING what the alcoholic inside does ‘not want’ to do. What are you going to do instead? Will you ask for help to make these changes?"

We may think of a shortcoming as falling short of our potential. In Step 7 we are going to practice new things in our lives, and a “personality change sufficient to bring about recovery,” a conversion, begins to take place. (567: 1) We are asking for help and strength from the power that we discover within us, through the discipline of the practice of working this program as understood by Alcoholics Anonymous. While we cannot - nor should not - deny our instincts, we are asking the higher power of our understanding to remove that habitual and insatiable demand for the satisfaction of our instincts beyond our true needs.

The effort, or the act of working this Step, is in the asking. We are asking for help to have wisdom and clarity, to be made strong. How we go about asking – through prayer, through meditation or other spiritual practices, or by thinking it over – is up to us. We are not going to ask just once, we will ask again and again throughout our lifetimes until in a moment of grace we find strength to go on without drinking or using. We need spiritual strength to go forth into the world and take those actions that are consistent with, and even demanded by, the understanding we have from our quiet time alone with our higher power. We **take refuge** in and cooperate with this ‘inner knowing’ in the process of letting go, of opening ourselves to change. We have come to see that we are **a part of**, rather than apart from, this universal family. This true perspective of humility gives us peace of mind. [see *12 & 12*, 48: 0; 58: 1; 72: 2]

STEP 8 Unfinished business

“We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment.” (Bill’s Story, 13: 3)

Steps 8 and 9 are powerful tools to address guilt and shame. Step 8 is the beginning of a process of **healing relationships**. We do not just look at ourselves; we must actually look at our roles in relation to others. This takes hard work and effort. We know who we have really harmed. These disturbances live on inside of us until we find a way to honor our feelings. Step 8 is a way out of remorse and regret. We do not let a long list distract us from the most difficult and painful relationships and the true amends we have to make.

With our sponsor, we discuss each person on our list and the potential amends we might make. We will not have to avoid anyone. We will not have to be afraid of being found out for some neglected responsibility. Instead of being servile or scraping, of feeling shame and guilt or of feeling forever less than, now “as God’s people we stand on our feet; we don’t crawl before anyone.” (83: 3) With a sense of inclusion comes a sense of acceptance. We grow in the program to be true companions with others and ourselves.

Steps 9 - 12: Heard in a meeting: “We practice Steps 9, 10, 11 and 12 on a daily basis.”

STEP 9 A new freedom and a new happiness

“I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.” (Bill’s Story, 13:3)

- Heard in a meeting: “To make an amend = make an apology + change behavior.”

The goal is to directly make amends to those we have harmed, not excusing our behavior, blaming others, proving something, or arguing about those events.

[Optional: Step 9 in the *12 & 12* gives us clear cut directions for making amends:

- “First we will wish to be reasonably certain we are on the A.A. beam.
 - “Then we are ready to go to these people
 - “to tell them what A.A. is,
 - “and what we are trying to do.
- “Against this backdrop we can
 - “freely admit the damage we have done
 - “and make our apologies.
 - “We can pay, or promise to pay
 - “whatever obligations, financial or otherwise, we owe.”

12 & 12 (84: 1)]

The Big Book authors relate how another of AA’s founders, Dr. Bob, made his amends. This was on June 10, 1935, which is considered the anniversary date of Alcoholics Anonymous:

“One morning he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received, and learned that many knew of his drinking. Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business. At midnight he came home exhausted, but very happy. He has not had a drink since.” (A Vision for You, 156: 1, 2)

Step 9 gives us a way to make restitution and to set right the damage we have caused in the past. We can admit the wrong and not feel we are groveling or obliged to hide in shame. Making

amends is a commitment to a continuous process of change. We will spend the rest of our lives practicing the spiritual principles that will bring real change in the way we are **partners with people**.

STEP 10 Getting current

“I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within.”
(Bill’s Story, 13: 4)

- Heard in a meeting: “If we are not growing in recovery, then we are moving backward toward active addiction.”

The addictive diseases are characterized by denial, self deception, isolation and loneliness. In Steps 4 – 9 we act to identify and change what in us blocks us from a power greater than ourselves. In Step 10, we practice Steps 4 - 9 in real time on a daily basis. This turns the slogan “one day at a time” into a philosophy of life.

Step 10 invites the practice of continuous awareness of our intentions, motives, and behaviors, and guards against persistent defects or new problems. We consider our conduct and thought patterns in order to initiate change. When we are attentive, we may inventory ourselves at any time of the day. Also we may retreat to places of quiet and work the Steps in a more formal way annually or semiannually. [See *12&12* (89: 1)]

“We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a **daily reprieve** contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” (Into Action, 85: 1)

STEP 11 Self-examination, meditation and prayer

“I was to sit quietly when in doubt asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me.” (Bill’s Story, 13: 4)

In Step 11, our work is to seek to improve the conscious contact we have always had with an “unsuspected inner resource,” (567: 4-568: 0) which is our higher power. As we work through the Steps, we discover more of the nature of this spirit. Yet it is often easier to identify what is not God’s will for us than what is. It is understood that it is not God’s will for us to drink and lapse into active alcoholism.

Eventually, all things merge into one. And through it all is our common experience of healing from alcoholism as this power that is greater than ourselves is made manifest in our lives. Our practice changes as we change. We each grow into an evolving **exercise of personal meditation and prayer** as we progress on our own spiritual path. May we be cautious that our own private devotions do not take us away from the fellowship.

STEP 12 Walking the walk

Spiritual awakening: “It meant the destruction of self-centeredness. ... There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known.” (Bill’s Story, 14: 1, 2)

The result of these steps: “Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty, and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things were the essential requirements.” (13: 5-14: 0)

Carry the message: “Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead.” (14: 6)

Practice these principles: “My friend emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs.” (14: 6)

A spiritual awakening is real because our lives are changed as a result. We can see and feel it. Many of us feel more alive,

loving, open, and better able to join fully in life. We come to know the natural joy of things experienced just as they are. That power, whether it is our own best and highest nature or a force beyond ourselves, becomes ours to tap into whenever we are open to it. It guides our actions and provides inspiration for our continued growth. This **comes about gradually and slowly as we work the Steps**. We grow more and more uncomfortable acting out on our character defects, and begin to feel more at ease practicing spiritual principles.

The founding moment of AA was when Bill W. shared his story with Dr. Bob. We can only keep what we have by giving it away, because we reinforce our recovery by sharing it with others. The message of a spiritual awakening perhaps is that we are not alone, we are good people, we can stay sober, we can recover, and there is hope. We simply present the message of our own story as positively as we can, and remain available to help when we are asked.

We see which Step we are meant to practice in each event of life. We are more aware of our old unworkable thought-habits that leap to mind when we react to life events and that dictate our actions. Now we may **pause, ask** for help, and then **respond** in a workable way that contributes to the serenity and peace of mind of all concerned. The positive principles of honesty, selflessness, courage, and compassion arise naturally as we enjoy that “profound alteration in [our] reaction to life” that the Big Book authors speak of. (567: 4) The spiritual benefits of our new worthy behaviors are real and will materialize if we work for them. We deeply wish for others as well as for ourselves that we all may be happy, joyous and free.

Gratitude becomes the underlying force in all that we do.

We let our lives speak.

SUMMARY OF STEPS BY THE BIG BOOK

Direct quotes from the Big Book and *12&12*.

Compile your own!

A.) “...the drink problem...” (17: 1)

B.) “...a common solution...” (17: 3)

C.) “...a practical program of action...”(9:6)

A.) The Problem: “...We were full of fear...” (52:2)

STEP ONE [Honesty]

✓ “If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely [Mind: mental obsession], or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take [Body: physical compulsion], you are probably alcoholic.” (44: 1)

- [Mental obsession:] “They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense [mental obsession] of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks....” (xxviii: 4)
- [Physical compulsion:] “After they have succumbed to the desire [mental obsession]

again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving [physical compulsion] develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over....” (xxix: 0)

- ✓ “...The main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.” (23: 1)
 - “Was I crazy? I began to wonder, for such an appalling lack of perspective seemed near being just that.” (5: 5)
 - “The alcoholics under investigation were still childish, emotionally sensitive, and grandiose.” [12&12, (123:0)]
 - “We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a 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....”(52: 2)

B.) The Solution: “...Quit playing God.” (62: 3)

STEP TWO [Hope] “...can get well....” (98: 2)

- ✓ “... You may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.” (44: 1)

- **“...Unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.” (xxix: 0)**
- **“They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements.” (27: 4)**
- ✓ **“...The personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism....” (567: 1)**
 - **“(Dr. Jung)...Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them.” (26: 1, 27: 4)**
 - **“Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time. (567: 4)**
- ✓ **“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.” (567: 4)**
- ✓ **“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.’” (568: 0)**
 - **“First of all, we had to quit playing God.” (62: 3)**
 - **“When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This**

applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you.” (47: 1)

- ✓ **“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.” (568: 3)**
 - **“To us, the Realm of the Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all....” (46: 2)**
 - **“... [The] main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” (45: 2)**

C.) The Program of Action: “... We pause...and ask....” (87: 3)

STEP THREE and Beyond [Trust]

- ✓ **“...The only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules.” (xxix: 1)**
 - **“It meant destruction of self-centeredness.” (14: 1)**
 - **“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. But we saw that it really worked in others....” (25: 1)

- **“Selfishness - self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. (62: 1)**
- **“So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us!” (62: 2)**
- **"He is the Principal; we are His agents." (62: 3)**

✓ **STEP 4 [Courage] “Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action...a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us [from higher power]. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.” (63: 4) [“motives” 86: 2]**

- **“Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?” (67: 2)**
- **“We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.” (67: 2)**
- **“If you have already made a decision [Step 3], and an inventory of your grosser handicaps [Step 4], you have made a good beginning.” (71: 0)**

✓ **STEP 5 [Integrity] “We usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient.” (72: 2)**

- **“...They told someone else all their life story.” (73: 0)**
- **“We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk.” (75: 1)**
- **“We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye.” (75: 2)**

- ✓ **STEP 6 [Willingness] “...Let go....” (76: 1)**

- ✓ **STEP 7 [Humility] “...Let God....” (76: 1)**

- ✓ **STEP 8 [Compassion] “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. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal.” (76: 3)**

- ✓ **STEP 9 [Justice] “Now we need more action, without which we find that ‘Faith without works is dead.’ ... Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past.” (76: 3)**
 - **“If we are painstaking ... Self-seeking will slip away.... Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. ... If we work for them.” (83: 4)**

- ✓ **STEP 10 [Perseverance]** “Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.” (84: 2)

- ✓ **STEP 11 [Spiritual awareness]** “... Let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. ... We ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.” (86: 2)
 - “... We pause...and ask...” (87: 3)
 - “...Humbly saying to ourselves many times each day ‘Thy will be done.’” (88: 0)

- ✓ **STEP 12 [Service]** “...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. ... Remember they are very ill.” (89: 1)
 - “Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house.” (98: 2) “Helping others” (97: 1)
 - “...Be sober, considerate, and helpful, regardless of what anyone says or does.” (99:1)