

Steps by the Big Book

SbBB PRIMER

This pamphlet is a companion to the larger **Steps by the Big Book (SbBB) workbook** (<http://stepsbybigbook.net>) and covers "Session One" to "Session Five" on Step 1. Here are optional suggestions for the organizers to help prepare for and launch a successful group Steps by the Big Book study experience.

In preparation for each SbBB study session, every group member **reads from the Big Book** at home, following their own daily quiet times. They may do this alone or with a group study "buddy" and/or their sponsor. Also, they **read the Steps by the Big Book workbook** notes and session questions as they prepare to write for 20 minutes or so daily on their own experience working that particular Step by the Big Book. Then they bring their writings (or notes, or 'chicken scratches') to share and discuss with others at the weekly Steps by the Big Book group study sessions. In a friendly way we work the Step – then we take the Step together.

Included in this SbBB Primer are **condensed selections from the Big Book chapters** covering Step 1. The chairperson or others may choose to refresh memories by reading bits from these shorter Big Book passages rather than go through the entire chapter during group time.

Contents:

The material in this Steps by the Big Book PRIMER is arranged in the order of the early sessions, from before "Session One" through "Session Five" and completing Step 1.

- The initial section on "**A: THE TEMPORARY COMMITTEE**" contains suggestions for the chairperson and others who are organizing the Steps by the Big Book group study. These cover what may be done before the first group session meets, to help smooth the way for the group experience.
- The next section on "**B: SESSION ONE – HALF**" is an optional proposal that the very first time the group gathers be used as a "Meet & Greet" session. Each person can share with the group why they are coming to the study sessions, and everyone can review the possible group norms and format. Later, after three or four regular sessions, the group members may agree on a different structure that better meets their needs.
- The following section on "**C: SESSION ONE**" contains selections from the Big Book drawn from the Contents, the Preface, and the Forewords. These generally are printed on the left hand page of this pamphlet, in "**Times**" font. Portions of these may be read aloud in the group session if that is desired. Then the corresponding queries (questions) from the Steps by the Big Book workbook generally are listed on the right hand side, in "**Comic**" font. The queries just make questions out of what the Big Book says. They are intended to help each of us dig deeper as we work a particular Step.
- The section on "**D: SESSION TWO**" contains selections from The Doctor's Opinion in the Big Book, again on the left. The group may choose to read some of that out loud in the session. Then the queries from the Steps by the Big Book workbook relating to The Doctor's Opinion are on the right.
- E., F., & G. Sections similarly follow as "**E: SESSION THREE**," "**F: SESSION FOUR**" & "**G: SESSION FIVE**" on Step 1

Best wishes to you all and have fun! Take it easy, but take it!

A. “TEMPORARY COMMITTEE” page 1 of 3

BEFORE YOU BEGIN A ‘Steps by the Big Book’ GROUP STUDY

So you have decided to launch a Steps by the Big Book group study. Good for you! It is a great way to study and practice the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous with a committed team of friends who also wish to advance with their sobriety and recovery. It is guaranteed that you will have fun. It is also guaranteed that you will work very hard.

Two slogans worth remembering are “Easy does it, but do it!” and “Our reasonable best is good enough!” Another good one is, “Let’s not take ourselves too d... seriously!”

A TEMPORARY COMMITTEE

One suggestion before you begin a Steps by the Big Book group study is to meet with a few like-minded people. Together you may form the nucleus of the study group at the start, and can help keep things flowing until the whole group comes into its own. It works well to meet with such a Temporary Committee in person or by phone or email more than once so that there are several people on the same wave length about what the group is all about.

The Temporary Committee may agree that people attending the study group will be abstinent, and have a desire to progress in their recovery from alcoholism/addiction. It helps to agree that this will happen by studying and practicing together the 12 Steps as they are outlined in the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The Steps by the Big Book groups are not AA meetings because enrollment is limited after the first few sessions.

READ THE WORKBOOK “INTRODUCTION”

It may be helpful for the Temporary Committee to read aloud together the “Introduction” section of the Steps by the Big Book workbook, pages 3 - 8. There are lots of helpful suggestions from others who have gotten similar groups going. Most use those norms and the format to get started with, and later the whole group may agree to change them after the first three or four sessions. {That is affectionately called “The Revolt,” and is a healthy group process that will happen as the study group team pulls together. }

It may help for the Temporary Committee to go over the description of the Steps by the Big Book group study FORMAT written by a group member, which follows. And also look over the enclosed format FLOW-CHART that outlines suggestions for what is “MY Job” and what is “OUR Job” as the group study begins. An optional STEP 1 FLOW CHART is available on page 29. When the time comes, the group may choose to make their own!

SESSION “ONE – HALF”: A MEET & GREET SESSION

Other groups have called their very first gathering of the Steps by the Big Book group study “Session One – Half”, rather than beginning with the true “Session One” right off the bat. This is to meet each other, and review the group norms and format together. Sometimes the “Session One – Half” turns into the actual “Session One” if people are raring to go with the Big Book reading and study questions. Have a great time!

“A: TEMPORARY COMMITTEE” page 2 of 3 cont.

How might a Steps by the Big Book session FORMAT go?

A group member responds:

Generally speaking, we are people in recovery who come together to work on the Steps because we want to. We are willing to commit to five months or so of weekly sessions. And most stay when we hear about the details of this particular group approach to working the Steps by the Big Book. The workbook can be a little dry, but it does help to read it out loud like a bedtime story.

We get the importance of closely reading the Big Book outside of the group sessions with a buddy and maybe other group members, and/or a sponsor. We take what that book has to say personally. It becomes our book. We spend time each day in quiet reflection, and write frankly about what the Big Book and the workbook bring up for us. Those who are not writers talk it out with their buddy and/or sponsor.

The weekly group sessions are friendly and we try to begin on time, sitting in a circle.

~Someone familiar with the process may chair the early sessions. Later we can each take turns chairing for three sessions or so in a row, and we might all agree to change the format as needed. We say which Step we are covering and what will happen that particular session. We may open with the Third Step prayer. The silent quiet time is refreshing and helps us to “be there.” We check-in one after the other, keeping it short.

~We often read aloud the Steps by the Big Book workbook notes and session selections for that Step. Either the chairperson or someone they choose starts off by reviewing some favorite selections from the Big Book, reading a sentence or paragraph or a few pages. Then they read part of what they have written in response and speak about their personal work on that Step according to the Big Book.

~Others carry on by reading aloud from their own writing, or say their reflections. The discussions get lively, yet focus on each person's own working of that Step with the support of all. As the Big Book says, *So cooperate; never criticize. To be helpful is our only aim.* (89: 3)

~If we haven't “finished” a particular Step, we may choose to spend another week on it, or we may agree “good enough” and we stand and grasp hands and recite the Step and often say a prayer from the reading. Together we have “taken” that Step.

~Then we look ahead to the next session, and encourage each other to meet with our buddies, to do the Big Book reading and to do the writing. We may close with the Seventh Step prayer, and we might go out for coffee and head on home.

**Optional example of FORMAT
for a typical Steps by the Big Book group session.**

This is for a 1½ hour session once a week. You may adjust the length of the session to 2 or more hours, add breaks, etc. Times are suggestions only and are approximate.

- **1st Open on time with focus meditation or prayer such as the Third Step prayer and from 1 to 5 minutes or more of centering silence.**

- **2nd Initial 2 min.: Review agenda for this session.**

- **3rd The SESSION – Approximate group study and practice times:
~10 min.: 30 second check-ins around the group.**

~15 min.: Review brief selections from the reading.

~15 min.: Session chairperson or designated group member may share their writing and experience with this reading and this Step according to the Big Book.

~40 min. Discussion (40 min. per 1½ hour session. 70 min. per 2 hour session, etc.): Group members may share their writing and talk about questions and worksheets on actually working the Step in question by the Big Book.

- **4th Final 3 min. Review next session's agenda.
Encourage reading and writing between sessions.
Urge meeting with one's buddy and/or sponsor.**

- **5th Close on time with meditation or prayer such as the Seventh Step prayer**

[End of “A: Temporary Committee”]

IF I am abstinent
& desire recovery...

...& I am willing to
grow along
spiritual lines...

...**then** I may commit with others to a
friendly, focused
Steps by the Big Book
study group

**"Easy does it,
But Do It!"**

MY JOB (as best I can,*
for ~2 - 3 hours a week)

Daily* **relax and quiet time**
Daily* **read** Big Book selections
& Step by Big Book questions

Daily* **WRITE**
on Big Book phrases
& Step by Big Book queries
"What these mean in MY life."

Weekly **talk** with Buddy/Sponsor
Weekly **ATTEND**
Steps by Big Book group sessions



Buddy's/Sponsor's JOB

Same as My Job

Weekly **TALK** with
buddy/sponsee

Weekly **ATTEND** group session
"Together we can do it!"

OUR JOB "Relax! Our reasonable best is good enough."
All **ATTEND** every Steps by the Big Book session*

Begin on time / Review the session agenda
Quiet time - meditation-prayer / **Check-in** around circle

Chairperson or other: **Read** part of Big Book selection
Share Writing on Big Book & Steps by Big Book workbook

Others **share Writing and Reflections** in turn
Take Step together

Review next session / closing meditation-prayer / **End on time**

B. “SESSION ONE – HALF” page 1 of 4

Steps by the Big Book MEET & GREET

WELCOME TO “SESSION ONE – HALF”

{Here is a script that you do NOT have to follow.}

Good for you all, and welcome to everybody for attending “Session One – Half” of the Steps by the Big Book study sessions.

[The Temporary Committee may introduce themselves, and explain that they may chair the first few Steps by the Big Book sessions until things get going, and then others may chair, or as everyone sees fit.]

THIS IS “SESSION ONE – HALF” - AN OPTIONAL GATHERING

We come together as alcoholics and addicts in recovery to help ourselves, and one another, to have greater peace of mind in recovery. Our method in this course will be to study and practice the 12 Steps as they are presented in the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This worked for the first 100 women and men in AA. It has worked for millions of others in recovery. It can work for us – if we work it!

Maybe you have found that it is hard to get through the Steps on you own. Many of us have found it so. That is why these Steps by the Big Book workbooks and group sessions were put together. Other alcoholics in recovery decided to do it together. So can we.

Together we can do it!

“Session One – Half” is an optional chance to meet and greet one another, and to look over how the Steps by the Big Book course may be set up. Basically everyone will get an idea of “What is MY job?” and “What is OUR job?”

In this “Session One – Half”, each of you may get a sense of whether or not you can commit to truly being a team member, and if at all possible to attend every session. You do not have to decide at this time. You may decide after the second or third session.

MEET & GREET

So why are we all here? This is a good time to go around the circle for three or four minutes each and say our names and our addiction and why we are here.

What is your experience with working the Steps?

What do you hope to get out of these Steps by the Big Book sessions?

What are you willing to do?

What questions do you have? (We may not have all the answers now.)

Etc.

“B: SESSION ONE – HALF” page 2 of 4 cont.

WHAT OTHER Steps by the Big Book GROUPS HAVE DONE

[This is from the Introduction to the Steps by the Big Book workbook, pp. 3 - 8.]

YOUR GROUP Please be aware that everything in the Steps by the Big Book workbook comes from the experience, strength, and hope of the folks who gathered the suggestions together. Every process and suggestion in the workbook is optional.

OUR STEPS BY THE BIG BOOK GROUP SESSIONS ARE NOT OFFICIAL AA MEETINGS BECAUSE WE LIMIT ENROLLMENT TO A SPECIFIC NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS.

-Your group can be of any size or composition. An even number of participants, perhaps from 2 to 16, allows members of the group to work in pairs as “buddies.”

- -A group may be simply one sponsor and one sponsee.
- -Agree on a purpose, plan and session format of the Steps by the Big Book group, and that in general the group will stick to the schedule.
- -Agree that each member attends every session if possible, commits to read the text and respond to the session questions, and in fact DOES each Step as it is encountered. (Fifth Steps are not shared at the sessions.)
- -Agree that each member of the group contacts one or more members (buddies) and/or a sponsor regularly between sessions.
- -Agree that group members can expect to spend at least as much time on reading, writing and contact with buddies between sessions as in group time.
- -Agree on a date by which participants may leave or new members may join the group after it begins.
- -Agree that group members will not drink or use during the course.

GROUP NORMS While there are no rules in AA, there are written Traditions and unwritten norms (i.e. identifying oneself as an alcoholic in meetings). In order to ensure that your group runs smoothly, we suggest considering the following questions:

“B: SESSION ONE – HALF” page 3 of 4 cont.

WHAT OTHER Steps by the Big Book GROUPS HAVE DONE

- -Will start and end times for the sessions be honored?
- -Will one group member chair the entire process, or will group members take turns chairing the sessions?
- -Will absolute confidentiality and anonymity about the group be practiced?
- -Will readings be read at the sessions, or should the readings be completed in advance?
- -Is each group member expected to speak and share personal writings at group sessions? (It is suggested that members do their Fifth Step outside of the sessions with a sponsor or buddy.)
- -Will group members consider not speaking a second time until all have had a chance to share first?
- -Will someone serve as a friendly timekeeper?

WORKING WITH A BUDDY and/or A SPONSOR

Our group experience has shown that it is useful for group participants to work closely with one or more members of the group (“buddies”) in a manner that compliments working with a sponsor. The support and stimulus of working the Steps with a buddy, a sponsor, or both, leads to personal growth and change. We read the Big Book chapters or selections together. Together, we work on our reflections and writings about the focus questions and inventories. Together we get and give support for this process of working the Steps, and for sharing our discoveries, doubts and experiences in the group.

HOW A SESSION MAY GO

Typically we read the session material on our own and write our responses. Many recommend beginning with a time of quiet relaxation and focusing before studying the readings and doing the writings. Some work together with their buddy or sponsor.

“B: SESSION ONE – HALF” page 4 of 4 cont.

WHAT OTHER Steps by the Big Book GROUPS HAVE DONE

This is a team effort. We meet in the weekly Step by the Big Book sessions as a committed group of equals once or twice a week, or as the group sees fit. We open with a time of quiet relaxation, followed by a very brief check-in as to how each member is doing with studying and working the Steps. We read selections from the Big Book on a particular Step, and then for 10 to 15 minutes one group member speaks of her or his personal experience doing this Step by the Big Book process. Every member then shares their writings or reflections on that session's Step work. Discussion is encouraged, as long as we speak out of our own experience. Some groups choose to expand or contract the session material, or take a short break after working Step 4. We may close with reciting the Step and a meditation or prayer.

PLEASE IGNORE ANYTHING IN THE GROUP SESSIONS OR WORKBOOK THAT YOU FEEL CONTRADICTS WHAT YOU FIND IN THE BIG BOOK.

FORMAT FLOW-CHART

There is a Steps by the Big Book sessions **FORMAT FLOW-CHART** to hand out or post that gives a picture of what “My Job” is and what “Our Job” is for our team study effort.

[Share the format flow-chart.]

It may help to read through the flow-chart together. What questions do people have? Of course, the group conscience may agree to change the format after the first three or four sessions, and that is fine.

FINAL CHECK-IN & GOODNIGHT

Before you head home, see if anyone has issues that need to be expressed. It may not be possible to answer them at this time.

Urge people to read the Big Book Preface and Forewords for the actual Session One which will meet next time. Say the date and time and ask people to please do the reading and be on time. Some may be ready to share phone numbers, email addresses, etc. There is no hurry. Enjoy the course!

[End of “B: Session One-Half”]

C. “SESSION ONE” BIG BOOK p. v

Big Book & Steps by the Big Book

BIG BOOK READING: suggested condensed selections for SbBB study sessions are in “Times” font, and generally on the LEFT hand side of the page (they may run over to the next page). [Optional clarifying comments are in brackets]

STEPS BY THE BIG BOOK: Workbook selections are in “Comic” font and generally on the RIGHT hand side of the page.

CONTENTS page v (fourth edition) [selections]

Preface page xi

Forewords to 1st (p. xiii) and 2nd (p. xv) editions of the Big Book

[BIG BOOK READING SELECTIONS] “Contents of the Fourth Edition
[chapter BB page, 4th edition]

“Preface xi
“Forewords to the 1st xiii, 2nd xv, 3rd xxii and 4th Editions xxiii

[THE PROBLEM (Powerless) Step 1; also elements of Chapters 2 & 3]

“The Doctor’s Opinion xxv
“1 Bill’s Story 1

[THE SOLUTION (Power) Step 2]

“2 There is a Solution 17
“3 More About Alcoholism 30
“4 We Agnostics 44

[THE PROGRAM OF ACTION (How to find Power) Steps 3 - 12]

“5 How It Works 58
“6 Into Action 72
“7 Working with Others 89
“Appendix II Spiritual Experience 567”

[End of selected BB “Contents” page]

"C: SESSION ONE" SbBB WORKBOOK p.18

Steps by the Big Book page 1 of 2

SESSION 1 Preface and Forewords Review the format together. Does the way the Steps by the Big Book sets this out make any sense to you? What questions do you have?

A wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built. (47: 2)

I ON YOUR OWN: STUDY - What did the Big Book authors say?

- **READ** Read the Table of Contents, Preface, and the Forewords to the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Editions of the Big Book. Many will read the Foreword to *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12)* as well.
- **WRITE** Consider the focus questions relating to the readings, and write reflective answers to them, as you see fit. **Say out loud** and **cross off** the bulleted comments to help you take them in. Include your own questions and observations, and explore your doubts as well as your certainties in detail and in depth.
- **TALK** Talk with your sponsor and/or buddy about the process you are about to undertake.

II WITH THE GROUP: PRACTICE - What does the Big Book say to me about my practice of the 12 Steps?

- We discuss the purpose, plan and session format of this Steps by the Big Book group course. Consider that each member is expected to not only talk about but to DO each of the Steps and, if possible, to attend every session with the team.
- This is a commitment, a team effort. Together we can do it!
- We discuss how the Big Book readings influence our own recovery process.

Points of Focus and Reflection

You may or may not choose to read parts of the Big Book selection on the opposite page.

1.) Contents -A repeating *mighty purpose and rhythm* (10: 3) of the Steps and of the Big Book can be seen even on the Contents page (Consider page v).

- 'The *Problem*' is set out in Doctor's Opinion and Chapter 1. [See 17: 1; 19: 3]
- 'The *Solution*' is introduced in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. [See also 17: 3; 25: 1]
- 'The *Program of Action*' is described in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. [See also 9:6; 42: 2]

“C: SESSION ONE” BIG BOOK p. xiii & xv cont.

FOREWORDS TO 1ST AND 2ND EDITIONS (selections)

Page xiii “Foreword to the First Edition (1939)

“We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics 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. We think this account of our experiences will help everyone to better understand the alcoholic. Many do not comprehend that the alcoholic is a very sick person. And besides, we are sure that our way of living has its advantages for all. (xiii: 1) It is important that we remain anonymous.... (xiii: 2)

Page xv “Foreword to the Second Edition (1955)

“...Alcoholics Anonymous has mushroomed...Many of our friends encourage us by saying that this is but a beginning, only the augury [**a sign of things to come**] of a much larger future ahead. (xv: 2)

“... The spark that was to flare into the first A.A. group was struck at Akron, Ohio in June 1935, during a talk between a New York stockbroker [**Bill W**] and an Akron physician [**Dr Bob**]. Six months earlier, the broker had been relieved of his drink obsession by a sudden spiritual (xv: 3) experience, following a meeting with an alcoholic friend [**Ebby T, eventually Bill's sponsor**] who had been in contact with the Oxford Groups of that day. He had also been greatly helped by the late Dr. William D. Silkworth [**wrote The Doctor's Opinion**], a New York specialist in alcoholism who is now accounted no less than a medical saint by A.A. members, and whose story of the early days of our Society appears in the next pages. From this doctor, the broker had learned the grave nature of alcoholism [**disease- mind: mental obsession, and body: physical compulsion**]. Though he could not accept all the tenets of the Oxford Groups, he was convinced of the need for moral inventory, confession of personality defects, restitution to those harmed, helpfulness to others, and the necessity of belief in and dependence upon God [**the earliest Steps; see BB p. 263: 0,1**]. (xvi: 0)

“Prior to his journey to Akron, the broker had worked hard with many alcoholics on the theory that only an alcoholic could help an alcoholic, but he had succeeded only in keeping sober himself. The broker had gone to Akron on a business venture which had collapsed, leaving him greatly in fear that he might start drinking again. He suddenly realized that in order to save himself he must carry his message to another alcoholic. That alcoholic turned out to be the Akron physician. (xvi: 1)

“This physician had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma but had failed. But when the broker gave him Dr. Silkworth's description of alcoholism and

“C: SESSION ONE” BIG BOOK p. v cont.

“Foreword to the Second Edition (1955) p. xv cont.

its hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady with a willingness he had never before been able to muster. He sobered, never to drink again up to the moment of his death in 1950. This seemed to prove that one alcoholic could affect another as no nonalcoholic (xvi: 2) could. It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery. (xvii: 0)

“Hence the two men set to work almost frantically upon alcoholics arriving in the ward of the Akron City Hospital. Their very first case, a desperate one, recovered immediately and became A.A. number three. He never had another drink. ... There were many failures, but there was an occasional heartening success. When the broker returned to New York in the fall of 1935, the first A.A. group had actually been formed, though no one realized it at the time. (xvii: 1) It was now time, the struggling group thought, to place their message and unique experience before the world [**wrote Big Book**]. (xvii: 3) As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live [**Steps & Big Book**], so we had to evolve principles by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function [**Traditions & 12&12**]. (xix: 1)

“Upon therapy for the alcoholic himself, we surely have no monopoly. Yet it is our great hope that all those who have as yet found no answer may begin to find one in the pages of this book [**Big Book**] and will presently join us on the highroad to a new freedom.” (xxi: 0)

[END of condensed BB Foreword reading]

“C: SESSION ONE” SbBB WORKBOOK page 18 continued page 2 of 2

2.) 1955 Foreword to Second Edition (Consider pp. xv: 3-xvii: 2; xix: 1; xxi: 0)

- What do the Big Book authors mean when they say that, *this is but a beginning, only the augury of a much larger future ahead?* (xv: 2)
- How am I part of that future?

What do I know about the story of AA?

- What were the tenets of the Oxford Groups? (xvi: 0) [See also 263: 0]
- What is the *message* of AA? (xvii: 3; xviii: 0; xxi: 0) [See also xvi: 2; 17: 3; 45: 2; 60: 0; 77: 0; 89 :1]
- What are the principles *by which the individual alcoholic could live?* (xix: 1)
- What are *the principles by which AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function?* (xix: 1)
- What is the alternative to *the high road?* (xxi: 0)

[End of “C: Session One”]

D. “SESSION TWO” BIG BOOK p. xxv **THE DOCTOR’S OPINION page 1 of 2 (selections)**

“The Doctor's Opinion

[Dr. William D. Silkworth, from Townes Hospital in New York City where Bill W sobered up for the final time]

“... We who have suffered alcoholic torture must believe – that the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind. It did not satisfy us to be told that we could not control our drinking just because we were maladjusted to life, that we were in full flight from reality, or were outright mental defectives. These things were true to some extent, in fact, to a considerable extent with some of us. But we are sure that our bodies were sickened as well [**disease**]. In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete. (xxvi: 2)

“The doctor's theory that we have an allergy [**abnormal reaction**] to alcohol interests us. As laymen, our opinion as to its soundness may, of course, mean little. But as ex-problem drinkers, we can say that his explanation makes good sense. It explains many things for which we cannot otherwise account. (xxvi: 3)

“Of course an alcoholic ought to be freed from his physical (xxvii: 7) craving for liquor [**physical craving = 'cannot stop' and is the "allergy", the "disease"**], and this often requires a definite hospital procedure, before psychological measures can be of maximum benefit. (xxviii: 0)

“We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy [**abnormal reaction**]; that the phenomenon of craving [**physical craving for liquor**] is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve. (xxviii: 1)

“Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices. The message which can interest and hold these alcoholic people must have depth and weight. In nearly all cases, their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives. (xxviii: 2)

"D:SESSION TWO" SbBB WORKBOOK p. 19

Page 1 of 2

SESSION 2 STEP 1 The Doctor's Opinion

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

...Physical craving for liquor. (xxvii: 1 - xxviii: 0)

They cannot...differentiate the true from the false. (xxviii: 4)

I ON YOUR OWN: STUDY - What did the Big Book authors say?

- **READ** Read The Doctor's Opinion. Many will read Step 1 in the *12&12*.
- **WRITE** As part of your Step 1 written inventory begin to write about:
 - o Your own definition of each word in this Step, and every Step. Then look up each word individually in the dictionary.
 - o Write what each part means to you: We admit that we are powerless over our alcoholism-addiction and that our lives [and minds] have been and are unmanageable.
 - o "How am I powerless over alcohol? Even if I have been sober for a significant length of time, over what am I powerless?"
 - o "How is my life [and mind] unmanageable today?"
- **TALK** Talk with your sponsor and other members of the group about the readings and your reflections on them.
- **PRACTICE DAILY RELAXATION WITH MEDITATION / PRAYER** You may follow the Big Book and *12&12* suggestions for meditation and prayer, or choose a practice that is in line with your own belief system. The goal is to set aside some quiet reflection time, perhaps 15-20 minutes twice a day.

II WITH THE GROUP: PRACTICE - What does the Big Book say to me about my practice of Step 1?

- As we each go about our daily activities, we think about the people, places, and things that are unmanageable, or over which we are powerless. Each day we write: "I cannot control / have no power over _____."
- We also list what we can control and what we do have power over.
- We share our lists with the group, avoiding 'yes' and 'no' rote answers, responding fully in detail and in depth.

Points of Focus and Reflection (Consider pp. xxvi: 3-xxix: 3) **Try them out loud.**

The Problem as understood by Dr. Silkworth in the Doctor's Opinion.

- 1.) The mental obsession (xxviii: 4) [(L obsession- siege) preoccupation, fixed idea]
- 2.) The physical compulsion [physical *craving* or *allergy* (xxx: 0), compelled to act]
- 3.) The using to excess [abuse: spree (xxix: 0)], and the need to control our drinking.
- 4.) The need for a *psychic change*. (xxix: 1, 3) (Also xxvii: 4; xxviii: 2; xxxi: 4)

“D: SESSION TWO” BIG BOOK p. xxv cont.

The Doctor’s Opinion page 2 of 2 (selections) cont.

“Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented [**mind: mental obsession**], unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks – drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do [**they took a drink**], and the phenomenon of craving [**body: 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, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery. (xxviii: 4, xxix: 0)

“On the other hand – and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand – once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules [**abstinence and 12 Steps**]. (xxix: 1)

“I do not hold with those who believe that alcoholism is entirely a problem of mental control. I have had many men who had, for example, worked a period of months on some problem or business deal which was to be settled on a certain date, favorably to them. They took a drink a day or so prior to the date, and then the phenomenon of craving at once became paramount to all other interests so that the (xxix: 4) important appointment was not met. These men were not drinking to escape; they were drinking to overcome a craving [**body: physical compulsion**] beyond their mental control. (xxx: 0)

“All these, and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity [**the 'disease concept'**]. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence.” (xxx: 5)

[END of condensed BB Doctor's Opinion]

"D:SESSION TWO" SbBB WORKBOOK p.19 cont.

Page 2 of 2

1.) **Mental Obsession**

[Mind: *unmanageable* (59: 2)]

- How am I affected by Dr. Silkworth's definition of alcoholism as a medical problem? (xxx: 0)
[Disease: (L- To lack ease.) Involuntary disability. See 64: 3]
- Did I drink *essentially because [I] like the effect produced by alcohol?* (xxviii: 4)
- Have I been *restless, irritable, and discontented?* (xxviii: 4)
- Have I sought *the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks?* (xxix: 0)
- Describe in detail how I succumbed to *the desire again?* (xxix: 0)
- In what ways did I reach the point where I could not differentiate *the true from the false?* (xxviii: 4)
- When did I first experience an abnormal mental obsession with alcohol? Describe.

2.) **Physical Compulsion**

[Body: *powerless* (59: 2)]

- How did I develop the *physical...phenomenon of craving [allergy]?* (xxvii: 7 -xxviii: 0,1; xxix: 0; xxix: 4; xxx: 1, 5)
- How do I describe my pathological physical reaction to alcohol?
- In what ways has my alcoholic body become as sick as my alcoholic mind? (xxvi: 3)
- What is my understanding of the concept of alcoholism as *the manifestation of an allergy?* (xxviii: 1)
1) [Allergy (Gr allos - strange): An abnormal reaction.]
- How do I feel about the idea of hospitalization? (xxviii: 0)
- When did I first experience a physical compulsion or craving for alcohol? Describe.

3.) **Drinking to Excess**

- In what ways did I *pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again?* (xxix: 0)
- In what ways did I repeat this *over and over?* (xxix: 0)
- What are my reflections on the ideas that *alcoholism has never been...permanently eradicated*, and that *the only relief...is entire abstinence?* (xxx: 5)
- When did I first experience the loss of control of my drinking? Describe.

4.) **Psychic Change**

- What is my understanding of a *psychic change?* (xxix: 1, 3)
 - What is meant by being *required to follow a few simple rules?* (xxix: 1)
 - Am I aware that, if I have been abstinent from alcohol a while, Step 1 is about my powerlessness over some other behavior or thought-habit that reflects the unmanageability of my life and mind?
 - Am I aware that I need to find a way to stop that behavior so that my surrender is not blocked by continued acting out?
- What is of significance to me in this chapter? What do I not agree with?

[End of "D: Session Two]

E. “SESSION THREE” BIG BOOK p. 1

Ch. 1 BILL’S STORY page 1 of 4 (selections)

[WHAT IT WAS LIKE]

“War fever ran high in the New England town to which we new, young officers from Plattsburg were assigned, and we were flattered when the first citizens took us to their homes, making us feel heroic. Here was love, applause, war; moments sublime with intervals hilarious. I was part of life at last, and in the midst of the excitement I discovered liquor. I forgot the strong warnings and the prejudices of my people concerning drink. In time we sailed for ‘Over There.’ I was very lonely and again turned to alcohol. (1: 1)

“Though my drinking was not yet continuous, it disturbed my wife. We had long talks when I would still her forebodings by telling her that men of genius conceived their best projects when drunk; that the most majestic constructions philosophic thought were so derived. (2: 1) “Out of this alloy of drink and speculation, I commenced to forge the weapon that one day would turn in its flight like a boomerang and all but cut me to ribbons. (2: 2) “My drinking assumed more serious proportions, continuing all day and almost every night. The remonstrances of my friends terminated in a row and I became a lone wolf. There were many unhappy scenes in our sumptuous apartment. There had been no real infidelity, for loyalty to my wife, helped at times by extreme drunkenness, kept me out of those scrapes. (3: 2)

“Liquor ceased to be a luxury; it became a necessity. ... I began to waken very early in the morning shaking violently. A tumbler full of gin followed by half a dozen bottles of beer would be required if I were to eat any breakfast. Nevertheless, I still thought I could control the situation, and there were periods of sobriety which renewed my wife's hope. (5: 1) “I woke up. This had to be stopped. I saw I could not take so much as one drink. I was through forever. Before then, I had written lots of sweet promises, but my wife happily observed that this time I meant business. And so I did. (5: 4)

“Shortly afterward I came home drunk. There had been no fight. Where had been my high resolve? I simply didn't know. It hadn't even come to mind. Someone had pushed a drink my way, and I had taken it. Was I crazy? I began to wonder, for such an appalling lack of perspective seemed near being just that. (5: 5)

“Renewing my resolve, I tried again. Some time (5: 5) passed, and confidence began to be replaced by cocksureness. I could laugh at the gin mills. Now I had what it takes! One day I walked into a cafe to telephone. In no time I was beating on the bar asking myself how it happened. As the whisky rose to my head I told myself I would manage better next time, but I might as well get good and drunk then. And I did. (6: 0)

"E: SESSION THREE" SbBB WORKBOOK p. 21

Steps by the Big Book Workbook page 1 of 2

STEP 1 Bill's Story

Step 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

Upon a foundation of complete willingness... (12: 4)

...the mental twist which leads to the first drink of a spree. (92: 0)

I ON YOUR OWN: STUDY - What did the the Big Book authors say?

- **READ** Chapter 1 Bill's Story, pp.1 - 16. Read in the Big Book how in 1934 one of AA's founders, Bill W., learned of the problem, the solution, and the program of action to recover from alcoholism.
 - o 1. *The Problem:* From Dr. Silkworth, Bill learned of the medical problem of alcoholism as both a mental and a physical illness. (7:1; xxv-xxxii)
 - o 2. *The Solution:* From Dr. Carl Jung, (through Roland H. and Ebby T.) Bill learned of the spiritual solution to the problem as *a necessary vital spiritual experience.* (27: 5; see also 9: 6; 567-8)
 - o 3. *The Program of Action:* From the Oxford Group (through Ebby T.), Bill learned of the discipline of practicing a step by step program of principles and action that opens one to the necessary *vital spiritual experiences.* (27: 4) [See also He Sold Himself Short, 263: 0]

- **WRITE** Write down how the matters set forth in Bill's Story reflect your own life.
 - o **Cross off** the bulleted focus and reflection comments as you consider them.
 - o Continue writing your Step 1 inventory about your powerlessness over alcohol and how your life is unmanageable.

- **TALK** Speak with your sponsor and other group members about the study group and the Step 1 readings.

- **PRACTICE DAILY RELAXATION WITH MEDITATION / PRAYER**

II WITH THE GROUP: PRACTICE - What does the Big Book say to me about my practice of Step 1?

- We review selections from Bill's Story together.
- We each consider sharing our own writings and personal Step 1 stories with the group.
- Rather than 'yes' and 'no' responses, consider answering in detail and with examples.

“E: SESSION THREE” BIG BOOK p. 1 cont.

Ch. 1 Bill’s Story page 2 of 4 (selections) cont.

“The remorse, horror and hopelessness of the next morning are unforgettable. The courage to do battle was not there. My brain raced uncontrollably and there was a terrible sense of impending calamity. I hardly dared cross the street, lest I collapse and be run down by an early morning truck, for it was scarcely daylight. An all night place supplied me with a dozen glasses of ale. My writhing nerves were stilled at last. ... Should I kill myself? No not now. Then a mental fog settled down. Gin would fix that. So two bottles, and oblivion. (6: 1) “... I was placed in a nationally-known hospital for the mental and physical rehabilitation of alcoholics. ...Best of all, I met a kind doctor [Dr Silkworth - The Doctor’s Opinion] who explained that though certainly selfish and foolish, I had been seriously ill, bodily and mentally. (7: 1)

[Bill takes Step 1]

“No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master. (8: 1)

[WHAT HAPPENED]

“Near the end of that bleak November, I sat drinking in my kitchen. With a certain satisfaction I reflected there was enough gin concealed about the house to carry me through that night and the next day. My wife was at work. I wondered whether I dared hide a full bottle of gin near the head of our bed. I would need it before daylight. (8: 3)

“My musing was interrupted by the telephone. The cheery voice of an old school friend [Ebby T - eventually Bill’s sponsor] asked if he might (8: 4) come over. He was sober. It was years since I could remember his coming to New York in that condition. I was amazed. Rumor had it that he had been committed for alcoholic insanity. I wondered how he had escaped. Of course he would have dinner, and then I could drink openly with him. Unmindful of his welfare, I thought only of recapturing the spirit of other days. There was that time we had chartered an airplane to complete a jag! His coming was an oasis in this dreary desert of futility. The very thing an oasis! Drinkers are like that. (9: 1)

“The door opened and he stood there, fresh-skinned and glowing. There was something about his eyes. He was inexplicably different. What had happened? “I pushed a drink across the table. He refused it. Disappointed but curious, I wondered what had got into the fellow. He wasn’t himself.

“ ‘Come, what’s all this about?’ I queried.

“He looked straight at me. Simply, but smilingly, he said, ‘I’ve got religion.’

“I was aghast. So that was it – last summer an alcoholic crackpot; now, I suspected, a little cracked about religion. He had that starry-eyed look. Yes, the old boy was on fire all right. But bless his heart, let him rant! Besides, my gin would last longer than his preaching.

"E: SESSION THREE" SbBB WORKBOOK p.21 cont.

Steps by the Big Book Workbook page 2 of 2

1.) The Problem (17: 1)

- What did Bill mean by, *I commenced to forge the weapon...that one day would turn...like a boomerang and...cut me to ribbons?* (2: 2)
- Was there a time for me when *liquor ceased to be a luxury; it became a necessity?* (5: 1)
Did I think *I could control the situation?* (5: 1)
- Did I ever wonder, *Was I crazy?* (5: 5)
- How does an *appalling lack of perspective* relate to sanity, honesty, or humility? (5: 5)
What do sanity, honesty, and humility mean to me? [Optional: 12&12 pp, 48: 0; 58: 1; 72: 2]
- In what specific ways did I feel *the remorse, horror and hopelessness of the next morning?* (6: 1) Did I ask, *Should I kill myself?* (6: 1)
- In what ways did I seek *oblivion?* (6: 1)
In what ways have I felt fear? (6: 2, 7: 0)
- What are my reflections on Dr. Silkworth's proposition that we have been *seriously ill, bodily and mentally?* (7: 1)
- Did I see that *I could not take so much as one drink?* (5: 4)
- Did such *self-knowledge* (7: 2) of the problem of *the insanity of that first drink* (8: 2) alone keep me sober?
- Bill describes **taking Step 1** by admitting, *Alcohol was my master.* (8: 1)
- In what ways has alcohol been my master? (8: 1)

2.) The Solution (17: 3)

- What is my understanding of the *simple religious idea?* (9: 6)
- What was my reaction to religion, the church, and God? (10: 1)
- How do I react to the suggestion, *Why don't you choose your own conception of God?* (12: 2; 46: 2)
- Bill **takes Step 2** when he understands that, *nothing more was required...to make my beginning than being willing to believe.* (12: 4)
- Note that Bill was instructed to sit quietly and *to test* [his] *thinking by the new God-consciousness within.* (13: 4)

3.) The Program of Action (9: 6)

- What is my understanding of the *practical program of action?* (9: 6)
 - How did this derive from the non-alcoholic *Oxford Groups of that day?* (xvii: 0; and see 263: 0)
 - What are *the essential requirements*, as I understand them? (13: 5 - 14: 0)
 - How do I understand, *It meant destruction of self-centeredness?* (14: 1)
 - What were the *revolutionary and drastic proposals?* (14: 2)
 - Note that Bill essentially **takes Step 3 through Step 12** at this time while still in the hospital. [Step 1 (8: 1); Step 2 (12: 4); Steps 3-11 (13: 2-4); Step 12 (1st part 13: 5; 2nd part 14: 5, 6)]
- ["E: Session Three" continues pp. 22 - 23]

“E: SESSION THREE” BIG BOOK p. 1 cont.

Ch. 1 Bill’s Story page 3 of 4 (selections) cont.

“But he did no ranting. In a matter of fact way he told how two men [Rowland Hazard and Cebra G. or Shep C.] had appeared in court, persuading the judge to suspend his commitment. They had told of a simple religious idea and a practical program of action. That was two months ago and the result was self-evident. It worked! (9: 2,3,4,5,6) “He had come to pass his experience along to me (9: 7) if I cared to have it. I was shocked, but interested. Certainly I was interested. I had to be, for I was hopeless. (10: 0)

[Bill takes Step 2]

“My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, ‘Why don't you choose your own conception of God?’ (12: 2) “That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last. (12: 3) “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. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would! (12: 4) “At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for the last time. Treatment seemed wise, for I showed signs of delirium tremens. (13: 1)

[Bill takes Step 3]

“There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then I 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 takes Step 4, Step 6, Step 7]

“I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since. (13: 2)

[Bill takes Step 5]

“My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies.

[Bill takes Step 8, ready for Step 9]

“We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. 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. (13: 3)

“E: SESSION THREE” BIG BOOK p. 1 cont.

Ch. 1 Bill’s Story page 4 of 4 (selections) cont.

[Bill takes Step 10]

“I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense.

[Bill takes Step 11]

“I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure. (13: 4) “My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems. Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty and humility (13: 5) to establish and maintain the new order of things, were the essential requirements. (14: 0) “Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It meant destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all. (14: 1)

“These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound. (14: 2)

“For a moment I was alarmed, and called my friend, the doctor, to ask if I were still sane. He listened in wonder as I talked. (14: 3) “Finally he shook his head saying, ‘Something has happened to you I don’t understand. But you had better hang on to it. Anything is better than the way you were....’ (14: 4)

“While I lay in the hospital the thought came that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what had been so freely given me. Perhaps I could help some of them. They in turn might work with others. (14: 5)

[Bill takes Step 12]

“My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! ...” (14: 6)

[WHAT IT IS LIKE NOW]

“There is, however a vast amount of fun about it all. I suppose some would be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity. But just underneath there is deadly earnestness. Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish. (16: 2)

“Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia. We have it with us right here and now. Each day my friend’s simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men.” (16: 3)

[END of condensed BB Bill’s Story and “E: Session Three”]

F. “SESSION FOUR” BIG BOOK p. 17

Ch. 2 THERE IS A SOLUTION page 1 of 3 (selections)

“We, of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, know thousands of men and women who were once just as hopeless as Bill. Nearly all have recovered. They have solved the drink problem. (17: 1) “... We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined. (17: 2)

“The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism. (17: 3)

“An illness of this sort - and we have come to believe it an illness - involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can. If a person has cancer all are sorry for him and no one is angry or hurt. But not so with the alcoholic illness, for with it there goes annihilation of all the things worth while in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferer's. It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives and parents - anyone can increase the list. (18: 1)

“But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. (18: 4) “Of necessity ... Most of us sense that real tolerance of other people's shortcomings and viewpoints and a respect for their opinions are attitudes which make us (19: 4) more useful to others. Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs. (20: 0)

“You may already have asked yourself why it is that all of us became so very ill from drinking. Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. If you are an alcoholic who wants to get over it, you may already be asking –‘What do I have to do?’ (20: 1)

“F: SESSION FOUR” SbBB WORKBOOK p.25

Steps by the Big Book page 1 of 2

SESSION 4 STEP 1 & 2 There is a Solution

Step 1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.

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

*Fellowship... ..the powerful **cement** which binds us. (17: 2)*

I ON YOUR OWN: STUDY - What did the Big Book authors say?

- **READ** Read Chapter 2, There is a Solution and Appendix II, Spiritual Experience in the Big Book.
- **WRITE** Continue to write about how you are powerless over alcohol, and why your life is unmanageable (then and now). Respond to at least three or four of the optional focus questions, and to ones of your own.
- **TALK** Talk with your sponsor and other group members about powerlessness.
- **PRACTICE DAILY RELAXATION WITH MEDITATION / PRAYER**

II WITH THE GROUP: PRACTICE - What does the Big Book say to me about my practice of Step 1 and Step 2?

- Letting go of the illusion that we can control our addictive behavior on our own is the first step on the way to recovery.
- Only when we realize we cannot control our using do we find a way to change, a way out.
- We each consider sharing our own written reflections on Steps 1 & 2 with the other members of the group. Pick a topic that interests all or several members of the group and engage in a round robin discussion.

Points of Focus and Reflection (Consider 17: 2-18: 4; 20: 1-23: 1; 25: 1-3; 27: 2-28: 3)

1.) **The Power of the Fellowship**

- How do I understand the *fellowship as the powerful cement which binds us?* (17: 2)
- How have I experienced the *common solution, the way out?* (17: 3)
- Did my alcoholic illness engulf *all whose lives touch the sufferer's?*(18:1)
- How can I *win the entire confidence of another alcoholic?* (18:4)

“F: SESSION FOUR” BIG BOOK p. 17 cont.

Ch. 2 There is a Solution page 2 of 3 (selections) cont.

“But what about the real alcoholic? He may start off as a moderate drinker... but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink. (21: 1)

“Here is the fellow who has been puzzling you, especially in his lack of control. He does absurd, incredible, tragic things while drinking. He is a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He is seldom mildly intoxicated. He is always more or less insanely drunk. His disposition while drinking resembles his normal nature but little. He may be one of the finest fellows in the world. Yet let him drink for a day, and he frequently becomes disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social. He has a positive genius for getting tight at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision must be made or engagement kept. He is often perfectly sensible and well balanced concerning everything except liquor, but in that respect he is incredibly dishonest and selfish. He often possesses special abilities, skills, and aptitudes, and has a promising career ahead of him. He uses his gifts to build up a bright outlook for his family and himself, and then pulls the structure down on his head by a senseless series of sprees. He is the fellow who goes to bed so intoxicated he ought to sleep the clock around. Yet early next (21: 2) morning he searches madly for the bottle he misplaced the night before. If he can afford it, he may have liquor concealed all over his house to be certain no one gets his entire supply away from him to throw down the wastepipe. As matters grow worse, he begins to use a combination of high-powered sedative and liquor to quiet his nerves so he can go to work. Then comes the day when he simply cannot make it and gets drunk all over again. Perhaps he goes to a doctor who gives him morphine or some sedative with which to taper off. Then he begins to appear at hospitals and sanitariums. (22: 0)

“This is by no means a comprehensive picture of the true alcoholic, as our behavior patterns vary. But this description should identify him roughly. (22: 1) “Why does he behave like this? If hundreds of experiences have shown him that one drink means another debacle with all its attendant suffering and humiliation, why is it he takes that one drink? (22: 2) “ ... We cannot answer the riddle. (22: 3) “We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink, as he may do for months or years, he reacts much like other men. We are equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to (22: 4) stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this. (23: 0)

“The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink. (24: 1) “...There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove. (24: 2) “ ...So many want to stop but cannot. (25: 0)

“F: SESSION FOUR” SbBB WORKBOOK p.25 cont.

Steps by the Big Book page 2 of 2

2.) The Real Alcoholic

- In what ways do I have *a hopeless condition of mind and body*? (20: 1)
- What is my reaction to the idea that *a real alcoholic* is one who loses *all control of his liquor consumption once he begins to drink*? (21: 1)
- Am I *a real alcoholic*? (21: 1) If not, why not? If so, describe fully.
- Did I have control over alcohol?
- What *absurd, incredible and tragic things* did I do while drinking?(21: 2)
- In what respects have I been *dishonest and selfish*? (21: 2)
- Have I been a *real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*? (21: 2) Describe.
- When have I searched *madly for the bottle*? (22: 0)
- Have I used *a combination of ...sedative and liquor*? (22: 0)
- Can I answer *the riddle* of why I took *that one drink*, that *first drink*, over and over? (22: 3; 22: 2; 23: 1)
- How do I respond to the premise that *the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than his body*? (23: 1)
- In what ways do I share *the malady of the lie*, the mental *obsession that somehow, someday* [I can] *beat the game* and take one drink? (23: 2; 22: 2) [See also 326: 2]
- In what specific ways have I *lost the power of choice in drink*? (24: 1)

3.) The Spiritual Experience

- In what ways is my being sober today evidence of having *tapped an unsuspected inner resource* which I may *identify with* [my own] *conception of a Power greater than* [myself]? (567: 4-568: 0)
- In what ways had I *come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life* as I had been living it? (25: 1) Describe in detail.
-Have I felt I had *but two alternatives*?
-*One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation...*
-*...and the other, to accept spiritual help*? (25: 3)
- How does one go about accepting spiritual help? Might one's spiritual life then include *our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs*? (20: 0) Can I accept that the concept of "others" includes me?
- Am I ready for the self-searching, *the leveling of* [my] *pride* and the *confession of shortcomings* that *the process requires*? (25: 1) (See also 42:1, 2; 64: 1; 122: 1)
- What was the *certain simple attitude* (27:0) that allowed *the utterly hopeless...drunk* (26: 1, 3) to become a free man? ((26: 4; 28: 1) [See 28: 3 *willing and honest enough to try.*])
- How do Dr. Carl Jung's reflections on *vital spiritual experiences* as the solution to our problem apply to my recovery? (27: 4, 5)
- How might William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* be of use to me? (28: 3)
- Have I experienced the presence of a higher power? Be specific.

["F: Session Five" Continues p. 28]

“F: SESSION FOUR” BIG BOOK p. 17 cont.

Ch. 2 There is a Solution page 3 of 3 (selections) cont.

[THE SOLUTION]

“There is a solution. 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, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed. (25: 1)

“The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves. (25: 2)

“ ‘Is there no exception?’ (27: 3) “ ‘Yes,’ replied the doctor ...(the psychiatrist, Dr. Jung)..., ‘there is. Exceptions to cases such as yours have been occurring since early times. Here and there, once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences. To me these occurrences are phenomena. They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. 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. ...’ (27: 4)

“The distinguished American psychologist, William James, in his book ‘*Varieties of Religious Experience*’, indicates a multitude of ways in which men have discovered God. We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters. (28: 3)

“Further on, clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered.” (29: 1)

[END of condensed There is a Solution]

[End of “F: Session Four”]

Step 1

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

POWERLESS

Body (Step 1)

“Physical craving” (xxviii)
~one drink = a drunk ~When I
drink I break out in a binge

The disease:
Taking that first drink =>
Physical Compulsion

UNMANAGEABLE

Mind (Steps 2 - 12)

”Restless irritable and
discontent” (xxviii)

“If I had an alcoholic mind
I would drink again” (41: 2)

“The riddle” (22: 3)
Mental Obsession =>
To take that first drink

ADMIT

~Incorporate into body, mind, soul
“A desperate desire to stop” (7: 2)

Take step 1: Surrender

How can 'I' do it?

WE

“Fellowship – a common solution – a way out” (17: 2, 3)
One alcoholic talking with another

G. “SESSION FIVE” BIG BOOK p. 30

Ch. 3 MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM page 1 of 3 (selections)

[ABOUT RELAPSE]

“Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. ... Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death. (30: 1)

[Here is where taking **STEP 1** appears in the Big Book]

“We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed. (30: 2)

“We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. (30: 3) We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. (30: 4) “... Heaven knows, we have tried hard enough and long enough to drink like other people! (31: 1) “Here are some of the methods we have tried: Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums - we could increase the list ad infinitum. (31: 2)

[Man of Thirty]

“A man of thirty was doing a great deal of spree drinking. ...He made up his mind that until he ,, had retired, he would not touch another drop. An exceptional man, he remained bone dry for twenty-five years and retired at the age of fifty-five. Then he fell victim to a belief which practically every alcoholic has – that his long period of sobriety and self-discipline had qualified him to drink as other men. Out came his carpet slippers and a bottle. In two months he was in a hospital, puzzled and humiliated. ..., he went to pieces quickly and was dead within four years. (32: 2)

“This case contains a powerful lesson. Most of us have believed that if we remained sober for a long stretch, we could thereafter drink normally. ... We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: ‘Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.’ ... If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol. (33: 1)

“G: SESSION FIVE” SbBB WORKBOOK p.27

Steps by the Big Book SESSION 5 page 1 of 2

STEP 1 & 2 More About Alcoholism

Step 1. We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

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

We were alcoholics (30: 2; see also 60: 2) Take Step 1

I ON YOUR OWN: STUDY What did the Big Book authors say?

- READ Read of relapse in Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism.
- WRITE Write the story of your last drink in detail or tell aspects of your story through several drinking episodes. .
 - o You may focus on these or other points in your written reflections:
 - The **Starting Problem**: Our mental obsession. ('The Lie') There came the time that we were stone cold sober and we picked up even though we had years of experience about where it would lead us. *The subtle insanity which precedes the first drink.* (40: 2)
 - The **Stopping Problem**: Our physical compulsion (craving, "allergy"). That once we put the drink into our system there was never enough, we could not stop.
 - How we drank to excess: Why? Because we are alcoholic. (30: 2) [See also 342: 1]
- TALK Talk with your sponsor or with other members of your group.
- PRACTICE DAILY RELAXATION WITH MEDITATION / PRAYER

II WITH THE GROUP: PRACTICE - What does the Big Book say to me about my practice of Step 1 and Step 2?

We talk with other group members about relapse. Did any of the stories in this chapter move us more than others did? Have we ever faced a situation where only our higher power stood between us and a drink? (43: 3) Have we ever relapsed? Describe in depth.

Points of Focus and Reflection (Consider 32: 2-34: 2; 35: 1-38: 2; 39: 2-43: 3)

1.) The Man of Thirty

- Do I have a *reservation of any kind*, [or] *any lurking notions that someday [I] will be immune to alcohol?* (33: 1)
- Was I *astonished at [my] inability to stop?* (33: 3)
- Had I *lost the power to choose?*(34: 2)
- Like the man of thirty, did I have an *utter inability to leave it alone?* (34: 2)

“G: SESSION FIVE” BIG BOOK p. 30 cont.

Ch. 3 More About Alcoholism page 2 of 3 (selections) cont.

“For those who are unable to drink moderately the question is how to stop altogether. ...Whether such a person can quit upon a nonspiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power to choose whether he will drink or not. ...This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it - this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish. (34: 2)

[Jim]

“What sort of thinking dominates an alcoholic who repeats time after time the desperate experiment of the first drink? (35: 1) “Our first example is a friend we shall call Jim. ...He did no drinking until he was thirty-five. In a few years he became so violent when intoxicated that he had to be committed. On leaving the asylum he came into contact with us. (35: 2) We told him what we knew of alcoholism [**Step 1**] and the answer we had found [**Step 2**]. He made a beginning. ...All went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life [**Steps 3 - 12**]. To his consternation, he found himself drunk half a dozen times in rapid succession. (35: 3)

“...We asked him to tell us exactly how it happened. This is his story: ‘I came to work on Tuesday morning. I remember I felt irritated... I felt hungry I had no intention of drinking. I just thought I would get a sandwich. ... I sat down at a table and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk. ... (36: 1) ‘Suddenly the thought crossed my mind that if I were to put an ounce of whiskey in my milk it couldn't hurt me on a full stomach...I vaguely sensed I was not being any too smart.... The experiment went so well that I ordered another whiskey ...I tried another.’ (36: 2)

“Thus started one more journey to the asylum for Jim. (36: 3) Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity. How can such a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight, be called anything else? (37: 1) “You may think this an extreme case. To us it is not far-fetched, for this kind of thinking has been characteristic of every single one of us. ...Our sound reasoning failed to hold us in check. The insane idea won out. Next day we would ask ourselves, in all earnestness and sincerity, how it could have happened. (37: 2)

[The Jay Walker]

“Our behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of an individual with a passion, say, for jay-walking. He gets a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles. (37: 4) ... Luck then deserts him and he is slightly injured several times in succession. ... Presently he is hit again and this time has a fractured skull. Within a week after leaving the hospital a fast-moving trolley car breaks his arm. He tells you he has decided to stop jay-walking for good, but in a few weeks he breaks both legs. (38: 0) ... He tries every known means to get the jay-walking idea out of his head. He shuts himself up in an asylum, hoping to mend his ways. But the day he comes out he races in front of a fire engine, which breaks his back. Such a man would be crazy, wouldn't he? (38: 1)

“G: SESSION FIVE” SbBB WORKBOOK p.27 cont.

Steps by the Big Book SESSION 5 page 2 of 2

2.) Jim

- What *mental states* are the *crux* of the [drinking] *problem*? (35: 0)
- Can I identify with Jim who *found himself drunk* even after accepting what others *knew of alcoholism* [Step 1], and the *answer* [they] had found [Step 2]? (35: 3)
- Have I been *crazy* and *insane*? (see 5: 5; 37: 1; 38: 1, 2)
- Was I able to *stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge*? (39: 1)

3.) The Jaywalker

- Are my thought-habits and behaviors *absurd and incomprehensible*? (37: 4)
- How have I *been strangely insane*? (38: 2)

4.) Fred

- Can I identify with Fred, who would not believe himself an alcoholic [Step 1], much less accept a *spiritual remedy for his problem* [Step 2]? (39: 2)
- Was I told *that if I had an alcoholic mind, the time and place would come - I would drink again*? (41: 2-42: 0)
- What are the *spiritual answer and the program of action*? (42: 2)
- What are my thoughts about the idea that *the alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink*? (43: 3)

III DAILY PRACTICE OF STEP 1 PRINCIPLES:

- Do I know that admitting powerlessness does not mean admitting worthlessness?
- How may I accept my new freedom in no longer having to lie about my drinking?
- How may I stay in touch with the reality of my disease, no matter how long I have been free from drinking?
- In what ways today have I begun to be honest in recovery?
- Can I tell my sponsor or someone else when I have been thinking about drinking or acting out on my disease in some other way?
- How am I practicing open-mindedness, humility, and willingness today?

IV TAKE STEP 1 Take Step 1 in the second paragraph of BB page 30.

... We had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. (30: 2)

This is how the Big Book authors described taking Step 1. If we concede, then according to the Big Book and under the conditions of this day, we take Step 1. As with all of the Steps, we each take Step 1 when we each say so.

Some write a statement such as this:

"I admit I am powerless over _____. My life is unmanageable."
_____ (signature) _____ (date)

The group may or may not choose to observe the completion of this Step by holding hands and reciting the Step. ["G: Session Five" continues p.34]

“G: SESSION FIVE” BIG BOOK p. 30 cont.

Ch. 3 More About Alcoholism page 3 of 3 (selections) cont.

“You may think our illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? We, who have been through the wringer, have to admit if we substituted alcoholism for jay-walking, the illustration would fit us exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It's strong language - but isn't it true? (38: 2)

[Fred]

“...The actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge. ... Let us take another illustration. (39: 1) “... If ever there was a successful business man, it is Fred. ...Yet, he is alcoholic.... Far from admitting he was an alcoholic, he told himself he came to the hospital to rest his nerves....He made up his mind to quit drinking altogether. It never occurred to him that perhaps he could not do so....

Fred would not believe himself an alcoholic [Step 1], much less accept a spiritual remedy for his problem [Step 2]. We told him what (39: 2) we knew about alcoholism. He was interested and conceded that he had some of the symptoms, but he was a long way from admitting that he could do nothing about it himself. He was positive that ...Self-knowledge would fix it. (40: 0)

“We heard no more of Fred for a while. One day we were told that he was back in the hospital. This time he was quite shaky. He soon indicated he was anxious to see us. ... 40: 1)

“Let him tell you about it: ‘...I rather appreciated your ideas about the subtle insanity which precedes the first drink, but I was confident it could not happen to me after what I had learned.... I felt I had every right to be self-confident, that it would be only a matter of exercising my will power and keeping on guard. (40: 2) ‘I went to my hotel and leisurely dressed for dinner. As I crossed the threshold of the dining room, the thought came to mind that it would be nice to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. That was all. Nothing more. I ordered a cocktail... Then I ordered another cocktail. ...it struck me a highball would be fine before going to bed, so I stepped into the bar and had one. ...I know little of where I went or what I said and did. Then came the hospital with unbearable mental and physical suffering. (41: 1) ‘ ... I now remembered what my alcoholic friends had told me, how they prophesied that if I had an alcoholic mind, the time and place would come - I would drink (41: 2) again. ... I knew from that moment that I had an alcoholic mind. I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental blank spots.’ ... (42: 0)

43:3 Once more: The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power. (43: 3)

[End of condensed More About Alcoholism] [End of “G: Session Five”]

In similar ways our Steps by the Big Book team works through Steps 2 to 12.

- **At home each team member sits quietly, reads the Big Book chapter, writes responses to certain questions, and meets with a buddy and/or sponsor.**
- **In the group we form a friendly circle, read aloud brief Big Book passages, share our Step writing, and talk about how we actually live that Step day to day.**
- **So together we study every Step, work every Step, and take every Step.**

Together we can do it!

12 STEPS of 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 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 in 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 I mend things so that I can get rid of 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.]

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