

THE BIG BOOK BUNCH

12 STEP WORKBOOK

We are the Big Book Bunch group of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our origins are the Students of the Big Book group, which has met in Woodland Hills, California since December of 1985. Our goals are to live the spiritual process through which sobriety is obtained and enhanced, and to publish (at no charge) our experience for other recovering alcoholics. We have absolutely no affiliation with any organization or cause other than our membership as individuals in A.A..

Our written materials are not official AA literature. They usually do, nevertheless, contain information from the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) and other conference approved literature owned and published by Alcoholics Anonymous. All A.A. material used identifies the source from which it is quoted. References in our documents to Big Book content exclude its stories. Included is all material from inside the front cover through page 164, plus Appendices I (Traditions) and II (Spiritual Experience).

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1

STEP: 1) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as:

STEP ONE. I admit that I am powerless over alcohol—that my life has become unmanageable.

READING FOR STEP ONE

Big Book:	The Doctor's Opinion:
	Chapter 3, More about Alcoholism
12&12:	Step 1

If you have recently returned to A.A. after doing some alcoholism research, you will learn more about the mind that took you out if you take our [Bottle Inventory](#) **understanding the relapse.**

.As we take Step 1, we separate it into its first and second halves:

STEP 1a. I admit that I am powerless over alcohol....

Although Step 1, itself, does not require that we admit to being "alcoholic",

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. [Big Book page 30, line 11]

And what does AA say an alcoholic is? The definition is scattered through the literature, but a test is offered in the first paragraph of Chapter 4. This test is twofold:

- a. If when drinking alcohol do you find it difficult to stop?, and
- b. If not drinking alcohol, do you experience difficulty in leaving it alone?

The first test measures our alcohol compulsion, which Daniel W. defines as, "An impulse or feeling of being irresistibly driven toward the performance of some action which is irrational." Dr.. Silkworth, in The Doctor's Opinion, tells us that:

...the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker, [Big Book page xxvi, line 4]

The body is in the clutches of alcohol, and alcohol controls the mental processes which, in turn, keep the alcohol flowing into the body.

The second test measures our alcohol obsession, "the persistent and disturbing intrusion of, or anxious and inescapable preoccupation with, an idea or emotion...". In other words, it seems as if the alcohol calls us with voice irresistible until we have little choice but to start the drinking process anew. This affliction is strictly mental until the alcohol enters the body. Then, we are back to the first test—again. In fact,

...the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.
[Big Book page 23, line 5]

...the mental states that precede a relapse into drinking...(are)... the crux of the problem, [Big Book page 35, line 1]

Confucius say: (He really did, too)

**Man take drink
Drink take drink
then, Drink take man!**

If you haven't made the concession of being alcoholic yet, don't quit! And, if perchance you are still drinking, then don't quit trying to quit! The primary purpose of taking this step is to bring about the conviction and admission that you are alcoholic. Part of your conviction should be the absolute certainty that the next drink will lead to undesirable consequences (to

say the least).

Writing: Your writing will commence with laying out some facts about your drinking. The simplest way to do this is to begin with the last drinking bout, providing the information set forth below, then proceed in reverse chronology until no significant new facts are to be uncovered.

Your goal is to set forth evidence of the mental processes that led to the first drink, and that your physical, mental, and spiritual states are taken over and subjugated by alcohol when it is introduced into your body. For example:

1. On June 20, after 3 weeks of abstinence, I had a few beers with the crew after a really hot 10 hour Friday.

I drank because: I just had to cool off, to renew my relationships with my old drinking buddies, to forget my boss's threat to replace us if we didn't speed up, to check out the ladies at the Golden Suds, and to show my nagging Alanon wife that she couldn't control me all the time.

This is what happened: I had two or three pitchers, got in a fight with John Jones, told the boss's nephew he was a nerd, spent half of my paycheck on floozies in the bar (with no physical relief, either), suffered a black-out between midnight and bar closing, parked the car in the neighbor's front yard, was locked out of my bedroom, spent the weekend puking alone, had a horrible hangover on Monday, and was placed on suspension at work.

Did alcohol work for me? It seemed to cool me off for a few minutes, but none of the other results I had in mind happened. As usual, a number of other unanticipated things also happened, all of which were not wanted. No, it didn't work—again, and I am truly lucky that no permanent damage resulted.

2. The whole month of May was the total pits.

I drank because: It didn't occur to me that not drinking was an option. I just couldn't stand the nagging of the wife, and the looks of the kids. It was necessary, somehow to just shut them off. The only thing in life that was tolerable was pool at the Golden Suds with my pals—they understood. I was desperate for relief, and I was coming to the horrible realization that I might never find it, that I would just keep going on and on and worse and worse.

This is what happened: Whatever relief I found in the bottle was superficial. My doctor told me I needed to cut down. I almost got arrested for crashing into the freeway divider. My pals really just tolerated me. They didn't give a damn about me. Work was unbearable, what with the hangovers, short hours, and a boss who didn't understand. I was getting 2 or 3 black-outs a week. The kids were never there. The wife was a beast. I was always sick.

Did alcohol work for me? Nothing worked anymore. My greatest fear was that it would never end. The beer was no good. I got sick. Wine tasted like bile. Whisky blacked me out. I didn't know what to do.

3. (You should have the idea by now.) Continue until the learning value wastes away.

In conclusion: provide answers to these questions.

- Which of my problems will be removed or alleviated if I take a drink of alcohol?
- Can any good come of my taking another drink?
- What will really happen to me and others if I do drink again?
- What good reasons do I have to believe my answers?
- Do I wish to avoid the next drink?
-

STEP 1b. I admit that my life has become unmanageable...

You have just swallowed some painful truths about your drinking. Upon even trivial reflection it is obvious that your thinking hasn't been too rational, either, when it comes to the drink problem. Have you managed your drinking career well?

The mentality we have when it comes to drinking, however, is but one part of a deeper thinking impairment which impacts almost every aspect of our consciousness. You may have noticed expressions such as these in the Big Book:

...illusion, delusion, self deception, lurking notion, peculiar mental twist, curious mental phenomenon, insane idea, foolish idea, insanity, absurd and incomprehensible behavior, queer ideas, strangely insane, subtle insanity, strange mental blank spots...[Big Book, various pages].

You undoubtedly have your own favorite expressions gleaned from pages 30 - 43 in the Big Book. But humor aside, there must be a serious message here that our own minds—quite aside from the drink problem—cannot be trusted with running us.

Writing: Put down some thoughts/actions and vacancies/inactions that might lead you to doubt your capability to run your own life or the affairs of others. Examples might be:

I married my first wife because she liked to party. I divorced her because she couldn't hold her liquor. I made my oldest boy become a veterinarian because I liked horses. I got into steel working because it was dangerous. I socked my best friend because he voted for McGovern. I hate my step father because he wants to visit us every two years. My neighbor is weak because he is fat. I repair my own car because the local mechanic is an Arab. We installed a pool for partying. etc..

Many members of AA feel a need to write an Immoral inventory (as opposed to the moral inventory of Step 4). If you have such a need, get it out of your system here.

In the course of writing our terminal drinking experiences, we have discovered that answering these questions is helpful.

a. When I decided to take the first drink of that last drinking bout.....

1. Had I answered the 20 questions suggested by Johns Hopkins Hospital? If so, what was my "score"?
2. Did I know that I had a problem with alcohol?
3. Was drinking habitual?
4. Did I have good reasons not to drink?
5. Was I aware of the reasons not to drink while I was deciding to drink?
6. Did I convince myself that I deserved a drink as a reward?
7. Did I expect the drink to work for me?
8. Did it work for me?
9. Was I optimistic about my future?

10. Did I have a sense of hopeless, dread or impending doom?

11. Did I consider myself worthy of a good life?

b. Was there a moment of clarity or a traumatic event that contributed to my not taking a next drink after the final bout ended?

In conclusion: It is more than likely that 85 - 95 % of your ideas and mental processes are right-on, and that the remainder will, as a minimum, get you or others into trouble. Our problem, it seems, is that we can't differentiate the good ideas from the bad. What is our prognosis?

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." [Big Book page 43, line 26]

And to remove the mental defense loop hole, how about this:

We are without defense against the first drink. [Big Book page 24, line 12]

When delusion based thinking ...is fully established in an individual with alcoholic tendencies, he has probably placed himself beyond human aid, and unless locked up, may die or go permanently insane. [Big Book page 24, line 29]

So many want to stop but cannot. [Big Book page 25, line 3]

The prognosis of a meaningful and joyful life, even while experiencing abstinence, is also dubious, because

...our troubles...are...of our own making. They arise out of ourselves. The alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. [Big Book page 62, line 15]

In view of the following dire prediction (bold style has been added for emphasis) you may wonder if there is any hope at all....

Among physicians, the general opinion seems to be that most chronic alcoholics are **doomed**. [Big Book page xxviii, line 32]

They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink 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. [Big Book page xxvi, line 34]

The principle of Step 1. A.A. is big on principles. (Look up "principle" in the dictionary.) In fact, the word appears 36 times in the Big Book. Just one instance is,

The principles we have set down are guides to progress. [Big Book page 60, line 10]

We try to distill each of the steps into its fundamental principle. What is the principle of Step 1? (Clue—it may be hopelessness. Would you believe, capitulation? or, could it be **surrender**?)

Obviously, there has to be more to recovery from alcoholism than admitting total defeat. Step 2 provides some hope.

2

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

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it in the two halves that appear below.

READING FOR STEP TWO

Big Book:	Chapter 4. We Agnostics
	Appendix II. Spiritual Experience
12&12:	Step 2

Step 2 is also separated into its first and second halves:

STEP 2a. Came to believe in a power greater than myself...

Having taken Step 1, you have already admitted the existence of a power greater than yourself. Think about it. Isn't alcohol a power greater than yourself? And, having also admitted that your life has been insanely unmanageable, your goal is to find some other power (besides alcohol), which is greater than yourself, and will produce saner consequences.

A.A.s who eventually achieve some time sober invariably acknowledge that their Higher Power is a spiritual power.

Anticipate that yours will be, too.

However, for the time being, your power may be any power that meets these four conditions. If you haven't noticed already, the word God is used in AA. In fact, the name appears in four of the twelve steps, but in two instances it is followed immediately by the expression

"as we understood Him". (meaning, according to your present conception of a Spiritual Power). A.A.'s use of the term, God, does not necessarily mean that we believe in "God", and it does not mean that we have a common understanding of what we do believe in. The term, God, is used only as a convenient way of referring to the Spiritual Power of our respective choices. And, have a Spiritual Power, we must!

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. [Big Book page 47, line 1]

Later in this document we will discuss the way that many of us have come to have conscious contact with a spiritual power of our own conception.

A.A. literature makes it clear that Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religion. It possesses no theology or dogma to be swallowed by anyone. In addition to using the term, God, the Big Book also refers to our Father, our Creator, the Spirit of the Universe, the Great Reality deep down within us, our Power, and many other names. When AA literature is translated into other languages, the name of God is translated

Your Higher Power should:

- Not be alcohol
- Not be you
- Be greater than alcohol and yourself, and
- Contribute to sobriety and sanity in your life.

also. He is called Dios, Gott, Yahweh, etc...

Please forgive our authors, too, in using the masculine pronouns, He, Him, etc... There is no intent to suggest that God is masculine, or that He possesses gender at all. A.A. has simply followed this age-old convention—until a more enlightened manner of speaking might be adopted.

Be assured, though, that God knows what His name is. You don't need to be so arrogant as to tell it to Him. Perhaps you might ask Him directly which name is best for you to use. Whatever name seems right to you is the one you should adopt for your intimate relationship with your Higher Power; but, when it comes to discussing your Spiritual Power with others, you also may wish to use the term, "God", strictly as a matter of convenience in communicating with your fellow alcoholics.

Writing for Step 2a: Make a list of powers greater than yourself within the following three classes:

12. **Physical:** (Examples: alcohol, pistols, policemen, bosses, cancer....)

13. **Mental:** (Examples: alcohol obsessions, greed, anger, pride, lust...)

14. **Spiritual:** (God...)

STEP 2b. Came to believe that the Power selected as greater than myself could restore me to sanity.

When A.A literature refers to insanity it is not using the dictionary definition of insanity. The Big Book is talking about the insane thinking of an alcoholic when he decides to ingest alcohol. In this sense, we all, without exception, have been insane. Moreover, our plight was hopeless. It is necessary, therefore, that our Higher Power be sufficiently able and willing to restore us first to the sanity of total abstinence.

Writing for Step 2b: Review the powers you listed in the writing above. Place a check mark to the left of each one that meets the condition of being able and willing to keep you from taking the next drink on a continuing basis. Your choices just became narrower.

Notice, too, that we come to believe. Your ultimate belief is unlikely to be obvious to you right away. We just keep at it. Be as persistent in promoting belief in your Higher Power as you were in justifying your drinking. In fact, why not ask your Higher Power to affix in your consciousness the certainty of His Reality. He will, if you let Him!

If you are not yet at the stage of talking to (let alone hearing from) a spiritual being, you may wish to follow A.A.'s suggestion that you begin with your favorite A.A. group as a power greater than yourself. Then, by following the A.A. spiritual starter kit, you will come into conscious awareness of an even higher Power.

Many of us have been downright confused about the idea and nature of God. Here's a discussion that has been helpful in sorting things out:

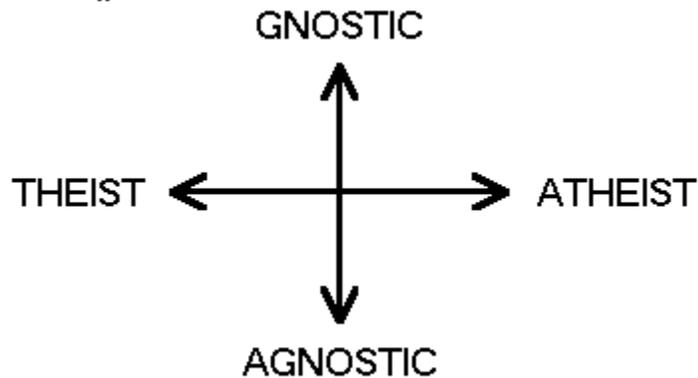
theists: First, we find the theists, those who worship one or more deities (God). Nearly all theists believe in a theology (their approved set of religious beliefs) espoused by one of the many religious institutions. These institutions often rely also upon antigods (devils) or a book alleged to be a faithful rendition from antiquity. Too, most claim exclusivity in the correctness of their system. Throughout human history (and certainly true today) some theists have been known to fight with each other. Yet, many wonderful people, including a great many A.A. members, attend church regularly and worship its deity successfully.

atheists: The letter prefix A means not or against . Atheists are believers that there is no God. They tend to take issue with all the theists.

THEIST ←————→ ATHEIST

From the diagram you just saw, and based upon the opinions of the theists and atheists, there seem to be only two choices for you to make—their way or the wrong way. It often appears to the AA newcomer that he must pick one of the churches (on the left above) or join the anti-church church (on the right). While some of these may be valid options, you might also resolve that you just don't feel comfortable being on the theist-atheist scale at all. After all, once you have picked a belief system, you have, as a consequence, rejected all the other systems you didn't pick. Maybe you feel you don't have any business making decisions about God's business.

Fortunately, you have at least four options, not just two. You could even opt to be agnostic, as the next diagram shows.



Agnostics: The agnostic cannot buy into the theologies (both pro and con), and he simply says, "I just don't know." The agnostic is on a wholly different plane. The theist-atheist plane is based upon the head or intellect. The agnostic is a(without)-gnosis(knowledge). And, with only modest imagination, we can remove the a and conceive of—you guessed it—the **Gnostic**, or knower. Moreover, the gnosis (knowledge of the existence and will of the Higher Power) is of the heart rather than the mind. You may have heard it said in an A.A. meeting that the longest journey in the universe is the one from your heart to your head. One of the meanings of this expression is that you need not play the mental and emotional game of the churches at all. Deal directly, instead, with the Spiritual Power that reveals itself to you.

The spiritual starter kit. All of this theology stuff can seem downright confusing. It can even appear to be a barrier in the path of sobriety. We A.A.s are fortunate in having a spiritual starter kit, so to speak, in chapter 4 of the Big Book. It is suggested as a sure fire method of coming to know a spiritual power. Here it is (we have supplied the bold style to selected characters):

Step 2.1. We found that as soon as we were able to **lay aside prejudice** and...[Big Book page 46, line 15]

Step 2.2. ...express even a **willingness to believe** in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God. [Big Book page 46, line 16]

Step 2.3. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you...we had to begin somewhere, so we used our **own conception**, however limited it was. [Big Book page 47, line 4]

Step 2.4. ...As soon as a man can say that he **does believe** or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. [Big Book page 47, line 16]

In short form the kit might read: a) Set aside all prejudice (both belief and disbelief about God and religions), b) Become willing to believe, c) Study all spiritual concepts, and formulate an initial—even conditional or tentative—conception of God, and d) Be persistent in testing the state of your belief and knowledge.

It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built. [Big Book page 47, line 19]

Notice that our step 2.3 above quotes that we used our **own conception**...of a Higher Power. Some of us were so spooked by the thought of a spiritual power that we had to begin with something more tangible. We have actually heard of newcomers using a door knob, a light bulb, a tree, or a moving van as their Higher Power. Such material objects, even animate ones, are not recommended. Two interim powers, however, seem to be effective for starters:

1) **The A.A. group.** Your A.A. Group is certainly a focal point of spiritual power, and it and its individual members can provide counsel and direction to straighten out your life if you wish.

2) **A borrowed Power.** You may know an A.A. member who seems to be comfortable with an effective Higher Power. It's quite acceptable to ask him or her to describe their Power to you, and if it is not offensive to you, you might ask to borrow their Power until you have your own. We are sure they will be delighted to comply.

Many of us have adopted schemes like these for a quick start in step 2. But, of one thing you may be sure—your own conception of a Higher Power will change with time as long as you are actively willing for Him to manifest Himself within you.

In our discussion about step 3 we will talk more about your right—actually, duty to yourself—to find a spiritual power of your own personal understanding. If that deity happens to be worshipped within a church, that is perfectly acceptable. However, do not accept statements from well-meaning A.A.s that so-and-so is the real and original Higher Power in A.A, and that you are short-changing yourself with any other. They are dead wrong! Take your A.A. spiritual counsel from those who follow the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Ultimately, you will find that your spiritual counsel will come directly from God himself.

(We have made)....clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought. [Big Book page 60, line 15]

We are fortunate in having a summary of the first two steps directly from the Big Book: Notice that **no non-spiritual power could** have relieved our alcoholism, and that God **could and would!** This is a very comforting guarantee, provided we meet the condition, if He were sought. And, what a relief. He does not need to be found, only **sought**.

And, take further comfort in these promises:

He humbly offered himself to his Maker—then he knew. Even so has God restored us all to our right minds. To this man, the revelation was sudden. Some of us grow into it more slowly. But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him. When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us! [Big Book page 57, line 8]

The principle of Step Two is _____. (It's time for you to uncover the principles of the steps on your own. We will compare notes when we discuss your writing.)

3

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

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as:

STEP THREE. I decide to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him.

READING FOR STEP THREE

Big Book: Chapter 5, How it works. From: Page 60, line 21: "Being convinced... Thru: Page 63, line 31: ...was felt at once."

12&12: Step 3

Step 3 has four key components:

- **STEP 3a.** ...Make a decision...
- **STEP 3b.** ...to turn your will and your life ...
- **STEP 3c.** ...over to the care of ...
- **STEP 3d.** ...God (as you understand Him).

STEP 3a. Make a decision... You may have heard this riddle in a meeting: "Five frogs were sitting on a log in their favorite pond. Two frogs decided to hop onto a warm rock. How many frogs were left on the log?" If you know anyone who answered, "three", suggest they read the riddle again. We alcoholics are experts at making decisions. Like, "I have decided to stop drinking!" "I have decided to bring my paycheck home to you and the kids, Honey!" You bet! If you have spent more than a week taking this step, you probably should just look upon it as a decision, but a decision that you reaffirm at least once each day. Then get on with step 4.

STEP 3b Turn your will and your life over... If, in meetings, you listen carefully to the stuff that people turn over you will be amazed before you are half way through. They turn over the Highway Patrolman shining a red light in the mirror of their car, the landlord banging on the door for his rent, their fat-clogged arteries, smoke corrupted lungs, and all the other things they wish to be rid of. It almost seems some folks think God must be some kind of celestial junk man. (In addition to those who think he is the ethereal pimp that brings forth enticing partners.) Going back to the source, we discover that it is silent on turning over junk, lust, or anything else—just our very lives and wills. You offer up only your life force and your motivation. That doesn't really leave much of value, does it?

will [from our dictionary] [2] (wil) n., v. willed, will-ing n.

15. the faculty of conscious and particularly of deliberate action: the freedom of the will.
16. power of choosing one's own actions: to have a strong will.
17. the act or process of using or asserting one's choice; volition: My hands are obedient to my will.
18. wish or desire: to submit against one's will.
19. purpose or determination: to have the will to succeed.
20. the wish or purpose as carried out, or to be carried out: to work one's will.

And, just what does *turning over* mean? Although you may have heard that it is like turning over a board to inspect the salamanders on the bottom side, the word refers to the *transfer* of possession and control....

STEP 3c. To the care of God... The first image that comes to mind is that the entity to which we offer something for care is a caretaker. A caretaker is needed only when the owner is either absent or incompetent (or both, as in the instance of the real alcoholic). A truly desirable caretaker is: 1) competent, 2) trustworthy, 3) available, and 4) consenting to care for your life and will. In addition to the idea of taking care of is the acknowledgement (for we alcoholics) of management.

God's mission is not to take care of us—even though He does. God's role is to direct us. It follows, then that our role is not to be taken care of, it is to take action consistent with God's direction, doing by ourselves the things that we can do without assistance.

...we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children....this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom. [Big Book, page 62, line 27]

Look up the word keystone in the dictionary, if you don't know precisely what it means. What role does the keystone play in the structure of an arch? So, again, what is the concept without which your spiritual growth will fall in upon itself? That's right. God is the Boss. We have a new employer. We do it His way, not ours.

STEP 3d. God as you understand Him. As we pointed out in our writing about step 2, this phrase does not mean that you believe in "God", and it does not mean that you understand what you believe in. The phrase does mean this and only this, that you decide to turn your life and will over to the care of a spiritual power of your naming and conception rather than that of someone else. (Why not read page 47 again, and ask yourself just what is the cornerstone referred to there?)

We repeat: A.A. literature makes it clear that Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religion or a sect. AA possesses no theology or dogma to be swallowed by anyone. The term, God, is used as a convenient way of referring to the Spiritual Power of our respective choices. Even though you may have a special term for your Power, when it comes to discussing your Spiritual Power with others, you also are likely to use the term, God, as a matter of convenience. Writing: on a piece of paper, complete the statements below. It is understood that your conception of God is certain to change, so the statements refer only to your conception at the present time.

1. The Power Greater than myself in which I came to believe in step 2 is called _____.
2. My Power is **not**: (set forth qualities your Power does not display, such as hateful, jealous, cruel, punishing....).
3. My Power is: (what He **is** like):
4. My goal is to pray _____ times each day, upon _____awakening _____retiring _____ eating _____
5. I have adopted the following meditation technique (this is really part of step 11, but there is nothing wrong with thinking about and beginning meditation right from the beginning.):

Sealing the commitment. Most of us found the guidance on page 63 of the Big Book is very effective. We recommend that you seal your commitment with another person, and that you memorize and repeat A.A's third step prayer. If the archaic terms Thee and Thou are not to your liking, you shouldn't be deterred from adjusting them as we have done in the rendition included at the end hereof.

If your *spiritual advisor* insists they you pray on your knees, by all means do so. Praying on the knees was big in primitive AA. The expression, "...on our knees..." was even included in step 7 of an early draft of the Big Book. Note, though, that its authors thought better of this, and the expression was deleted. It's not

there now, is it? Be assured that praying on the knees is not a requirement of Alcoholics Anonymous. Nevertheless, if you are Catholic, Episcopalian, Muslim or of many oriental religions, you may wish to pray on your knees. It will certainly help you to concentrate on what you are doing. It might even help you find your shoes in the morning.

The negative side of the pray-on-your-knees custom is that it deprives its adherents of many opportunities to pray during the day. Spiritually achieved ones cherish every moment in which they might commune with their Power. These moments might be in the car at a stop light, before partaking of food in the company cafeteria, or after realizing the answer to a perplexing problem. So, do what you think right, but don't deprive yourself of being in the state of closeness to God whenever you can.

The principle of Step 3 is _____ We will compare notes when we discuss your writing.

The THIRD STEP Prayer

[As adjusted from the book Alcoholics Anonymous, page 63, line 14]

God, I offer myself to You —
to build with me
and to do with me as You will.

Relieve me of the bondage of self,
that I may better do Your will.

Take away my difficulties,
that victory over them
may bear witness to those I would help
of Your Power,
Your Love,
and Your Way of life.

May I do Your will always.

Amen.

4

STEP 4) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as:

STEP FOUR. Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of yourself.

READING FOR STEP FOUR

Big Book:	From: Page 63, line 32: "Next we launched ,
	Thru: Page 71, the end of Chapter 5
12&12:	Step 4

Step 4 is considered to be the big written inventory step. And we have seen many, many ways in which it is recommended to be taken. A variant in the 12&12 uses the "seven deadly sins" as its basis. An early member of AA used a list of 20 defects of character as his outline. Many sponsors propose a life history be written. And, of course, the Hazelden people have a variety of guidance systems. There is even a PC computer approach that asks all sorts of revealing questions about one's sex and family life. If you are reluctant to take this step, then you may want to procrastinate further by exploring all these alternatives in depth before you start—at some future date. If, on the other hand, you want to get on with the sober life, then let's get on with the tried and true method in the Big Book. It consists of five lists. The words that follow here will then assist you, but don't forget that your reading, discussing and understanding the Big Book in depth is essential. Do not rely solely upon the document in hand.

A written inventory. Between pages 64 and 71 you will discover at least 10 clear statements that your inventory is to be *written*. Please look them up now. Unless you are physically handicapped, there are no exceptions to a *written* inventory. Put aside your tape recorder, and get out your pen and paper. If you type with a high level of expertise and think freely at a key-board, your sponsor, however, might allow a typewriter or PC.

But, remember that you are not writing the great American novel here. To do so would be a gross imposition upon the person with whom you will take your fifth step. Moreover, the thought of setting forth your life history completely misses the point. You are to write an inventory—not a narrative. And, what is an inventory? In 1939 Webster said it was, "...an itemized list of goods and valuables [stock or a person's qualities], with their estimated worth;..." The preferred synonym is LIST, and that's exactly what you are to do—write the list(s) outlined by the Big Book.

A moral inventory.

mor-al (môr'uhl, mor'-) adj. 21. of, pertaining to, or concerned with the principles of right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong; ethical: moral attitudes. 22. conforming to accepted or established principles of right conduct (opposed to immoral);
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virtuous; upright: a moral man.

23. expressing or conveying truths or counsel as to right conduct: a moral novel. based on fundamental principles of right conduct rather than on law, custom, etc.: moral obligations.

24. capable of recognizing and conforming to the rules of right conduct: a moral being.

25. virtuous in sexual matters; chaste.

26. of, pertaining to, or acting on the mind, feelings, will, or character: moral support.

It is clear that we are not counting possessions. Nor are we really listing people, institutions, principles or, even, actions in order to count them. We are seeking to illuminate the basis (or underlying cause) of our actions. In other words, why do we resent the world the way we do?

In fact, the most essential results of this step will be 1) to provide enough data for you and your guide to write down a statement of the nature of your wrongs (defects of character) in step five, 2) to provide data for step eight, with an initial listing of persons you have harmed, and 3) to reinforce your process of psychic change.

How many inventories? The formal written inventory of step four need be taken only once in your sober career. There is ample provision in step ten for spot-check, daily, periodic and annual refresher inventories.

How thorough? We are told that nothing counts but thoroughness and honesty. But, what should you do with very sensitive information? Many recovering alcoholics have one or more significant experiences in their past that they are highly reluctant to put on paper—either because the incident is one about which they feel great shame (the horror of which we dare not speak, the big one we plan to take to our grave untold) or because its revelation might cause severe personal or legal injury to ourselves or others. We suggest:

6. Always keep your inventory in a safe, private place so that no other person will ever see it unless you reveal it to them. Anticipate that there will be others with inquiring minds, and take precautions to assure your privacy.
7. Leave nothing out of your inventory just because it is a major item.
8. If you have good and prudent cause to take extraordinary precautions against unwitting disclosure of some part of your past, you may wish to encipher the incident or character trait as "Topic A" or the like (it's up to you, though, to remember what Topic A really is). This will prevent its disclosure to any person reading your inventory, but it will still satisfy the need for the topic to be included. How you then deal with this topic in step five will be discussed in that step.

On the other hand, how can you avoid undue length? Leave out needless repetition of resentments, fears, wrongs, etc. when the associated character defect has already been revealed. If, for example, you resent smokers who blow smoke in your face, it is preferred that you do not list them all. An entry such as, "Sam Smoker and all the other inconsiderate boobs who blow smoke in my face.", should suffice. In a more serious vein, maybe you have known violence and have had many bloody fights. You will probably want to list the major protagonists, especially ones who have suffered severe injury at your hands, and enough experiences to illuminate the different provocations or seeming justifications that led to your fighting in the first place. It is also prudent to include persons to whom you expect you might be making

amends in step nine.

Warning! Besides protecting yourself from premature embarrassment or even incarceration due to unintended disclosure of your inventory, you should also avoid making amends without guidance. An intentional, but premature, disclosure as part of the mending process can also be very damaging—to you and others. Except for minor matters or exceptions you have discussed with your sponsor in advance, you should make your amends in step nine where they belong.

When to start your inventory. The completion of Step 3 is described on page 63 of the Big Book. Notice that the very next paragraph says,

Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action ... at once...[Big Book page 63, line 32 & page 64, line 3]

In the early days of A.A. when a newcomer asked when he should begin his inventory, he was told, "When you want to stop hurting". When do you want to stop hurting? We will now show you how to divide the job up into simple pieces. Write the first column of list 1 today. It will take from 5 to 30 minutes. Don't big-deal yourself into inaction.

How many lists? The Big Book mentions five (maybe four) distinct lists. Each of these lists is discussed in more detail below. If you have a pressing need to add additional information, or if your sponsor suggests further material, go for it.

Step Four is composed of these lists:
STEP 4a. Resentments. [Page 64, line 23]
STEP 4b. Faults [Page 67, line 21] (may be combined with 4a).
STEP 4c. Fears. [Page 68, line 3]
STEP 4d. Sexual Injury. [Page 69, line 12]
STEP 4e. Harms. [Page 70, line 30]

Writing: Step 4a, RESENTMENTS, columns #1 through #3.

Step #4a RESENTMENTS Column #1

Who

I'm resentful at:	Column #1 is the WHO column. Who is the person, or what is the institution or principle that you resent? A resentment is a negative feeling more intense than dislike and less violent than anger. Resentment is often referred to as smoldering anger, and the list should include both those you resent and those with whom you are angry (or even hate, which is more intense yet). In this first column, just list the name of the person, institution or principle. Next, rearrange the list so that the names are ranked from the least resentment at the top to the most intense resentment at the bottom. If you have more than fifty items, you probably have too many. Ten may be too few.
Sam Smoker, et. al.	
Peter Punch	
Mother	
Father	
IRS	
Wife #1	

It would be a good idea to get together with your selected fifth step person at this point to see if you are on track. There is another reason for the contact. Making up the list is not a major undertaking. It can usually be done in several hours. By breaking the 4a list up into columns, you will not be intimidated nor held back with the perception that the inventory step has to be a big deal.

Step #4a, RESENTMENTS

Column #2

What they did

Column #2 is the WHAT column. This is called the "Cause" column on page 65. It describes briefly just what *the resented party did* that triggered your resentment. It does not describe how you reacted to their action. The example in the Big Book seems to be pretty clear. Expand what you began when you filled in the WHO column. Where they (the source of your resentment) performed multiple actions, put in as many as will provide the needed learning experience. It will probably be necessary to rewrite the entire list, because you will need more lines to amplify the reasons.

I resent:	Because they:
Sam Smoker	Smokes at me
	Insulted me
Peter Punch	Hit me
Mother	Sided with Dad
	Died
Father	Beat me
IRS	\$ Attachments
Wife #1	Left me
	\$ Attachments

Step #4a, RESENTMENTS

Column #3

the basis (Why)

1. Ambition	6. Pride
2. Fear	7. Self esteem
3. Financial security	8. Sex relations
4. Physical security	9. Health
5. Personal relationship	10. Sense of justice .
[1. - 8. are from the Big Book. We added 9. & 10. because we thought they were needed]	

Column #3 is the WHY column. Just as column #2 required more thought than column #1, this column merits some deep searching. Just *what is it about you* that was triggered by the other person or their actions? Include as many triggers as apply. The first 8 triggers listed here are [*affects my*] found in the Big Book: We have added another, 9. (Health, which may be included in 4) and the catch-all, 10., to take care of drivers who cut you off on the freeway, and people who look at you funny.

Again, it is a good idea to consult with your sponsor after you have filled in the whys for the first 4 or 5 items. Figuring these triggers out is no easy task.

Writing: Step 4b. Faults. This list can be treated as a fourth column of the resentment list. What the book says is,

The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults we listed them.[Big Book page 67, line 21]

Remember, the Resentment List (Step 4a) deals primarily with people, institutions and principles that you resent. Usually, your resentment is based upon a wrong you believe was done to you. The fourth column identifies *your own part* in causing the injury to yourself and to others as well. If you choose not to make it part of the resentment list, then make up a separate list, showing the name of the person resented and where you were also wrong.

Step #4a, RESENTMENTS with #4b, FAULTS

#1 WHO	#2 WHAT	#3 WHY	#4 MY ERROR
I resent:	Because they:	Affects my:	My Fault Was:
Sam Smoker	Smokes at me	Health	
	Insulted me	Self Esteem	Stimulated his fear
Peter Punch	Hit me	Security	Insulted him
Mother	Sided with Dad	Fear	
	Died	Relationship	Made her get sick

Father	Beat me	Security	Broke his trophy
		Fear	
IRS	\$ Attachments	Financial	Didn't file returns
Wife #1	Left me	Relationship	Cheated on her
	\$ Attachments	Financial	No child support

Step #4c, FEARS

Writing: Step 4c. Fears.
 Create another list. You have already indicated on the resentment table some actions that cause you to react in fear. Skim through them and list the feared pattern. Add other things you fear even though you do not resent them.

I'm afraid of:
Getting cancer from smoke (Sam Smoker).
Being broke. (IRS, Wife #1, Mr. Brown, etc.)
Being attacked and hurt (Peter Punch).
Being celibate (Mr. Brown, My Wife).
The purple monster in my dreams.
Being shunned by others because I'm getting fat and ugly.

Step #4d, My SEXUAL CONDUCT has Injured:

Who:	What I did:	Their hurt:
Wife #1	Denied her affection	Her self esteem
My wife	Took a mistress	Her self esteem
	Slapped her	Fear
My niece	Aroused her	Fear

Writing: Step 4d. Sexual Injury. This is the list of our sexually related conduct in which we have been selfish, dishonest, inconsiderate or hurtful; or where we have unjustifiably aroused jealousy, suspicion or bitterness. This list will look very much like the resentment

table, except that here they could resent us:

Step 4e, HARMS I Caused:

Writing: Step 4e. Harms. "We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct..." This is a preliminary version of your list for step eight. It doesn't need to be complete at this time, but it should contain all the persons and institutions on lists 4a through 4d that you have harmed. If the injury has already been amended, as with the IRS in our example, it does not need to be included. You may also defer to step eight the willingness to amend your harm. In other words, document what you did, not what you are willing to do about it.

Who I hurt:	What I did:
Peter Punch	Insulted him about his age
Mike Mauler	Broke his nose in a bar
Employer #1	Stole \$546.65
Wife #1	\$2500 Child support unpaid
Father	Broken trophy
Wife	Physical abuse
My son	Conned him out of Med School
Mother	Worried her to death

Evaluation. You have finished your written inventory. It wasn't nearly as big a task as others make it out to be, was it? But, you are not done with step 4. The Big Book is clear that you are now to review your lists, analyze what they mean, and learn something from what you have written. Your analysis will be reviewed in depth in step five, where we deal with the points introduced in the Big Book one-by-one.

The principle of Step 4 is _____.

5

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

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as:

STEP FOUR. Admit to God, to yourself, and to other human being the exact nature of your wrongs.

READING FOR STEP FIVE

Big Book:	Chapter 6, Into Action.
	From: Page 72 Thru: Page 75, the bottom of the page.
12&12:	Step 5

Why? This step is genuinely therapeutic. "Confession" (not an A.A. term) was one of the six steps in the Oxford Group, one of the sources from which A.A. sprang. It is to be found in some form in most every religion since ancient times. There is some kind of essential mystical property in the act of opening up completely to another human being. There is a sense of initiating the cleansing process in step 5. You have undoubtedly heard that your sickness cannot be removed completely until your deepest secret is purged. This is absolutely true!

In conjunction with your step 4, this bringing in of another person makes a lot of sense. You have done your very best to write out acts, thoughts and emotions which will need to be corrected and which will help to identify your defects of character. You have done the very best you could. Nevertheless, only the most achieved human can see himself in total objective truth. The keys to your behavior, often so obscure to you, will seem to jump out to the attention of your fifth step partner, especially if he has heard a fifth before with others. So, a major benefit is the feedback that will help you as you proceed to later steps. One of our members noted this on page 75 of the BB:

"We...go to it, illuminating every twist of character...withholding nothing..."

He was concerned that the lists which make up Step 4 did not fulfill this everything requirement. It was pointed out that the everything refers to Step 5, not Step 4. There is always much discussion in Step 5 that goes far beyond the content of the inventory. This is the way it is supposed to be.

With whom? You have heard of A.A.s who select a total stranger (even one who speaks only another language) to hear their fifth. This might satisfy the first reason above for the step. However, it deprives the one taking the step of the response that is so vital to growth. Moreover, it makes sense to take this step with your sponsor or a person to whom you will turn for guidance in the future. When they are informed by the step and future discussions, they can help you see your patterns and provide the continuity that is necessary for unlearning old habits and initiating new (and healthy) ones.

The best approach is to select your partner, at least on a conditional basis, before you begin your step 4 in earnest. They may have definite ideas as to what they want to see when you take your fifth.

Needless to say, you will want more than concern, experience and wisdom from your partner. He or she must be absolutely trustworthy. Not a single episode from your revelation should ever leave their lips.

One of the best ways of evaluating the ability of your partner to preserve private information is to listen as they talk about others. Do they engage in gossip? Do they reveal things about others you wouldn't want revealed about yourself?

When? It makes little sense to have an inventory riding around in your pocket. Once you've selected your partner, make an appointment and go to it.

Preparation. The Big Book is clear that once you have finished your step four writing, you are to review your lists, analyze what they mean, and learn something from what you have written. Your analysis will be augmented in step five, but you should not leave all the thinking up to your guide. Read page 66 again. We are reluctant to repeat the book. However, some of the points it makes cannot be left without comment:

27. The world is, indeed imperfect, and our lives have been touched by injustice. Our typical reaction has been to try to fix the world. When that didn't work—it never does—we got good and sore and bitched and drank at it. Only in sobriety have we learned there is but one thing in this universe that we can and must try to influence. You guessed it—self. Many of us have then discovered a miraculous truth. When we set about to have our Creator manage our lives, we are often empowered with incredible influence over people near us and in the world around us. The catch (wouldn't you know there would be one) is that we must not attempt to exercise self-will.
28. The power of resentment far exceeds any conception we had of negative thinking. Were you aware that:
 - ..a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness.
 - The hours in which we allow futility and unhappiness in our lives are not worth while. Resentments waste our lives.
 - Resentments shut us off from the sunlight of the Spirit, thereby preventing the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience.
 - When shadowed from the sunlight of the Spirit, the insanity of alcohol returns, we drink again, and we die.
 - Harboring of resentments is fatal.

Most alcoholics have a deep—almost pathological—sense of justice. If we are wronged (meaning often that we did not get what we wanted), or even conjure up the notion that we might have been wronged, we find full justification to express anger or harbor resentment. It then seems almost a duty to carry a justified resentment. Otherwise those who have wronged us would get off scot-free. And that wouldn't be right, would it? So, we waste our God-given lives judging and punishing our fellows. Relinquishing a justified resentment is one of the most difficult experiences known to the alcoholic.

Yet, it must be done! There is striking evidence that resentment creates a physical poison in our bodies, in addition to the mental and spiritual maladies it feeds.

And, how do we rid ourselves of resentments? Hopefully, this process began in step 4. Our list holds the key.

a) Note the message of the column headings:

Column #1) **Who** do you hold a grudge against? Column #2) **What** did they do that you found offensive? Column #4) **How did you contribute** to their action? and Column #3) **Why** did you react with a resentment?

The first lesson is that resentments cannot be cleared up until we know we have them and why. The second lesson is that we have made ourselves vulnerable to the outside world to an extraordinary extent. Our entire self concept has been molded by the opinions and actions of others and our old thinking as to what we ought to be and were.

b) Next, it is necessary to be willing to let go of the resentment. You will learn more about this in step six. Moreover—and the Big Book doesn't give as much help here as it might—we must forgive the person we resent. There will be more discussion of forgiving others in step eight. Just accept right now that you are going to have to do it! There is no other course.

Now look at your fear list. For most of us, fear is the underlying cause of resentments, greed and negative behavior with others. This will be discussed further in step six.

Finally, the harm you have done others, whether relating to sex or not, needs to be thought through. Why did you do what you did?

The ultimate key given you in the Big Book is the oft repeated notion that your life is now on a different basis. A basis is a foundation—that upon which all the rest stands. Your new basis is trusting and relying upon God.

Character Defects. You will note in the steps these phrases: the exact nature of our wrongs, defects of character and shortcomings. Here we have three different ways of saying defects of character, which, according to Webster, are the habitual traits of defective thought and behavior which distinguish a person:

The dictionary on CHARACTER

3. An attribute, quality, or property; esp., a distinguishing attribute.

5. The aggregation of distinctive qualities belonging to an individual...; the stamp of individuality impressed by nature, education, or habit...

6 The estimate put upon a person or thing; reputation; repute.

7. Moral vigor or firmness, esp. as acquired through self discipline.

We have heard folks point out that nature in "...the exact nature of our wrongs..." is singular. We have performed many wrongs, but there is but one underlying nature for our wrong doing. Having given this idea some thought, we conjectured that separation from God or self-centeredness might be our singular wrong. However, the text in the step could also be interpreted that each wrong might have its own and different nature. Understand it as you will, discuss it with your sober associates, and then move on. There just might not be a "right" answer to this one.

We have assembled on the last page a short catalogue of character defects, which you may expand or condense as you see fit. At the end of your step five you should know which of these apply to you. In the [] to the left of each candidate in the catalogue you can place a check mark [✓] if it applies sometimes, an [X] if it is a real problem, or just leave it blank []. These are the things we become willing to have removed from us in Step 6. Please notice that unreasonable judges, nagging partners, dictatorial bosses, stupid drivers, overdrawn checking accounts, falling hair and warts are not on the list.

Conduct of your fifth will be guided by your partner, who will be delighted that you have not brought the great American novel, and that you have followed the tried and true formula in the Big Book (as modified, perhaps by their prior direction). They will usually ask you to read your fourth to them. Much valuable communication will be provided by your expressions and voice in addition to your words. If they take notes, which is rare, they will give them to you before you leave. They are yours. This step takes anywhere from 2 to 8 hours. Schedule enough time, especially in recognition that many partners will combine steps five, six, seven and eight in one sitting.

Promises: we have a whole page on promises. We can't resist repeating here what A.A. members are promised at the completion of a successful Step 5.

"Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing,

1. **(W)e are delighted.**
2. **We can look the world in the eye.**
3. **We can be alone at perfect peace and ease.**
4. **Our fears fall from us.**
5. **We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator.**
6. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now **we begin to have a spiritual experience.**
7. **The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly.**
8. **We feel we are on the Broad Highway**, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe. "

In many meetings we are read the alleged "12 promises" (actually the 18 beginning at the bottom of page 83). Upon reflection, the promises from Step 5 might be even more wonderful. Go to [Promises](#) and discover for yourself.

Writing: for once, there is no writing you need to do in advance of step five other than your inventory. Note, though, that at the conclusion of your presentation be sure that you have at least three pieces of paper to take home with you:

1. The first will be a list of your **defects of character**. If you like, use the list on the next page by checking off the character defects that apply to you. This list will guide steps 6 and 7.

2. You should also have a preliminary list of **persons you have harmed** for step 8 (This will be a combination of the sexual injury [4d] and persons you have harmed lists [4e] from step 4.).
3. Retrieve a list of the names of the **persons you still resent**. You will probably find it necessary to forgive them in order for the resentment to be removed.

It is often a good idea to burn the inventory you brought with you. More on this in step 7.

The principle of Step 5 _____.

Defects of CHARACTER

<input type="checkbox"/> Abusing others	<input type="checkbox"/> Fear *	<input type="checkbox"/> Pessimism
<input type="checkbox"/> Anger 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Filthy-mindedness	<input type="checkbox"/> Prejudice
<input type="checkbox"/> Arguing	<input type="checkbox"/> Gluttony 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Pride 7
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrogance	<input type="checkbox"/> Gossiping *	<input type="checkbox"/> Procrastination *
<input type="checkbox"/> Boasting	<input type="checkbox"/> Greed 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Recklessness
<input type="checkbox"/> Cheating	<input type="checkbox"/> Hate *	<input type="checkbox"/> Resentment *
<input type="checkbox"/> Closed-mindedness	<input type="checkbox"/> Hopelessness	<input type="checkbox"/> Revenge
<input type="checkbox"/> Cold-heartedness	<input type="checkbox"/> Immodesty	<input type="checkbox"/> Sarcasm
<input type="checkbox"/> Complaining	<input type="checkbox"/> Impatience *	<input type="checkbox"/> Secretiveness
<input type="checkbox"/> Controlling others	<input type="checkbox"/> Injustice	<input type="checkbox"/> Self condemnation *
<input type="checkbox"/> Corrupt companions	<input type="checkbox"/> Insincerity *	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-indulgence
<input type="checkbox"/> Cowardice	<input type="checkbox"/> Insulting	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-justification *
<input type="checkbox"/> Criticizing *	<input type="checkbox"/> Intolerance	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-pity *
<input type="checkbox"/> Dependency	<input type="checkbox"/> Irresponsibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Selfishness *
<input type="checkbox"/> Destructiveness	<input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy *	<input type="checkbox"/> Sloth 7
<input type="checkbox"/> Deviousness	<input type="checkbox"/> Laziness *	<input type="checkbox"/> Theft
<input type="checkbox"/> Dishonesty *	<input type="checkbox"/> Lewdness	<input type="checkbox"/> Thrill-seeking
<input type="checkbox"/> Enviousness * 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Lust 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtlessness
<input type="checkbox"/> Exaggeration	<input type="checkbox"/> Lying *	<input type="checkbox"/> Uncleanliness
<input type="checkbox"/> Excess	<input type="checkbox"/> Meddling	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulgarity *
<input type="checkbox"/> Fanaticism	<input type="checkbox"/> Miserliness	<input type="checkbox"/> Waste
<input type="checkbox"/> Favoritism	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative thinking *	

* One of 20 character defects identified by an early member of A.A.

7 One of the "Seven Deadly Sins" (try the mnemonic, "GAPLEGS", or, better yet, "PAGGLES")

6

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

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as:

STEP SIX. I am entirely ready for God to remove all my defects of character

READING FOR STEP SIX

Big Book:	Chapter 6, Into Action.
	Page 76, paragraph 1, line 1-7
12&12:	Step 6

At this point, it would be a good idea to look again at our discussion of step 5, where we define character and list a number of candidate defects. Upon completion of step 5, you should have compiled a list of the character defects which you have. Step 6, the object of our current discussion, is concerned with your **willingness** to have these defects of character **removed**.

You have noticed that discussion of step 6 in the Big Book is but 5 sentences in 7 lines. We will look at each of these sentences in turn.

Sentence #1. If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at

Step Six. [Big Book, page 76, line 1]

What are we answering? On the prior page we are instructed to do certain things after completion of step 5, including:

Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an **arch** through which we shall walk a free man at last. [Big Book, page 75, line 29]

Your arch spans 7 of the 12 steps. It was entered in step 3, when you decided to turn your life and will over to the care of your understanding of God. Upon completion of step 9, which you are yet to do, you will have entered the "realm of the spirit" (step10).

But wait a minute. The design is not yours. Then whose design (path) is this?

RARELY HAVE WE seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed **our path**. [Big Book, page 58, line 2]

Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the **path of spiritual progress**. [Big Book, page 100, line 6]

Time after time, this apparent calamity has been a boon to us, for it opened up a **path which led to the discovery of God**. [Big Book, page 116, line 15]

And where do we build our **arch**?

But be sure you are on solid spiritual **ground** before you start and that your motive in going is thoroughly good. [Big Book, page 102, line 4]

With what do we build?

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. [Big Book, page 25, line 13]

"God, I offer myself to Thee-to **build** with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. [Big Book, page 63, line 15]

The portion of a structure upon which all else (even the foundation) rests is the footing.

He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a **footing** we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. [Big Book, page 63 line 5]

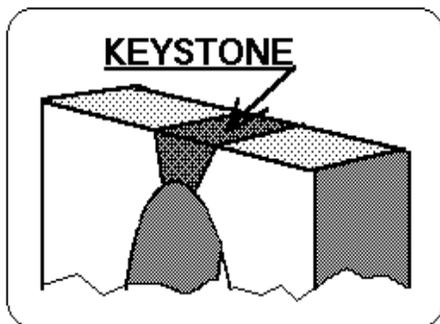
The foundation itself is described in some detail in the Big Book:

Upon a **foundation** of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. [Big Book, page 12, line 22]

Helping others is the **foundation** stone of your recovery. [Big Book, page 97, line 5]

...let him go as far as he likes in helping other alcoholics. During those first days of convalescence, this will do more to insure his sobriety than anything else. Though some of his manifestations are alarming and disagreeable, we think dad will be on a firmer **foundation** than the man who is placing business or professional success ahead of spiritual development. [Big Book, page 130, line 2]

Twelve—Anonymity is the spiritual **foundation** of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities. [Big Book, page 564, line 31]



We should take special note of the **keystone** of the arch. It is the stone in the center at the top. Both sides of the arch rest upon it. Without the keystone, the whole structure would collapse. Because your arch is spiritual, rather than material, the keystone symbolizes something other than stone.

...we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the **keystone**...[Big Book, page 62, line 27]

We have all heard of a cornerstone. To a mason, it is the first stone laid. It is also a stone forming a part of a corner or angle in a wall, especially a stone lying at the foundation of a principal angle, specifically one laid at the formal inauguration of the erection of a building, usually inscribed with the date or other matters and often hollowed out to receive documents, records or other relics. In a more general sense, a cornerstone is something of fundamental importance; a trait or fact upon which others rest as if forming a superstructure. In the latter sense it is akin to a keystone.

"Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple **cornerstone** a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built. [Big Book, page 47, line 20]

For the first time, he lived in conscious companionship with his Creator. Thus was our friend's **cornerstone** fixed in place. [Big Book, page 56, line 31]

And what binds the stones together?

The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful **cement** which binds us. [Big Book, page 17, line 19]

Entry into the Arch, however, is barred to those without the Key.

We turned back to the list (our fourth step inventory), for it held the **key** to the future. [Big Book, page 66, line 23]

Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have—the **key** to life and happiness for others. [Big Book, page 124, line 22]

Meanwhile, back at the conclusion of step five we are directed to review the adequacy of our construction:

Are the **stones** properly in place? [Big Book, page 75, line 30]

Have we skimped on the **cement** put into the foundation? [Big Book, page 75, line 31]

Have we tried to make **mortar** without sand? [Big Book, page 75, line 32]

If the job so far is acceptable, then you may be ready for step 6 and the destiny that is about to unfold for you.

We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us. We can only clear the **ground** a bit. If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway [Big Book, page 55, line 23]

Sentence #2. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. [Big Book page 76, line 2]

The alcoholic mind has little difficulty in translating indispensable to suggested. But if our foundation is one of complete willingness, can we do without it?

• Willingness is the foundation of abstinence!

when the broker gave him Dr. Silkworth's description of alcoholism and 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. [Big Book page xvi, line 27]

There is the type of man who is **unwilling** to admit that he cannot take a drink. He plans various ways of drinking.

He changes his brand or his environment. [Big Book page xxviii, line 13]

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. [Big Book page 13, line 11]

But this man still lives, and is a free man. He does not need a bodyguard nor is he confined.

He can go anywhere on this earth where other free men may go without disaster, provided he remains **willing** to maintain a certain simple attitude. [Big Book page 27, line 1]

MOST OF US have been **unwilling** to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. [Big Book page 30, line 1]

On the third day the lawyer gave his life to the care and direction of his Creator, and said he was perfectly **willing** to do anything necessary. [Big Book page 13, line 33]

• **Willingness is the foundation of belief in God:**

I stood in the sunlight at last. 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. [Big Book page 12, line 18]

There had been a humble **willingness** to have Him with me—and He came. [Big Book page 12, line 31]

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.. [Big Book page 28, line 20]

We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a **willingness** to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God. [Big Book page 46, line 16]

We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I now believe, or am I even **willing** to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is **willing** to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. [Big Book page 47, line 14]

What is this but a miracle of healing? Yet its elements are simple. Circumstances made him **willing** to believe. He humbly offered himself to his Maker—then he knew. Even so has God restored us all to our right minds. To this man, the revelation was sudden. Some of us grow into it more slowly. But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him. When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us! [Big Book page 57, line 36]

The point is, that we are **willing** to grow along spiritual lines.. [Big Book page 60, line 9]

He can choose any conception he likes, provided it makes sense to him. The main thing is that he be **willing** to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles. [Big Book page 93, line 8]

• **Willingness is the foundation of a sober life:**

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. [Big Book page 13, line 33]

If you have decided you want what we have and are **willing** to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps. [Big Book page 58, line 25]

For the type of alcoholic who is able and **willing** to get well, little charity, in the ordinary sense of the word, is needed or wanted [Big Book page 97, line 33]

To duplicate, with such backing, what we have accomplished is only a matter of **willingness**, patience and labor. [Big Book page 163, line 8]

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 [Big Book page 570, line 12].

Sentence #3. Are (you) ready to let God remove from (you) all the things which (you) have admitted are objectionable? [Big Book page 76, line 3]

Please note that this step does not include willingness to have God remove your nagging spouse, the law suit your neighbor slapped upon you, the court appearance you are facing nor your swollen liver, even though you may be willing to have them removed. We are dealing here with **your** defects, not those of the world. If you reflect upon the papers you carried away from step 5, one of them was a listing of your character defects. These are the things which you have "admitted are objectionable". Go through your list again. For each item, ask yourself if you are willing to have it removed.

Most of us were not totally willing to have all of our character defects removed totally right away. Pick out an easy one, and become willing to have it removed immediately. Then, pick out a harder one, and nibble around the edges of its desirability. Help yourself be more willing for its removal than you were before. For the really tough ones, pray for willingness to become willing. However, don't postpone Step Seven until you are totally willing to have them all eradicated. Flush your defects one at a time. "Divide and conquer", you know.

One measure of your willingness to be free of a defect is to stop reinforcing it. Don't do it anymore. Or, more practically, postpone its next reinforcement as long as you can. Learn from the experience of defect-relapse. What are the triggers? What, if any, are the benefits? What are some other tools for postponement/eradication that you have not tried?

Here is a little practice we encountered that is helpful. It is called:

The Four A's of Adjustment

Awareness. Until we admit awareness of a problem or a character defect, we cannot possibly let it go. Steps 4 and 5 apply here.

Attitude. This is the willingness **A**. Do we justify our thoughts or actions? Do we want to keep doing what we are doing and get different results? We must not only be willing to let it go, we must stop hanging onto it. This is Step 6.

Alternatives. What are the various actions or inactions that we might employ to have our defect removed? One of these, certainly, is Step 7! Talk around among trusted folks. What have they done that worked? Do some more research (not the experience of repeating the defect, but the learning variety).

Action. Select a promising alternative, and put it to work. Keep at it. If appropriate, keep a notebook in your pocket to record relapses and retries until you see real progress. Associate with persons, places and things that will reinforce your growth.

Sentences #4 & #5. Can He now take them all—every one? If (you) still cling to something (you) will not let go,... ask God to help (you) be willing.

[Big Book page 76, line 5]

We know of one fifth step partner who, upon completion of a friend's fifth, would produce the character defect list, and they would both go through it, checking off each defect that applied. The stepping friend would then go outside with his inventory, the list of defects, and a large brass urn. He would sit in the yard taking step six alone with his Father, performing the reflection described in the Big Book. When entirely

ready, the inventory and the defects were solemnly burned in the urn. The symbolism was total willingness to be cleansed of these defects in the healing presence of God. Step 7 followed immediately.

The principle of step 6 is _____.

7

STEP 7) Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as:

STEP SEVEN. Humbly ask God to remove your shortcomings.

READING FOR STEP SEVEN

Big Book:	Chapter 6, Into Action. Page 76, paragraph 2
12&12:<	Step 7

You may also wish to use our Step Seven Work Sheet.* see below for Worksheet

The 12 & 12 dwells on the word, "humility" to some length. Here's what the dictionary says:

HUMILITY Definition:

hu-mil-i-ty (hyue mil'l tee; often yue-) n.

1. the quality or state of being humble; modest opinion of one's own importance or rank; meekness.

[1275-1325; ME humilite < L humilitas; see:

hum-ble (hum'buhl, um'-) adj. <-bler, -blest> v. <-bled, -bling> adj.

1. not proud or arrogant; modest.

2. Low in importance, status, or condition; lowly: a humble home.

3. Courteously respectful: in my humble opinion.

The root "hum" means earth as in humus and, humor. When the definition says that Humble means "lowly" it does not mean servile or inadequate. It means, simply, not exalted, as is the earth as opposed to heaven.

So, humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.

The way we have come to look at humility is that it is a virtue, one of the principles that AA teaches us to live. The definition we have adopted pictures us as standing naked before God, without pretense nor reservation. It means hiding nothing, being our real selves, both good and bad. A good synonym for humility is honesty.

Mother Theresa obviously knew precisely what humility means when she said:

"If you are humble nothing can touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know who you are."

In the context of Step 7, then, we find that our taking of Steps 4, 5, and 6 has prepared us to know much of who and what we are. It is our real essence, then, that stands before its Creator with the prayer that its shortcomings be removed. (*The expressions exact nature of our wrongs (step 5), defects of character*

(step 6), and *shortcomings* (step 7) are to be used interchangeably, according to Bill Wilson.)

But, just what does get removed? Does God remove defects that we don't know about? If He did, then steps 4 and 5 might be unnecessary. You have been instructed to go to a great deal of trouble to bring to the surface your defects of character.

Knowing of our defects is only a precursor to becoming willing to stop hanging onto them in step six. We don't think this effort is all make-work. The Higher Power we have come to know does not intrude into our lives without invitation. He only responds to step seven prayers that are very specific. He wants us to understand which qualities of character are desirable and which are not (within the context of His scheme of things). He wants us to know ourselves well enough to know which character attributes we have and which are missing. Therefore, we believe that there is no catch-all we can invoke that just says, "clean us up".

The point is that we are to ask God to displace our own character with the character He chooses us to have.

Does God remove all our defects of character that we ask Him to? It seems not. Sometimes we think something is a defect of character when it might be right for us, like a mole on our cheek. Maybe we haven't yet learned enough from our defects to really be ready to have them removed, even though we think we are.

Most of us take Steps Six and Seven every day. The process of letting go and letting God is not instantaneous. We whittle away at the old self, often painfully, until His magnificent configuration slowly emerges.

The principle of Step Seven is_____.

The Seventh Step Prayer
My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.

STEP 7 WORKSHEET

7) Humbly asked Him (God) to remove our shortcomings.

What shortcomings? The "exact nature of our wrongs" in step 5 is expressed in terms of "defects of character" in step 6, and offered up to God for removal as "shortcomings" in step 7. Bill Wilson, when asked why he used three different sets of words to define character defects, said it was to avoid repetition. Therefore, he intended that there be no significant distinction. Some members waste time needlessly by differentiating the three expressions, which we term, simply, as character defects.

When step 5 is performed well, we leave with a list of our character defects. In step 6 we progressively become willing to have these removed from us, and in step 7 we pray that they might be.

Make a grid similar to that below, and list your defects of character in it. If an example we have entered applies to you, let it remain. If not, replace it with one of yours that is not listed.

Character Defect	Willingness to have removed
Abusiveness	—
Anger	—
Dishonesty	—
Fear	—
Infidelity	—
Irresponsibility	—
Procrastination	—
Stinginess	—
Thievery	—
Thoughtlessness	—

Willingness for removal. We have identified five possible levels of your willingness to have each character defect removed. These are:

- 1) Already removed
- 2) Absolutely willing
- 3) Almost willing
- 4) Give me more time
- 5) Never

Place one of these level indicators in the right column of the grid for each character defect.

As you know from reading the 12&12, our stubborn insistence to “never” allow a defect to be removed must, itself, be removed.

If your willingness level for any item is not 1) or 2), you will want to repeat the exercise again later.

We are certain that God will not remove from alcoholics the defects of character that we do not admit we have. This fact explains one of the reasons we must take steps 4 and 5. We also know that God may remove our defects only to the extent that we are willing for them to be removed. That is why we take step 6. He does not intrude upon our private desires to cohabit with the trash in the garbage can.

Describes your level of humility:	
1	I am so low I cohabit with worms.
2	I deserve contempt and condemnation.
3	I am worthless.
4	I am filled with guilt, shame, remorse and self-loathing.
5	I feel like being totally honest.
6	I have little interest in impressing others.
7	I have nothing to hide from God
8	I am coming to really know who I am.

Humility? Are you humble? Place a check mark next to each of the statements in the table which identifies your level of humility?

Even though the dictionary says that humility describes one of lower status, that is not the spiritual significance of humility. Therefore, the first four statements above describe humiliation, not humility.

The root is “hum”, the same root as in humus and humor. For us, humility means “down to earth”. Humility means honest, real, and without phoniness as in statements 5 through 8 above. Our role model, Mother Theresa had it right on when she said, “If you are truly humble, nothing can touch you, neither disgrace nor praise, because *you know who you are.*”

So, we enter into step 7 with honesty, willing to stand naked, so to speak, before God, hiding nothing, and with no hidden motives.

More about God. In Step 7 we ask God to do something – to remove our shortcomings. But, not all conceptions of a Higher Power(HP) are likely to improve us. Some of the HPs we have encountered are a tree, a moving van, a rock, the classic light bulb, and even the AA Group itself, which is suggested as a last resort starting point in AA literature. Amongst these, the only possible candidate for removing shortcomings might be the AA Group.

However, we think it is not prudent to go through your defects catalogue before your Group. You would be exposing yourself unnecessarily. They would not take the time, and, even if they did, you would get all kinds of confused and incompatible reactions from them. At best, the Group, or even your sponsor, might give you some insight into the nature of your wrongs and some remedial possibilities.

So, you might as well bite the bullet and open yourself up to the Spiritual source, which we might as well call “God” for communication purposes. Here is an opportunity for you to identify further your own conception of God. This is not completely a true-false exercise. Some of your responses might require some contemplation. Thinking deeply on these questions is the benefit of doing it.

Your own conception of God

1.	What is the name of your Higher Power(HP)?
2.	Where is your HP located?
3.	What is the primary location of your HP at the time you are meditating or praying?
4.	If you usually pray on your knees, why do you?
5.	Can your HP read your thoughts when you pray? Does your HP hear you better when you speak aloud?
6.	Is your motive underlying the prayer as important as the thoughts and words of the prayer itself.
7.	Should your message be specific and precise, or is it OK to be vague in your requests to your HP?
8.	Place a check next to the defects which God is likely to remove?
a	Defects of which you are not aware.
b	Defects which stand in the way of your usefulness to God.
c	Defects which stand in the way of your usefulness to others.
d	Defects which annoy you.
e	Defects which interfere with your happiness.
f	Once you have asked your HP to remove your defects(shortcomings), will they be gone?
9.	Does your HP reward you when you comply with His will?
10.	Does your HP punish you when you do not comply with His will?
11.	Is it necessary for you to attend or be a member of a church?

The prayer. We are tempted to print out the seventh step prayer for you. However, this is a work sheet. Find the prayer in the Big Book, and write all 56 words of it in the space below.

"My creator
"
"
"
"
"
"

It is curious to note that we ask only for removal of defects of character which stand in the way of our usefulness to God and our fellows. What about the ones that are painful to **us**?

8

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

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as:

STEP ONE. Make a list of all persons you have harmed. Become willing to make amends to them all.

READING FOR STEP EIGHT

Big Book:	Chapter 6, Into Action.
	From: Page 76, line 15 Thru: Page 82.
12&12:	Step 8

As we take Step 8, we separate it into its first and second halves:

STEP 8a. Make a list of all persons I have harmed..

In other words, **who have you harmed?** You will recall from our discussion of Steps 4 and 5, that a preliminary list of persons we had harmed is generated there. The list will now be refined into a personal amendment plan, which is the product of Step 8.

Although this step requires plenty of work, there is nothing frightening in it. Amends are not actually made in Step 8. Instead, we **plan** for the making of amends in Step 9, which follows.

Listing the persons (and institutions) we have harmed is simplified if we break the list into three sections:

29. People you have harmed since you sobered up, and whom you might still be harming today.
30. People who tell you that you have harmed them, and they want restitution.
31. All other persons you think you have harmed, especially those you feel bad about.

On the nature of harms. Our 1939 Webster's second edition tells us that harm is: injury, hurt, damage, misfortune, grief, pain, sorrow, evil, wrong or wickedness. Have we brought about any of these in the lives of others? The Big Book and the 12&12 also are quite specific about harm. Specific varieties are quoted in figure (1).

figure (1)

A Catalogue of Harms Done to Others

sources: **BB**=the Big Book of A.A., Alcoholics Anonymous

12&12=Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

HARMS, IN GENERAL

1. harm—the result of instincts in collision in which we cause physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual damage to people. [12&12, page 83, line 1]

2. {The alcoholic illness) ..brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives and parents-anyone can increase the list. [BB, page 18, line 7]

3. hurt [BB, page 76, line 30]

4. smarts from our injustice [BB, page 77, line 6]

5. where we have been at fault, [12&12, page 79, line 6]

6. people [we have] hurt [12&12, page 79, line 23]

7. wretched conduct [12&12, page 81, line 3]

8. damaged others who were still happily unaware of being hurt [12&12, page 81, line 10]

9. injure others [12&12, page 84, line 3]

10. disturb others [12&12, page 84, line 3]

11. He does absurd, incredible things while drinking. [BB, page 21, line 14]

PHYSICAL OR MATERIAL HARMS

1. owe money [BB, page 78, line 14]

2. criminal offense [BB, page 78, line 26]

3. short in our accounts [BB, page 78, line 28]

4. padding the expense account [BB, page 78, line 32]

5. unpaid alimony [BB, page 79, line 2]

6. cheat [12&12, page 83, line 5]

7. miserly [12&12, page 83, line 13]

ANTI-SOCIAL HARMS

1. discrediting [another person] [BB, page 80, line 10]

2. destroying the reputation of another [BB, page 80 line 12]

3. disgrace...family [BB, page 80, line 17]

4. ruinous slander [BB, page 80, line 23]

5. given offense [12&12, page 84, line 4]

6. becomes disgustingly and even dangerously anti-social. [BB, page 21, line 20]

EMOTIONAL HARMS

1. [extramarital]...affair [BB, page 81, line 10]

2. [putting others]...through hell [BB, page 80, line 15]

3. broken hearts [BB, page 82, line 25]

4. dead relationships [BB, page 82, line 26]

5. affections uprooted [BB, page 82, line 26]

6. selfish sex conduct [12&12, page 83, line 8]

7. callous [12&12, page 83, line 14]

8. cold [12&12, page 83, line 14]

9. irritable [12&12, page 83, line 14]

10. critical [12&12, page 83, line 15]
11. impatient [12&12, page 83, line 15]
12. humorless [12&12, page 83, line 15]
DISRUPTIVE HARMS
1. selfish habits [BB, page 82, line 27]
2. inconsiderate habits [BB, page 82, line 27]
3. a home in turmoil [BB, page 82, line 27]
4. human wreckage left in [our] wake [12&12, page 79, line 19]
5. our behavior... has aggravated the defects of others [12&12, page 80, line 20]
6. strain...[their] patience [12&12, page 80, line 21]
7. [bring] out the very worst in [others] [12&12, page 80 line 22]
8. tempers are consistently bad [12&12, page 83, line 3]
9. lie [12&12, page 83, line 4]
10. irresponsible [12&12, page 83, line 14]
11. show favoritism [12&12, page 83, line 15]
12. dominate others [12&12, page 83, line 16]
13. wallow in depression [12&12, page 83, line 20]
14. wallow in self-pity [12&12, page 83, line 21]
15. make living with us difficult and often unbearable [12&12, page 83, line 22]
16. incredibly dishonest and selfish [BB, page 21, line 26]

Amending harms done to others since you sobered up, and whom you might still be harming today. Step 8 is concerned with harms of the past. Step 10 corrects harms of the present. But, it is a good idea to make a few points about the nature of harm that we might bring upon others. If we stole while we were practicing the drink profession, it's time we stopped stealing. Right now! If we were insolent, demanding, sarcastic and critical, especially to those who tried to love us, we must learn to stop hurting them—even when we think they deserve it. If we are careless, and we smoke in A.A. meetings, we should look at the fact that second-hand smoke kills over 50,000 people in the USA every year. Where does the Big Book say we have acquired a right to kill or maim our fellow alcoholics while we continue addictive gratification in public?

People who tell you that you have harmed them, and they want restitution. Sometimes others, notably the IRS, law enforcement agencies, the phone company and recipients of alimony or child support are sure we have committed harm, and they want "justice". We might not agree with them. In any event, once we have made adequate use of mediation or the legal system, any residual claims against us should be cleared up. We cannot live in peace when we are being hounded by creditors. Usually they will accept a reasonable, but steady, plan for payment over time.

All other persons you think you have harmed, especially those you feel bad about. Now we are ready to get down to business with the important list of past harms we have done which might be the source of guilt within ourselves.

Amending harms you have done to yourself? We did **not** put *yourself* at the top of the list, even though we hear all the time at A.A. meetings that you should be at the top of your amends list. The correct side of such a belief is the absolute truth that we have been very cruel to ourselves. We certainly didn't deserve all the self-punishment we inflicted. And, assuredly, the sober you does not deserve to

continue being punished. Clearly, a major benefit of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is the fact that our lives—once we change our drinking matter, attitudes and ways—do get better, the world is no longer battering down our doors, and we are free of guilt. So, the amend we make to ourselves is that we are in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous enjoying the rewards of a brand new way of living.

The alcoholic mind, however, is expert at twisting A.A.s program of recovery into an opportunity for being self-serving. Suppose that you had smashed up your favorite car in a blackout while drinking. You were a person. Losing your car was a harm. You did it. Therefore, you owe yourself a new car! And—if you listen to the bleeding-hearts—getting a new car for yourself is right at the top of your amends list, too! Right? We don't need any more clever gimmicks to get things our own way.

We dare not take the path of rewriting the BB and the 12&12 to mention door-mats or to include ourselves in Step 8. Our founders designed this step to correct our actions upon **others**, not ourselves.

Writing: List the person harmed, the harm done, the nature of the amend to be made (including the dollar amount, if any) and the amendment priority or projected date. Leave two columns for the date completed and comments about their reaction to our amendment.

STEP 8b. ...and become willing to make amends to them all.

Now that you have our list of persons you have harmed, become ready to make amends to them all. How will you know when you are ready? The only true measure is to begin Step 9. You don't have to be ready to make all your amends before you make the first one. Keep up the getting-ready and the amend-making until you are done. It helps, however, if you order your amends list from the easiest amend to the most difficult. In this manner you can be half way through Step 9 in a short period of time, and the price paid, other than some wounded pride, will be insignificant. You will feel very pleased that you are really taking the steps.

A word of caution, again. Please do not commence Step 9 without some guidance. You can possibly bring further harm to others or needless inconvenience to yourself through premature or ill considered amends.

PROMISES of Step 8 (from page 78).

If our manner is calm, frank, and open,

9. **we will be gratified with the result.** In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens. Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own faults,
10. so **feuds of years' standing melt away** in an hour.
11. **Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress.** Our
12. **former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well.**
13. Occasionally, **they will offer assistance.**

The principle of Step 8 is _____.

9

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

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as:

STEP NINE. Make direct amends to the people you have harmed except when to do so would injure them or others.

READING FOR STEP NINE

Big Book:	Chapter 6, Into Action.
	From: Page 82, line 17 Thru: Page 84, line 15.
12&12:	Step 9

Our experience with Step Nine prompts us to emphasize four ideas about this step.

1. **Token amends will not do!** Just what is an amend? Here is what our trusty dictionary says:

a-mend :(uh mend') v. .
v.t.
2. to change for the better; improve.
3. to remove or correct faults in; rectify.
v.i. <
4. to grow or become better by reforming oneself.

Later in this document you will see an extraction of words and phrases that the authors of the Big Book used to describe what they meant by the word amend. Their true meaning, while including the definition above, is more like the synonyms for the word, rectify:

rectify : v.
1. right, set right, put right, make right, correct, adjust, regulate, straighten, square; focus, attune; mend, amend, emend, fix, repair, revise; remedy, redress, cure, reform.

One might even use the definition of the word, "repair", to express their meaning:

re-pair :[1] (ri pâr') -paired, -pair-ing . v.t.
1. to restore to a good or sound condition after decay or damage; mend.
2. to restore or renew.
3. to remedy; make up for; compensate for.

Extracted words and phrases as examples of "amends":

BB = the Big Book of A.A., Alcoholics Anonymous 12&12 = Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
SELF CORRECTION ...sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will. [BB, page 76,

line 22]

...demonstration of good will [BB, page 77, line 13]

...sweep off our side of the street [BB, page 77, line 32]

...sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it. [BB, page 83, line 2]

...We clean house with the family... [BB, page 83, line 7]

...asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. [BB, page 83, line 8]

...The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.. [BB, page 83, line 11]

...Our behavior will convince them more than our words. [BB, page 83, line 15]

...There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. [BB, page 83, line 19]

...Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. [BB, page 83, line 22]

...We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. [BB, page 83, line 25]

RESTITUTION

...repair the damage [we have] done in the past. [BB, page 76, line 21]

...set right the wrong [BB, page 77, line 12]

...straighten out the past [BB, page 77, line 32]

...arranging the best deal...[of repayment]...we can [BB, page 78, line 21]

...reparations [BB, page 79, line 5]

...sent...money [BB, page 79, line 29]

...willing to go to jail [BB, page 79, line 30]

...make a public statement [BB, page 80, line 15]

...[make]...good to the wife or parents [BB, page 82, line 19]

...reconstruction [BB, page 83, line 1]

APOLOGY

...confessing our former ill feeling [BB, page 77, line 27]

...expressing our regret [BB, page 77, line 27]

...we let these people know we are sorry [BB, page 78, line 21]

...admitting faults [BB, page 79, line 28]

...admit our fault [BB, page 81, line 21]

...asking forgiveness [BB, page 79, line 28]

...A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. [BB, page 83, line 2]

2. Don't rush into amends without guidance. You can mess up yourself and others unless the best judgment is used. And, when we are new to sobriety, our judgment is often not so swift. Please read again the words we offered for Step Eight, which is the planning of your amendment step.

3. Your amends must never harm others. Both of the books make clear that we cannot seek atonement at the expense of others. Be especially careful not to implicate or injure other people in your wrong-doing.

4. Don't forget to take the hidden step—forgiveness. You will recall that in Step Four you listed the people who had harmed you as part of your resentment matrix. None of the steps emphasizes sufficiently that the ultimate process of resentment eradication (and they must be wiped out) is forgiveness of those we resent. If you have not yet cleaned up your resentments, finish them off in Step Nine. It then becomes the double-edged sword that cuts you free from all harms done by you and to you.

There is a difference between being forgiven and forgiving, however. Our amends to those we have harmed are made at our own initiative and directly to the person harmed, whenever possible. On the other hand, when we are forgiving others, it is rarely appropriate to approach them to let them know they are forgiven. Why?

- They might have no idea that we have resented them. After all, the resentment is ours. Letting them in on our problem cannot do them any good, and may cause them considerable hurt feelings or aggravation—even anger.
- We have been learning not to play God and to avoid ego-serving activities. Approaching other to let them know they are forgiven would usually be thought of as self-serving. This we avoid.

If, on the other hand, the injuring party has let us know that they feel guilt about what they have done, it can often be a true act of kindness to let them know they are off the hook as far as we are concerned. We do this with true humility and compassion. We never give the impression that they owe us something for our act of forgiveness. We then try to treat them the way we want others to forgive us for our own wrongs.

Some of our members believe that the other side of the forgiveness coin, that we are forgiven for our transgressions, is a necessary goal of Step 9. There is no need at all that we be forgiven by the person we have harmed after we make an amend. If they choose to tell us we are forgiven, that is a fine gesture—one we might cherish. However, the real goal here is that you cease to know guilt stemming from your prior acts or omissions. The removal of guilt is the exclusive domain of your spiritual power. You may also wish to visit [Forgiveness](#)

On your way. Your Step 9 can last from several weeks to many years. Start it when you have finished step 8 and are told to do so. Continue until you are done.

PROMISES OF STEP NINE Here are the 20 promises starting at the bottom of page 83 in the Big Book. Some people think these are the only promises the Big Book makes. Little do they realize that each step has a set of promises, and that there are many more besides. There are even a few guarantees. Drop us a line if you have found the 173 promises and guarantees in the Big Book that we have found.

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development,

32. **we will be amazed** before we are half way through.
33. **We are going to know a new freedom**
34. **and a new happiness.**
35. **We will not regret the past**
36. **nor wish to shut the door on it.**
37. **We will comprehend the word serenity and**
38. **we will know peace.**
39. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, **we will see how our experience can benefit others.**
40. **That feeling of uselessness (will disappear)**
41. **and self-pity will disappear.**
42. **We will lose interest in selfish things and**
43. **(we will) gain interest in our fellows.**
44. **Self-seeking will slip away.**
45. **Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.**
46. **Fear of people (will leave us) and**
47. **(fear) of economic insecurity will leave us.**
48. **We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.**
49. **We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.**
50. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. **They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.**
51. **They will always materialize** if we work for them.

Writing: It would be a good idea to update your amendment plan (step eight) when each amendment is done. Check it off. Make a note as to their reaction. If an agreement was reached concerning further action on your part, write it down. We even know one sponsor who keeps Step 8 lists of his step partners on a computer (on an encrypted file for total privacy). Every month or so, the list is made current.

The principle of Step 9 _____.

10

STEP 10) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as:

STEP TEN. Continue to take personal inventory. When you are wrong promptly admit it.

READING FOR STEP TEN

Big Book:	Chapter 6, Into Action.
	From: Page 84, line 16 Thru: Page 86, line 18.
12&12:	Step 10

Your reading in the 12&12 pointed out that there are four varieties of tenth step inventory:

Although all inventories are alike in principle, the time factor does distinguish one from another. There's the spot-check inventory, taken at any time of the day, whenever we find ourselves getting tangled up. There's the one we take at day's end, when we review the happenings of the hours just past. Here we cast up a balance sheet, crediting ourselves with things well done, and chalking up debits where due. Then there are those occasions when alone, or in the company of our sponsor or spiritual adviser, we make a careful review of our progress since the last time. Many A.A.'s go in for annual or semiannual house-cleanings. Many of us also like the experience of an occasional retreat from the outside world where we can quiet down for an undisturbed day or so of self-overhaul and meditation.

[12&12, page 89, line 7]

These varieties of inventory differ primarily in their timing—when they are taken, and the span of time that they cover:

10a. The spot check inventory. Steps one through nine have sensitized us to see the truth about our own behavior and the manner in which the rest of the world, especially people, respond to our actions. Having developed this awareness, we come to see, during each moment of each day, what is really going on. In other words, we are living in the truth of the moment. We have, in addition to a new awareness, also developed some measure of ability to actually control our actions. No longer are we simply sleep-walking under the direction of old habits—habits, the way we think and act when we are not thinking about what we are doing, and our elaborate delusions. The process of exchanging good habits for destructive old habits is, unfortunately, laborious, and we don't always respond in accordance with the principles of A.A.. (In fact we never do get perfect—at least not in this lifetime.) But here are some of the ways in which the spot-check inventory works:

- Just as we begin to render the digit of disgrace to a "lousy" driver while driving, we become aware of what we are doing. We also recognize that lousy drivers don't deserve our preoccupation, they will not be improved by depreciation, and we have better ways to behave in the presence of the unwashed. We discover more and more that we do not render the sign at all, and when we do

slip, we don't respond to his finger with a shaking fist and a red face. We either break off the escalating exchange or we force out a smile—even if it is not a sincere smile. Responding with grace, incidentally, is one of the most perfect ways of "winning" an argument.

- When our boss tells us he didn't like what we did on a recent assignment, and we tell him to go to hell, we try to respond immediately with an apology for our inappropriate reaction. Next, we don't enter into a long string of excuses about why we did what we did, but we try to find out what the boss is really saying. If he doesn't have all the facts we give them to him. If he does not foresee that his approach might cause unfortunate consequences, we gently discuss what we think might happen. But, we don't try to protect him too much against his will.

If, given our "invaluable counsel", he still wants us to do things differently, we make sure we understand clearly what he wants us to do, and we tell him that we will try to do it that way from now on. And we do it, all the while trying to bring about *his* objectives and keeping him from getting egg on his face—even when we think he deserves it. Is this a tall order? Not really, it's actually fun if we learn not to take it too seriously. Besides, all the other alternatives are worse.

10b. The daily review. Most of us try to set aside a time every day for meditation. One constructive activity just prior to meditation is the daily inventory.

...we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions. When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflections, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken. [Big Book, page 86, line 3]

There is no need to embellish upon this direction. One point of interest, however, is that the topic in our mind when we drift off to sleep tends to remain in the unconscious mind during the night. Here are some things to avoid thinking about prior to sleeping: having a big fight with a coworker, taking revenge upon the ex-partner, having wild sex, being persecuted or victimized, performing destructive or unlawful acts, and the like. These ideas will keep us fighting, exercising or suffering all night. When we wake up we will be demoralized, bereft of the sunlight of the spirit and all pooped out.

10c. The periodic review. There will arise occasions when we feel a stock-taking will be a good idea. Maybe we are thinking about becoming engaged, and we want to avoid some of the pitfalls we have had in prior relationships. Our work partnership may be faltering or a new job could be coming up. Maybe we are stuck in the seeming malaise of the curse of living, and we just want a new start, or at least something.

The suggested format for a periodic review could well be the same as that used for Step 4. Why not reread our discussion of that step? It is a good idea to follow-up a periodic inventory with a Steps 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, too.

10d. The annual house cleaning. This might be like one of the occasions just discussed. It's a good idea.

Promises. In the Step 5 guide we repeated the promises that follow that step. Well, check out the bottom of page 84 for these from Step 10:

52. **And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone —even alcohol.**
53. For by this time **sanity will have returned.**
54. **We will seldom be interested in liquor.**
55. If tempted, **we recoil from it as from a hot flame.**
56. **We react sanely and normally,** and
57. we will find that **this has happened automatically.**
58. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or

effort on our part. **It just comes!** That is the miracle of it.

59. **We are not fighting it,**

60. **neither are we avoiding temptation.**

61. We feel as though we had been placed in **a position of neutrality—safe and protected.**

62. We have not even sworn off. Instead, **the problem has been removed.** It does not exist for us.

63. We are neither cocky **nor are we afraid.**

64. That is our experience. **That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.**

With promises like these, who needs booze? No, really! What were the promises of the bottle during our final months of drinking? We know, for a fact, that sobriety in A.A. beats drinking anytime. Yup, every day.

The principle of Step 10 is _____.

11

STEP 11) Sought 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.

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as steps 11a and 11b, below.

READING FOR STEP ELEVEN

Big Book:	Chapter 6, Into Action.
	From: Page 85, line 28 Thru: Page 88.
	Appendix II, Spiritual Experience, page 569
12&12:	Step 11

We have included the first full paragraph on page 86 of the Big Book within step 10, because that is where it belongs, but there is nothing wrong with your reading it again. This step is about coming closer to your Spiritual Power (step 11a) and your seeking to fulfill His plan for you (step 11b).

STEP 11a. Seek through prayer and meditation to improve your conscious contact with God (as you understand Him)....

Evolution of God-consciousness. At the outset, let's look at the phrase " **improve** your conscious contact..." Talk of improvement advances the belief that you already have achieved a beginning of conscious contact, otherwise there would be nothing to "improve" upon. Here are some examples of the evolution of God-Consciousness through the steps:

All steps. When many hundreds of people are able to say that the **consciousness** of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith. [Big Book, page 51, line 5]

This dream world has been replaced by a great sense of purpose, accompanied by a growing **consciousness** of the power of God in our lives. [Big Book, page 130, line 9]

Step 2. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first **conscious** relation with God as we understood Him. [Big Book, page 47, line 4]

If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join

us on the Broad Highway. With this attitude you cannot fail. The **consciousness** of your belief is sure to come to you. [Big Book, page 55, line 24]

He stood in the Presence of Infinite Power and Love. He had stepped from bridge to shore. For the first time, he lived in **conscious** companionship with his Creator. [Big Book, page 56, line 25]

Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming "God-**consciousness**" followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook. [Big Book, page 569, line]

Step 3. God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom. When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became **conscious** of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn. We were now at Step Three. [Big Book, page 62, line 27]

On the third day the lawyer gave his life to the care and direction of his Creator, and said he was perfectly willing to do anything necessary. His wife came, scarcely daring to be hopeful, though she thought she saw something different about her husband already. He had begun to have a **spiritual experience**. [Big Book, page 158, line 9]

Step 5. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a **spiritual experience**. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe. [Big Book, page 75, line 12]

Step 10. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God- **conscious**. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action. [Big Book, page 85, line 28]

Step 11. I was to test my thinking by the new God-**consciousness** within. [Big Book, page 13, line 21]

In Step 12 we are advised that we will experience a "spiritual awakening". It is now clear that the awakening is simply the end result of a growing consciousness of the Spirit. Step 11 focuses exclusively

upon nurturing this consciousness through prayer and meditation. But, first, let's discuss the "*as you understand Him*" phrase which appears in both Steps 3 and 11. What this phrase means is:

- Alcoholics Anonymous is **not** a religion or a church.
- Steer clear of A.A.'s who try to con you into believing in *their* understanding or name of God as being "right". They are at variance with the steps and traditions of A.A. However, it is quite proper to lend one's own conception of the Spirit to another member until they are comfortable with their own conception—which could be the same one, still.
- A.A. has no formula or dogma about God that you must or should accept. (Although careful reading of the Big Book and the 12 & 12 do offer some pre-conceived notions that you may or may not adopt. Some of these are that God is one, all-powerful, universally present, forgiving and loving.)
- It is quite acceptable to use the A.A. Group as a Higher Power for a while, or to borrow an understanding from another A.A. member or a church. But, eventually the Spirit you come to have conscious contact with will be that which is manifest to you personally.
- You may or may not "understand" your God. The extent to which you have a mental grasp of the name or nature of God is not what is being talked about. "Understanding" refers to the choosing, not the knowing.
- The point of the phrase is that the name and nature of the Higher Power you came to seek in Step 2 are **yours** and yours alone. Your Spirit will be revealed to you as you come nearer to your Spirit.

Prayer and Meditation. On page 25 of the Big Book there is mention of a spiritual tool kit. Have you thought about the tools that might be in it? Certainly prayer and meditation are there. The reading assignment on page 1 above distinguishes between prayer and meditation. In brief, prayer is the act of asking God for guidance. Meditation is the act of receiving His power and wisdom. The 12 & 12 suggests that reciting the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi (enclosed herewith) can be useful. It further suggests that meditation upon its message can also bring about change within us.

The method of prayer & meditation. We often hear it said in meetings that the speaker "hits his knees every morning." Not being brought up Catholic or Muslim, we envisioned that slapping of the knees might be spiritually significant in A.A. When we discovered that the act of prayer was being referred to, we asked why A.A. tells us to get on our knees to pray. We were informed that A.A. makes no such suggestion. In fact, reference to praying on the knees, in the original draft of Step 7, was explicitly removed to prevent the misconception that such a practice was suggested. Moreover, to be on one's knees as a prior condition to prayer will prevent prayer at many opportunities during the day. If you or your sponsor think that you should be on your knees for correct prayer, then by all means do so. It might just be the best way to pray. For the content of prayer, see Step 11b that follows.

There are hundreds of books about meditation. It is a good idea to peruse these and to try their suggestions out. It is an even better idea to ask your fellow A.A.s how they meditate. In Southern California there are a number of A.A. meetings that include a 5 or 10 minute meditation as part of their format. The most essential element in meditation is withdrawal of self, giving the stage of conscious attention to the Spirit. Because it is almost impossible to totally eliminate conscious thought, you might try focusing upon just one thought. Some folks concentrate on a candle, others a chime. Many witness the breath passing in and out of their nostrils. There are those that chant, and others that adopt a special posture. For most of us, though, sitting quietly as comfortably as possible, usually alone, is preferred. Try to find a scheduled quiet time each day for your meditation. Five minutes will suffice. Up to a half hour might be possible. But, remember, meditation is not an experience in which you are the Master of Ceremonies, nor is it a planning session. Its purpose is to come into harmony with your Spirit.

The frequency of prayer and meditation. While avoidance of concentration upon other activities is necessary for effective prayer, why pass up any opportunity to relate with the Creator of the universe? Two terrific times to make prayer a habit are first thing upon arising and last thing before retiring. The tenth step review on page 86 of the Big Book is a valuable exercise prior to the evening prayer. Why not also take time at the beginning of each meal to express gratitude, to thank your Father for His presence, guidance and power; and to thank your companions for their company. They don't even need to know that your statement is a prayer.

STEP 11b. Pray only for knowledge of His will for you and the power to carry that out.

Who is here to do for whom? What does the Big Book mean when it tells us He will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves?

"God will do for us..."

65. But my friend sat before me, and he made the point-blank declaration that God had **done for him** what he could not do for himself. [Big Book, page 11, line 14]
66. We have elsewhere remarked how much better life is when lived on a spiritual plane. If God can solve the age-old riddle of alcoholism, He **can solve** your problems too. [Big Book, page 116, line 16]
67. In this book you read again and again that faith **did for us** what we could not do for ourselves. [Big Book, page 70, line 31]
68. We hope you are convinced now that **God can** remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him. [Big Book, page 71, line 1]

We have heard these statements interpreted as meaning that God can (and will) make us healthy, wealthy, wise and amorously successful. Looking at them in context, however, their meaning is very limited: In the first instance, Ebby is pointing out to Bill that God sobered him up when he could not do it by himself. In 2., the family is advised that God's sobering up of Dad is a sign that He can fix up the rest of the family as well. In 3. and 4. the point is that God can sober us up and remove the self-imposed obstacles that prevent us from doing **His** will.

Even though life in God's camp is enormously fulfilling, be assured that God is not here primarily to take care of us and our desires. He is here to give us the tools and the power to do **His** work, *not ours*.

- Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do **Thy will**. [Big Book, page 63, line 16]
- May I do **Thy will** always!" [Big Book, page 63, line 20]
- **Thy will** be done." [Big Book, page 67, line 7]
- "How can I best serve Thee—**Thy will (not mine)** be done." [Big Book, page 85, line 19]

Be assured that we are not describing an arrow in the balloon of joyful life. Quite the contrary, the will of God is infinitely more satisfying than anything we could plan for ourselves. If you are not so sure about this, stick around until you are. You will be amazed before you are half way through.

So, there is ample direction in the Big Book about the proper use of prayer.

What to Pray For

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." [Big Book, page 13, line 20]

To sum up about sex: We earnestly **pray** for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. [Big Book, page 70, line 15]

It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let by-gones be by-gones. Each might **pray** about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind. [Big Book, page 82, line 6]

We usually conclude the period of meditation with a **prayer** that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We **ask** especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may **ask** for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to **pray** for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why. [Big Book, page 87, line 10]

If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set **prayers** which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. [Big Book, page 87, line 23]

The secret for successful sobriety. We are often amazed that some A.A. members—many of them anything but newcomers—seem to have missed the foremost secret of success in A.A.

If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which **only** a spiritual experience will conquer. [Big Book, page 44, line 4] You have undoubtedly run into the A.A. *must-sayers*, who proudly tell you how many times the Big Book uses the word, must. (Write us for the correct answer and all the examples, if you must have them.) Maybe they should also count and note the message of the "only"s if they want to know what is really important. According to the quotation above, just how much latitude do we real alcoholics have in avoiding the **only** thing which will conquer alcoholism?

You have noticed by now that Big Book chapters 3 through 7 are organized in the same sequence as are the steps. Just as each step has its guiding principle (see our discussion of Step 12), each step contains a problem to be overcome. Moreover, each of the problems is solved by one or more prayers consistent with the principle of the step.

Problems are Solved by Prayer Associated with each Step

Step 1. *Problem:* **self-indulgence.** *Solution:* **surrender & abstinence**

Step 2. *Problem:* **defiance.** *Solution:* **open-minded willingness**

Step 3. *Problem:* belief in **self-sufficiency.** *Solution:* **God-dependence**

God, I offer myself to You —to build with me and to do with me as You will.

Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your Love, and Your Way of life. May I do Your will always. Amen. [Big Book, page 63, line 14]

Step 4. *Problem:* **ignorance** about self: *Solution* **honest data gathering:**

Resentment (..the number one offender. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease ...When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically."..the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill.) *Solution:* We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."

Fear (..an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn't deserve.) *Solution:*...we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play a role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity. ...we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.

Sexual Harms (Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead?) *Solution:* . We subjected each relation to this test—was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed... In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it. God alone

can judge our sex situation... we let God be the final judge. : We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.

Other Harms (We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.) Solution: faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves. We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him.

Step 5. Problem: fear. Solution: Returning home (after taking the step) we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thanked God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better.

Step 6. Problem: denial. Solution: Can He now take them all—every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

Step 7. Problem: arrogance. Solution:: My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. [Big Book, page 76, line 8]

Step 8. Problem: guilt. Solution: Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.

Step 9. Problem: ego. Solution: Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink. . So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.

Step 10. Problem: procrastination. Solution: We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. 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. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition. It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. "How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done." These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.

Step 11 Problem: distrust. Solution: After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken. On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives. In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it. We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom

from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done." We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves. It works—it really does. We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.

Step 12. Problem: sloth. Solution: . God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us. Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you until then.

Writing: What are your favorite prayers?

The principle of Step 11 _____.

12

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.

That is what the authors of the Big Book and millions before you did. To personalize the step for your study and action in the here and now, however, you may wish to rephrase it as the three suggestions which follow.

READING FOR STEP ONE

Big Book:	Chapter 7, Working with Others.
12&12:	Step 12

STEP 12a. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps....

The price. This little quote sums up the price we pay to get to this point:

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 to establish and maintain the new order of things, were the essential requirements. 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. [Big Book, page 13, line 29]

Awakening as the result of what? The result, or consequence of taking the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous is a Spiritual Awakening. Please reflect that this step does not say the awakening comes as the result of taking steps 1 through 11, those preceding Step 12. On the contrary, the awakening comes as the result of taking *these* (all of the twelve) steps, *including* Step 12. (If you disagree, that is wonderful. Keep on digesting these steps.)

An exclusive result? Notice, too, that *the* result of these 12 steps is a Spiritual awakening. We have heard that this awakening is the sole or exclusive result, otherwise our authors would have said "...a..." result. Careful reading of the Big Book, however, makes clear that there are *many* results of taking the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, even though your Spiritual Awakening may be the cardinal, or most significant, result.

Who/what awakens? The original draft of the Big Book said the result was a spiritual **experience**. However, *experience* was changed to *awakening*, because the experience was so subtle for most of us that we couldn't really say when it happened, what it was like, or whether it had ever happened at all. Some folk believe that it is the Spirit, the God-head within us that awakens as the result of our taking the steps. Upon deeper reflection, however, we come to doubt that we could have ever gotten into A.A. and through the first 11 steps without the guidance of a Spiritual Power. Therefore, the *Spirit* has not been asleep to awaken. It is *we*, who have slept in the presence of the Spirit, that are now quickened to consciousness of the ever-presence of God.

Where do we find God? The awakening concept also clears up the question as to where and how do we *find* God. The answer, is, of course that God was within us from the very beginning. As to the *where*, the Big Book tells us at least twice exactly where God is:

With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an **unsuspected inner resource** which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves. Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. [Big Book, page 569]

Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great **Reality deep down within us**. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us. We can only clear the ground a bit. If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently **within yourself**, then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway. [Big Book, page 55]

You may recall the song, the *Blue Bird of Happiness*, in which the bird—after being sought all over the place—is eventually found right in one's own back yard.

How do we find God? As to *how* we establish conscious contact with our Spirit, the Big Book offers a simple and fool-proof spiritual starter kit for all who seek. Its four tools are sub-steps 2.1 through 2.4:

Our Spiritual Starter Kit

Step 2.1. We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and.. [Big Book page 46, line 15]

Step 2.2. ...express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God. [Big Book page 46, line 16]

Step 2.3. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you...we had to begin somewhere, so we used our own conception, however limited it was. [Big Book page 47, line 4]

Step 2.4. ...As soon as a man can say that he does believe or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. [Big Book page 47, line 16]

In our experience, God is revealed to us when we allow and participate in removal of the blocks we have placed before His countenance. These impedimenta are removed slowly, and ...He has come **to all who have honestly sought Him**. When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us! . [Big Book, page 57]

An evolutionary awakening. Most of us have become aware of His Presence only in retrospect, that is, by realizing that He is simply there, as He has been for some undetermined time:

69. The first evidence of the awakening is usually in the change that takes place in our actions. We stop doing the things that injure ourselves and others. We begin to do the things that demonstrate constructive service. This is because most of we alcoholics do not think ourselves into right actions, but we can act ourselves into right thinking.
70. Next, there is an evolution in awareness. The mind has discarded its old habits, and new habits and ideas are in charge.
71. Finally, we discover that the promises in the Big Book are coming true in our lives. The essence of these is the presence of an internal peace that would have been inconceivable were we still drinking and carrying-on as we once were.

The smears on the window of the Spirit within have been removed. His radiance and power shine upon the world and others through us. The light is not of our making, we are simply the channels through which it flows. But, we play a vital role in all this. It is ours to:

- keep the lens free of the stain of ego
- to keep the nozzle of God's power opened
- and to train it upon those who are desperate for sobriety and healing.

STEP 12b. ...I have tried to carry this message to alcoholics, ...

Carrying the A.A. message is mandatory. You have learned by now that carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to those who still suffer is an indispensable component of your own sobriety. You can uncover many quotations in the Big Book to affirm the absolute necessity of your carrying the A.A. message to other alcoholics. Here are but two examples:

Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs. [Big Book. page 20, line 1]

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill. [Big Book. page 89, line 1

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives. [Big Book. page 89, line 15]

Where do newcomers come from? Circumstances in which we carry the message have changed significantly since the Big Book was written. In the old days, the drunk was found by or referred to an A.A. member, who qualified his prospect, often taking him through Step 3, before sponsoring his attendance at a meeting. Now-of-days, the prospect may call into a telephone exchange that either sends some of us out for a visit or arranges for the prospect to attend a meeting; the prospect may just show up at a meeting alone or with a friend; he may have met some of us at a hospital or penal institution; he may "graduate" from a drying-out institution; or, a judge might sentence the poor guy or gal to a number of meetings (without ever consulting with us first). Thus, open meetings and a cup of coffee afterwards serve as the primary screening vehicles through which we come into contact with raw recruits. We have, for the most part, learned that many of the drunks who really need to sober up are often reluctant to try the A.A. approach. Unfortunately, it is typically necessary for them to take the first move in seeking recovery.

Experience is indispensable. Given that we feel compassion for the suffering alcoholic and are willing to spend some time with him, the only real tool we have is experience. Your experience with recovery, though vital, is of less importance with the very new than your experience with alcoholic drinking preceding recovery. The best experience is your own experience. The new prospect will know right away that you are authentic. Without his being able to validate you, you are wasting your time, and his, too. Of secondary benefit is your ability to relate the experience of others you know in A.A. But, second-hand experience will usually suffice only to get the prospect to a meeting where he can meet a sober member with personal experience of an alcoholic situation similar to his own. The other tools in your kit, of course, are those which open the channel to a Higher Power.

With whom should you work?

- **With alcoholics.** The first suggestion is that you carry the message to *alcoholics*. Lots of people come into A.A. with major problems that a compassionate member would like to help them out of. If we try to relieve newcomers from problems other than alcohol, we can get ourselves into uncharted waters in a hurry. Quite often we eventually discover that our own egos play a part in our trying to rescue those in need. Those with medical problems should see doctors. Those who are really out-of-balance in the head should see therapists. The financially strapped can usually manage to survive. Repair of a catastrophic family situation should probably be left to a counselor. Our unique domain of excellence is avoidance of the next drink, although it is natural for us to try to be useful in other areas as well.
- **With alcoholics who really want to recover.** When you are asked to help another, you are quite in order to ask, "Are you willing to go to any lengths to stop drinking alcohol?" If they are, continue. One of the worst traps we can get into is to try to sell A.A. This puts us on the defensive, where we cannot afford to be. If your prospect is not sick and desperate enough to grasp at about any straw, then he might have to try another approach. A.A. is the "best deal in town for a buck". But, there are others, too, and they might seem more palatable. Sometimes, we weep at how often real alcoholics turn, again and again, to the ultimate teacher—alcohol. If your prospect continues to drink in spite of your assistance, he just might be better off under the guidance of someone else.
- **With alcoholics who ask for your help.** Continue with those who ask for your help. But don't be misled that all the things which might be asked of you are valid "A.A. requests". Carrying the alcoholic for more than a day or two, if ever, is something we avoid. It may come to the point that *you* must decide what *you* think the newcomer really needs, and you then offer that to him or her. If that isn't what they want, then they have plenty of other sober members to find it from. There comes a point, too, at which the prospect either follows the A.A. path, or he wants to do it his own way. Sometimes we need to give him enough slack to stumble. Hopefully, he doesn't also "slip".

Getting the right help. In many instances you might believe that the newcomer will be better off with an organization other than A.A. or with a different A.A. member, and you should try to steer them there. A good ground-rule is that you should have gotten out of the kinds of predicaments the newcomer is in, so you can explain what you did to get out. Otherwise, you can provide only head-learning where actions taken and experiences learned are needed. We mentioned elsewhere that A.A. is like a three-legged stool. Each is necessary to keep it from falling on its face. These are:

- a. **Process.** The 12 steps. They will work to recover from just about anything.
- b. **Fellowship.** Working with other recovered alcoholics is necessary. Those lacking direct personal experience in alcoholism carry the message poorly.
- c. **Spirit.** This whole thing works only in the presence of and under the direction of God.

Do not short-change newcomers by letting them depend upon you to help them out of situations outside our own experience. In addition, it is usually not a good idea to undertake extensive therapy with a candidate you are or might be sexually or emotionally attracted to. With rare exceptions, women work with women, and men work with men.

What is the source of recovery, anyway? Few of us have escaped the exhilaration of getting a new prospect sober—or kick ourselves for letting him slip into the debauch of relapse—only to realize that we didn't do it. At most, we carried the A.A. message and offered some compassion and comfort, for a while. We have also come to know that the newcomer didn't bring about his own sobriety, either. Nor did the Group or the book. It was the result of you and your prospect using the other tools in your recovery tool-kit. Yes, we gain the certain knowledge that God, the Creator of the Universe, Himself, does the work. Period.

The best 12th step might just be you. Words are often cheap. The message that best gets through the haze and cynicism of the alcoholic is you—your situation and behavior. Do you have what the newcomer wants, not so much in terms of your possessions, but, more correctly, would the newcomer want to be like you. This takes us right to the pay-off. Your life has been spiritualized and you are living by the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous.

STEP 12c. ...and I have tried to practice these principles in all of my affairs.

These Principles? And which principles might be *these* principles, pray tell? Most members answer with, the steps. They are partly right. For the moment, let us resolve that *these* principles are the *Alcoholics Anonymous* principles of recovery as set forth in the Big Book (and the 12&12). They are not some other collection of principles.

Principles. To be sure we know what we are talking about, it is necessary to decide just what a principle really is. A principle is a fundamental or basic tenet, truth or rule. Principles are the foundation of truth underlying the laws of nature, and, especially, belief systems. For the purposes of A.A., principles might be thought of as *basic action guidelines*. They represent the belief system against which we measure thoughts or actions.

We have compiled a listing of many of the principles of recovery in the Big Book in Principles ... The principles of recovery [rev. 4/17/1997]

But, the "**principles**" addressed thus far are but a few of the **principles** that should guide our lives. For example:

Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords. [Big Book, page 118 line 13] These are four additional **principles** we affectionately call PLUT (Patience, Love, Understanding, and Tolerance). If you continue in the latter chapters, you will also encounter inclusion of Compassion and Kindness amongst the necessary virtues for recovery. Thus, our favorite acronym, PLUCKT, comes about. It is perfectly correct to suggest that others who know this bit of inside knowledge should "Get PLUCKT" for serenity. (grin)

You are going to have an exciting time identifying and practicing A.A.'s **principles**. It is suggested that you and some friends start with the first printed page in the Big Book (then the 12&12), and that you each read a paragraph while the others ask themselves if the paragraph contains any basic action guidelines for recovery from alcoholism, for quality living in general or for spiritual growth. If so, write them down.

In all of our affairs. Once we have learned the talk, we walk like we talk. Knowing what the principles of recovery in A.A. are is the easy part. The key to Step 12 is that we practice/exercise or act in accordance with these A.A. principles in all of our affairs (thoughts, words and deeds) 24 hours of each day during each day of every year. Wow! Now we understand better what is meant by:

What an order, I can't go through with it. [Big Book, page 118 line 13]
But we do. Of course we can't be perfect (saints). We just get better and better and better..... New habits eventually displace old habits, and we don't even notice the dramatic changes that have taken place in our attitude and behavior. The rest of the world notices, though. They really do appreciate our new and constructive contribution rather than the destruction we once delivered.
So, we are new people, behaving under new guidelines; we describe and demonstrate to other A.A.s the message of A.A.; and we have a spiritual experience. Each of these three parts of Step 12 reinforces the other two. Each is vital to recovery.

Graduating from A.A. Newcomers sometimes feel that coming into A.A. is something like attending school. There are classes, home work, grades, and graduation. While there is some validity to this analogy, ponder these **Questions and Answers**:

1. **Q.** How long do I have to attend these darn meetings? **A.** Until you want to.
2. **Q.** How does A.A. work? **A.** Very, very slowly.

Back to the school idea. A.A. does resemble a country school, where all grades are taught in the same class room:

- Students in each grade teach those in the grade below what they ought to learn.
- Each student prods those on the same grade to advance to the next, so that they can pull him up there when they finally arrive there.
- Each grade teaches all the other grades what they ought to unlearn.
- Those who do their best at teaching become the best learners.
- Nobody is in charge but the Spirit. As one advances, life gets better and better. Who could want more? We don't even think about graduating. Why would we want to? This is what happens.....
....alcoholics have ... what are called vital spiritual experiences. ...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. [Big Book, page 27, line 14]

Writing: There is no writing assignment. Just keep trudging on the broad highway.

The principle of Step 12. _____