

# A Day at a time



Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our directions. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a way of life, which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. 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 follow directions.

At some of these you may balk. You may think you can find an easier, softer way. We doubt if you can. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that you are dealing with alcohol -- cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for you. But there is One who has all power -- That One is God. You must find Him now!

Half measures will avail you nothing. You stand at the turning point. Throw yourself under His protection and care with complete abandon.

Now we think you can take it! Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as your Program of Recovery:

1. Admitted we were powerless over alcohol -- that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care and direction of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

## INTRODUCTION

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

The purpose of this interpretation is to help members quickly work out an acceptable 24-hour schedule of A.A. living. This subject matter is founded on basic information from the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

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

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

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

As uncontrolled drinkers, few of us realized the danger of our position or how much alcoholism had damaged and deterio-

## *Twelve Steps*

rated our minds and bodies. We didn't realize the full significance and effectiveness of our simple program without the help and cooperation of understanding members who had arrested their alcoholism.

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

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

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

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

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

according to our understanding.\*

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

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

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

*Alcoholics Anonymous* has all our answers; it was written by alcoholics for alcoholics and is based on the trials and experiences of the first 100 Alcoholics Anonymous members. They worked out a recovery program that has proved to be sound and effective in the lives of millions of alcoholics.

---

\*Read *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Chapter Four, pages 46-47.

## *Twelve Steps*

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

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

## **Aids to Contented Sobriety**

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

### *Humility*

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

of this relationship throughout every 24-hour period.

*Honesty*

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

*Faith*

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

*Courage*

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

*Gratitude*

Gratitude continues the miracle of our sobriety. Gratitude is a healthy mental atti-

## *Twelve Steps*

tude; as we develop gratitude we enlarge our capacity for happiness, service, and contented sobriety. A lack of gratitude may lead to that first drink; gratitude and sobriety go hand in hand.

## *Service*

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



## THE TWELVE STEPS\*

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

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

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

STEP FOUR. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

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

STEP SIX. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

STEP SEVEN. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

STEP EIGHT. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make

---

\*The Twelve Steps are taken from *Alcoholics Anonymous*, published by A.A. World Services, Inc., New York, NY, pp. 59-60. Reprinted with permission. See Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

## *Twelve Steps*

amends to them all.

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

STEP TEN. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

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

STEP TWELVE. 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.

# 12 STEP WORKSHOP 1<sup>ST</sup> STEP

1. READ BIG BOOK (DOCTOR'S OPINION)
2. ANSWER QUESTION SHEET BY HIGHLIGHTING ANSWERS IN YOUR BIG BOOK.
3. READ DOCTOR'S OPINION IN GROUP AND DISCUSS.
4. FILL OUT POWERLESS AND UNMAGABILITY WORK SHEET.
5. DISCUSS IN DETAIL LOSS OF.....
6. IDENTIFY PROBLEM (LACK OF POWER).
7. READ FROM 12 STEP AND 12 TRADITION'S FORWARD AND STEP 1
8. DO EXPECTATION'S AND GOALS FOR WORKSHOP / RECOVERY.
9. FROM WORKSHOP BOOK (BLACK BINDER) INTRODUCTION IN GROUP.
10. STEP I, HONESTY, NEED, FONDATION, RESISTANCE, COMPLIANCE  
AKNOWLEDGEMENT, ACCEPTANCE, WILLINGNESS.
11. READ FIRST STEP IN BLACK BINDER (SUMMARY)
12. SPIRITUAL PRINCIPAL OF THE FIRST STEP

Little River 79th Street  
12 Step Workshop  
AA Principles of  
The 12 Steps

EXAMPLES OF BEING POWERLESS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

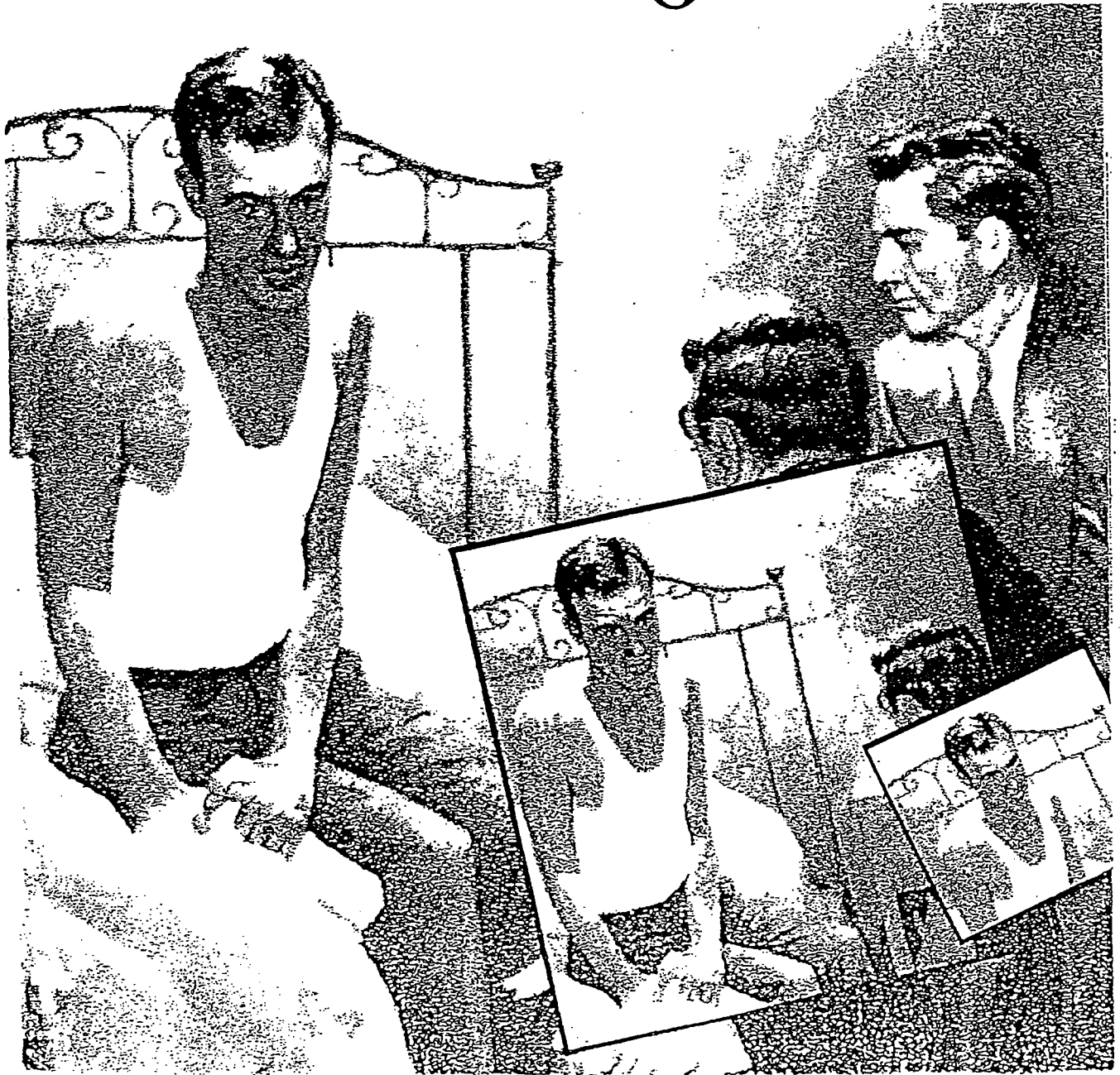
EXAMPLES OF UNMANAGEABILITY

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 0.

ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LIST ON POWERLESSNESS AND UNMANAGEABILITY WRITE OUT IN YOUR OWN WORDS YOUR DEFINITION OF BOTH.

# A Day at a time

Little River 79th Street  
12 Step Workshop  
AA Principles of  
The 12 Steps



## STEP ONE

*We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.*

Men and women who are allergic to alcohol and who compulsively persist in drinking eventually become sick from a unique illness. This illness is known to medicine as alcoholism; it is unique in that it adversely affects us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Step One briefly portrays the pathetic enigma of uncontrolled drinkers who have acquired this illness over which they are entirely powerless.

Drinkers of this type consider alcohol a physical requirement; they gradually increase its consumption at the expense of proper intake of nutritious foods. This practice induces physical and nervous disorders decidedly detrimental to their comfort and health.

The study of Step One will be largely devoted to the physical illness of alcoholism.\*

---

\*Read "The Doctor's Opinion," page xxiv in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. For 31 daily health suggestions, read *Stools and Bottles*. Available through Hazelden Educational Materials.

## *Twelve Steps*

Few alcoholics have given their drinking problem much intelligent study. They reluctantly agree they must quit but keep right on drinking.

Severe hangovers make them realize that physical illness plays a part in their discomfort, but they resort to a little "hair off the dog that bit them" and continue into a new binge or finally taper off, suffering much physical and mental anguish.

The alcoholic lives in compulsive slavery. Alcohol is the only means that makes life bearable and quiets the alcoholic's jittery nerves. Existence under such circumstances soon makes the alcoholic's life unmanageable.

Correction of this condition is a serious problem of immediate concern. Recovery is possible for alcoholics who honestly want to stop drinking. "Unmanageable lives" and the physical illness induced by compulsive drinking can be arrested. We must have only a conscious need and desire for help.

The founders of Alcoholics Anonymous identified the physical factor as a part of their powerlessness over alcohol. This physical factor was given first consideration in their new recovery program. In twelve simple Steps they outlined a way of life for daily practice that restored them to physical health and contented sobriety. Daily practice was the key to their success.

## *Step One*

By trial and error they designed a simple philosophy to arrest alcoholism. It embraced knowledge of many vital facts. Recovery is possible, but a cure cannot be effected. The man or woman who has become an alcoholic cannot become a controlled drinker. They have developed a serious illness, and their lowered physical and mental resistance is powerless. Control over alcohol is gone. Continued drinking now brings only physical illness and insane behavior. They are truly sick people.

Experience has proved that recovery from alcoholism is contingent on

1. Having a sincere desire to stop drinking.
2. Admitting and believing in our innermost hearts that we are powerless over alcohol.
3. Looking upon alcoholism as a fatal and incurable illness involving the body, mind, and spirit.
4. Considering ourselves as patients in A.A. for treatment.
5. Identifying alcohol as a poison rather than a beverage for us.
6. Making it our business to understand how alcohol affects us.
7. Realizing we are alcoholics.
8. Learning, practicing, and having faith in the Twelve Steps of the A.A. program.



## *Twelve Steps*

9. Believing we can arrest our alcoholism, but we can never drink normally again.
10. Gaining a lay person's knowledge of how alcoholism affects our health and well-being.
11. Using this knowledge and understanding of our illness not only to gain sobriety but to guard against the danger of a return to drinking.
12. Doing this partially by keeping in our minds a mental picture of the unmanageable life alcohol demands from us and our powerlessness over it.

The layperson's view and understanding of alcoholism are simple ones based on known facts and backed up with his or her experiences and the knowledge gained from other alcoholics. The following discussion of alcoholism briefly covers the facts necessary to a beginner; the beginner's understanding will naturally increase as he or she makes the Alcoholics Anonymous program a way or life.

Nature has provided each normal man and woman with a physical body designed to withstand the rigors of a strenuous daily life.

A healthy person can endure great hardships under most unfavorable circumstances as long as he or she receives oxygen,

water, balanced nutrition, regular elimination, proper rest, and relaxation. The human tenacity to retain that spark of life is persistent as long as we follow these standards.

When one of these factors is permanently neglected, deficiencies will eventually occur, such as physical problems, nervous tension, and neurotic conditions. Our nervous systems will upset mental balance, and we will eventually die from lack of rest and nourishment.

Alcoholism stimulates such a condition and further complicates it by a daily intake of toxic poison — alcohol.

The blood stream and body cells are first affected, then the brain, as we compulsively substitute the poison alcohol for the nutrition necessary to normal health.

This poison irritates the brain and finally breaks down nature's defensive barriers. Physical deterioration is sometimes rapid, but, in most alcoholics, addiction is acquired over a period of years, so it is only in the later stages of the illness that acute physical breakdown is apparent.

This breakdown is not apparent to the alcoholic, who is unable to visualize the hazards of his or her mental or physical condition. Alcoholism has gradually inhibited the alcoholic's power to discern between social and pathological drinking. A

## *Twelve Steps*

marked personality change, influenced chiefly by negative thinking, now drives the alcoholic to heavier drinking.

Friends and relatives become concerned over this change in personality. But, the alcoholic precludes self-criticism and becomes at odds with a normal environment.

Recovery from alcoholism, the illness which was responsible for our unmanageable lives, can only be accomplished when we stop drinking and return to a permanent, regular, balanced diet that completely eliminates alcohol. There is no shortcut, no substitute, no other way out for the alcoholic.

Controlled drinkers have no trouble conforming to this procedure, but alcoholics, who have lowered their physical resistance and exhausted their nervous system, should have medical help in starting rehabilitation.

Many members who ignore the importance of their physical well-being as an asset to recovery will fail to arrest their alcoholism. Some may recover, but they slow the process if they do not feel well physically.

We believe all alcoholics should be hospitalized upon request for help with the Alcoholics Anonymous program. This is not presently possible in all cases, so the members who cannot receive hospital care should consult a doctor who is skilled in the diagnosis and treatment of alcoholism.

## *Step One*

The importance of this advice cannot be overemphasized. The alcoholic is a sick person who does not realize it and wishes to minimize his or her physical condition. This should not be allowed by the older members; they should point out the need for a complete physical checkup and see that the new member gets it.

Those who neglect the simple precaution of receiving ethical medical care are less apt to effect a speedy recovery from alcoholism.

The alcoholic whose life has become unmanageable from uncontrolled drinking is taking a serious step in identifying with our program and attempting to make it a way of life. The alcoholic's future security depends on the successful attainment of A.A. as a way of life. Alcoholics cannot allow impaired physical well-being to detract from chances of recovery; therefore, they must safeguard their health, as poor health may return them to drinking.

New members will benefit by investigating the various phases of alcoholism that apply to their cases; they must admit they are alcoholics and discuss their problems with older members who are always willing to offer advice and help.

Learn to see in alcoholism a diseased condition of the nervous system due to the excessive use of alcohol. Reflect upon your powerlessness over this sickness. Learn a

## *Twelve Steps*

number of the tests in the medical and psychological field that identify alcoholics. Admit you "can't take it." Consider your inability to take it or leave it alone; remember your inability to leave alcohol alone in the face of impending disaster. If you drink, it definitely marks you as an alcoholic. The necessity of a drink "the morning after" is common to most alcoholics. There are many other identifications of the alcoholic; make it your business to learn some of them.

The founders of Alcoholics Anonymous understood that members have to realize their physical illness and receive medical help before they can concentrate on the spiritual requirements necessary in recovery. Physical health is a necessity, but it is only the first step in recovery from our alcoholic illness.

SUMMARIZATION. Recovery from alcoholism first involves a layperson's knowledge of this illness and a conscious need for its treatment. There is no mystery about it. Addiction to alcohol has set up a poisoning within our bodies. Compulsive drinking, over which we are powerless, naturally follows. Our lives become unmanageable. The First Step of recovery is to recognize our alcoholism and admit our physical illness.

WHY DOES THIS HELP? It makes us honest in evaluating our true physical con-

dition. It makes us humble and willing to stop alcoholic rationalization. It awakens us to our need for hospitalization before entering A.A. and for medical care afterwards.

WHY ARE WE SICK? CAN WE BE CURED? Real alcoholics are sick from poisoning acquired by substituting alcohol for food and rest. Physical health can be restored, but no cure will permit us to become controlled drinkers.

TREATMENT. Admitting our alcoholism. Willingness to accept medical treatment. Proper diet and relaxation. Belief we can recover. Daily practice of our A.A. program.

## Drugs

Occasionally, some of us have resorted to drugs for physical comfort or to induce sleep. This practice is *out* for all alcoholics, except those rare cases where an ethical medical practitioner, skilled in the treatment of alcoholism, prescribes and supervises such treatment.

We live the A.A. program to develop normal, well-integrated personalities that exclude the use of the narcotic, alcohol. Drugs prevent this change in personality. They warp our thinking. They too quickly become a substitute for alcohol and are decidedly habit forming for most of us.

# There Is A Solution

Step 1 pages 17-29

Big Book

Highlight the answers in your big book

1. What are the two common bonds that recovering alcoholics have that transcend political, economical, social or religious backgrounds? P17 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph.
2. Do most people feel for the alcoholic as they feel for say, the cancer victim? P18 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph.
3. What understanding must be reached before anything can be accomplished with a suffering alcoholic? P18 L20
4. What is the approach that works? P18 L25
5. Is the elimination of drinking all there is? P19 L5
6. What attitude do we take that allows us not to argue about things medical, psychiatric, social and religious? P19 L31
7. If you are convinced that those you see in AA are recovering from a hopeless condition of mind and body and you say, "What do I have to do?" What answer does the book give? P20 L11
8. According to the book, does the moderate drinker need AA? P20 L28
9. How about the hard drinker? P20 L31
10. What is the difference between the alcoholic and the above two types of drinkers? P21 L8
11. Why does the book conclude that the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than in his body? P22 L28 P23
12. After reading Page 23 Line 7 to 26, do you see why we alcoholics are great alibiers and rationalizers?

