

How to Do the A.A. Third Step

Step Three “Made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him.”

Set aside prayer: *God please enable me to set aside everything I think I know for an open mind and a new experience. Help me see the Truth about the failure of my life run on self-will and my decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God.*

Instructions: read and highlight: BB pages 58-63

Below are 2 ways to conceptualize this step:

Principle	Theme/Solution	Action	Defect	Result
Faith (Keystone)	Let Him God-Dependence	Practice Willingness	Self-reliance Self Sufficiency	Serenity A new relationship that begins the “turning” from self to God.

Purpose	Process	Experience	Result	Promise
Decide on a relationship with God	Identify the relationship you need to have with God	Make a decision to have this relationship, which makes it happen.	Begin to act as if it has been established	I will comprehend the word serenity and I will know peace

1. Review “How It Works” (pp 58-60)

(58:1) Rarely have we see 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.

(58:3) 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!

(59:0) Half measures will avail you nothing. You stand at the turning point. Throw yourself under His protection and care with complete abandon.

2. Review Steps 1-2. Are you on solid ground?

Step 1:

- Do you concede to your innermost self that you are powerless over food? (Step 1, read pg. 30)

- Do you have any reservations or lingering ideas that one day you will be immune to or UNAFFECTED by compulsive eating behaviors?

Step 2:

- Do you now believe or are you willing to believe in a Power Greater than yourself? (pg. 47).
- Do you believe God can and that He will relieve you of your compulsive eating behaviors if you seek Him?
- Either God is everything or else He is nothing. Either God is or He isn't. What is your choice to be?

STEP 3

(60:3) Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives. (Step 1-- I can't)

(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism. (Step 2 -- He can)

(c) That God could and would if He were sought. (A decision to allow this to happen by following the Program of Action) (Step 2 -- I think I will let Him)

(60:4) Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood Him. Just what do we mean by that and just what do we do?

Lead in pages

(60:3 – 61:0) The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful. In trying to make these arrangements our actor may sometimes be quite virtuous. He may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self-sacrificing. On the other hand, he may be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest. But, as with most humans, he is more likely to have varied traits.

(61:1) What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. He begins to think life doesn't treat him right. He decides to exert himself more. He becomes, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit him. Admitting he may be somewhat at fault, he is sure that other people are more to blame. He becomes angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is his basic trouble? Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Is he not a victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if he only manages well? Is it not evident to all the rest of the players that these are the things he wants? And do not his actions make each of them wish to retaliate, snatching all they can get out of the show? Is he not, even in his best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?

Read the first paragraph (What usually happens?) with your name in the place of "he" "him" "himself" It shows how much of self you were wrapped up in.

(61:2) Our actor is self-centered—ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays. He is like the retired business man who lolls in the Florida sunshine in the winter complaining of the sad state of the nation; the minister who sighs over the sins of the twentieth century; politicians and reformers who are sure all would be Utopia if the rest of the world would only behave; the outlaw safe cracker who thinks society has wronged him; and the alcoholic who has lost all and is locked up. What-ever our protestations, are not most of us concerned with ourselves, our resentments, or our self-pity?

(62:1) Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

(62:2) So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help.

Then at the bottom of page 62, the authors tell us what we have to do in order to rid ourselves of selfishness:

(62:3) This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, 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 of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

For those who do not know, the keystone is the supporting stone for the ENTIRE structure, so the Third Step decision is the supporting Step for the rest of the Steps. Now this decision is starting to sound important. The Big Book just stated that we need to let God become our Director, so we need to be doing what we think our Higher Power would have us do. In other words, we need to be staying in the moment, being directed by unselfishness and love, and doing the next right thing. It also says that we need to move in the direction of being God's agent, and since an agent is given the power to represent the Principal, we are deciding to start acting in a way that would represent our Highest Power. It then mentions being God's children, and if we are all God's children, we need to start acting as if we are ALL equal brothers or sisters. So you can see that this paragraph says a lot, and actually contains the essence of what the Third Step decision is all about. The book continues and this next paragraph contains the Third Step Promises.

THIRD STEP PROMISES BB Pg 63:1

(63:1) 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.**

Parallel “reborn” with our old self = old ideas, emotions and attitudes reborn into new self = new ideas, emotions and attitudes. (27:4)

This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one was felt at once.

(567:1) The terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening" used here, and in the book ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, mean, upon careful reading, that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcohol has manifested itself among us in many forms.

(567:2) Do NOT get the impression that these personality changes or spiritual experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and/or spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone this conclusion is erroneous.

(567:3) - In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. 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.

(567: 4) Among our rapidly growing membership of hundreds of thousands of members such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what psychologist William James called the "educational variety" because they develop over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference before he is himself.

(567:4) The new man gradually realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by year of self-discipline. 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 ourselves.

(568:2) Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problem in the light of our experience can recover, PROVIDED that he does not close his mind to SPIRITUAL concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

(568:3) We find that no one need have difficulty with the Spiritual aspect of the Program. Willingness, Honesty and Open-mindedness are the Essentials of Recovery and are the indispensable tools of a rich, successful and rewarding experience.

CUT DIRECTIONS FOR STEP 3 ON BB Pg 63

1. We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.
2. We found it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as our wife, best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand.
3. The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation.

Taking Step 3:

Are you convinced that you are a food addict and cannot manage your own life?

Are you convinced that no human power can relieve you of your compulsive eating behaviors?

Are you convenience that God can and that He will relieve you of your compulsive eating behaviors?

Are you convinced that any life run on self-will can be a success? (pp-60-62)

Do you believe that selfishness and self-centeredness is at the root of your problems? (p. 62)

Are you convinced that your troubles in life are basically of your making and are the result of self-will out of control? (p. 62)

Are you ready to stop playing God and from henceforth allow God to be in charge? (pp. 62-63)

Are you willing to have God guide your recovery and your life? (Yes or No)

If the answer is yes to all these questions, then take the Third Step Prayer together: --- Notice the prayer is an open prayer. There is no "amen."

PRAYER

Step Three Prayer: God I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always!

Abandon your life to God with the most self-surrender you can possibly muster.

AFTERTHOUGHT

- Step 3 is NOT a conclusion of the mind like Steps 1 & 2. Step 3 is a decision of the heart. This decision manifests by doing Steps 4-9 in a timely manner, followed by Steps 10, 11 and 12.
- The Time Table for Step 4 is "**at once**." Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless **at once** followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us (64:0)
- You must "at once" start on Step 4 while you are still enthusiastic about doing so. If you wait, you run the risk of losing that enthusiasm.
- With this in minds, steps 4-8 are about to be done right now, in one fell swoop

Summary of Step Three

There is an old proverb from India which illustrates the point of the Third Step well. Two men were walking down an unpaved road, they were barefoot. The road was covered with small rocks which hurt their bare feet when they stepped on them. One of the men said to the other, "This journey would be much easier on our feet if this road was paved with leather." The wiser of the two men replied,

"Yes, this is true, but we could get the same effect by wearing a pair of shoes." Alcoholics and addicts wish to pave the road with leather so they don't need to wear shoes. The Twelve Steps are designed to become our shoes. The Steps help us change to fit into the world as it is, rather than continuing to try to get the world to change so we can be happy.

The following joke illustrates the rest of Step Three:

Question: Three bullfrogs are sitting on a log. One bullfrog makes a decision to jump in the pond. How many are left?

Answer: Three. The bullfrog only made a decision, he hasn't done anything yet.

The way we implement the decision we made in Step Three is to complete Steps Four through Nine.

We have now completed all the information that the "Big Book" authors provide for Step Three. What follows has been called "The Step Three Parable" because it captures what we think is the essence of the Third Step:

A drunk is staggering along the street and he meets God.

"God, I can't do this anymore," he says. "Please, please, will you give me sobriety?"

God says, "Sobriety isn't free, how much money do you have?"

The drunk reaches into his pocket. "Fifty bucks."

"I'll take it," says God, "you're sober."

The man stands up straight, drunk no more. It feels pretty good. "Yeah but, God?" "Yes?" "I know I gave you my money willingly. But, you see, I need to get gas for my car."

God says, "You have a car?"

"Well, yes."

"You didn't tell me that. I'll take the car."

"But..."

God interrupts and says, "I'll take the car. It's part of the price for your sobriety."

"But how will I get to work?"

"You have a job? I'll take the job, too."

"But God, how will I pay my mortgage?"

"Mortgage? You have a house? I'll take that too."

"But God, my family. How will I take care of them if You have my house and my job?"

God says to him gently and lovingly: "In order to keep your sobriety; you must give Me these things. But I will let you drive My car, as long as you remember it's MY car. You can have the job, but remember you're working it for ME. It's My house but I will let you live in it. And as for the family, they are MY family but I will trust you to take care of them."

Even though we have taken a considerable amount of time on the first three Steps, all we have done is make decisions. Now we are going to begin to take some specific actions that will carry us the rest of the way to God.