The Alcoholics Anonymous 12-Steps Made Clear

Plus Various Handouts
With Program Formats & Answer Keys

by
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This book is dedicated to the thousands of sober alcoholics who have shared their experience, strength and hope with each other since Alcoholics Anonymous had its start in June, 1935.

Thank you!

This book was created entirely by sober alcoholics, all active members of Alcoholics Anonymous. What we have in common is a program of recovery. As is often the case now among AA members, some of this book’s contributors additionally describe themselves as dually addicted (abused illegal or prescription drugs along with alcohol or switched between use of one for another). Some are also dually diagnosed (diagnosed by a medical doctor or psychiatrist as having a mental illness or biochemical imbalance in addition to a substance abuse problem). Some also include in their “stories” elements of being codependent – controlled by or trying to control other’s behavior, reactions or feelings, whether drinking or not. We have histories that include domestic violence, in some cases, sexual abuse, PTSD and other addictions such as gambling, workaholism and just general loneliness!

We who have contributed to this work have found that, if we put our sobriety (staying clean and sober) first and seek to apply the principles contained within the AA 12-Step program in our lives, our substance abuse ceases to be an overwhelming problem to ourselves or a threat to our communities. We are guided, gradually, to unravel the tattered snarls we’d lived in our dealings with other people, with various institutions we encountered, and, most vitally, within ourselves. No matter how confused our past or present situation, we find that with patience, persistence, and a growing trust in a loving Higher Power, there is realistic hope. We begin living useful lives. Self-respect, peace of mind and love of life can be restored. Willingness to accept our situation and to face it with available support is indispensable.

The AA program’s tradition of singleness of purpose is to deal exclusively with problems of alcohol (and not problems with other drugs or with mental-medical conditions). Alcoholics Anonymous, long ago, established this policy of viewing all additional conditions that might impact some members (and not some others) as “outside issues,” just as it views matters of religion, politics, ethnic preferences and so forth. In keeping with Tradition Ten, AA, as an organization, takes no position on any “outside issue” in order to avoid engaging in any controversy, especially public controversy.

Today, however, as medical research reveals more about the biochemical basis of our disease, the use of therapeutic and psychiatric medications under medical supervision is increasingly a factor in recovery for many individuals referred to Alcoholics Anonymous. Within the AA fellowship itself, a number of sober AA members have discovered they have had an untreated biochemical imbalance in conjunction with the substance issues. This book offers tips on considering other forms of treatment while working the Steps in the AA program. Official AA literature does not. Thus, this workbook is not, nor could be, “AA Conference-approved” literature. It is, instead, sobriety fellowship material only. There is no substantial conflict, however, between the original AA program materials and fellowship and the suggestions provided in this book. From very early in the AA fellowship’s history, those who have had “other problems” have
sought and been provided AA’s support, provided they have a desire to stop drinking and wanted AA’s help. All AA asks of the alcoholic with “other problems” is that these be treated outside Alcoholics Anonymous. While AA does not endorse specific treatment programs or therapies, AA steadfastly encourages alcoholics to get all the help they need: “Today, the vast majority of us [AAs] welcome any new light that can be thrown on the alcoholic’s mysterious and baffling malady. We don’t care too much whether new and valuable knowledge issues from a test tube, a psychiatrist’s couch or revealing social studies. More and more we regard all who labor in the total field of alcoholism as our companions on a march from darkness into light. We see that we can accomplish together what we could never accomplish in separation and in rivalry,” stated AA’s co-founder – in 1958!

The AA program material still remains the best and clearest source of simple, straight-forward information on what we mean, as alcoholics, when we speak of “being powerless,” on how addiction is insanity, and just what practical actions an individual so afflicted must take in order to stop the deadly progression of the disease. This workbook is a bridge across the years between 1935, when Alcoholics Anonymous had its start, and today. Alcoholism, the disease hasn’t changed much. Statistics indicate it still will kill, jail or render insane anyone, untreated, who has it. We, the sufferers, may talk, dress a bit differently and the “sinking ship” that’s we’re said to share may look a little techno now, but it is still going down. And we still need a life raft!

To the Newcomers:

Welcome!

You are the lifeblood of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Sincerely, Your Friends in Recovery.

1

First Contact: Making A Start

1. Who Joins Alcoholics Anonymous?

Some sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous have never been in “rehab.” Some have no drunk driving tickets “in their story.” Some haven’t ever been in jail, haven’t lost jobs, haven’t flunked out of school, haven’t lost their health. Not yet, anyway! Some alcoholics in recovery have actually glimpsed the fatal malady that is alcoholism in their lives before it had taken them to the depths or the extremes and they have taken action. These are the fortunate ones.

At the other extreme, we have members who just don’t seem to be able to put much “time” together. No matter how often emergencies end in a detox unit or how many “spin-dry” cycles (28-day rehab programs) they attend, these members remain welcome. Within AA’s membership, there are those, too, who had added or switched to drugs with alcohol, used (or tried to use) drugs to control their drinking and others who had used (or tried to use) alcohol to taper off from other drugs or to moderate their use. Many of these members believed they successfully controlled their behavior in the eyes of others until, eventually an outside force – often a branch of the Courts – intervened. These members were usually offered “a choice:” Either accept treatment for substance/alcohol abuse or face the consequences. Such consequences may have ranged from loss of jobs to loss of families to loss of freedom. Alcoholics Anonymous is almost universally included in treatment plans for alcoholism. “[Public] acceptance of AA grew by leaps and bounds . . . for two principle reasons: the large number of recoveries and reunited homes.

Of alcoholics who came to AA and really tried, 50% got sober at once and remained that way: 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with AA showed improvement,” states the “Forward to Second Edition” of Alcoholics Anonymous, © 1955, pg. xx.

What Is and What Isn’t Alcoholics Anonymous?

- All AA participation is voluntary – AA works for no agency or court.
- AA is not a church. AA is a spiritual, not a religious program.
- The AA program is utilized as primary treatment for alcoholism by motivated alcoholics who may use AA exclusively to maintain long-term (permanent) sobriety.
- AA’s track-record as follow-up treatment to rehabilitation and medical care is unsurpassed.
Thus, “I was ordered to AA,” begins many a story in AA. And as more and more agencies recognize the role that alcohol/other drug abuse may play in a wide range of associated problems, clients in domestic violence programs, juvenile court, anger management programs and mental health outreaches may also be asked to stay sober and attend AA meetings, sometimes being required to have cards signed to prove attendance.

Whether or not a person attending an AA meeting has a card to be signed, that person may still feel pressured and somewhat skeptical about the “AA message.” If we come because somebody else is bugging us about our drinking or substance use this is a common and understandable reaction.

Fundamentally, however, how we end up at AA meetings boils down to a matter of personal choice and decision. We can, after all, choose not to attend and accept the consequences, whatever they are. But if we do have a card to be signed to prove attendance to another agency or program, we will have to approach the meeting’s secretary to initial the card. Most, but not all, AA meetings are willing to do this, so it is up to us to find out “the ground rules” when it comes to court/program cards.

Beyond the matter of getting a card signed, there is very little that separates the “mandated” newcomer from any other new attendee at AA. Just about every AA member will affirm that s/he felt “pressured” by something or someone to take a look at his or her drinking. It is a rare alcoholic, indeed, who got up one morning and just decided to be “a nice guy” and go join Alcoholics Anonymous! If we didn’t have some sort of overwhelming problem in our life, few if any of us would have made that decision. For most of us, the question wasn’t “Do I have a problem?” The question was, “Is alcohol the cause, or a part of the cause, of the problems I have (and can’t seem to escape or avoid?)”
Step One

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. The Doctor’s Opinion About Alcoholism

   Is alcoholism a disease? Or is it a moral issue? A question of character? Will-power? The dilemma of addiction has been debated for centuries. As a condition, it has no respect for traditional boundaries of class, age, sex, education or even spiritual inclination – afflicting those it will while sparing others. In his Forward to Alcoholics Anonymous, a medical doctor who was one of AA’s great allies offers his comments and his hope.

   1. What kind of alcoholic did Dr. Silkwood initially see helped by “certain ideas” that the recovering person shared with other alcoholics, encouraging them to do likewise?

   2. What did he believe chronic alcoholics have, physically, to alcohol, that non-alcoholics don’t?

   3. How does this allergy show up?

   4. How helpful is “frothy . . . appeal”?

   5. What are the “well-known stages”?

   6. “. . .Unless a person experiences _____ there is very little hope of . . . recovery.”

2. Reservations About Drinking and “Bill’s Story”

   Any lingering idea or fantasy that we will be able to “drink like other people,” or use alcohol socially or keep up our unaltered ties to those we drank with, is bound to threaten our peace of mind and may easily take us “back out.” Have we really worked Step 1 if we have a reservation about whether we are truly powerless over alcohol in all situations and circumstance? Even alcoholics with “good sobriety” find we can quickly “slip” back into a danger zone if we allow ourselves to entertain the notion that “we could handle it, if . . .” Here is a Step One “program of action” to challenge reservations:
In Alcoholics’ Anonymous, Read “Bill’s Story,” writing down the answers to the following questions as you go along. This is also a good format for a discussion meeting on the chapter.

1. When Bill’s friend showed up, sober, what did he declare about God?

2. What did Bill say about his own situation, at the point this occurred?

3. What did Bill see about his friend that convinced him there had been a change?

4. What was the novel idea about God that was proposed?

5. What was required, in order for growth start?

6. What did Bill ruthlessly face?

7. What was Bill to do, in order to test his thinking?

8. What was his friend’s promise to Bill, if he followed these suggestions?

9. What does Bill mean by “simple, but not easy. . .”?

10. What did Bill find “worked when all other measures failed . . .”?

11. What “. . . has to work, twenty-four hours a day, in and through us, or we perish.”?

3. Follow-Up Exercise
   What are our reservations? What do we think we “could possibly get away with” and not fall back into our old rut, if we were careful or lucky? What are we afraid might be too much for us, might make us drink in some extreme situation? At a discussion meeting or with a trusted sober program friend or sponsor, we talk about our reservations and how Bill’s story affected us. Did we identify in some ways but not others? We may be amazed what we can learn about ourselves when we open up!

4. There Is A Solution
   In Chapter 2 of Alcoholics Anonymous, begins with a description of the AA fellowship, that feeling of mutual caring and commitment among those in recovery that is so much the “spiritual glue” that has bound our members in unity across continents, economics strata, politics, race and religion.

   1. What is the tremendous fact for every one of us?
2. What is the great news in this book?
3. How does this great news getting out depend on Tradition 1 of AA’s program?
4. Going on to discuss alcoholism, what are the symptoms of the disease?
5. Who can win an alcoholic’s confidence?
6. Who can take it or leave it alone?
7. Who may find it difficult to stop, troublesome, may need some help?
8. Who begins to lose all control once s/he starts to drink?
9. Who has talents to build a bright future but then pulls this down on his/her head by a senseless sprees?
10. While the alcoholic keeps away from drink, how does s/he react?
11. What have most alcoholics lost?
12. What have we no defense against?
13. What are the results of fully established alcoholic thinking?
14. What is the central fact of our lives today?
15. What are our two alternatives?

5. Step One in the “12 X 12”

Read the Step One text in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (the AA “12 X 12.”)

1. Who wants to admit defeat?
2. Little good can come to any alcoholic unless what?
3. What two factors of our dilemma did our sponsors point out?
4. How did we raise the bottom?
5. When, and only when, do we become open-minded and willing to listen?
6. Reflection Exercise

Make some personal progress notes on the following topics:

Do we presently have a sponsor? How far have we gone in making progress in the kind of open, direct communication with another member of the fellowship that Step One describes?

Where do we see ourselves, in terms of hitting a “bottom”?

If asked to speak at a meeting, try speaking to one of these topics:

We share our experience – what we are finding out as we make an effort – our strength – what we are gaining and learning and finding in ourselves to share and to give – and our hope – asking our questions, sharing our doubts and uncertainties, to let our needs be known to a loving God through our fellowship. Thus, we make a humble beginning!

Broadly Effective: Program-Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

What Is the Problem?

Step One asks us to state what is out of our control and admit we can’t manage our lives by our old methods.

1. What Is A “Personal Program for Recovery” In Alcoholics Anonymous?

As AA “newcomers,” we may feel we are entering uncharted territory. We encounter such “AA paradoxes:” as “Surrender to Win!” “Discover Independence In Seeking Help!” “You have to give it away to keep it”

We hear we have to be teachable in order to make progress in recovery. To succeed, we are advised to “take action” and to have a “personal program”. Members suggest that we “Easy Does It” and quickly caution us, just for “Twenty-Four Hours.” To some of us, this may sound more like AA double-talk than pearls of spiritual wisdom, at least at the beginning! “How are we,” we wondered, “to make sense of it all?”

The question, “How am I, personally, going to get – and keep – my feet on the ground around here, in a way that works for me?” is a cornerstone of every successful 12-Step program member’s individual plan, hence, his or her personal program for recovery.
What A Personal Program for Recovery Includes:

- **My focus is?** (What is my problem, issue? How am I powerless?)
- **My resources are?** (Program, advisors, books; What are tools?)
- **My plan is?** (Attend meetings, pray, take meds; What do I do?)
- **My commitment is?** (A 24 hour strategy to stick to my plan today.)

Personal programs for recovery can and do change, over time, as we, ourselves, change and grow. What stays the same about them, is that, at every stage of our development, 1) they are always ours, and 2) they are always based on decisions we choose to make, working in what we consider to be our own best interests.

Thus, one sober AA member may report that attending meetings daily, or perhaps several times a day, having daily contact with a sponsor plus volunteering in a club or service center is what works for him or her. Some members take part in other 12-Step groups. Others attend a “dual diagnosed” groups or special focus groups run by a therapist or a facilitator and many are active in a church-sponsored fellowships, too. Is one more member more “right” than another, in how they are staying sober? Not at all! Not if each is sticking to a personal program for recovery that fits his or her personal needs, character, stage in recovery and speaks to his or her heart. The “test” of this? Sobriety and peace of mind!

Alcoholics Anonymous is unique in the respect we have for each other’s right – and need – to find our own “mix” of resources and tools, to discover our spiritual path, and to work out our own story. “We aren’t a glum lot... We absolutely insist on enjoying life... We think that cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness... We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free... We are convinced that a spiritual mode of living is a most powerful health restorative... We should never belittle a good doctor or psychiatrist. Their services are often indispensable in treating a newcomer and following his [or her] case afterward,” states Alcoholics Anonymous, in “The Family Afterward,” Chapter 9.
**Take Back the Initiative.** Those of us who felt pressured or controlled by other people, the courts, employers, spouses, to attend AA found we could quickly stop feeling like “somebody’s kid being ordered around” if we decided to take on the experience as educational.

**When we are “ordered”** to stay clean and sober for a period of time or to attend 30 or 90 AA meetings, we may bristle at being so directed. But we can approach this as an *experiment* instead of a *sentence*. We just may learn something! No matter who sends us or what we fear may be the consequences of failure to comply, we take much of the “bite” out of any troubles we face when we adopt the attitude, “When Life gives me lemons, I choose to make lemonade!”

**Try Several Meetings.** As newcomers, we are encouraged to attend several different AA groups if we are fortunate enough to live where many exist, before settling into a routine. Questions we ask ourselves include: What meetings make us feel welcome? Where do we hear stories we identify with? What tips can we use to stay clean and sober and make our daily lives better, and more productive?

**Read AA literature.** The “basics” of the AA program are found in AA’s official literature. AA meetings usually have a table or rack of AA pamphlets available free to newcomers. What goes on at AA meetings makes more sense, we have found, once we get an idea of what the AA program is; AA’s literature makes the goals and the limits of AA recovery very clear. Buy or borrow a copy of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the AA “Big Book.”) Non-readers will find the AA core materials are available on audio tape or CD.

**Talk to People.** It *isn’t rude* to introduce ourselves by our first name and say hello to 12-Step program members before and after meetings. We help ourselves fit in when we take a step forward and approach those who said something during a meeting that rang a bell with us. It is OK to ask members for their phone number. We may be offered, or we can request, from any meeting secretary, a phone list of people who are
willing to be called by newcomers. We can ask people what brought them to AA. Listening for similarities between ourselves and others and sharing with them is an excellent way to get to know people who are trying to live a positive lifestyle! When we risk a little, we make a friend!

**? Accept Help.** We gain when we work with the guidance of someone who understands the AA program. Most of us have been “loners” in one way or another, or, we may have been in a rut -“stuck on stuck.” We are challenged now, to accept new ideas. Learning often requires trust, dropping our defenses and opening our minds. Building trust takes time and work. If we have been assigned a counselor or minister in a treatment program, or have gotten an AA sponsor, we may resist speaking frankly to them at first. We may fear they will judge us, condemn us. Usually, our “worst nightmares” are just that, nightmares, not realistic expectations. We are often much harsher and stricter task masters for ourselves than other people turn out to be. Recovery opens the door to a new world of care and support for us. We are frequently our own worst critics and sometimes, condemners. We open ourselves to a cheerful new world by letting someone who knows the AA program set the pace. They serve to help us stay moderate and get “the basics” down instead of jump to conclusions or rush to take big, drastic actions from guilt, fear or shame.

1. AA books can be purchased at most AA groups; ask the secretary. Also find them at AA Central (Intergroup) Offices; check local white pages for the listing for Alcoholics Anonymous. Contact AA’s World Service Office, POB 459, NY, NY, 10163 or on the Net at: [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org).

2. **Where Am I? Questions to Answer & Discuss In a Group**

? How did I get referred to Alcoholics Anonymous (or the 12-Step program I am attending)?

? What expectations or requirements, if any, have been placed on me by others to stay (clean and) sober for a period of time, attend a certain number of meetings, work the 12-Steps? (How long?) (How many meetings?) (Who holds these expectations?)

? What, if any, consequences do I face if I go back to drinking (using)? What if I don’t attend the meetings or meet the other requirements?
1. Powerless Over . . . .

Most people, including recovering alcoholics also have other issues: “Can we use the AA program on (fill in the blank)?” This question is not new. A good bit of AA’s history and tradition reinforces the concept of singleness of purpose in AA – which is, basically, the idea that by sticking to one issue (alcoholic drinking) the AA program and fellowship will avoid losing focus. Nonetheless, core AA literature answers positively to the question of transferability: In the Forward to Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (the AA “12 X 12,”) Bill W. states (anonymously,) “Many people, non-alcoholics, report that as a result of the practice of AA’s Twelve Steps, they have been able to meet other difficulties in life. They think that the Twelve Steps can mean more than sobriety for problem drinkers. They see in them a way to happy and effective living for many, alcoholic or not.”

Thus, over the years, a variety of “spin off” programs have grown up that apply the original 12-Steps to issues other than alcoholism, with the blessing and permission to adapt the Steps and Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc.

Within the AA fellowship itself, members may suggest that we seek out one of these programs if we are dealing with an issue other than alcoholism.
While some people in recovery do attend several 12-Step fellowships, others prefer to work entirely within the guidance of Alcoholics Anonymous alone. Some members, dual-addicted to alcohol and other drugs, or alcoholic and also children of alcoholics, or alcoholic with alcoholic/addict family members, may prefer to “work on it all” in AA (or NA) believing that, this way, they are less likely to become confused or to compartmentalize themselves. They see their non-alcohol issues as character defects, and address them in Step 6. Others like to compartmentalize. It’s a matter of choice.

Some problems, of course, their nature, may require that we seek “outside help.” In some instances, this may be court-ordered. There is no rule on this subject. At AA events or meetings, we do confine ours to discussion to problems and solutions involving alcoholism, rather than go into detail about issues we face that don’t bear on this topic.

Good sense and moderation are our best counselors in this matter. We are advised, in the AA “Big Book” to make use of medical and psychiatric help as it applies to our situation. In Chapter 9, “The Family Afterward,” states, . . . “this does not mean that we disregard human health measures. God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors, psychologists and practitioners of various kinds. . . .” We need appropriate help and care, in recovery.

? As individuals, are there drugs, pills or other substances we use with or in addition to alcohol? Is there a related acting out or “toxic” behavior patterns that we are also “powerless over” in Step One?

? We talk to someone – a professional counselor/case manager, minister or a 12-Step sponsor – about what is on our list. Rather than spin from one problem to the next, to the next, our task is to establish our priorities among issues we face. What are “First Things First” for us?

? Our next task is to stick with our priorities a day at a time, using the tools and feedback available to us, seeking daily a clearer vision of what our Higher Power intends for us.
4. What Are “Primary Issues” In Recovery?

Any behavior that threatens a person's life, health, sanity or freedom is a primary problem for him or her. Any behavior pattern that has the potential for killing us, putting us in a hospital, behind bars or that repeatedly places us in unsafe situations qualifies as a primary problem. We recommend working the 12-Steps on primary problems first.

Alcoholism/other drug addiction is always as a primary problem, if it exists, because experience shows that those who have these disorders cannot make progress on other issues unless they find a way to stop drinking/using, and stay stopped.

Co-dependence, can be defined as the loss of one’s distinct sense of self except as a component in a relationship or relationships. Domestic violence or family/parenting issues, homelessness, or overcoming gang or cult membership are examples of “other issues” that are almost always based on co-dependency. Such issues can be so toxic that they need to be addressed when the alcoholic/substance abuser is undergoing detoxification.

Co-dependent personalities can be so intent on controlling other people that they may deny there is a drinking problem or resist or even actively undercut sobriety. Co-dependency is itself a self-loss disease; it, too, requires treatment! Untreated, the more extreme forms of it may lead to battering, stalking, sexual exploitation or elder/child abuse and neglect. Interpersonal behaviors that display forms of financial victimization, physical intimidation, bullying, and gang domination are also seen as extreme examples of co-dependent need and exercise of control.

5. Questions to Ponder

1. Do people, places and things that we can’t control cause us to feel like “a pawn in life’s game”?
2. Are there risky or harmful behaviors we are powerless to resist when we drink or use?
3. Is our life unmanageable because the same things seem to happen, over and over again?
4. Does our life seem hopeless, at a dead end?

6. What To Look For In A Sponsor

We can, if we are court-ordered or directed to attend Alcoholics Anonymous as a requirement of some other agency or personal obligation we have, choose to work through the 12-Steps just like a student in a class. Faith isn’t required, only willingness. We are free to attend open AA meetings and do what is expected of us. It our decision. We needn’t “either go to jail or allow ourselves to be brainwashed,” as some fear.
One of our first tasks, if we are attending on a “checking it out” basis, however, is to find a sponsor who will let us admit our reservations about being alcoholic, if we have any, or about being “court-ordered” to attend.

An element of mutual openness and honesty, is especially vital. Experience shows that being rigorously honest with at least one other human being is necessary to achieve quality personal sobriety. Honesty is the spiritual lifeblood of the fellowship as well as the chief requirement for the personal integrity of character from which we grow and eventually may flower as mature, creative human beings!

It is possible to work the AA program with no religious faith, we have found, but it is not possible to work it without the touchstone of honesty!

Sponsors come in all sizes, shapes and colors, of course, and one size definitely doesn’t fit all! Whether our sponsor has a great deal of time or is a person who has only recently completed the Steps, what matters most is the honesty and trust that grows between us. That grows directly in relationship to working the 12-Steps on life experiences and in shared service commitments in the program.

“The spiritual life is not a theory; we have to live it...” (Chapter 6, Alcoholics Anonymous.) Sincerely done, when we size up prospective sponsors at the meetings we attend, arrange to meet with them and undertake to work the Steps under their guidance, we are definitely “living it” in the sense that we mean the term “spiritual” in the 12-Step programs. We are doing what is called “moving our feet” in our own behalf, instead of dreaming or theorizing (as so many of us had, so long and so often, in the past.) Without even realizing how we’d made a start, we see that we finally are off the sidelines of life and now getting into the swim of it! Another surprising and unexpected benefit: We see that we are no longer “faking it,” off on our own; we now have a living mentor-supporter, a companion, eventually, a friend, at our side. Isolation is behind us at last.

Hurrah! Let’s give ourselves a round of applause, a pat on the back and a smile in mirror! Good job! We deserve it. Getting well takes some courage!

Keep coming back!

It works if we work it!
**A Sponsorship Worksheet**

1. Must we “put up a good front” in order to impress the person we ask to sponsor us with our willingness to “do whatever it takes” if, in fact, we’re just trying to avoid consequences?

2. What is the basic requirement we have for a sponsor (beyond their being sober (clean) and having worked through the 12-Steps personally?

3. What is vital to and has to be present in sponsorship?

4. What is the bedrock of both lasting and content personal sobriety and the spiritual lifeblood of fellowship in 12-Step programs?

5. What is the chief requirement for the personal integrity which is the basis of character?

6. What develops over time in an effective sponsorship relationship between members?

7. What are we doing when we size up prospective sponsors at the meetings we attend, arrange to meet with them and undertake to work the Steps under their guidance?

8. What are some of the personal life changes and benefits that come from our “moving our feet” to create a sponsorship relationship for ourselves?

9. Why is “A Sponsorship Worksheet” included in Step One materials?
Step Two

“Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. Came . . . Came to . . . Came to Believe . . .

Most of us arrive in Alcoholics Anonymous in a state of crisis often in pain and confused. Overwhelming consequences loom before us. For many of us, our first few meetings – or maybe even our first month of AA/NA meetings are more or less a blur. If we remembered anything, it was a phrase such as “Keep coming back” or “Don’t take the first drink! At meetings, our minds and emotions were often preoccupied with other concerns: “Will I lose my kids?” “How can I ever get back what I have lost?” “What’s the use?” “I’m a loser,” or “There’s no hope.” In this sense, we came to recovery.

As the poison of alcohol (other drugs) gradually leaves our body, our minds begin to clear. We may still face a great many problems but usually, as our health improves, that feeling of panic or despair begins to dissipate. The “stories” heard at meetings about other people’s experiences may begin remind us of ourselves. We hear of “miracles” and restoration of health and families. Hope returns (or awakens!) as we see and hear people much like ourselves progressing in the face of troubles not unlike our own. Thus, we came to recovery.

Finally, as we start to “move our feet” – applying the principles of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous in our own lives – our own experience becomes our source of faith. “It works if you work it!” is a slogan closely related to another AA slogan, “HOW,” – Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness. These slogans describe an attitude change that transforms working Step Two from drudgery to adventure.

“Don’t take our word for it!” Charlie B., an early member of AA was fond of saying, when speaking about Step Two, “Try it yourself and see what happens!”

Thus, it is by our direct experience of a power greater than ourselves that we began to accept the proposition that such a power exists and exists for us. This is how we “came to believe.”
1. What terms are used to describe a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism?

2. Are these always sudden, powerful events followed by quick change?

3. What are personality transformations called that take place over time?

4. Who is usually aware of these first?

5. What do we finally realize we have undergone?

6. What have we tapped?

7. What are the essentials of recovery that are indispensable?

2. Read a Personal Story

In the back of the AA “Big Book” there are personal stories of AA members. Read one of your choice and answer these questions:

1. **How it was**: How did the individual telling the story find AA?

2. **What happened**: What did the person hear or see in the AA fellowship that reached him/her?

3. **How it is now**: How s/he lives now from this sober point of view?

Note: **Keep it simple!** Just look for these three elements in the story you choose. In “Bill’s Story,” (Chapter 1 of the “Big Book”) for example, (1) Bill was hopeless and the program was brought to Bill, by his friend; (2) Bill was impressed by the friend’s clear eyes and conviction (a noticeable change in his friend.) Bill resolved to give this spiritual program an honest chance and he followed that up by checking into a hospital for treatment. (3) He had a spiritual experience as a result.

Now, answer these same three questions about yourself and your story.
3. **Restored to Sanity**

If “insanity” is defined as being “a danger to self and/or others” (a legal definition used for involuntary commitment of individuals), most AA/NA members can relate numerous occasions when their loss of control while under the influence of alcohol/other drugs met this definition. Most AA’s agree that the sanity that is restored through the intervention of a Higher Power in Step 2 has to do with the lifting of the obsession to drink/use and the “twisted thinking” that leads us to take the first drink (or drug) even when we want to quit. Read Chapter 3, “More About Alcoholism” in the AA “Big Book.”

1. What is the “great obsession” of every abnormal drinker?
2. What delusion do we have? What has to happen to it?
3. What did intervals of control, usually brief, lead to?
4. What happens over any considerable period of time, as a result of the progressive nature of our illness?
5. Name some of methods alcoholics have tried to regain control that have lead to relapse. (Name some of the ways you have tried, yourself, only to control your drinking/drug use.)
6. What is one suggested way to find out for yourself if you are alcoholic?
7. What is the mental state that precedes relapse in an alcoholic/addict, even one who has “much knowledge about himself”?
8. When we relapse because we feel “justified by nervousness, anger . . .” and deliberately chose to drink (use,) what do we deny/insanely lose sight of?
9. What does a person with strange mental blank spots regarding the consequences of drinking have, against which will power and self-knowledge are useless?
10. What does the alcoholic lack at certain times?

4. **Step Two in AA’s “12X12”**

Read Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, answering these questions:

1. Who are the three types of alcoholics who are confronted by a dilemma?
2. What three things does the belligerent one need to know, in working Step 2, to relax and “get through the hoop”??
schooling stopped arguing?

4. What is the method of substitution?

5. What sorts of people have lost their faith?

6. How have people who think they have tried the way of faith and of no faith found their experience?

7. How do these people feel?

8. Was just having good values, belief in fair play and decency, enough to keep us sober or to make our lives manageable?

9. Did our intellectual abilities make our lives manageable or our hearts content?

10. Did finding the weak points and inconsistencies of other’s faith make us any kinder, better or safer, after all? What kind of thinking was this?

11. What is the fallacy of defiance?

12. What had to replace defiance, in order to be spared alcohol’s final catastrophe?

13. What is the blind spot of person who believes s/he is devote, who,

14. Can any alcoholic claim “soundness of mind” for himself/herself?

15. What can lead any and all of us to faith, thus, eventually, to sanity restored?
Broadly Effective: Program-Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

What Can Help?

1. Powers Greater Than Ourselves

   A seriously ill north woods logger, a long-time two-fisted drinker and bull rider with three driving under the influence tickets pending against him, was court-ordered to attend AA. At a meeting, he complained, “I don’t know that I’m ‘powerless over alcohol;’ I like to sit on my porch and drink whiskey!” A member responded, after the meeting, “I don’t know if you’re ‘powerless over alcohol,’ friend – but you sure powerless over the courts. They’re going to send you up to jail for two years if you don’t stay dry!” Our friend got the point. He didn’t want the consequences, so he stopped arguing and started working the program. Later, he found he agreed with a lot of the materials. His health improved; his directness made him friends in AA and many benefitted from his support in turn.

   1. List all the “power(s) greater than yourself” that are keeping you sober today. Be realistic. Along with positive forces (trust in God or the group, for example) include what scares you into sobriety/being clean (threat of jail? loss of job/family? a health issue that may kill you?)
   2. Describe the higher power you rely on for help and encouragement today. This higher power may be anything at all that is “greater than yourself” that can (and does) solve problems you face now.
   3. List the practical ways you bring this power greater than yourself into your life. What do you do (Pray? talk to people in the program?) to show your willingness to use this power?
   4. What has happened since you began this experiment in willingness? How has your thinking changed? Your outlook become more hopeful?
2. What Is “Recovery”?

From the point of view of whatever agency or person sends a person to a 12-Step program, getting us to stop doing whatever it was is recovery enough! As long as we stay stopped.

That’s one – very real – definition of recovery. It is the working definition commonly applied by the courts, employers and even by family members, as recovery indefinitely alcoholic drinking or from the abuse of various illegal or prescription drugs.

“But is this enough recovery?” An inescapable amount of wrangling on this topic goes on and on, within every AA and NA fellowship. “Sure it is,” sober Book-thumpers respond, “as far as it goes. From the law’s point of view – or even the boss’s or the family’s, in the short-run – if we aren’t driving under the influence and creating uproar in the home or on the job or in the community, that’s enough recovery. The law doesn’t get all misty-eyed about our inner life or how much joy we feel! Drinking (drug abuse) has to go, one day at a time, or we have no chance. But the question remains – and this gets really personal – is this all we need to change, even to stay dry (clean)?”

Can we, in fact, stop drinking (drug abuse) and stay stopped indefinitely without changing at least some other things? Such as where we go? Or how we spend our time and with who?

And beyond that, what about our outlook? Attitude? Can we comfortably stay stopped long without being obliged to “look in the mirror,” to get a glimpse of how we’ve been in the habit of seeing ourselves, other people, the circumstances we face? Must we become at least a little willing to learn new ways to view challenges and conflicts? What about a need to improve communication skills, to check out our expectations against what other people actually feel and think?

Those of us who aren’t especially dominated by self-protective fear and suspicion of other people’s motives – whose attitudes are fundamentally positive – acknowledge needing work, a little to a lot of work, in these areas.

Those who can stay “dry” (clean) without changing much commonly report experiencing a growing physical sense of stress, anxiety, irritability and snappishness, along with a building perception of feeling cut off, burdened, oppressed and hopeless about the future. Is enduring this, called “white-knuckle sobriety,” enough “recovery”?

We have to answer these questions for ourselves. No one can do it for us. The decision to work the 12-Steps of recovery to the best of our ability is always a personal decision, a voluntary choice. The court, a counselor, a sponsor, minister or family member cannot make us do it. No one outside ourselves can. Admittedly, courts do hold out the option of “accepting recovery” as an alternative to jail time; people are often “sentenced” to not drink/use and to attend 12-Step program meetings (and have a card
signed to prove it.) Family members can plead and threaten. So can the boss (if he/she doesn’t just cut us loose). All of this, in the end, is just them letting us know their hopes, desires or demands toward us. If we do more than “go through the motions”– comply to avoid consequences – it is because we have made a free and independent choice!

1. What is society’s working definition of recovery from alcoholism (substance abuse)?

2. Is this enough recovery for me?

3. What actions do I have to take to maintain this level of recovery today?

4. What are the changes in the where, what and who of my old routine that I must maintain today?

5. Changes is how I relate to some personalities?

6. Authority figures or situations?

7. How do I relate to situations when I am told “no” or can’t achieve my objective?

8. How do I handle success, compliments, warmth and intimacy in a social situation?

9. What do I do right away when I want to drink (use) instead of drinking (using)?

10. What is my Number One goal in recovery? My Number Two goal? My Number Three goal? Whose decisions/choices are these?

11. Why is “What Is Recovery” included within the Step 2 section of this Workbook?
3. Confronting Our Own Defiance – 1

“I’m different,” we may say; “I’m (black) (Hispanic) (female) (not that bad;) I’m an exception in this.” Less polite, we proclaim, “No way I’m going to do that!” Or we may agree to do what is asked of us – “But not now!” If we are resisting following the instructions of those we’ve actually sought out and asked for help, then we are suffering from a common problem for alcoholics (and addicts of all kinds): Defiance. This attitude of stubborn unwillingness, what Herbert Spenser called, “contempt prior to investigation,” can quickly lead us to the conclusion, “AA (NA) didn’t work for me” – and send us back out to oblivion.

Usually defiance has its roots established deeply in areas where we sense our trust has been betrayed. Deeply held mistrust – in people, or perhaps in God or in something we once had faith in – can “shut us down” to new information. This closed attitude puts us in serious jeopardy. We can’t get well unless we can learn to “open up” again! Here is an exercise to help reduce our fear of “getting burned again” when it comes to keeping an open mind in recovery:

1. We list several – try for at least five – “false gods” we have trusted in the past, that have let us down. We include the persons, substances, religions or other beliefs we had that we depended on that have collapsed, abandoned us or turned false on us.

2. What features of the AA program or fellowship remind us of our past experiences with people or other things we trusted (that let us down, died or were taken from our lives?)

3. Asking our Higher Power to guide our recovery, we talk to a sponsor in the program about our suspicion and fear of being let down. This can feel risky, but we do it.

4. We evaluate: Are these fears realistic in the present? If so, what options are open to us to improve our safety, security, peace of mind? Or, if not, are we being tempted by our disease to turn away from the some tools that can help us?
4. Confronting Our Own Defiance – II

“Whatever can take us back out there can kill us.” This includes “old ideas.” Challenges to our old ideas – those subtle rules and values by which we live – can put our backs up, head us for the door. Whether we are conscious of them or not, we do have values and rules by which we habitually live and, in effect, define ourselves. In the portion of Chapter 5, “How It Works,” of Alcoholics Anonymous, (read at the beginning of most AA meetings), we are cautioned: “Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. . . .” Our old ideas may be serious barriers to our feeling “a part of” AA, rather than “apart from” the program and the fellowship in AA.

1. List three or four old ideas we have (or have had) that limit our behavior or our thinking. For starters, we list any statements that start, “I always . . .” or “I never . . .” These are called absolute statements and they are indications of strongly held values.

2. Are any of these rules about keeping up appearances? Are some controlling or ego-feeding propositions, designed mostly to make us “look good” in the community or on the street?

3. Are we willing to “let go absolutely” of these old ideas? Are we willing to join those who “completely give themselves to this simple program,” even if it means changing who we think we are?

5. Willingness, Willingness, Willingness

Here is a practical exercise to try to apply open-mindedness to the question of faith:

1. In the spirit of “give it a try and see what happens,” what problem we can’t solve for ourselves are we willing to try with a Higher Power? We do this “experimentally” to see what comes of it. For most of us this may be the compulsion to take the first drink (drug,) but it can also be other problems – issues with children, the job, money, health.

2. We then make a point of being watchful and open to listen for guidance (from whatever or however we conceive of our Higher Power.)

3. We then “move our feet” to follow up on what is suggested by or through our Higher Power.

4. We pay attention and see what happens.

5. We give credit where credit is due and deserved. We do this out loud at meetings.
6. Questions to Ponder:

1. What Power greater than ourselves (if any) do we trust with our life?
2. What Power Greater than ourselves (if any) do we believe loves us unconditionally?
3. Who or what have we trusted in the past that let us down, abandoned or injured us?
4. How does it feel to reflect on the fact that our behavior may have been insane?

1. “As psychiatrists have often observed, defiance is the outstanding characteristic of many an alcoholic. . . .” Step 2, pg 31, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.  [Italics mine.]

2. Re-read Appendix II, “Spiritual Experience,” in the AA “Big Book,” for a discussion of the indispensability of willingness, honesty and open-mindedness to recovery. The line quoted herein is used as an illustration of what “is a bar to all information . . .”
Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God.

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. God as We Understand God

As we read in Chapter 4, “We Agnostics” in Alcoholics Anonymous, we try to identify with as much as we can that is similar in this chapter to our own sense of a Supreme Force or Being, whether or not we are in the habit of using the term “God” or of thinking of “God” as “Him.”

Although some individuals feel these terms are very important and specific these terms are, basically language. In AA, respect and tolerate of each person’s right to use the language and concepts of a Higher Power that speaks to his or her heart. It is usually helpful to discuss this chapter with someone who is spiritually grounded in Alcoholics Anonymous. Working in a small group could provide a broad range of insight from other members’ experiences, ideas and concepts.

1. What are not always easy alternatives to face?

2. What was our dilemma?

3. What is sufficient, regarding God?

4. What is the cornerstone of a spiritual structure?

5. What have organized religions done, despite its failings or weak points?

6. What did thousands of worldly people declare occurred when their human resources totally failed?

7. What proposition must we face, as a result of our alcoholism?

8. How had we been worshipers?

9. What is deep down in every man, woman and child?

10. Where do we find the Great Reality?
There are practical reasons for adopting a spiritual way of life in Alcoholics Anonymous. Beginning with “How It Works,” Chapter 5, in Alcoholics Anonymous, which is read at the start of most AA meetings, read through the end of Step 3 in the AA “Big Book.”

1. The a-b-c’s state: “(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.” What experience have we had of identifying with this trio of statements (known as “hitting our bottom”)? Why are we advised to remember this?

2. Another reason AA’s insist that “the God-thing” is so important is this: few, if any, among us has been able to summons up the required self-honesty and courage to complete the inventory and then go through with the rest of AA’s 12-Steps on self-will or commitment alone. Who/what do we serve beyond our narrow goals for gain or wishes to avoid consequences?

3. Working Step Three is a gradual process, for a lot of us. Often, we come to rely upon God’s guidance a little at a time, “taking it back” and “turning it over” again and again. The God we AA’s seek is a practical God—God who can where we can not. We aren’t a group of religious theorists – far from it. Our concern for spiritual matters is based on down-to-earth needs we have for a Higher Power’s aid. “Am I really powerless?” we ask ourselves. “Has my life become unmanageable, despite my own best efforts to keep it together?” If we still have trouble picturing ourselves accepting God’s help and guidance let’s review our progress in Steps One and Two.

4. Do we think we’re safe now and back in control? Do we have a small reservation about when or how we might
be able to drink again? Do we feel that although we may be powerless over vodka, or cocaine, meth or prescriptions drugs or any other addictive drug that you could probably drink a beer or two without any problem, or that if we fix a money problem and get a partner/family member to do what we want that we could probably drink again? If so, how are we like the ambitious actor, in the “Big Book’s” Chapter 5?

5. If the impulse for self-reliance tempts us to take back control, do we quickly entertain fantasies or imagine circumstances where we either don’t need God or we become God’s super-heros? (Drink would not be a problem for us, in our dream-world, and unchecked, this concept of God may begin to not really care if we drink.) This, often begins the road to a “slip,” or a binge, from which only some make it back to sobriety and sanity once again. When tempted in these ways, we may ask ourselves, “How well has self-reliance really served me? How sane was my behavior before I got sober? How loving and stable were my relationships?”

6. Only when we are convinced that “our way” without God’s help is a dead end do we approach the state of mind necessary to making a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God. If we didn’t need God’s help to have a workable life would we have the disease of alcoholism?

7. If we could have lived happy or useful lives on our own terms, would we have this book in our hands and be working Step Three today?

8. What is root of our troubles?

9. What is the alcoholic an extreme example of?


11. What was our next decision?

12. What six results follow this decision, if we are sincere?

13. Can we alter or re-write the Step Three prayer, to put it in our own words?
3. Step Three in the AA “12 X 12”

Read Step Three in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, the AA “12 X 12.”

1. What is the key?
2. When have we made a beginning on Step 3?
3. When do we become increasingly independent?
4. What are the results of self-sufficiency?
5. What dependence produces no baleful results?
6. Who are we likely to depend upon, when first sober?
7. What had been our whole trouble?
8. What is the Step 3 Prayer in the 12X12?

Broadly Effective: Program Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

Will I Let It?

1. “God As We Understand Him”

Some of us had “issues” with “God.” AA is not a church or a religious study group. Fortunately, AA leaves the definition of “God” open to us, as individuals. Consequently, The “Big Book” consistently adds “as we understand Him” to the term, “God.”

If we take issue with the terms “He/His” for God, we may choose to substitute the word “God” for every reference to “Him” or “He” in the AA “Big Book” and “12 X 12,” to conquer that sticking point. This simple substitution can be made as we are reading.

AA did have its start as part of a Christian Ministry (the Oxford Movement), so AA literature is colored with religious-sounding language. However, the founders believed that certain spiritual principles underlay all faiths. Over the years, many thousands of alcoholics from other traditions – Muslims, Native Americans, Buddhists, Taoists – all over the world, have found sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous. We AA’s apply the principles of the AA program to
our own inner convictions and cultural understanding. We can and should use our own words to make the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous “come alive” for us.

Regardless of our cultural or spiritual heritage (or lack of one) most of us benefit from an overhaul of our concept of God from time to time. As newcomers to AA, some of us were afraid of God. Some of us were very angry, felt let down and abandoned by God. Often these ideas were a part of what kept us drunk. We may have believed that God intends to punish us or that we were beyond forgiveness. Maybe we believed that God was either powerless to help us or didn’t care what becomes of us.

We re-read the portion of Chapter 4, “We Agnostics,” beginning with the paragraph that starts, “We found, too, that we had been worshipers. . . .” We review our “old ideas” about God and we take a look at the “deals” we’ve tried to make with this concept.

1. What concepts of God have we had that disappointed, shamed or exposed us to feeling like fools? AA encourages us to discard these “old ideas,” and to feel free to replace them. Describe a concept of God that we can trust, a God who loves us, just as we are. Our concept of God often changes as we grow in understanding, but this God will keep us sober.

2. Few of us join Alcoholics Anonymous “at the top of our game!” Admittedly, most of us bring with us a burden of guilt, loneliness and regret. “If I was an alcoholic horse thief and I want to stay sober, I better have a God who loves a sober horse thief!” We need a God who accepts us, especially the things we try to bury and forget, and who offers us hope. This is the God who will strengthen us and hold us up while we continue through the balance of the Steps. What does God accept about us that people may not? When we have done our Step 3 work to our satisfaction, we return to the Big Book and take Step 3, in the “Big Book,” repeating the Step 3 prayer with someone we trust and who we believe is also committed to these principles. If the language of the Step 3 prayer seems too flowery, we write it in our own words. If we are of another spiritual tradition, we adapt these concepts to our own faith.

1. Yes, AA does have Christian roots! Not only is AA literature sprinkled with “He’s” and “His’s,” but pages 13 and 30 (next to last paragraphs on each) “The Co-Founders of Alcoholics Anonymous,” AA WSO pamphlet P-53, make clear references to the Bible and to the fact that “most of us [early AA’s] were practicing Christians.” Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions, Tradition 3 account of the same incident paraphrases these comments.
2. Decisions! Decisions!

Perhaps we are unwilling or afraid to work Step Three because we have become uneasy about making decisions in general, not just decisions about God. We might worry that we’ll either fail in a commitment or that others might blame us, if things go wrong. Many of us might be on the defensive and not taking action for fear that we’ll be picked apart by fault-finders, critics and those who don’t like us.

Anxiety about being blamed or trapped into commitments by manipulation isn’t usually going to just evaporate! Action on our part is required. Here are some practices to help make decision-making easier:

1. We can start small, even with God. We can make a decision to “turn it over” just for today instead of “forever,” and take action on this.
2. We can ask God to give us trust and willingness to rely upon God’s power and mercy, just for today, right now.
3. We can try taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly, saying “The Serenity Prayer” when in a stressful situation. We can say it again and again and again listening to the words.
4. We can make small decisions in our lives, to get used to having the power of choice.
5. We can decide what we will order at a restaurant, for example, or how we want it cooked, instead of having it the same old way.
6. We can decide how we will set up our personal time and what we do with it.
7. We can decide who to approach in a room full of strangers. Or how we respond to those who seek us out.
8. We can learn to get help with big decisions. A key to good living is the habit of getting beneficial help and assistance for our lives.

3. Kicking Out the Bad Guys

Some of us have had our “inner critics” who will whisper, or shout, sneeringly, “You’re not going to make it;” “You’re no good, you piece of garbage!” or worse. Most of us have had experiences, at one time or another, with such a “committee” in our head that tries to tell us confusing, conflicting messages. Here is a method for “kicking out the bad guys” within, making it easier to hear “the still small voice” of a loving Higher Power.

1. Write a brief positive message that is the opposite of (contradicts) the attack-message from within. Examples: If the hate-message is “You’re not going to make it,” a positive message (affirmation) could be, “I am a child of God and I am safely in God’s care,” or “I win some and I lose some!” Whatever our positive statement, it should be easy to remember.
2. When the mean statements start to run in our head, we let ourselves hear it, let the feelings come up – tears or anger, shame or sadness – and while we are experiencing these, we shout
our positive statement back directly to the “bad guys.” It’s a good idea to do this somewhere people won’t think you are crazy – maybe the shower, or while sitting in traffic on the freeway, while walking on a private trail or at the beach when the surf is up.

3. Here’s the good news: The “bad guys” must leave when confronted by these positive statements, called “affirmations.” Why is this so? Because truth drives out falsehood! If one of our “bad guys” sneers at this tool, we can test this by affirming: “Truth drives out falsehood; I am God’s beloved child.” See what happens!

4. We remember to thank God as we understand God for this tool to drive out evil influences that have “set up shop” within our minds, tormenting our hearts. It is a truth that sets us free.

4. Drawing Our Higher (Inner) Power

1. Using markers or colored pencils, we draw a picture of a Higher Power that loves us as we are and will help us live a sober life today.

2. If drawing a picture of God makes us uncomfortable, we can draw a circle and fill it with colors or draw something that we feel might help us – maybe a spaceship to take us away? We don’t have to be too serious.

3. We put ourselves in the picture.

4. We put the picture up somewhere we will see it every day.

5. We talk to our picture. We ask our Higher Power to become real in our life. We tell it our needs, hopes, frustrations. We ask our Higher Power to guide our choices and decisions.
6. Replace your pictures after a month. Keep them six months or a year, for review.

5. Questions to Ponder:

1. What decisions have we made in the past that were disasters?

2. Have decisions kept us in situations which were objectionable, dangerous?

3. What is our current concept of God?

4. Are we willing to trust this concept of God with our will and our life?
Step Four

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. Optimism Built of Honesty

   In working the first three Steps, we 1) admit alcohol/other drugs has made our life unmanageable; 2) we survey resources that are bigger than our selves to restore us to sanity, and 3) we commit ourselves to accepting guidance and direction from God as we understand God. These first three Steps are able to help us admit to ourselves why we are in recovery. We also feel hope that living a sober, successful, joyous life is a realistic possibility for us.

   Ideally then, we approach Step Four with confidence in the AA program along with a growing relationship of trust in God as we understand God.

   But our sobriety doesn’t depend upon us being able to live up to this ideal. AA’s guideposts aim high, but our realistic goal is always progress not perfection. Most of us have tried to ignore and hide things about our pasts. We don’t relish the idea of stopping now and dealing with all that. And that’s only the objective stuff – not always the hardest part to face. There may be a deep well of sadness, loneliness and hurt and guilt. Who wants to open up those cold, deep places and peer inside?

   Although we admit the necessity of a “searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves,” many of us struggle with the task. Optimism to undertake Step Four can be found in the practical faith that we have already experienced from the benefits of honesty regarding our alcohol problem: We are sober today.

   Additionally, we have listened to other sober AA members share that completing the Step Four inventory marked the beginning of a lasting change for the better.

   So when we have admitted that we, too, want and need a different outlook, we are poised at the threshold of Step Four, with the God of our understanding as our source of power and comfort, to see us through the work ahead.
2. Causes & Conditions

Beginning at the paragraph in Chapter 5 in Alcoholics Anonymous after the Step Three prayer, “Next we launched . . .” we read the next three paragraphs. “Our liquor [other drugs] was but a symptom,” the text reads.

1. What are “the things in ourselves which had been blocking us”?
2. What are “the causes and conditions” we must get down to?

To answer these questions for ourselves, we must list the events and circumstances we are hiding from by means of drink/drugs. We create an outline of our life story, noting events that stand out. Under each age, we detail our losses, disappointments and bad judgements, along with hurts we’ve done to others, crimes we’ve committed and experiences that make us feel ashamed. Example:

A. Age birth to 5 years:

B. Grade school years:

C. Teens:

D. As an adult:
3. Assets & Liabilities

Although the “Big Book’s” metaphor of a “business’s stock in trade” may be confusing to those of us who are accustomed to computerized automation in retail establishments, we remind ourselves that we aren’t computerized. (Not yet, anyway!) We still have work “by hand” to figure out what qualities we are trying to “sell” to the world around us. We inventory our personal qualities and characteristics by drawing a balance sheet, placing our positive traits on one side and our weaknesses on the other. Use this list as an example, substituting in the facts about yourself:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Liabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>loyal to friends</td>
<td>lie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of humor</td>
<td>steal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong, healthy body</td>
<td>make unfair demands on people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We try to keep both lists balanced. We own the “good stuff” about ourselves. We dust off those hopes, ambitions and dreams that we feared were lost. We polish them up and let them be possible again. We let our kindness and caring be among the assets we claim, in sobriety. We don’t bog down or go overboard in listing a zillion little detailed incidents of what we’ve done, either. For example, we stick to “the bigger picture.” Rather than “I told someone I didn’t do it when I did,” or “I said I lost the money when in fact I spent it,” etc., we just list “lie” and “cheat” as liabilities.

4. Resentments

Now we read the next section in the "Big Book," about resentments. We look up that word in a dictionary to be sure we are clear about what it means. Using the outline in the "Big Book," we list who and what we feel is against us, why we believe this is so and what we might lose (or not get)
as a result.

**GRUDGE LIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I’m resentful at . . .</th>
<th>The Cause:</th>
<th>Affects my:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. We write down the people, places or things we actively dislike, hate or reject. If we were to "live and let live" with these people or situations, what are we afraid might happen?

2. We look at our basic drives: Personal Security (Physical Survival and Safety), Emotional Security (Commitments and Bonds), Sex (Gratification of Physical Appetites) and Esteem (Self-Respect and Identity.) How are one or more of these, our "basic instinctual drives" threatened in each instance on our list?

3. We consider, “How did we come to be in a position to be in the power of these people, places and institutions, physically or mentally? What is "my part" in the situation?” If, for example, I was born into a family where I was neglected or abused, am I still behaving as though I were a child? If I am in jail or facing stiff fines, how did this come to pass, from "my end"? If I believe I am the victim of prejudice, do I have the courage to search out resources to give myself the support I need to feel appreciated and esteemed for who I am?

5. **Fears List**

We read the next four paragraphs (*Alcoholics Anonymous.*) We then construct a Fears List, and add the items from our Grudge List that we are afraid we might lose, might not keep or gain, and what we fear may happen to us or to others that we love. We also add any objective fears such as fear of heights, fear of snakes, spiders, dogs, fear of flying, etc., as well as subjective fears, such as fears of being alone, fears of being disliked, etc. We also admit our superstitious fears. Examples of superstitious fears include fears such as, “If I admit I feel a certain way, I will jinx the outcome of something.” We also list any fears we have which we hide or ones we may be ashamed to have, such as fears about our own inner character or nature.
FEAR LIST

a. What is the relationship of self-reliance to fear?
b. What is a better way?
c. What can provide us with serenity to match calamity?
d. What does a working faith provide?

6. Sex

Now about sex. Read on through “...to yield would mean heartache.” in Alcoholics Anonymous.

A. What are the extremes of thought
described on this topic? Are there other aspects of this conflict not mentioned – same sex relationships, for example, that we contact in our daily lives? (Remember, it was a very courageous act to even mention sex when the “Big Book” was written!)

B. What does the “Big Book” suggest we do about such controversies?

We find it helpful to write an inventory of our sexual experience and conduct, using a balance sheet format similar to the one used for Assets and Liabilities. We go through our history:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex Experiences</th>
<th>“My Part” in These</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>numerous sex contacts while drunk</td>
<td>loss of control, selfishness, lust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheated on my mate</td>
<td>inconsiderate, dishonest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unplanned pregnancy</td>
<td>careless, irresponsible, hurt others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. We may find instances where, perhaps as a child, we have been exploited by others sexually. We list these, placing the hurt or humiliation we had under the heading of the sex experience, since that was our actual experience of the sex. Across from this, under “My Part,” we list how we reacted. Have we feared or acted out upon others due to the violations that occurred?

D. We also list those sex relations we have or have had that were not selfish, but instead were tender, affectionate, fun, nurturing and rewarding. Even if these were damaged or lost due to drinking, we still own these experiences for what they were once.
E. What are our personal ideals regarding sex and sexual relationships?

F. What is the test we subject each relationship to?

F. Where do our sexual powers come from?

G. Who can judge our sex situation?

H. What is likely to happen if we continue to use people sexually?

I. What is it suggested we do, if sexual matters remain very troublesome?

7. Summary

After reading the balance of the chapter, we go back to the "Balance Sheet."

A. We add "willingness" and "able to complete a tough task" to our Assets column.

B. We let our sponsor and our fellowship friends know we have finished the Step Four Inventory from the AA Big Book.
8. Step Four: Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

AA sponsors often advise the newcomer to "stick to the Big Book" for the Steps in the beginning and work the inventory as outlined above. Most fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous have established within them special meetings for studying the Steps and Traditions of the AA program, reading through the AA text, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (the AA "12 X 12"). These "Step Meetings" are an excellent way to get familiar with these further studies on the 12-Steps while hearing how other AAs have applied them to their own lives.

The Step Four Inventory in the AA “12 X12” takes an alternative approach in two parts to the inventory and the exercise is structured differently. Many AA members report they have found this approach especially helpful in their second or third year of sobriety, at a time when they felt called upon to re-evaluate their “root causes” at a greater depth. Some members may, however, find it easier to relate to the “12 X 12's” inventory procedure from the start. It is a matter of choice. In whatever way we choose to utilize the inventories, we are reminded to try to remain mindful to avoid bogging down into too great an amount of detail or morbid self-absorption in this or in any of the Steps, lest our usefulness to others be reduced or negated once again.

First Part: Instincts Out of Balance

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* goes into detail, when it comes to the Step Four inventory, on how our basic instinctive drives, necessary for continuation of the species, often "far exceed their proper functions." It asserts that our instincts for Survival, Reproduction, Emotional Security and Society are "perfectly necessary and right, and surely God-given." Read the first three pages of Step Four, ending with "...with other people who have instincts, too."

1. What happens when a person places sex desire ahead of everything else?

2. What may become of the person who hoards money?

3. What becomes of the person who is determined to depend completely upon a stronger person for guidance and protection?

4. What do people do who have become "power mad"? What do such people throw to the winds?

5. What can we not experience when we become a battleground for the instincts?

6. How do other people react?
7. When our instinctive drives are out of balance, who are we in conflict with? Who else?

8. How have we used alcohol/drugs to fuel or to justify our own instincts out of balance?

9. In what personality-type does self-loathing fuel a desire to escape, to drown out our guilt?

10. What type believes that drinking/drug use itself was really the only thing wrong with us, as people?

11. Who is inclined to blame, hate or despise others for their situation or to justify their behaviors?

12. What is our first need, if we are seriously disturbed?

Part Two: The Seven Deadly Sins Inventory

Beginning with the paragraph of the AA "12 X 12", "To see how erratic emotions victimized us . . ." read through a portion of the text, ending with "These are the first fruits of Step Four."

13. On a separate sheet of paper, list the seven deadly sins, leaving plenty of room under each category.

14. How does pride show up in our behavior? We list ways we feel superior to others, different from others, less or worse than others. How does pride keep us "apart from" rather than "a part of" life?

15. In what situations do we want what we want, no matter what happens to other people? What sorts of things are involved? Money? Power? Collections of things?

16. How and when do our appetites drive us, sexually? Will we say anything to get what we want? Will we lie to ourselves to "make it all right?"
17. Do we believe that anger is a "normal reaction" to being opposed? What else angers us? Do we act in anger? (Spite, revenge, violence, character assassination, lies and gossip?)

18. Do we eat more than we work off in a day? Binge on sugar, fat, starch? Are we "comfort eaters?" Do we eat and throw up? Starve ourselves? How do we look in a mirror?

19. Are there people we feel "have it easy" where we "have it hard?" Are there people who think they are smarter than we are, better looking than we are, richer or stronger or more successful than we are, that we really dislike? Do we hope "they get their's?"

20. How basically lazy are we? Do we "kill" time? Do we lay around when we ought to be doing something? Do less than our share on the job? Let bills or getting back to people slide?

Read the balance of the chapter.

21. We answer the questions posed in each paragraph, reviewing our instinctive drives out of balance and how these have lead us to err, in attitude or behavior.

We outline our life history taking these questions into account.

22. What conditions I cannot change have been especially troubling?

23. Am I willing to take the measures necessary to shape my life to conditions as they are?

24. What twisted relations with family, friends and society have we been especially stupid and stubborn about?

25. How have we shown the inability to form true partnership with another human being?

26. What do we need to do if we deny having these problems?
Broadly Effective: Program Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

What Is True About Me?

1. Inventory Your "Stuff"

Most people enter recovery with "things in a mess." Some of us have boxes of "stuff"—half finished projects, unanswered mail, jumbled up tools—that are waiting for "inventory." We find out a lot about ourselves when we sort through our "stuff."6

1. What are we willing to let go of—give away, sell, toss?
2. What do we cherish and want to retain?
3. What are we willing to complete?

2. Inventory in Pictures

Find yourself angry when you hear a certain tone of voice? Have a compulsion to leave when asked certain questions? Have behaviors, likes and dislikes, kept you from achieving your goals? Often attitudes and behaviors are rooted in memories and events that are buried in the past. Our conscious minds falter. We can write down causes and conditions but still miss the mark. Here is a tool for recapturing lost information, by doing the personal inventory with our creative, non-verbal mind:

1. We start by sharing the confusing “quirk” with the God of our understanding. Example: “I get angry when I hear people arguing, even when it has nothing to do with me.”

2. We let ourselves feel what we feel about it, and we let our God see this, too. Example: “I feel complete loss of control, like my safety is shattered and anything can happen, when people start shouting. I feel like hitting them, trashing them, doing anything to make them shut up and stop.” My skin gets clammy and I feel light-headed. I want to run.

3. We draw while we are experiencing our thoughts and feelings. We find it is usually easiest to start by drawing what acts as our “trigger” (the behavior that sets off our “quirk”). This can be simple stick figures, by the way—not necessarily great art. Then we add colors to express our emotions, the energies we sense in the situations. Relax! It’s our picture!
4. We put ourselves in the pictures and then we add anything we would like to have but feel blocked away from by this “quirky” situation.

5. We put our picture somewhere we can look at it each day for a week. We ask the God of our understanding to open our heart and mind and reveal to us what we need to know about this “quirk” that is affecting our lives.

6. We keep an open mind by remembering that we are now adults in the care and service of our Creator, no longer weak, helpless victims of fate. Even memories of early childhood events can now be used for healing because we are not stuck in the past. *God is not powerless over our past!*

7. We add what we learn to our personal inventory and complete the rest of the Steps. We talk to someone who respects these techniques, sharing our pictures, feelings and insights in Step Five.⁶
3. “Outside Issues” and Step Four

1. We list any of what AA calls “outside issues” that are factors in our life. These include using drugs other than alcohol, mental/emotional illnesses, post traumatic stress, over-eating, sexual acting out, gambling, over-spending issues, codependency (living in reaction to or attempting to control other people.)

2. How do these “outside issues” relate to our alcoholism? Do we drink because of them, or to try to control them? Do we do them instead of drinking, or to medicate our symptoms?

3. When we are “dry,” do these “outside issues” get worse? Go away?

4. We place these “outside issues” on the Liabilities side of our Balance Sheet.

4. Questions to Ponder:

1. Is there a “guilty secret” in our past – crimes, sex behavior?
2. Do we have secret fantasies of love or revenge?
3. Are there periods of time lost in “black outs” we can’t remember?
4. Are there childhood memories, even vague ones, that bring up feelings of loss?
Endnotes:

1. If we are in an institution where what we include in our personal inventory may be reviewed by people who are officers of the court or otherwise obligated to disclose criminal behaviors and incidents to authorities, we are realistic about what we write down on paper. The AA program is intended to be confidential, anonymous, from one alcoholic to another. We do not use Step 4 properly if we “turn ourselves in” by writing down information that will surely get us in trouble if it is shared with authorities. Our decisions about what to do about these matters are made “down the road,” in Step 9, after we have worked Steps 5, 6, 7 and 8 with a sponsor and have received a Higher Power’s guidance on what to do.

3. If, indeed, we are still a child, it is up to us to go for help once we realize that we are in an unsafe or abusive situation. Help is out there! We talk to someone in authority who we can trust and who will make sure we are protected from further injury/risk from the abuser(s.)

4. Don’t have a sponsor? We get one! If we are in a facility or program that provides counseling, we go over this material with our primary. We cease trying to "go it alone."

5. Did we get sober/clean with just the clothes on our back? Did we lose or throw away or sell all of our material possessions? We inventory what happened to our "stuff" if we are forced to start out again. We make it a "fresh" start by taking a look at how we have acted out things in the way we throw things away, sell them or trash them. Let’s be good to ourselves in sobriety!
Step Five

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

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. Phase I: An End to Going It Alone

Our decision to go through with Step 5 marks the practical beginning to the end of our physical, social and spiritual isolation as human beings. This is, of course, a radical departure from the past for most of us. If we have been following the suggestions we have encountered in the preceding Steps, our attitude toward self-disclosure has already begun to shift.

We have already begun to let some people in. We have exposed some of our feelings to a sponsor or counselor; we have asked for explanations of what we could make no sense of in the reading materials. We may have shared some of our fears, perhaps some guilty secrets. This has probably taken work, but our willingness to make an effort to “do what it takes” to remain sober has encouraged us. We have taken risks. Working Step Five now will not be the major hurdle it may have first appeared. We will find in our hearts that we are ready to carry out Step Five.

In all likelihood, We have probably held back things in our sharing at meetings or in our talks with others in the program such as crimes committed and not discovered, sexual incidents where hurt, betrayal, violation of trust (or even of law) occurred. We kept such things to ourselves; we left out these “details” even with our sponsors. When we take Step Five, however, we commit ourselves to include all this holding back nothing.

We take Step Five to get free of the prison we have built ourselves – a prison built of solid walls of our falsehoods and deceptions, our secret guilts, our senses of failure, of shame, our fantasies or plots for vengeance. We either let the healing of recovery reach us, in every nook and cranny of our hearts, minds and history, or we remain stuck in this prison.

Read the first two pages of Chapter 6, “Into Action,” in Alcoholics Anonymous:

1. When we did our personal inventory, what was our aim with our Creator?
2. Have we shared all of our character defects and misdeeds with God as we understand God?
3. How well does a solitary self appraisal usually work?
4. Why do people relapse?
5. What do we have to do to gain the humility, fearlessness and honesty necessary to stay sober?

6. How does our desire to “look good” to others block us from recovery?

2. Phase II: Who Can We Trust?

If we have thought, up until now, that recovery was just about stopping drinking/using, completing Step Five changes our mind. Before we can go through with sharing our life story with another human being, we may have to challenge some very old habits that go hand in hand with our alcoholic/addicted way of life. Has our ability to trust others been damaged? Have we had the habit of seeing others as potential threats or as pawns to be manipulated? Have we associated with people we had to, or felt we had to, impress or appease? If we are going to complete Step Five, we will have to be willing to let go of these habits with at least one other human being. There is no way around it. We review the portion of Chapter Five in the “Big Book” that is read at the beginning of AA meetings. We note the phrases that begin: “At some of these we balked,” and ends, “. . . the result was nil until we let go absolutely.”

Our willingness to confide in someone will come, if we are honest about the concerns we have. Usually, our issues of trust are wrapped up in our distrust of our own good judgement, when it comes to picking our allies! We haven’t always been our own best friends, when it comes to choosing a confident. So our challenge, at least for this one-time activity of completing Step Five, is to make a wise and appropriate choice. We do well to reflect carefully before taking action. “Will we discuss this with our sponsor, a Christian mentor, a rabbi, a priest, a spiritual leader in another tradition?” Step Five isn’t casual conversation; it is spiritual work. It signifies our willingness to trust ourselves to a kinder way of life.

The human being we work with should be someone we conclude is a person of the spirit. He or she should “walk his or her talk” and should “have what we want” in terms of integrity and character. This person may or may not be in AA.

Beginning where we left off in Alcoholics Anonymous, (“We must be entirely honest with somebody . . .) read the next five paragraphs, ending with “. . . walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.”

1. Who will consult a priest or minister? 
What must we not do, if taking Step Five with a family member?

2. What three things will “the right person” be willing to do?

3. Once we have taken Step Five, how can we look at the world?

4. When alone, what do we experience?

5. What becomes of our fears?
6. What will we begin to feel?

3. **When We Share, We Learn**

   Read Step 5 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (the AA “12 X 12.”) If we are working the Steps for the first time with a sponsor who recommends utilizing AA’s text, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the AA “Big Book,”) as a principal guide, the following questions summarize points covered in the “12 X 12.”

1. **What does Step Five teach us about forgiveness?**

2. **Can we now trust our own objectivity in self-appraisal?**

3. **What is the emotional and spiritual experience of Step Five?**

   Attending a Step Study meeting is always a good choice for this initial survey as well as for more detailed consideration of the Steps, if such meetings exist in our community.

4. **Step Five in Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions**

   Here is a more thorough study-guide to Step Five in the “12 X 12”:

   1. **What do all the Steps do that is contrary to our natural desires?**

   2. **If we have swept the search light of Step Four over our careers, what do we have an urgent need to do?**

   3. **When we seek an easier way to deal with Step Five, what do we leave out?**

   4. **What symptoms do even those who stay “dry” suffer from skimping on Step Five?**

   5. **What is one thing we are likely to receive from Step Five?**

   6. **What is Step Five the beginning of?**

   7. **What is a second dividend of Step Five, along the road to straight thinking and solid honesty?**

   8. **What two difficulties are overcome by talking to another person, not just to God?**

   9. **When should we make a beginning?**

   10. **What is the real test of the situation?**

   11. **Do we seek someone who has been able to surmount serious difficulties in sobriety to hear our Step Five?**

   12. **What is a second dividend of Step**
Broadly Effective: Program Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

**Talk It Over**

1. **Fifth Step at AA Meetings**

   It is often said, “We are doing Fifth Step when we share at meetings.”

   In a general way, when we share our experience, strength and hope, we do open up our personal inventory at group level. This helps others to identify with us as members of Alcoholics Anonymous, to the extent that they share our experiences. It is not helpful, however, for us to shock or to expose the group to intimate details that may burden them. 12-Step programs all ask us to pledge, “What you hear here, let it stay here!” But anonymity breaks do sometimes occur. We are asking for trouble if we “dump” intimate personal information in a meeting. Here are some guidelines for personal sharing at group level that many have found helpful:

1. We share general information, not specific details, to illustrate our points about our drinking history and behaviors. Example: If we robbed to pay for booze or drugs, we may want to share this fact to illustrate how out of control our addiction was. Better, however, to not say, “I held up the XY Market on Plodon Street last May for $$$.” This information helps no one’s chances at sobriety. It will be shocking to some. It may prompt someone to break our anonymity to others in the fellowship or perhaps to the police. We don’t burden people in AA meetings with criminal secrets.

2. We resist the temptation to share explicit details about sexual incidents which occurred while drinking/drugging. Gossip about these matters can be damaging to our own program or to other people.

3. When in doubt about sharing a particular problem or troubling bit of history, we share one-on-one with someone trustworthy first, before opening up the topic at meeting level.

4. We don’t mention names, ever, at AA meetings. If events have occurred where we have been the victim of a crime, we discuss these with a sponsor and appropriate professionals.
Here are some techniques for learning *assertive communication* skills. Step Five is a one-on-one exercise in this kind of talk. We are neither aggressive nor making excuses in *assertive* speech. Without forcing our point, we disclose how we look at things, how we feel. When we are *assertive*, we are *poised*, we are *able to listen*, we *think before we speak* and we *tell the truth*.

1. **We listen to ourselves.** In a conversation – at home, at work – we imagine listening to ourselves on the radio. How do we sound? Is our voice loud? Are we adding details to our story to make ourselves sound better? Are we applying pressure to the other person?
2. **Take a breath before answering.**
When someone asks us a question, we take a deep breath before we respond. Even if we have a “ready answer,” we take a breath before we speak.

3. **We speak from experience.** We don’t make “you” statements about other people’s feelings or thoughts.

4. **We resist the urge to embellish or “make up something”** when in doubt. We risk letting others hear our hopes, preferences, limits, boundaries. We resist the impulse to “lay down the law.”

3. Interaction and Discussion

With a sponsor or program friend, we review our personal experience with the above exercises. Where do we see ourselves, in terms of strengths and weaknesses, reflecting on the chart above?

4. How does defensiveness, guilt, fear of consequences or fear of exposure to shame or abuse impact any area of the chart?

5. Does being preoccupied or distracted interfere? (Hungry? Angry? Lonely? Tired?)

4. “Outside Issues” and Step Five

1. Have we admitted our “outside issues” such as abuse of other drugs, co-dependency, mental/emotional illness, post traumatic stress, sexual acting out, gambling, over-spending or over-eating to our sponsor (and/or whomever we did Step 5 with?)

2. Have we avoided the temptation to try to substitute a need for specialized, technical or professional aid on these issues with talking to AA friends about them?

3. Have we rationalized “outside issues” as “not important” if we just don’t drink?

4. Do we actively seek out appropriate “winners” – those who have specialized knowledge and skills on these topics – as spiritual and/or professional helpers?
5. Questions to Ponder:

1. What do we fear that God as we understand God will not forgive?

2. What are we ashamed to tell anyone about ourselves?

3. What “isn’t important enough” to share or discuss with someone?

4. Who do we know that accepts us and respects us just as we are?
Step Six

“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. “Returning home . . .”

AA’s “Big Book” devotes only two paragraphs to advising us on how to best approach Step Six. This information begins where the discussion of Step Five ends, in Chapter 6, “Into Action” of Alcoholics Anonymous, “Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour. . . .”

Clearly then, it was anticipated that early AA’s would undertake Step Six just as soon as they had shared their personal inventory with another in Step Five. This is still a good idea.

1. What do we do as we begin the hour of review of what we’ve done?

2. How do we use the “Big Book” in our review?

3. How is what we’ve done so far similar to an arch or gateway into new life?

4. When we think of the foundation we have laid, how is each honest effort like a stone?

5. Have we tried to substitute a lie or a half-truth for the real thing?

6. Are we trying to put our lives together with just words which, like mortar made without sand, will crumble without the grit of hard work needed to bind words and wishes into a lasting monument built of action?

7. If we are satisfied with our efforts, are we now ready and willing to have God remove our weaknesses and shortcomings? Are we willing to be changed from our old ways to the new ones possible to us as sober people?

8. If we are unable or unwilling to really renounce all of our shortcomings, are we willing to ask God as we understand God to give us the willingness, over time?

This is the entire process of Step Six in the AA textbook, Alcoholics Anonymous. Many sponsors
recommend that we apply this method of Step Six to at least our first “round” of working the 12 Steps. Some members stick with it indefinitely.

2. Step Six in the AA “12 X 12”

_Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions_ (the AA “12 X 12”) spends _twenty-four paragraphs_ on Step Six. Why the big difference from the “Big Book”’s brief instructive two? The answer has a lot to do with timing and development. Many, probably most, sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous find, through the rich experience of living substance-free lives, that we begin to loosen our hold on some behaviors that may not have seemed significant “problems” initially. Often, this includes reflecting on behaviors we took for granted or saw as central aspects of our characters. In a word, over time, and at our own pace, we tend to develop _willingness_ to change. Step Six in AA’s “12X12” provides an aid to self-examination, meant to be used again and again. It is intended as a yardstick for _candid_ reflection as well as for good natured discussion among peers, in study groups free of stuffiness, pomp or self-destructive meanness, as we each proceed toward _entire_ willingness to have God remove our faults.

How and why does such a willingness come to pass? Remembering “_we aren’t saints,”_ we sense that the “self-will run riot” we encounter in Step Three continues to plague and torment us, despite our best efforts. This motivates us to consider our characters. As we adjust to living life on life’s terms, we are become more willing to grow along spiritual lines. This is the natural maturing process.

What evolves over time in us represents a shift in how we are able to conceive of and accept _ourselves_ – as people closer to an ideal we personally respect. This is satisfying.

In the beginning, it can be helpful to review the four paragraphs in Chapter 5 of the “Big Book” that begin, “_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...”_ when we weigh our personal challenges in Step Six.

As we proceed to read through the text, we then consider the following questions:

1. Regarding the maturity signified by “separating the men from the boys,” what qualities is such a person said to be capable of?
2. What character defect do many members of Alcoholics Anonymous affirm God has removed?
3. What do nature and God abhor?
4. What is God unlikely to remove?
5. What is the measure of our character defects?
6. Along with forgiving our faults if we ask, what does God ask, as our part?
7. Is this something we do overnight?
8. How many of us are “entirely willing” to give up all our character defects?
9. What is the best we can do?

10. What is a common sticking point?

11. What is our dangerous stance when our instincts and self-centeredness are running the show?

Now, we inventory these areas in ourselves, using The Seven Deadly Sins questions posed in the “12X12”:

12. Do we have any of these defects at rock bottom levels? (Are they listed on our Step Four inventory?)

13. Are we driven to prove ourselves? Do we strive to dominate in every situation? Do we avoid settings where we have to ask questions, fall in line or follow orders? Do we “dis,” “kid,” or put down others?

14. Do we want the rewards more than we want to make a contribution with the efforts we make? Are we more interested in accumulating than in using things and resources?

15. Do we lie or put up false appearances to gain sex or use sex to gain favors or power over people?

16. Are we zealots, always on some sort of crusade or mad at the world? Do we find fault? Play the devil’s advocate? Use sarcasm? Make ourselves hard to please?

17. Do we indulge ourselves in food or other forms of creature comforts that are wasteful, extravagant? Do we demand a lot of care and attention?

18. Do we neglect contributing what we can, with the qualities we have and the resources at our disposal while wishing we had the qualities, lifestyles, bank accounts or social status of others? Are we spiteful to those we feel “don’t deserve” the good fortune they have?

19. Do we let things go, waste or squander food, clothing, money, time? While we work, do we really wish we were somewhere else – on a desert island? – and not wholeheartedly making a contribution in the present? Do we hang back?

Finally, we answer these summary questions:

20. How much perfection do most of us want?

21. What is “the exact point” of Step Six?

22. What is the urgent thing?
Broadly Effective: Program Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

Let Go

1. Habitual Behaviors & Ingrained Attitudes

Here are several Step Six Topic Exercises for workshops or discussion groups:

I. We are probably more used to looking at life in terms of problems we face rather than character defects we have. If we wake up in jail, for example, we see that as a problem, not a character defect. We may be sharply aware of several problems we face in life, but only dimly conscious of having character defects. Step Six reminds us to approach problem-solving by becoming willing to change something about ourselves.

1. If we are, in fact, in jail, for example, what behaviors in ourselves placed us there?

2. Whatever our current situation, what choices have we made that place us where we are?

3. If we feel our choices are or have been limited, how can our attitude affect our outlook now?

II. The character defects we seek to release in Step Six are the precise behaviors and attitudes that keep us bound to our problems. Since most of the behavior that causes us big trouble we do over and over, our character defects are usually habitual behaviors and ingrained attitudes. We have found that many of our problems simply will not and cannot go away until we become willing to let go of the thinking and acting that ties us to them!

Habits are essential structures in our lives. They are our practical boundaries, the limits we really live by, whether we're aware of them or not. We are defined by our habits, both to ourselves and to those around us. Habit accounts for how we spend most of our time. If our lives are going to change and stay changed, we are going to have to become willing to say goodbye to some habitual behaviors.

This can be a lot like saying goodbye to old friends. A present character defect often is an old coping behavior that once was a useful part of our survival kit. We usually don't become aware what old routines have become excess baggage until they cause us problems.

1. We think through our daily routines. What do we do the same each day? [List.] We include things like how we dress (which shoe goes on first?) Our hygiene habit, etc.
2. What percent of “who we are” is “set in stone” more or less, by our physical habits? How do we react to having these upset or disturbed?

3. How much of what we think about is limited to certain topics, interacting with the same people, doing the same job or work?

4. Are there subject, topics, people we seldom or never mention, discuss or interact with? Fear or hate?

III. One category that usually comes up for scrutiny after a period of sobriety are behaviors other than drinking that have health or state-of-mind impacts on us. Many of us used tobacco, or had chemical imbalances caused by poor diet, lack of sleep or exercise or habitual anxiety when we sobered/cleaned up. Compared to our drinking/using, these habits may have seemed insignificant, if problems at all, especially if we faced legal consequences.

We may not even consider being “willing to have God remove” these habits or issues when we first work Step Six. Being sober/clean was all we cared about – and rightly so! Still, over time, we often do come to see our health issues as impacting the quality of our sobriety. We grow and change, in recovery. In God’s time, we become increasingly willing to let health have the flesh.

IV. Another bracket of habitual attitudes that we often want to revise after a period of sobriety includes areas within our mental outlook where we may have been ill-informed or closed-minded.

The statement, “People don’t change behaviors that work,” is truer than we may realize. Coming across like a know-it-all might have been a way to bluster into leadership, or maybe, having fixed ideas was just a good way to “turn down static” from other people? But the closed mind clearly isn’t helpful in a classroom or a study group. We discover, it doesn’t build trust and understanding between friends, either! As we come to rely upon a Higher Power to protect us, we can risk opening our

Manipulating people or defensive touchiness, either of which may have been lifesavers for us in a world of threats and uproar, are also examples of behaviors that can outlive their usefulness when we change our way of life. We can continue these habits – treat people like it is their job to put up with us and then react to them defensively if they resist, if that's been a style that’s worked for us “out there.” Now, in safer situations, we can fail to make friends because we don't know how to let our own guard down. If we continue to feel
and act more controlling or sensitive than is actually warranted, we negate our own power. We lose out in situations where we could take a more positive role. We can feel pretty foolish when we realize we’ve been shadow boxing and knocking ourselves down for the count!

1. How teachable am I?

2. What new areas of life am I exploring, learning skills in, doing service in, making friends in, today? [List]

3. Are my views on religion, politics, sex, race, world affairs, the news, open to discussion with anyone? In a small group? In a community forum?

V. A third kind of behaviors and attitudes for potential re-working consists of the behaviors that may have been useful to us when we were “out there” in the drinking-world but which no longer serve us in sobriety.

Let’s take a look in the mirror: A lot of us have some pretty objectionable behaviors we don’t challenge right away when we sober/clean up. We may be people who create a crisis: Are we always in a tizzy about one thing or another, demanding a great deal of attention, going over our woes in great detail, spending hours on the phone? Or, maybe we like to blow our cap and let off steam. This sort of behavior might have been acceptable in a rowdy bar, or useful in getting people to back off. Sometimes, though, our old coping mechanisms and defenses become our biggest liabilities, in our sober life.

We aren’t in a rowdy bar, after all; we are in an AA meeting, or perhaps at a sober social gathering. Soaking up attention or blowing a cork doesn’t work in these situations. Isn’t it time to learn some new ways to relate, socially? Are we honestly willing to let God remove the sniveling or the loud mouth?

1. What “coping behaviors” still hang on into sobriety? Do we compulsively “make nice” (as though there were an explosive drunk in the room to placate) whenever a disagreement or difference of opinion occurs?

2. Do we seize control or give detailed instructions in every situation (as though the others are incompetent drunks, not to be trusted)?

3. Do we fail to complete projects or to fill requests (so we won’t be “to blame”)?

4. Do we have an habitual “attitude”—such as hostility, defensiveness, defeatism or cool indifference – to protect ourselves, as though we were still in a world where we have no program nor a Higher Power we could trust?
VI. Sadly, too, if we fail to review our habitual behaviors regularly, we are likely to build ourselves some new ruts and/or some new walls to keep us lonely once again! Stubborn resistance to change has a price: We may notice, after we are “dry,” we don’t get the same degree of attention we did as newcomers. If we are inclined to become self-satisfied, other group members have no choice but to “let us be.” No longer do people come up to us and say, “Bubba, you may drink again unless you cut out the pot smoking!” Or we might start Thirteenth Stepping, conning people out of money, stealing groceries, etc.

There is a kind of “acceptance” as “dry” that comes as people get used to us, even if our private behaviors are alienating or offending people. An old timer described the phenomenon, “If you fight hard enough for your character defects, you get to keep ‘em!” A person can stay “dry” and perhaps that is enough for some. “From the point of view of the courts,” some may say, “if you and I don’t drink and drive a car, that’s recovery enough!”

2. We Are Not Our Character Defects

1. Have we mistakenly identified ourselves with our bad habits?

2. Have we believed we are our reactions?

3. Are we angry?

4. Has our own confused thinking about these faults, possibly some of our earliest learned behaviors, worked against us to mark our lives?
5. If we could live in perfect faith that our basic drives and instinctive appetites are normal, healthy and that satisfying them is part of God’s intention for us all, who would we still have on our “grudge list,” if anyone?

6. To the extent that we are blind, stubborn, weak or underhanded, we are out of touch with the Real Person within us that God created and intends us to be. Our desires and appetites push us to act. If we lack the skills and faith to work out healthy ways to satisfy our needs, how do we impose on other people? How do we give in to our need’s unreasonable demands?

3. Self-Concept & “It’s Just the Way I Am”

Alcoholism/addiction goes hand in hand with what professionals call “low self-esteem.” Often, alcoholics/addicts habitually put themselves “one down” in relationships, perhaps without even realizing it. We also may gravitate to unsafe situations, thinking them “normal.” “It’s just the way I am,” we may say, or “It’s just the way people are.” An old timer stated, “I had no idea what was healthy and what was dysfunctional behavior. I was used to having things all screwed up, undependable, even dangerous, around me. Even sober, I kept running into walls built by my insane expectations that I just couldn’t see. I felt trapped and I didn’t know why. How could I be willing to let something go if I couldn’t identify it? I was miserable until I rethought my ‘old ideas’ about normal!”

Here are some questions that are offered as “door openers” to possible low self-esteem ways of looking at life and at other people. At the end of the exercise, there is a key to indicate what sorts of issues may be involved when we’ve answered “yes” to one or more of these questions. Once we have an idea where our outlook may be distorted, we can begin to ask God to help us find the willingness to let go and be changed by recovery tools.

1. Here we trained to take on responsibility for the feelings (especially hostile or suspicious feelings) of one or more authority figures we depended upon in our life?

2. Do we then feel justified in rejecting or betraying him/her?

3. Do we have persistent feelings of resentment, grief or fear toward one of the sexes as a group? Do we have nightmares or dread of being hurt/ridiculed by men or women?

4. Has our (job/career) (gambling) (eating) (sex-life) (relationships) (control) (______) become an escape from other areas of our life? Is it nearly all we do or think about?
5. Do intimate relationships tend to drain us? Do we attract people who want us to entertain them? Make their decisions? Sympathize with their constant problems?

6. Do we see ourselves as engaging in a kind of game, socially, when it comes to sex relations? Are there “rules” of the chase we follow or flaunt? Is there an element of “scoring points?”

7. Do we see ourselves as passive, acted upon by others, when it comes to personal and property rights boundaries? Do we feel “taken over” by the demands of others us?

8. Do we justify not pursuing our goals because we expect someone close to us will be angry or feel abandoned if we do? Do we “guess” what they will say rather than ask? Have we misread situations or missed opportunities as a result?

9. Are there real or fantasy figures whose love, admiration or respect we expect to earn as a result of our achievements? Are there people we fear we will lose if we fail?

10. Have we experienced feeling afraid, exposed or enraged in situations where the “rules” were suspended or ignored?

11. Do we have memories of being censured or punished for expressing our feelings, as a child? Were we told we hurt others feeling when we tried to stand up for ourselves? Did love seem conditional or second-guessing what someone else wanted to hear or do?

12. Did we learn a concept of God that judges, tests and punishes, isn’t merciful, doesn’t love us? Do we still have a “committee” in our head that picks us apart and sneers at our hopes, goals?
If we answered “yes” to questions 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, we may find that domestic violence or sexual abuse/incest experiences are influencing the ways we relate to people today, especially those who are close.

If we answered “yes” to questions 2, 5, 6, 10, 12, we may want to examine how power and control over others has become a way to feel safe in a world that may seem to hold many threats.

A “yes” answers to questions 4 indicate a tendency to substitute one addiction for another. Many more questions could be asked when it comes to this tendency to “stop one problem and start another” which many alcoholic/addicts report is always a temptation. We have been known to substitute all sorts of things, even a lot of “good” things – exercise, talking on the phone, college degrees – for our old “bad” ones. Of course, the key to whether we are abusing an outlet has to do with how compulsively we pursue it, to the exclusion of other responsibilities and/or our relations with people and our service to others and God.

Willingness is the key to taking our inventory of habits that may be “taking over” our lives.

Seeking “outside help” when appropriate is recommended in the AA “Big Book,” page 133!

4. “Outside issues” and Step Six

Some of us may wonder if we are “a special case” in terms of Step Six in the AA program when it comes to certain behaviors because we have an “outside issues” that affects us as much (or maybe more, we think,) than our alcoholism. Such issues include post traumatic stress disorder, mental/emotional illness, addiction to other drugs, co-dependency, gambling over-eating, or another acting out behavior, as a primary disorder or a serious diagnosed medical condition.

When it comes to considering the principles of recovery, as outlined in the 12-Steps, and what sorts of “defects” we can bring to a loving God, it is good to remember: God is not powerless!

Many successful members of Alcoholics Anonymous, to cultivate their own integrity, use Step Six as a “hub” from which to address any issues that crop up, as challenges to character, in the walk of sobriety. They find this a “keep it simple” choice, a way to integrate growth over time, in every area of their lives, including their dealings with professional therapists and health care providers.

Here are some questions we can apply to these sorts of issues:

1. Are we seeking appropriate “outside help and support” for our “outside issues” or are we tempted to stuff them, substituting our AA participation while just letting them slide?

2. Are we willing to be restored to health and sanity in these areas of our life, as part of our recovery from alcoholism in the care and in the service of a loving Higher Power?
3. Are we willing to cease saying, “No, never!” with regard to letting go of these issues? And keep an open mind?

5. Draw A Free Me!

Is there a goal we have for ourselves that we’d like to objectify? We can draw ourselves or collage an image of what we’d prefer – whatever it is! Let’s take that old dusty golden dream out of the closet and polish it off, put it out where we can see it. *Let it shine!* We affirm that a loving God wants only good for us, in God’s care and service and fellowship!
6. Questions to Ponder:

1. What old behaviors that used to be OK or helpful are now in the way?
2. If we let them go and stopped doing them, what might happen?
3. What do we want for ourselves instead of our old habits, behaviors or attitudes?
4. Are we entirely willing to trust God, take the risk and let go?

Endnotes:

1Julia Ross, M.A., former director of a large substance abuse program in San Francisco, CA, has written two books, *The Diet Cure* and *The Mood Cure*, and has a web site on line which has extensive self-quizz tables geared to exploring the neurotransmitter replacement needs of those in recovery. She recommends supplements available at health food stores. Many recovery centers utilize these sorts of supplements in detox and outpatient programs for recovering clients.
Step Seven

“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

The AA “Big Book” devotes a single paragraph to Step Seven. It is found, beginning with the phrase, “When ready, we say something like . . .” which is followed by a prayer of offering ourselves to God, good and bad, to do with as God chooses to mold us and direct our efforts.

1. Which character defects do we ask God to remove?

2. What do we ask God to give us?

3. And for what purpose?

When we reflect upon this paragraph, made up of a single prayer, we remember that this prayer is intended to be offered at the culmination of the process we began in Step Five and continue in an hour’s reflection upon the defects we’ve admitted, readying ourselves to be willing to let them go, in Step Six. Step Seven is then taken in the spirit of humble realization. We have admitted our faults, reflected on how these defects of character have injured others and limited ourselves. It is with full awareness of the grave nature of our flaws and limitations that we come before God as we understand God and ask that our shortcomings be removed, to the extent that this is in keeping with God’s will and plan for us today.

2. Humble Is as Humble Does

Once we have worked through Steps Four, Five and Six as newcomers, many of us continue to practice these Steps, periodically. In Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (AA’s “12 X 12”) the focus of Step Seven is on cultivating the humility necessary to work Step Seven both initially and as an ongoing effort in character-building.

The idea of cultivating an attitude of humility may not sound appealing, at first. To those who may have been crushed into submission by an abusive tyrant in the family or domestic setting, or to those who have suffered ridicule and scorn at the hands of bullies or cliques, “humility” often gets confused with “humiliation.”

This is not the goal of Step Seven.

Those of us who cling to the rationalization that “the best defense is a good offence” may not relish the idea of dropping our arrogance. Those of us who become clowns when we are asked to look into a mirror may shrink at the prospect of dropping our “keep ’em laughing when you go”
defenses, either. For reasons like these humility is
given a whole chapter to explain it’s importance
and rewards.

Self-pity, in considering past wrongs and
hurts inflicted on us, on the one hand, and the
defensive posturing of either looking down on
people or distracting them, on the other, are
barriers, not assets, we discover, in Step Seven.
These characteristics and the behaviors we use to
mobilize them are blocks to intimacy and keep us
centered on self.

The goal of Step Seven is to make ourselves
increasingly more useful to God and helpful to
others.

We consider, “How can anyone who is
preoccupied with protecting him/herself be
available to God’s direction? How can we hear
others if we are concentrating on keeping up
appearances all the time?” Our attention is, at
best, split, when we are preoccupied with self.
Our skills and talents are blunted (or not
developed) to the extent we are “covering our
tails” one way or another, instead of being open
to Creative guidance. We are, in effect,
*humiliating ourselves* when we insist on clinging
to past wrongs, fearing that we may become
vulnerable again. We make ourselves less when
we waste our energies this way, instead of letting
ourselves be guided into greater usefulness as
channels for God’s power and will. Our faith
grows through trust in God’s healing power.

We read the first two-plus pages of Step
Seven in the “12 X 12,” ending with “. . . true
love of man and God the basis of living” and
answer these questions, which are good for
discussion:

1. What perspective did we lack?

2. What qualities of character-building are
desirable for daily living?

We read the next six paragraphs, beginning
with “This lack of anchorage . . .” concluding
with, “. . . which can give us serenity.”

3. What blindness do we suffer when we
lack anchorage to permanent values?

4. What does living exclusively by our
own intelligence and strength block?

5. What cannot be set in reverse all at
once?

6. Who had previously known only
excitement, depression or anxiety?

We read from “This improved perception .
. .” through the next four paragraphs, through “to
remove our shortcomings.”

7. What did we flee from, as from a
plague?

8. What did we fear less and desire more?

9. What could we substitute for
unremitting suffering, as a motivation?

We read the balance of Step 7.

10. What is the chief activator of our
defects?
11. What does living on the basis of unsatisfied demands lead to?

12. If our belief that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity has lead to the removal of our obsession to drink/use, what hope must there be?

Broadly Effective: Program Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

Let God

1. Humbly Let Our Light Shine

“We do not put our candle under a basket, but instead we place it on a stand, where it may shine as a beacon, giving light to all,” paraphrases the Biblical verse. So it is with our abilities and talents, in recovery.

It is humble to let our light shine, not boastfully, but as a resource to God’s purposes.

1. We list five things we do physically especially well, or five outstanding qualities of personality we have.

2. How can these be improved or made more useful in sobriety?

3. How did our drinking/using take away from these talents and skills?

4. How can each of these skills or qualities be put to use without boasting today?
2. The 10-Day “Worry Free” Diet

Here’s a crash diet, to eliminate unsightly lumps of worry or bulges of anxiety, that really works! We start with the character defects we are most willing to have removed.

1. We ask God to remove each character defect, as it suits God’s purpose for our highest good and greatest usefulness to God and God’s creation.

2. We visualize ourselves handing over each defect on our list to God as we understand God, making sure we actually let go!

3. Now, we consciously shift our attention: concentrate on an activity, think about a topic, anything of interest, so long as it doesn’t involve whatever was on our list of character defects we’ve asked God to remove.

4. For the next 10 days, we practice abstinence from worrying about anything that was on the list. We resolve to not fret about these flaws nor brood about anything associated with them, one day at a time.

5. We replace anxiety, self-contempt or worry thoughts by flooding our mind with thoughts of God. Examples:
   
   God loves me unconditionally!”
   “God is love, beauty, comfort, good health, power and peace!”
   “I am safe in the care of my loving God!” These powerful positive statements about God, called “affirmations,” are healing antidotes to poisonous worry.

6. If we “slip” back into worrying, we shift our attention immediately back to a positive statement about what we believe to be true about God. This gets easier with practice.

7. We listen for practical ideas that come to mind, called “inspirations,” as to what God wants us to do. These ideas provide guidance and aid in the removal of all of our character defects.

6. We “move our feet,” as AA’s often say, to change. We show our willingness to be helped when we cooperate. This may be a matter of getting outside help and of resisting the urge to slide back into our old ruts. If we humbly ask God, then we are quiet enough, within our mind, to hear “our end of the deal.”

7. We talk to a sponsor about any inspirations we receive. This is a way to practice humility, get feedback and break out of the habit of “going it alone” in spiritual matters.
8. We “move our feet,” as AA’s often say, to change. We show our willingness to be helped when we cooperate. This may be a matter of getting outside help and of resisting the urge to slide back into our old ruts. If we humbly ask God, then we are quiet enough, within our mind, to hear “our end of the deal.”

9. We talk to a sponsor about any inspirations we receive. This is a way to practice humility, get feedback and break out of the habit of “going it alone” in spiritual matters.

3. “Outside issues” and Step Seven

Are we willing to ask God to remove any “sacred cows” that are really character defects?

1. Have we delayed admitting or getting “outside help” for “outside issues” because of pride?

2. Are we willing to let go and let God give us new behaviors or useful work to fill the gaps where our character defects have left holes, such as the absence of some age-appropriate social skills?

3. Are we willing to ask God to remove any “sacred cows” that are really character defects?

4. Questions to ponder:

1. Are we willing to be changed – to recover – or do we just want to stop drinking/using?

2. How does our relief from the compulsion to drink/use today influence our thinking about God’s power?

3. What is to be gained by being less driven by self-centered fears?

4. Are we OK with being as useful to God and others as may be possible?
Step Eight

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.”

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. Clearing Our Side of the Street

In Step Eight, we undertake the work that heals our relationships with other people. This may sound like a very big order – and, for most of us, it is. Some of our personal relationships may have caused frustration, heartbreak or confusion. Some individuals have gone away or have died. Healing may seem, at first glance, impossible.

Our purpose, however, in Step Eight is to build a bridge into a bright new world where functional relationships are possible for us. We seek to bring a new dimension of spiritual understanding to relationships we have, or have had, so that healing becomes possible in us. Convincing other people is not the focus of Steps Eight and Nine. We work these Steps in order to clear our side of the street and to make right, wherever possible, harms done to others. We do this to reclaim our self-respect and our ability to love other people. We trust the outcomes – what others may do or how they receive us – to the care of a loving God as God inspires their hearts and minds. Some believe that a thorough practice of Steps Eight and Nine puts a lasting end to co-dependency in our relationships, public and private, with other human beings.

In the chapter, “Working With Others,” page 76, third paragraph, the AA “Big Book” says all it has to say about Step Eight:

1. What will we attempt to sweep away?

2. What do we do, if we haven’t the willingness to do this?

Perhaps we did not make a list while working on Step Four:

Where do we find this list in our Step Four materials and who belongs on it? We review the Life Story section of our inventory, our Resentments outline and our Sexual History outline, writing down the names of those affected.
1. **To whom do we owe money or property?**
   Are there crimes or thefts we’ve “gotten away with”. where have we profited financially at someone else’s expense? Are there broken promises to pay or to provide for others – and which others?

2. **Who has lost something dear to them or been otherwise seriously disadvantaged by our lies or deceptions?**

3. **Whose confidence have we betrayed? Who have we slandered?**

4. **Who have we hurt physically, intimidated, taken advantage of, or abused sexually?**

Consulting with our sponsor, we review our Balance Sheet and Fears Inventory:

5. **Who have we tormented with our character defects and self-centered fears?**

6. **How have our character defects and fears kept us from fulfilling our potentials?**

7. **What defects have been excuses for not living up to commitments?**

8. **What defects help us to justify or rationalize using or abandoning people?**

Most sponsors will agree it is a good idea to work Step Eight as it is suggested in the “Big Book,” at least for the first time through the Steps and make a start on the action of Step Nine in practical ways. We find it is good to begin to come to terms with the **objective wrongs** we feel most remorseful, worried, even ashamed about – including money and on-going responsibilities – as soon as we can, once we’re sober. Working these Steps with a trusted sponsor, many find, is some of the most reliable “insurance” against relapse.
2. **“Why Not Just Start Fresh?”**

   It is the rare alcoholic/addict who is not at some point tempted to "just shut it all down and start fresh," resolving to never, never do "those things" again. “Surely, we can leave the past behind, now” we fantasize, “we have learned our lesson! It will be different this time. We’ve changed!”

   Right.

   Many alcoholics/addicts have used this sort of self-deception to fall back into old patterns and eventually drink, and many have tried to use will-power alone to quit drinking!

   Step Eight in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (the AA “12 X 12”) goes to deeper levels to discuss the ways we may tend to minimize our efforts, or the need for them, when considering Step Eight. Read the first two paragraphs of Step Eight in the “12 X 12” (page 77.)

1. What is the great adventure?
2. When do we finish?
3. What must we redouble our efforts to see?
4. What happens once a willing start is made?

   Read on, beginning with “These obstacles . . .” on page 78 through “. . . altered our lives for the worse,” page 80.

5. Whom must we forgive?
6. Who must we become willing to approach?
7. What attitude is characterized by the stance, “we never hurt anybody but ourselves?”
8. What sort of emotional conflicts may persist?
9. When these occurrences happened, what may have resulted to our emotions, our personalities and our lives?
Read the rest of the chapter:

10. What problems do defective relations with people cause us?

11. What course do we want to hold to?

12. What is our steadfast aim?

3. Our Impact On Parents and Mates

Read Chapter 8, “To Wives,” in the AA “Big Book.”

1. What are some of the ways our addiction has affected those who have tried to stand by us?

2. How has our selfishness made others feel about themselves, about us, about the world?

3. If you were the family member, could you live up to the plan outlined here for how an alcoholic in or out of recovery should be treated?

Broadly Effective: Program Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

Who Have We Injured?

1. Injuries Done Ourselves

How do we injure ourselves? The 12 X 12 states . . . “In many instances we shall find that though the harm done others has not been great, the emotional harm we have done ourselves has. Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness. At the time of these occurrences, they may actually have given our emotions violent twists which have since discolored our personalities and altered our lives for the worse.”¹ Many individuals in recovery have backgrounds which contain real tragedy. Our reactions to these events and to circumstances beyond our control is a measure of harm done to ourselves.

Let’s take a look at some circumstances many of us have encountered:
1. **Dysfunctional Family Origin:** There may have been alcoholism, addiction or mental illness in our family of origin; we may have been neglected or abandoned by parents too caught up in their own problems to care for us. Some of us have experienced physical abuse, sexual acting out and molest issues through our families or early ties. We may have little idea of what is “normal” intimacy or what it is legitimate to hope for within a sober family.

2. **Abandonment:** Many of us have lost people – loved ones. We may have been placed for adoption, had a loved one die – of disease, accident, in war or street violence – or leave. We may be victims of “users” who betrayed our trust, left us with children or other responsibilities that should have been shared. We may be tense, bewildered, confused, resentful, distrustful, hurt and sad.

3. **Post Traumatic Stress:** We may have involuntary reactions to events or behaviors that remind us of past violent experiences, later in life. These “triggers,” along with being slipliabilities for us when it comes to drink, may set off other kinds of inappropriate behaviors – outbursts of fear/rage, sudden departures or breaking of ties, mis-reading of communications. We may be overwhelmed, frightened, angry, watchful, unsure of what’s next.

4. **Divided Loyalties:** We may have mixed feelings – love and rage, loyalty and bitterness – toward people who shared or exposed us to traumatic events in the past. These feelings may color how we react to people in the present. We may feel unsure we can ever unravel these emotional conflicts. We may have decided not to try.

5. **Coping Mechanisms:** We may have pushed painful or humiliating experiences down deep or even out of our memories, only to find “violent twists” in our personalities, impacting other people, damaging our lives later on. We may have wondered if we’ve been “ruined” or “condemned,” forever marked by our past. We may just keep up a “front” for others or for the sake of appearances without much real hope that our own secret pain will be healed and restored.
Step Eight in our spiritual program of recovery offers a key to overcoming past hurts, mistakes, even those that go very deep indeed.

How is this so? After we’ve put our list together, with the help of our sponsor, we are faced with a task that, at first, seems impossible – the task of becoming willing to make amends to them all. Most of us are willing, even anxious, to make amends to some of those on our lists, but there are those we really, really can’t see anything good or safe about. No way do we want to let some people off the hook! It boils down to a simple fact: no one can become entirely willing for us. We have to learn how to let go of a grudge. Of a hurt. Of disappointment. Of grief. Of bad luck. In a word, we are faced with opening ourselves to the realm of forgiveness. This spiritual growth is between us and God. A good thing.

Many of us were afraid to let go of losses and hurts. Perhaps we have built self-concepts on things that caused our anger, sadness, over-powered us or defined ourselves by how we resist evil, or demand justice. “So, if we forgive them, who will we be? Wouldn’t we be, in effect, saying they were right?” Co-dependency – the problem of living one’s life through other people, trying to control them with our emotions, our manipulations, in the hope that, in doing so, we will be satisfied and happy – is the core of the problem we address in Step Eight.

This is dynamic work. It takes courage. Where our sponsors can help us and where the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous itself is a source of help is in reminding us that, while we may flounder and feel out of our depth, the pain we experience in this work is the pain of new growth, not the pain of further injury. We have a program that really works. God isn’t powerless!

If we do the footwork, the willingness comes. Not because we “give up” in a despairing way, but because we come to understand that we have a program today that gives us a way out from retaliation and bitterness.

Often, those we are mad at didn’t have such a program.

They were lost.

We, too, we admit, were lost, once. But this is no longer the case.

We can feel sorry for them, out there. Lost. And pray that grace brings them through.

We no longer have to live in reaction to them, whatever it was.
We can ask God as we understand God to give us new ways.

Here is an Exercise to bring the power of Step Eight to past relationships:

3. The Beginning of An End to Co-Dependency

1. **Honest Review.** Being entirely honest, we review the harms done us by parents, caretakers or authority figures who have had power in our life. Who hurt us? Who left us? We list all the major circumstances of our childhood that made us sense ourselves as unsafe, unloved, unappreciated or unworthy. This is not an attack on anyone; it is simply a review of the objective facts.

2. **Our Reactions.** We then list how we reacted to these harms. Example: If a parent was violent, were we crushed, or did we become violent ourselves, fighting back – perhaps taking out our anger on smaller children or pets? (Are we, as a result, bullies as adults?) Did we become liars, experts at “getting around” a tyrant by saying what s/he wanted to hear? (Are we inclined to “handle” people still?) Did contempt freeze us up inside? (Are we suspicious of people’s motives?) Do we have a “prove it” attitude, even with loved ones and best friends? Did we build walls to protect ourselves? (Are we presently unable to trust?) If we lived in a family where promises were often broken and plans for vacations or holidays were routinely cancelled or endlessly delayed, did we become anxious, or unable to commit? Did our inability to please someone or to take care of them lead us to conclude we are ineffective or worthless? (Do we feel safest if we just stay on the sidelines?) These are among the harms we may do to ourselves, in reaction to others.

3. **Passed On to Who?** How have we been “passing on” these behaviors, either the abusive ones themselves, or our reactions to them, to other people in our lives today? Which other people? Mate? Children? Employers? Do we stay out of relationships?

4. **Who Have We Made Gods or Demons?** Have we built our personalities around what we are afraid other people will do? “If who I am depends on what another person does...
or might do, then I am a co-dependent. I am not in touch with my own God-given identity,” a member explained, “I harm other person by making them responsible for who I become, but I harm myself far more. I twist my personality when I make other people my demons or gods; I twist myself away from looking to God’s guidance within! What greater harm can anyone do his or her self?”

5. They Didn’t Have a Program. Not denying the hurts done to us by others or by events in the past, we turn to God and ask that we be given understanding, which is the heart of forgiveness. Were those who harmed us lost and confused themselves? Were they drunk? Drugged? Mentally unbalanced? Ill-informed? Drowning in guilt? Did they have what we have, a program of recovery, for themselves and the problems they faced?

6. We Do. We thank God that we do have a program! As we gain perspective on the condition of our former tormentors, we may use our tendency to rationalize in their service, as a way to try to extend a point of view to them, as to how they tried to see themselves. We may continue to reject behaviors or come to re-evaluate it, as our own understanding deepens. We detach. Where abuses have ceased, we ask for clarity and wisdom to guide our acts. If abuse doesn’t cease, we may have to take right action to make sure it stops. For example, if a parent-figure who molested us is now molesting grandchildren, we must report the continuing offence. We can pity the individual and cease hating him/her as we act to protect ourselves and those in our care from further abuse. We commit ourselves and the offender to God’s care. We are all God’s children.
7. **We Become Open to Change.** We place on our list all those we have hated or blamed as well as those who have been affected by the patterns of abuse or neglect we’ve been carrying with us. We ask God to show us a new outlook on ourselves. We ask that we be guided to appropriate kinds of help, be it medical, psychological, spiritual, educational or legal to fill the gaps in our characters which have occurred because we were preoccupied with the behavior of others. We ask God to show us ways to heal ourselves, make the best use of our talents and restore all of our relationships to a spiritual basis as we clear up past hurts. When we have come to this standpoint, we are ready to go on to Step Nine.

4. **“Outside Issues” and Step Eight**

   How have we injured others because of our behaviors due to untreated “outside issues” such as mental/emotional illness, post traumatic stress disorder, abuse of drugs other than alcohol, gambling, over-eating, sexual acting out, domestic violence or co-dependent demands?

1. How have we neglected other people due to these or other untreated “outside issues?”
2. Do we see willingness to get appropriate treatment or “outside help” as willingness to make amends – to other people? – to ourselves?

5. Questions to ponder:

1. Who are the people we have robbed, cheated, slandered or abused?

2. Who are the people we have misjudged and ill-treated?

3. Where have we done less than we could for others or for ourselves?

4. Is there someone we can’t forget?

Step Nine

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

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. We “Do the Next Right Thing”

Making amends is a demonstration of recovery, of our being restored to sanity, in action. When we work Step Nine, we must always seek to exercise judgement and consideration for other people. Our concern is for justice, fair play and for an end to hostilities, deception and fraud in all of our relationships, public and private, without exposing others to abuse or embarrassment.

In Step Nine, we seek to actively become the new person we have been working hard to create, through our actions. Rather than make claims about how we’ve changed, we seek to pay what we owe, to admit where we’ve lied and to make right the past by undoing the harms we’ve caused wherever we can. These are the practical goals we set ourselves which are the means we have to demonstrate how change has come about within us through spiritual recovery.

In the AA “Big Book,” read from “Now we need more action . . .” on page 76 through “. . . that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindliness and love.” on page 83.

1. What is the relationship between action and faith?

2. Instead of preaching spirituality, what do we seek to demonstrate to those we have wronged?

3. When do we discuss God?
4. What do we do regarding a person we hate?

5. If our manner is calm, frank and open, what may – or may not – result?

6. What about money?

7. What about criminal offences?

8. What must we secure before taking drastic action that may implicate other people?

9. What about ruinous slander?

10. What about involving third parties?

11. What is the alcoholic/addict like?

In our work in Step Nine, it is emphasized that we discuss our situation with others, taking others’ welfare and feelings into account, in the solutions we propose. The temptation to sacrifice other people’s best interests to our own drive for perfection must be avoided. Beginning with the next paragraph, “The spiritual life is not a theory . . .” we read through the following paragraphs, ending with “. . . we don’t crawl before anyone.”

12. Instead of urging our family members, what will convince them more than words?

13. In making amends, without being servile, how do we present ourselves?

We read the next two paragraphs, beginning with “If we are painstaking . . .” These are the Promises of AA Recovery, often read at AA meetings.
14. How many of the promises have to do with our attitude?

2. Willingness, Judgement and Timing

   Read Step Nine text in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (AA’s “12 X 12.”)

1. When do we begin making amends?

2. Can we buy our peace of mind at the expense of others?

3. What considerations do we take into account when we face razor-edged questions?

4. What is the very spirit of Step Nine?

3. The Family Afterward

   Read Chapter 9, “The Family Afterward,” in the AA “Big Book.”

5. What happens to people who live with alcoholics/addicts?

6. What are some obstacles to tolerance, understanding and love, families in recovery face?

7. How can involvement with AA be balanced with other activities?

8. What about participation in a church/mosque/synagogue?

9. What do we think cheerfulness and laughter make for?
10. What about health, diet and sex?

11. What three little mottos are appropriate to family life in recovery?

Broadly Effective: Program Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

Fix Our End of a Problem

1. Making Amends to Ourselves

We considered the harms we have done ourselves in Step Eight. By living reactively, driven by fear or denial, persistent emotional conflicts constantly drained our energies. Having been preoccupied with fending off or controlling the behaviors of other people had only wasted our time. We had obviously failed changing or managing other people’s behavior. We could have better spent this time doing something useful, productive – or at the very least, rewarding in some way.

If we have been trying to manage or control other people, worry, fear and impaired judgement, may have cause us to make big life-mistakes – misunderstand our own priorities, miss opportunities and neglect those who had a right to our care in favor of those who made the most insistent demands on us. Educational opportunities may have been neglected. We may have squandered money or been convinced to spend it unwisely to satisfy a feeling of guilt or obligation. Our talents may have been set aside, never developed, or sacrificed to serve people who had little regard for our creativity. Driven by futility, frustration and despair, many of us, trying to escape our bitter turmoil, ended up in a stupor of drinking and/or using drugs.

How can we begin to make amends to ourselves, to the person within us who had talents and dreams that we abandoned? How do we begin to reclaim our potentials, our God-given talents, our dreams?

If we have completed Step Eight, we realize that one of the best amends we can offer ourselves and those who may have hurt us or set us up for failure, is to shake off the hurt and go forward, fresh and new. We realize that we can release ourselves from patterns of reaction – revenge, suspicion, doubt, and unwillingness to risk or to commit. We can take our validation from our loving Creator, stepping free from the compulsion to prove ourselves to other people or meet their demands in order to feel secure. This is the deeper meaning of “recovery” – regaining a sense of poised communion within ourselves. From this stance, we can freely love and have regard for those around us, even if their behaviors are disappointing
or objectionable and even if their choices are at odds with ours. We are finally independent (not isolated) and in a position to act maturely in our own self-care.

Here are some suggestions for adding new dimensions to character, personality and poise:

1. **Dust ’em Off!** What are the dreams and goals we have put into a closet and let gather dust, in our drinking/using careers? We dig them out and dust ’em off. We bring them back into “the realm of the possible,” where they belong.

2. **A World Full of Hope.** We consider a broad range of options for improvement in our lives in recovery. We consider, too, practical health and dental issues – do these need attention? Are there educational deficits that are keeping us below our potential for earning or contributing to life? Are there hobbies or interests we have longed to explore? Are there therapy needs that can help stabilize our moods or improve self-control? Our goal is to make ourselves as useful as possible to God and to life.

3. **Short, Medium and Long Range Goals.** We write down a list. We set goals for today. We set others for the week, some for a year. We put these somewhere we will see them every day – on the mirror in the bathroom, on the refrigerator, over our dresser. Or write them on a paper we use as a marker in a daily reflections or meditation book we will see every day. These are our goals. We have a right to them.

4. **Mix Small Goals With Big Ones.** One of the ways we build confidence is to set ourselves up for success. We do this all the time, in recovery. We don’t take a drink today, for example. That is a big goal in a short time frame. We count our success in days, not years or a lifetime. We can do this sort of thing with our personal goals, too, even if our aspirations are high. If we want to get a college degree, for example (a big, long range goal) we can set a short goal of getting the catalogue and application forms today, or this week. If we are in classes, we can have a daily goal of showing up, reading the materials, writing the papers. All these goals work together, a day at a time, a week at a time, toward the long range goal we have in mind.

5. **Let ‘Em Shine!** We let some other people know what we are doing with our days, with our
life. We are selective. We build a support network of people who are realistic and positive and committed to our success and to their own. We practice eliminating gossip, griping and dwelling on problems that do not exist in our communication with everyone. We stick with people who do the same.

6. **Review Goals Often.** “Progress, not perfection” is a good plan, we find. We note where we have succeeded and where we need to make a new start. We discard goals we don’t wish to pursue anymore. These are self-commitments, not sentences! We all grow and change in recovery. Sometimes we outgrow our goals or pursue new ones. We seek to become our own trustworthy companion in the daily adventure of sober living!

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<tr>
<th>2. “Outside Issues” and Step Nine</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Have we begun to see ourselves, including all our strengths, weaknesses and “outside issues” as part of one unified recovering person?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How does getting appropriate medical and psychological treatment figure as amends?</td>
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<td>3. Does participation in other support groups fit into making amends?</td>
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<td>4. Does education help or tutoring fill a need?</td>
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**Questions to Ponder:**

1. What are appropriate actions I can take now to heal or repair the past?
2. Is this action free of appeasement or manipulation?
3. Is this action free of self-righteousness?
4. Is the timing right?
Step Ten

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.”

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. One Day At A Time

With Step Ten, we begin what is called the “maintenance” of daily living the Steps in the AA program. “Continued to take personal inventory” becomes a technique for living well, avoiding compounding misunderstandings, or mistakes of judgement. How is this to be accomplished? Working Step Ten, an action Step, helps. We learn to make use of the tools of the Alcoholics Anonymous, one day at a time, specifically the previous nine Steps, in order to avoid creating “wreckage of the present.”. The action taken in Step Ten defines our evolving character as a sober person.

When do we begin? Step Ten, like Step Eleven, is a Step we start learning to use just as soon as we are sober and committed to staying that way. This may seem paradoxical, since it may take us some time, months perhaps, to actually work through Steps 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 to a degree where we feel a measure of completion, but, in practice, it isn’t.

Step Ten is yet another example of AA’s famous watchword of “gradual progress;” we learn as we go along. Our maturing skill in applying Step Ten to our lives and affairs is a practical measure and a demonstration of our willingness “to grow along spiritual lines.” “We claim spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection,” we remind ourselves, from the portion of Chapter 5, “How It Works,” and we do our best. In this pursuit, we find we can achieve a measure of self-respect and peace of mind, one day at a time.

Read the portion of the AA “Big Book” that discusses Step Ten (Chapter 6, “Into Action,” page 84, beginning with “This thought brings us to Step Ten. . . .” and concluding with “It is the proper use of the will,” on page 85.

1. What do we set right?
2. How long should we continue?
3. What do we watch for?
4. Who have we ceased fighting?
5. What has returned?
6. Regarding liquor, what position are we in?
7. Are we cured?
8. What is the vision of God’s will prayer, in Step Ten?
2. The Lessons of Sober Living

We begin with the first three paragraphs of Step Ten in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (the AA “12 X 12”) pages 88-89, through “...tomorrow’s challenges can be met as they come.”

1. What is the acid test of the AA way of living?
2. What is the “emotional hangover”?

We read on through, “Am I doing to others as I would have them do to me – today?”

3. What is a spiritual axiom?
4. In our daily ups and downs, what four character traits do we need?
5. To think or act to good purpose, what must become automatic?
6. What is the danger of success?
7. Why are we sober today?
8. What are other people suffering?
9. What idea must be abandoned, if only a little at a time?
10. What keynotes can bring us to harmony with most people?

Finally, we read the balance of Step Ten in the “12 X 12.”

11. What is said to be the touchstone of spiritual progress?
12. What should we carefully examine?
13. What happens when we search our hearts with neither fear nor favor?
3. Living Life on Life’s Terms

Read Chapter 10, “To Employers,” in the AA “Big Book.”

1. How have alcoholics asked for “special treatment” on the job or in the community?

2. Do we see ourselves as “an investment” our employer makes?

3. Did our employer or another agency that has our best interests at heart bring, or try to bring, recovery to our attention or intervene upon our drinking/drug use with a “choice”?

4. Do we give an honest day’s work for a day’s pay, today?

5. Do we avoid asking for special treatment, favors or lower standards for ourselves today?

6. Did we apply our work-ethic today to sharing tasks around the home or in the fellowship?

**Broadly Effective: Program Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:**

**Live In the Present**

1. Do the Deal!

Taking personal inventory becomes less of a struggle as we grow to like ourselves better. We build up realistic trust in and respect for ourselves, over time, by means of our actions and motives.

How would we, as a sober/clean adult, handle the following:

1. **Pay the bill.** When we get some money, do we choose to pay down
some bills or do we put things “on the never-never” and go further into needless debt?

2. **See the wo/man.** Do we dodge that person who has an issue with us or do we look them up and have an honest conversation?

3. **Help the friend.** Have we taken time to help a loved one or friend with a task without being asked, or do we fill up every minute of our day, doing things for ourselves?

4. **Don’t take the first word!** Does a disagreement start when we get defensive or insist on having things our way? If we don’t “take the first word” the rest remain unsaid.

5. **Keep coming back.** Do we follow a daily plan for meeting our responsibilities and furthering our goals or do we fail to follow up on some decisions or commitments?

6. **Talk about it.** Do we talk to a sponsor or mature friend regularly, especially when we are faced with a challenging decision, or do we still try to tough it out alone?

7. **Easy does it.** But do it!

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**2. A Self-Esteem Inventory**

As one of God’s children:

1. We name three things we acknowledge ourselves for, today.

2. We consciously express gratitude for the good we experienced, today. (Nothing is too small to qualify.)
3. We gracefully forgive three slights, things we or others might have done better, today.

4. We smile in the mirror and thank God as we understand God for the willingness to grow.

3. We Own Partial Gains & Practice Gratitude

Here is an “Attitude Adjustment” exercise that helps as a “spot check” Step Ten aid:

1. Instead of complaining about what hasn’t (yet) happened or gone our way, we practice owning what has.

2. We say “thank you” and “please” to those we used to take for granted.

3. We know that we always have something to give – a smile, a prayer – no matter how bad off we feel!

4. We remember that being grateful is a choice, not a mood or a whim.

4. “When We Were Wrong . . .“

“We claim spiritual progress . . .”

1. Considering both situations involving facts (hard data) about something and also my attitude about it or a person, was I wrong about something today?

2. Did I admit my wrongs, to myself and God?

3. Did I admit my wrongs to others, especially to the ones directly affected?

4. How did my mood or speech reflect problems of mine that had nothing to do with the people I ignored, snapped at, criticized or treated rudely today?

5. Have I acted to make this right with them, wherever possible?

6. Have I considered how what I have learned today about myself takes me back to one or more of the Steps, for further work and reflection?

7. Who will I, or have I, prayed for what I dislike or fear today?
8. Who will I or have I prayed for that I love and respect today?

4. Questions to ponder:

1. When did circumstances or other people seem to get in my way today?

2. Did I pause and take a couple of deep breaths and ask God to be with me?

3. Did I consider the problems or the goals of those who seemed in my way?

4. Did I treat those involved as I would have them treat me?

1. Reflecting back to AA’s early days, in the formative period of the fellowship, a new member might well have been “pitched” by every sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous in his vicinity while he was “detoxing” in a sanatorium or hospital. If willing to commit to recovery, the “new recruit” would, in all likelihood, have worked all of the Steps through Eight before emerging from the facility, to begin work on amends as soon as shoe-leather touched sidewalk in sobriety: maybe ten days to two weeks after sobering up! This was probably more the rule than the exception, during the first several years of AA’s existence. (See the stories in the “Big Book” and A.A. Comes of Age, © AA WSO.)
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 it out.”

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. Becoming God-Conscious

If we admit that the God of our understanding is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves, namely keeping us sober, doesn’t it make sense for us to try to move toward a closer relationship with our God? We think so. In Step Eleven, in acknowledgment of our caring Creator’s grace already received through our sobriety, we seek to develop practices through which we may grow nearer to this loving Source and to living out our Creator’s will for us.

Beginning with “Much has already been said . . .” on page 85 of the AA “Big Book,” we read through to the end of the chapter.

1. What three things do we receive from God?

2. What do we prayerfully do at night, concluding with asking God’s forgiveness and guidance for corrective measures?

3. What do we prayerfully do upon awakening?

4. What becomes a working part of our mind?

5. What is the four word prayer we can use many times a day to lessen the danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity or foolish decisions?

2. Seekers of Spiritual Nourishment
Were we to survey a cross-section of people who are not alcoholic and ask them to name a few outstanding characteristics of alcoholic personalities, would many of them respond, “Alcoholics are seekers of spiritual nourishment?” Probably not.

Yet, alcoholics have often repeatedly sought in the bottle, with drugs or other “thrill seeking” activities, to gain an uplifting “high,” a sense of well-being, confidence, unity, fellowship, or spiritual mastery. Some believe that it is the yearning for the intoxication of the spirit that tempts many potential alcoholics/addicts to quickly lose control.

By working Step Eleven that we begin to finally gain what we sought in vain through the bottle. Well-being and peace, feeling inspired in our decisions and choices, carefree lightheartedness and goodwill toward all, are the fruits of prayer and meditation, freely received and lastingly secure, through the grace of our loving God. No wonder, much of the AA program focuses on radically replacing our ill-advised dependence upon alcohol/drugs with a growing reliance upon the grace and guidance of God! We are, in cultivating our relationship with the God, finally finding what many of us so long sought in vain.

Step Eleven in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (the AA “12 X 12”) details practical techniques for growing in the use of meditation and prayer. In the “12 X 12,” we may read Step Eleven from page 96 to the end of the passage, “. . . We will want to go further,” and respond to these questions, or discuss them in a study group:

1. What do some alcoholics feel might help in an occasional emergency?

2. What happens when we experiment with prayer?

3. What three things are directly linked?

4. What makes it possible to receive God’s help?

We continue through the top of page 102, “. . . the channel between ourselves and God as we understand Him.”

5. What is our step into the sun?

6. What are treasure troves to all seekers?

7. What is true of constructive imagination?

8. What were the qualities the author of the prayer seeks?

9. What is one of the first fruits of meditation?

We conclude by reading the rest of Step Eleven:

10. What is prayer commonly understood to be?
11. What defines the whole range of our needs?

12. What do we do well to add to each prayer request?

13. What can be side by side with an earnest prayer?

14. To just about what extent do we receive guidance for our lives?

15. What do we begin to see are the real and eternal things in life?

Broadly Effective: Program Friendly Substance-Abuse Materials:

Am I Centered?

1. Breathing Meditations

1. While working at a routine job or activity, we can breathe in (one, two, three . . .) slowly through our nose, hold it (one, two, three . . .) and then let it out, slowly, through our mouth. We repeat this as many times as we like, asking God as we understand God to be with us. This works especially well when doing routine tasks such as dusting furniture, folding clothes, working in the garden, stacking wood, carrying something from one place to the next, etc.

2. While listening to music, we can practice this meditative breathing technique, opening our mind to the sounds unreservedly.

3. While touching a loved one or pet, we can practice this meditative breathing technique, becoming entirely present through the senses of touch, smell and sight.

4. While swimming on our back or floating in a pool, we can use this meditative breathing technique, focusing on the sense of sound and the feel of the water and sunlight upon our skin, the scents in the air.

In each of these practices, we ask that God as we understand God be present in each and guide our experience. We avoid using this practice in activities where we must focus for the sake of safety or precision! We allow our breathing to become a constant prayer and meditation on God.

2. Claiming Past Meditation and Prayer
Those of us who have in the past rebelled against organized religion or rejected a church, may often find comfort in claiming the ways we have despite our rebellion, praised God as the Creator of all as we examine the content of Step Eleven. Here are some exercises to aid us in this process:

1. At a park or quiet place outdoors, we find a place where we can be on our own for a half hour. (If we are confined or otherwise unable to go outdoors on our own, breathing deeply and slowly, we visualize an outdoor setting where we feel safe and at home.)

2. We remember back to another time when we were outdoors and relaxed, remembering it in detail, how our body felt, the sounds, smells, air temperature. We recall other times, back into childhood, when we were at peace in nature. How did we feel, looking at the sky or at features in the landscape?

3. We look around us now, remembering how we felt as a child when we relaxed in nature. How did we feel, looking at clouds, for example? Could we fly in our imagination? Sing or explore with the birds? Were we fascinated with the small things – bugs, pollywogs, the faces in flowers? Was there a high place we used to go, where we could look out over the country, the rooftops of our city, and feel ourselves touching it all, with our eyes? Where there places we hid our great and small treasures, went to hide out?

4. We consider this: If prayer is the act of praising God and Creation, was our attitude prayerful, as a child in God’s world? Was there praise and appreciation and wonder in our heart and our mind, as a child? Is it still there, today, when we pause and take time to open up to these memories and to the beauty and peacefulness of nature before us?

5. We reflect on all the ways we have non-verbally prayed, praising God for the beauty around us, the wonders of life and of living things in our world, with our pauses where feeling come up and we simply must stop for a moment.

6. As we own both our memories and our present practices of child-like awe and piety, our sense of ourselves tends to become less judgmental, kinder and much more humane. These are among the validations we have of ourselves as spiritual beings, alive in the presence of God, and in the unity and the fellowship of the Spirit. And so it is.

3. Stretching Open Our Mind

One of the great realizations of sobriety is that we are not stuck with the past limitations of our thinking and vision. Where we used to blindly fall into a river of hopelessness or run into the stone walls of our restricted expectations, we are now free to enter into and to explore the garden of the spirit, through the care and direction of our loving, all-powerful divine Higher Power. Exercises to explore:

1. **We open our mind to the possibility that our peers in sobriety might just be right.** When we try some of the things that are suggested by fellowship members for building a conscious
contact with God, we may be surprised and amazed – or not.

2. **We read the spiritual teachings of our own culture and background.**
   How many anti-Christians have read the Bible? How many fallen away Moslems or Buddhists or Taoists or Native Americans have made themselves familiar with the core of their discarded faiths? We can practice the art of keeping an open mind by exploring and studying the religions we are predisposed to reject.

3. **We explore the realms of the spirit.**
   We can attend a church or denomination new to us. Go to a bible study (Koran study, etc.) Listen to the testimony of those who have found faith or renewal of faith. We can pray about the suggestions we receive and then try them, if we are so inspired, just for the spiritual exercise.

4. **We can practice willingness to learn and to grow.** AAs with long-standing sobriety often report that their concept of God, even if it has always been strong, has changed and evolved, over the time and experiences of sobriety. We are cautioned to avoid thinking that falls into fixed, static “routines,” especially *formulas* about “how it works” in AA recovery. The AA “Big Book” reminds us, “The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it,*”

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4. **Pray for Strangers**
One of AA earliest members, Charlie B., who, as a Merchant Seaman founded many early groups in Australia, offered this solution to the barrier of self-centeredness, which so limits our ability to listen— even to God! Here's the Charlie B. Method to get out of our own shadow and give God's light of Grace a chance to reach us. The "oldtimer" who provided this exercise states she learned this Method from Charlie when she was a newcomer to overcome various problems; she states she can't remember any of those problems now, but she has never forgotten this solution.

1. When we go to a meeting, we are to look around the room and pick out someone we don't know.
2. This should be a person we are not attracted to, sexually.
3. This should be a person who we aren't inclined to see as a prospect for some sort of business deal.
4. We are to remember what this person looks like, when we leave the meeting and include this person in our prayers.
5. We pray that this person be given God's clear guidance as well all the good things we want and they want for themselves.
6. That's it! See what happens.

5. Replacing Habitual Distraction

We may still be inclined to forget to meditate. Most of us become sharply aware of how habitually busy and distracted we keep ourselves when we try to reserve 10-15 minutes a day for quiet reflection. Keeping ourselves distracted, out of touch with our bodies to a greater or lesser extent, is a defense mechanism.

In order to cope with physical and/or emotional discomfort, researchers observe, people (and animals) who are over-stressed or chronically in pain frequently develop ways to distract themselves, consciously or not. This shift of focus, escaping the present to avoid pain or stress, is a habit that, once established, dies hard.

1. Have we have been more or less addicted to excitement — to our own anger, to silent rehearsals of dialogue with people who aren't present, to fantasies of conquest? Or are we obsessed with worry over possible bad outcomes based on what others may do or fail to do?
2. These mental distractions probably will do their best to hang on. When we start to meditate, these "charged tapes" may often push themselves forward. We can consciously take in a deep breath and shift our attention to a statement about God as we understand God to contra-act these distractions: "God loves me," "God is my refuge and protection," "God is the creator of all that is true, good and lasting," are examples of statements we can use, called "affirmations."
3. Is real crisis present in our lives? It may seem disloyal to step free of it and take time to meditate. Bringing God-power in is never disloyal, always a positive act of love. If we (or those around us) have acted out fears in our relationships, our lives may be infected with crisis. We remind ourselves that meditation provides an antidote to crisis-building emotions as we take a deep breath and let go of the crisis, for now, in the present.

4. We give ourselves permission to be present, with all our feelings, conscious of where we are, as we turn inward to meditate. If we have learned to use crisis and distraction to escape from painful feelings, we may have to take in several deep, slow breaths as we do this. Rather than giving up on meditation, we see these coping mechanisms for what they are – things blocking us from God’s healing power and grace in the present.

5. As we gradually replace distraction with prayer and meditation, our real identity, the Person God created us to be, discovers a safe path into the present and gradually returns. God blesses our efforts. It gets easier.

6. Questions to Ponder:

1. Is prayer a meaningful, cheerful activity for us?

2. What are the ways we open ourselves to God’s guidance, through mediation, today?

3. How does “a conscious contact with God” show itself in our decisions and actions, today?

4. Do we sense God’s will for our life and the power to live it, today?
Step Twelve

“Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

Strictly Speaking: Understanding the AA Program from Original AA Materials:

1. “Carrying the Message”

The AA “Big Book” plunges into Step Twelve, dedicating a whole of Chapter 7 to “Working With Others,” while the text of Step Twelve in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (the AA “12 X 12”) asks us to first consider what it means to be “spiritual awakened” before we go forward to help the next alcoholic/addict who still suffers. There is a reason for these different approaches that bears mentioning here: In early AA, new members were often guided through Step Eight (“Made a list . . .”) in a hospital or home-detox situation. They usually embarked upon Step Nine on the very first day they returned to the world. Steps Ten and Eleven were encouraged, monitored and shared among fellow AAs through regular, often continuous, contact. Step Twelve’s “carrying this message” was often the core of a newcomer’s focus, as she readied him or herself to become a spiritual channel of hope in a world where recovery from alcoholism was, then, quite unheard of. Every sober AA has something to share. Beginning with sobriety itself, our “message” develops over time, but our early enthusiasm and hope remains, even now, our most effective “pitch.” We have this beacon of hope to share from our first day sober. Thus, we are advised to always “remember where we come from.” Our own best hope for remaining sober lies with these memories, too.

Still, if we are to remain sober, we will have to do more than simply not drink. Experience is our teacher in this. Thus the “Big Book” exhorts us to “get on with the work!” and go forth to offer “a way out” to the next fellow-sufferer, in order to anchor what we, ourselves, have learned and experienced, and in doing this, we have our own best hope for continued sobriety. This still works.

AA’s “12 X 12,” written fifteen years after the “Big Book,” speaks to a membership that contains not only the fresh-from-disaster newcomers of the 1930’s. By 1952 AA contained, in addition to “raw prospects,” AA’s who had lived and grown in sobriety for long periods of time. This is usually the situation we find in most AA groups today. As Alcoholics Anonymous became better known, as it grew in the respect of medical doctors as a resource, and as ministers could hold out AA to alcoholics in their care, more and more alcoholics were referred. Working independently and cooperating with the advent of 28/30 day medical inpatient treatment programs, outpatient programs, prison-based programs and a broad spectrum of religious-based and secular treatments, AA developed into a network of
meetings and groups, nationally, then, worldwide.

The nearly “secret society” atmosphere of one alcoholic searching out a bewildered “wet” newcomer and introducing him/her to the AA philosophy was replaced and augmented by a stream of referrals, with newcomers advised (sometimes ordered) to “go to AA and get help.”

We may ask, “So, just how does traditional “12-Stepping” fit into the modern recovery equation?”

Let’s begin with Chapter 7, “Working With Others” in the AA “Big Book” to get ourselves grounded in what, exactly, traditional AA 12-Step work represents. We read from the beginning of Chapter 7 to the middle of page 96, ending with “… who have since recovered, of their chance.”

1. What has practical experience shown?
2. What is the bright spot in our lives?
3. What qualifies us to be uniquely useful to other alcoholics?
4. Based upon what we have learned of the AA fellowship in our own participation, have the answers to these three questions changed or do they seem about as true today as they were when AA began, in 1935?
5. Where, in addition to those sources cited, can alcoholics in need of our help be found now?
6. Is it still usual for sober AAs to work alone or to contact a prospect’s family?
7. Who don’t we waste time on?
8. When we begin to talk to an AA prospect, what do we sketch?
9. What are we careful not to brand him or her?
10. Why can we speak of hopelessness?
11. What do we not contradict?
12. When will you be most successful with alcoholics?
13. When may you have to drop a prospect?
14. What should we do if a prospect does not respond at once?

What we have been examining here are the fundamental techniques for carrying the AA message. Nowadays sober AAs can (and regularly do) present these basics, “how it was, what happened, and how it is now,” in situations that are not traditional 12-Step calls.

AA meetings are major forums where we practice “12-Stepping” newcomers who, today, are often referred to Alcoholics Anonymous by outside agencies or the courts. We may also carry the message when we volunteer at an AA Intergroup or Area telephone hotline, or at Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) outreach activities. Most of these options for “12-Stepping,” which are far more widespread now than visiting a prospect one-on-one, didn’t exist...
for early AAs. Even AA meetings, which most members rely upon in present-day AA, were relatively rare and informal. An alcoholic might be able to attend one group meeting a week in a community and s/he might have to travel some considerable distance to do so.

Today, many AA sponsors start with setting up a “daily plan” that includes having phone contact, meetings a newcomer sponsee will attend and perhaps other assignments before going into formal 12-Step work. Thus, AA 12-Step work has evolved and expanded to keep pace with the evolution of treatment and of the fellowship itself over the years.

Although strategies may differ as circumstances dictate, the basic truth of sharing our experience, strength and hope with each other in order to stay sober and help others to achieve sobriety remains unchanged.

Returning again to the AA “Big Book,” Chapter 7 goes on to discuss the practical nuts and bolts of working with a newcomer. These special relationships, even then called sponsorships, are a vital aspect of carrying the message to the newcomer as well as keeping the message alive in the sponsors themselves.

We read from “Suppose now you are making your second visit . . .” on page 96 through “ . . . trust God and clean house,” page 98.

15. When did sponsorship commence, in early Alcoholics Anonymous?

16. What happens if we permit him/her to imposes upon us for money, connections or shelter?

17. Who will need little charity?

18. What happens if we put our work on a service plane?

19. What do we burn into every prospect’s consciousness?

20. Have things changed, in terms of the practical help AA members may offer?

21. Are there resources, therapy and treatment options available in your community that refer alcoholics to AA meetings or clubs?

22. Do we refer alcoholics to treatment facilities or other agencies and resources available to them?

23. Where do we ultimately obtain the guidance we need in deciding what to do in 12-Step work?

Beginning with “Now, the domestic problem . . .” page 98, we read through “ . . . is worth any amount of criticism.”

24. If there is divorce or separation, should there be haste in getting back together?

25. What must both the sponsor and prospect do?

26. To what do we confine our advice, when working with a family?

27. What do we share, if we have been successful ourselves?

Chapter 7 concludes with some guidelines for AA “maturity” in terms our return to the community and recommended attitudes toward questions of alcohol in general. We read the balance of Chapter 7. Some recovering alcoholics/addicts do not have much (or anything) to return to, of course.
The task of such persons is not fundamentally different, however, from the goal of those who have family, social standing and a rich community tradition still intact. For all of us, the project before us is *to bring something to life*, rather than to take something from it (or leave something out of it) as we did, in our drinking.

If we endeavor to do this project well, blessings and benefits that may seem out of our reach will surely come to us. Our future is, as one AA member puts it, “blank pages.” Our stories are yet to be written, one day at a time!

28. What is our rule?

29. What is our job now?

30. What do we not show intolerance of?

31. What was only a symbol?

Our growth and development in Alcoholics Anonymous, as individuals, as family and community members, as spiritual beings, is open-ended, we believe, “one day at a time.” For this reason, we conclude this study guide with suggestions for further growth, study and reflection.

**Read Step Twelve in the AA “12 X 12.”**

Now, let’s go over a few points that are made in the AA “12 X 12.” When we carrying the message at meetings we need to consider how “we have to have something in order to give it away.”

1. What is the full implication of Step Twelve?

2. What do all who have had a spiritual awakening have in common?

3. What have we been trying to do in the first eleven Steps?

4. When do we begin “the giving that actually demands nothing” in AA?

5. What do we do at AA meetings?
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6. What are some of the pains of growing up?

7. What is our best chance for transforming calamity into assets?

8. How can we get the cart before the horse?

9. What had constantly thrown us into unworkable relations?

10. What conditions may develop where not much partnership can exist?

11. Freedom from what is more important than freedom from want?

12. What three personality traits do most alcoholics have in common that make it difficult for us to “stay right size”?

13. What is true ambition?

14. What is the theme of AA’s Twelfth Step?

Read Chapter 11, “A Vision for You,” in the AA “Big Book.”

1. What yearning and obsession do alcoholics share?

2. What is the substitute we share?

3. Where are we really with each other?
Am I Giving Away What I Want to Keep?

1. One Day At A Time

Although a personal dilemma may seem irreparable, the solution will come, if we but focus on living our program “one day at a time.” Here are some guidelines that offer comfort:

1. **We only live today.** If something is before us that needs to be done, now is the time to do it! If we are waiting for a better time, we are missing an opportunity.

2. **There’s only so much we can do today.** Someone said, “Doing a big project is like building a castle; you can only do it one brick at a time.” When life seems overwhelming, one day at a time (or one hour at a time) brings us back to what is endurable.

3. **Not much lasts forever.** No matter how troubling a situation may be, we remind ourselves, “this, too, will pass.” We are not condemned to endless struggle, pain or remorse. Neither can we depend on “having it made,” no matter how great a present triumph.

4. **We can start again.** Living today gives us the freedom to begin anew. We are not stuck with our patterns of error, however ingrained. We can start a new day right now and let this day make a difference.

2. Secret Favors

Here is a “practice these principles” exercise that can be applied everywhere:

1. We consider those people in our life that we see often, perhaps every day.

2. Our question and prayer: “What would cheer or lighten the burden of one of them, today?”

3. We consider, “How can we act, without being seen or letting it be known we are doing it, to bring a smile to the lips of that person or benefit them in some way, today?”

4. We take action to do at least one “secret favor” every day, or more often, if possible.
3. Questions to ponder:

1. What does “having had a spiritual awakening” mean, to me, in my experience?

2. How do I presently “carry the message” to those who still suffer?

3. How is my program of recovery alive in me and in my world, today?

4. Are there aspects of my life that my program presently misses or skips?
Reference Answer Key

Step One

The Doctor’s Opinion: 1. Hopeless. 2. An allergy to alcohol. 3. A phenomenon of craving develops. 4. Seldom suffice. 5. They like the effect; they lose touch with the difference between true and false; they become restless unless they can again experience it; the craving develops; sprees followed by remorse, resolution not to drink. This is repeated again and again. 6. An entire psychic change.

Bill’s Story: 1. God had done for him what he could not do for himself. 2. His will had failed; doctors said he was incurable; he was about to be locked up. 3. He was on a different footing. 4. That Bill choose his own conception of God. 5. Being willing to believe in a power greater than myself. 6. His sins. 7. The new God-consciousness within. 8. Bill would enter a new relationship with his Creator. 9. It meant the destruction of self-centeredness. 10. Work with another alcoholic. 11. Faith.

Chapter 2, “There Is A Solution:” 1. We have discovered a common solution. 2. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree. 3. Personal recovery depends on group unity. 4. Annihilation of all things worth while in life. Misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of innocent children, sad wives and parents. 5. The ex-problem drinker. 6. Moderate drinkers. 7. Hard drinker. 8. The real alcoholic. 9. The alcoholic. 10. Much like other people. 11. The power of choice to drink. 12. The first drink. 13. S/he is probably beyond human aid and unless locked up may die or go permanently insane. 14. That our Creator has entered our hearts and lives in a way which is miraculous. 15. Go on to the bitter end or accept spiritual help.

Step One in “The 12 X 12:” 1. Practically no one. 2. S/he has accepted this weakness and all its consequences. 3. That we were smitten by an insane urge (mental obsession) to drink combined with an allergy of the body that insures that we ultimately destroy ourselves in so doing. 4. By going back in our drink histories to show the beginning of the fatal progression. 5. When we discover the fatal nature of our situation.

Step Two

Chapter 3, “More About Alcoholism.” 1. That s/he will control and enjoy drinking. 2. That we are like other people has to be smashed. 3. Pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. 4. Worse, never better. 5. Drinking only beer, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath,) taking more exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanatoriums, accepting voluntary commitment. 6. Try some controlled drinking. 7. Insanity. 8. The consequences of the first drink. 9. An alcoholic mind. 10. The first drink.
Step 2 in Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions: 1. Some won’t believe in God, some can’t and some do, but have no faith God will perform a miracle for them. 2. 1st, that AA doesn’t demand that we believe anything, 2nd, to get & stay sober, we don’t have to swallow all of Step Two right away, and 3rd, all we really need is an open mind. 3. We can begin to see and feel. 4. Make AA itself our Higher Power. 5. Those who have drifted into indifference, those who have cut themselves off, those who have become prejudiced against religion, those who are angry at God. 6. Bitterly disappointing. 7. Lost. He is the bewildered one. 8. No. All our score cards read ‘zero.’ 9. No. We who had won so handsomely in a walk turned into all time losers. 10. We substituted negative for positive thinking. 11. At no time had we asked what God’s will was for us. 12. Reliance. 13. Quality of faith rather than quantity. 14. No. 15. True humility and an open mind.

Step Three

“God As We Understand God,” Chapter 4, “We Agnostics:” 1. To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis. 2. Lack of power. 3. A power greater than ourselves. 4. Yes to the question, “Do I believe or am I willing to entertain the idea that there is a power greater than myself?” 5. They have given purpose and direction to millions. (Those in them have demonstrated a degree of stability, happiness and usefulness we should have sought ourselves.) 6. They found that a new power, peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them. 7. Either God is everything or God is nothing. 8. People, sentiment, things, money, ourselves. A sunset, the sea, a flower. Something or someone. 9. The fundamental idea of God. 10. Within us. Why Do We “Turn It Over?” Chapter 5, “How It Works:” 1. Open. Discuss how power greater than self is necessary for recovery. 2. Open. Discuss personal concept of a Higher Power. 3. Open. Discuss whether our HP can and will come to our aid, unconditionally, if asked. 4. Open. Discuss complacence, reservations. 5. Open. Discuss pride, lack of trust, unworthiness. 6. Open. Discuss realistic thinking. 7. Open. Discuss self-appraisal. 8. Selfishness – self-centeredness! 9. Self-will run riot. 10. We had to quit playing God. It didn’t work. 11. God was going to be our Director. 12. 1) He provided what we needed; 2) we became less and less interested in ourselves; 3) more and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life; 4) we felt new power flow in; 5) we enjoyed peace of mind; 6) we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow and hereafter. 13. The wording [is] of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. Step Three in the AA 12X12: 1. Willingness. 2. Once we placed the key of willingness in the lock and have the door ever so slightly open. 3. The more we are willing to depend upon a Higher Power. 4. A bone-crushing juggernaut whose final achievement is ruin. 5. Dependence upon an AA group or upon a Higher Power. 6. Our closest AA friend (the sponsor.) 7. Only when Step Three is given a determined and persistent trial. 8. Misuse of willpower. 9. The Serenity Prayer, “God, Grant me serenity to accept the thing I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can and Wisdom to know the difference,” plus “Thy will, not mine, be done.”
Step Four

**Optimism Built of Honesty:** 1. Open. “Character flaws,” “defects,” “blind spots,” “crimes,” “anger” are possible answers. 2. Open. Further discussion of general framework, environment of our drinking; both of these topics addressed in detail in the “Life Story” portion of Inventory, in following text. 3. “Flaws in our nature” coupled with strengths to build on, detailed in following text. 4. These “number one” offenders diagramed as suggested in following text. 5. This “corrosive thread” is detailed in the outline, as indicated.  a) Fear results when self-reliance fails us.  b) Relying on God.  c) Faith.  d) Courage. 6. Treating sex relations much as we would treat any other problem, we diagram our sex-history as indicated in the text.  A) Extremes – Some feel it is a base instinct, only for procreation while others “would have us on a straight pepper diet.” B) We tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for ourselves. C) Open. See Resentment Inventory. D) Open. E) Open. F) Was it selfish? G) God. H) God alone.


Step Five

**An End to Going it Alone.** 1. A new attitude, new relationship.  2. Certain defects in a rough way.  3. Is insufficient.  4. Never completed their housecleaning.  5. Tell someone all of our life story.  6. We want to enjoy a reputation we don’t deserve.

**Who can we trust?** 7. Those who belong to denominations that require confession.  8. Disclose things that will hurt them.  9. Keep a confidence, approve of our plan, not try to change our mind.  10. In the eye.  11. Peace and ease.  12. Fall from us.  13. Nearness of our Creator.

**When We Share We Learn:** 1. When we resolutely tackle Step Five we inwardly know we’ll be able to receive forgiveness and give it, too.  2. If all our lives we had more or less fooled ourselves, how could we be sure we weren’t still self-deceived? Still bothered by fear, self-pity, hurt feelings, guilt, anger, hurt pride, we need the help of God and another human being!  3. Provide we hold back nothing, the dammed up emotions of years break out and miraculously vanish . . . as the pain subsides, a healing tranquility takes it place.

**Step Five In Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions:** They all deflate our egos.  2. We have to talk to someone about them.  3. The things that really bother and burn us.  4. Irritability, anxiety, remorse,
depression, sometimes accuse even close friends of the very defect they themselves were trying to conceal. 5. We shall get rid of that terrible sense of isolation. 6. True kinship with humanity and with God. 7. Genuine humility. 8. It confirms we have been honest with ourselves and with God and avoids the difficulty of garbled or justified thinking of what comes to us alone. 9. Yes. Difficulties perhaps like our own. 10. As soon as we can. 11. Our own willingness to confide and our full confidence in the one with whom we share.

**Step Six**

**Returning Home.** 1. Thank God. 2. We re-read the first 5 Steps. 3. Arches and gates are transitional structures, similar to seeing ourselves moving from one place or state of mind to another. 4. Like placing stones, have we proceeded systematically, finishing each Step to the best of our ability, to build a solid foundation before moving on? 5. Like skimping on cement, have we tried to get by with half-truths and partial disclosures? 6. Have we stuck enough of the gritty sand of action into the smooth flow of our words to make our sentiments take form in life?

7. Open. 8. Open.

**Step Six in The AA 12X12:** 1. Capable of enough willingness and honesty to be able to try Step Six repeatedly on all his/her faults without any reservations whatever. 2. The obsession to drink. 3. Suicide. 4. Our instinctual drives. 5. When our instincts drive us blindly or we willfully demand that they supply us with more satisfactions or pleasures than are possible or due us. 6. That we try as best we know how to make progress in the building of character. 7. No. It is a lifetime job. 8. Practically nobody. 9. Try to have it. 10. “No, I can’t give this up yet.” 11. “This I will never give up.” 12. List any. Are these on Inventory? If not, go back and add them, discuss with sponsor. 13. Mellow forms of Pride: detail these and any other that come to mind. 14. Respond. Discuss hunger to possess, have, accumulate money, property, things of value or desired by others just for the sake of having them – list manifestations of Greed. 15. Discuss. We look for ways that using people brings elements of Lust into our love-life. 16. Consider: How does Anger or outrage still function as a motivator for us? If we let go of reaction 100%, what would we use for an energy source instead? 17. Gluttony can be for food but it can also be for attention, other kinds of “strokes.” Discuss. 18. Envy is almost always a measure of our own self-esteem, we are advised. Discuss how being “less than” or sitting in judgement of others plays a part in our lives. 19. Sloth may be related to concrete health issues including clinical depression or medical problems that went undiagnosed, untreated in our drinking, not just from lack of willingness. Discuss these aspects of this issue as well as wastefulness, lack of skills in caring for self or things. 20. Only as much perfection as will get us by in life. 21. Perfect ideals. 22. That we make a beginning, and keep trying. 23. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives and move toward God’s will for us.
**Step Seven**

**When Ready, We Say.** . . . 1. Those in the way of our usefulness to God and our fellows. 2. Strength. 3. To do God’s bidding.

**Humble Is as Humble Does.** 1. That character building had to come first. 2. Honesty, tolerance and true love of God and man. 3. To the true purpose of our live. 4. Reliance on God. 5. Self-centeredness. 6. All of us. 7. Pain and problems. 8. Pain, humility. 9. Voluntary reaching. 10. Self-centered fear that we would lose something we had or not gain what we desired. 11. Continual disturbance and frustration. 12. That there could be similar results with any other problem.

**Step Eight**

**Clearing Our Side of the Street.** 1. The wreckage of the past. 2. We ask God to give it to us.

**Why Not Start Fresh?** 1. Learning to live in peace, partnership and brotherhood with all men and women. 2. Never. 3. To see how many people we have hurt, and in which ways. 4. We realize the advantages of doing so. 5. One and all. 6. All we had harmed. 7. Purposeful forgetting. 8. Very deep, sometimes forgotten ones, below the level of consciousness. 9. They may have given our emotions violent twists, colored our personalities and altered our lives for the worse. 10. All our woes, including alcoholism. 11. Admitting wrongs we have done while forgiving those done us, real or fancied. 12. A quiet, objective view.

**Chapter 8, To Wives:** 1. They have lived in fear, emotional, financial and physical insecurity. They have reacted in anger and spite. They have tried to manage, manipulate the alcoholic, employers, creditors, police. They have learned to lie, deceive, retreat from society, family and friends. They have experienced violence and abuse. 2. Some have despaired. Some have become “holier than thou.” All have been hurt, saddened, developed a shell of isolation. 3. Open.

**Step Nine**

**Do the next Right Thing.** 1. Faith without works is dead. 2. A demonstration of good will. 3. When it will serve any good purpose. 4. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit. 5. We will be gratified; feuds may melt away, but if not, we have done our part. 6. We pay or agree to pay. 7. We pray for guidance to do the right thing. 8. Their permission. 9. We set it right, whatever the cost. 10. We should avoid it. 11. Like a tornado in people’s lives. 12. Our behavior. 13. We are sensible, tactful, considerate and humble. 14. All of them.

**Willingness, Judgement and Timing.** 1. As soon as we are sober. 2. No. 3. There is no pat answer to fit all such dilemmas. 4. Readiness to take full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others.

**Chapter 9, The Family Afterwards:** 1. The entire family is, to some extent, ill. 2. Each must undergo a process of deflation of their fixed ideas, their demands, their insistence upon taking the lead. 3. If the family takes a supportive, cooperative attitude toward AA activity, the alcoholic may soon moderate
his/her involvement; family prayer and meditation can become new activities, attendance at church may also extend the family’s spiritual life. 4. Each alcoholic should adopt an open mind and consult his/her own conscience. 5. We think that cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness. We think that God wants us to be happy, joyous and free. 6. There should be no hesitancy in consulting a doctor or psychologist if difficulties in these areas exist or persist. 7. First Things First. Live and Let Live. Easy Does It.

### Step Ten

**One Day at a Time.** 1. Any new mistakes. 2. For a lifetime. 3. Selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear. 4. Anything and anyone. 5. Sanity. 6. In a position of neutrality. 7. We have only a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of spiritual condition. 8. “How can I best serve Thee? Thou will (not mine) be done.”

**Lessons of sober living.** 1. Can we stay sober, keep in emotional balance and live to good purpose under all conditions? 2. The direct result of today’s or yesterday’s negative emotions. 3. If I am disturbed, something is wrong with me. 4. Self-restraint, honest analysis of what’s involved, willingness to admit when at fault, willingness to forgive when the fault is elsewhere. 5. Self-restraint. 6. “Big-shot-ism” 7. The grace of God. 8. The pains of growing up. 9. The idea that we can be loving toward few, indifferent toward most, and hate or fear anyone. 10. Courtesy, kindness, justice and love. 11. Pain. 12. Our motives. 13. Sleep with good conscience.

**Living Life on Life’s Terms, Chapter 10, To Employers:** 1. Impose, take advantage, lie, stolen money or property, padded hours. 2. Open. 3. Open. 4. Open. 5. Open 6. Open.

### Step Eleven

**Becoming God-Conscious.** 1. Strength, inspiration and direction. 2. Review our conduct. 3. Ask God to direct our thinking. 4. Inspiration. 5. “Thy will be done.”

**Seekers of Spiritual Nourishment.** 1. Prayer. 2. It works. 3. Self-examination, meditation and prayer. 4. Seeking it. 5. Meditation. 6. Libraries and places of worship. 7. All achievement rest upon it. 8. The grace to bring love, forgiveness, harmony, truth, faith, hope, light, and joy. 9. Emotional balance. 10. Raising the heart and mind to God. 11. “Knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.” 12. “If it be Thy will.” 13. A certain amount of presumption and conceit. 14. To the extent we stop making demands on God. 15. Truth, justice and love.

### Step Twelve

**Carrying the Message.** 1. Nothing will ensure sobriety more than working with another alcoholic. 2. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other. 3. Our common problem. 4. Open. 5. Open 6. No. 7. Those who don’t want to stop drinking 8. Our drinking career. 9. An alcoholic. 10. Because we offer hope. 11. Resistance to following all of the program. 12. If you don’t exhibit a passion for reform. 13. If s/he wants you to be a banker or nurse. 14. Work with another prospect. 15. As soon as the prospect made a decision to go with AA. 16. We may be harming him/her. We are letting him/her rely on us rather than on God. 17. The type of alcoholic is capable of getting well. 18. The alcoholic relies upon us, instead of God. 19. That s/he can get well, regardless of anyone. 20.
Open. 21. Open. 22. Open. 23. From our Higher Power and experience in recovery. 24. There must be a new basis for the relationship first. 25. Walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. 26. Point out that defects of character aren’t going to disappear overnight. 27. Share how you accomplished healing in your own relationships. 28. Not to avoid places where there is drinking if we have a legitimate reason for being there. 29. We were withdrawing from life. 30. To be at the place where we may be of maximum helpfulness to others. 31. Drinking as an institution. 32. Bottles.

And to Practice These Principles. 1. The kind of love that has no price tag. 2. They are now able to do, feel and believe that which they could not before on their unaided strength. 3. We admitted we were powerless, realized we needed a Higher Power to get well, turned our lives over to God as we understand God, inventoried our lives and our characters, disclosed these facts openly, let go of them, asked God to remove them, catalogued those we had hurt, made amends to them, incorporated these principles into our daily lives and sought to improve our relationship to God and God’s direction. 4. Even the newest newcomer can try to help the next sufferer. 5. We listen and give reassurance, or if asked to share, we carry the message. 6. We many become fixed upon sobering someone up, become discouraged when someone relapses, be hurt when our advice is rejected, or become confused when we are given a position of trust. 7. When we switch from “2-Stepping” to 12Stepping.” 8. When we put satisfaction of instincts ahead of spiritual growth. 9. Either trying to dominate people or being entirely dependent upon them, instead. 10. The alcoholic may have become like an erring child, and the spouse, the parent. 12. Childishness, emotional sensitivity and grandiosity. 13. Desire to live usefully and walk humbly. 14. The joy of good living.

A Vision for You. 1. To enjoy life as they once did. 2. The fellowship of AA, where we find release from care, boredom and worry and our imaginations are fired. 3. In the Fellowship of the Spirit.
1. **AA Sponsorship**

An obvious primary use of this workbook is as a guide through the 12-Steps, working with an AA sponsor one-on-one. In a growing number of community fellowships, sponsors have already begun developing handouts and questionnaires on the Steps. Sponsees often meet individually (one on one) with a sponsor and keep in contact by phone. Generally, a sponsor recommends a schedule of meetings to attend and sets the pace for addressing the Steps. With or without handouts, some sponsors may also meet with sponsees in a small group to review a Step, read the Big Book or engage in discussion.

This workbook supports activity of both sorts. The **“Strictly Speaking”** Exercises included directly refer to specific Alcoholics Anonymous conference approved materials on the Steps. The optional **“Broadly Effective”** Materials include exercises that have evolved within the larger sober recovering community. Some fellowship sponsors will find these materials acceptable while others will choose to ignore them. This is, of course, a matter of individual choice.

2. **Sponsorship In Other 12-Step Programs**

The Alcoholics Anonymous 12-Steps Made Clear is written so that it can also easily be used as a study guide for sponsorship within additional 12-Step programs. Members of “offspring” fellowships that have a body of their own literature still report they find study of the AA Steps extremely helpful. They gain insights into the principles that underlie all forms of the disease, since these are given thorough attention in AA’s basic texts. They use these exercises as suggested for alcoholics, changing, “I am powerless over ______” to specify the appropriate substance or behaviors.

For substance-free family members of abusers and other co-dependents who use this book, every effort to eliminate any remnant of “a double standard” as it applies to expectations, language, and gender-roles has been made. Thus, this workbook is also attractive to women members of Alcoholics Anonymous as well as dual members of Narcotics Anonymous, Adult Children Of Alcoholics (ACOA), Co-Dependents Anonymous (CoDA) and similar fellowships.

Members of Al-Anon, CoDA, ACOA who approach the AA materials for the first time should bear in mind that the **Big Book**, Alcoholics Anonymous’s main text, was written in 1936-37 and **Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions** was written in 1951-52. This helps explain the seeming “dated-ness” of some of the language, which is tied to their time of origin.

AA’s original founders were middle class Christian white men, mostly in their forties and fifties and, in most respects, a part of their times. They all called God “He” and so did their wives. Most families in that era had single “bread-winners” (the man,) who drove the car (if there was a car,) wrote the checks, made the investments and major decisions – often without bothering “the little woman.” There are, of course, still fundamentalist families that hold to these gender-roles (and consider departure from them a mistake) but this is no longer the “norm.” This book, in the spirit of avoiding controversy, has worked to neutralize these issues. No effort has been made, though, to modify or alter the spiritual basis of Alcoholics Anonymous, including the overtly Christian elements implied within the original texts. Now, as then, these
aspects of AA’s message are optional, not mandatory.

3. Six-Month 12-Step Workshop Format

In some regions, a practice has sprung up of convening Step Study Workshops for 26 weeks using a structured format to work through all 12 Steps.

Workshop Goals:

1. To establish a strong fellowship of sober alcoholics who have worked all 12-Steps of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous from the texts, Alcoholics Anonymous and Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions.

2. To carry the AA message to those who still suffer.

Features:

1. Dates and locations for these groups are made known through announcements and flyers distributed to clubs and recovery facilities. Groups are not on the AA meeting list because the membership closes, usually after three weeks. “Drop in” guests may not attend unless they are invited by facilitators to speak or lead an exercise for the group.

2. Groups are facilitated by two to four (try for four) AA members who have worked the Steps, using a structured format for the meeting and for the program as a whole. These facilitators take turns leading the individual sessions on a rotational basis.

3. Groups may or may not be restricted to a single sex (facilitated by same). Usually the group is allowed to start with as many as thirty members. If all “stick,” small group work can be done in sub-groups. Usually, there is attrition over the weeks.

4. The group and all attendees agree to observe and respect the 12-Steps and 12-Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, including anonymity, as the basis of the group’s operation. No facilitator shall be paid. The group shall be self-supporting, including the costs for the facility and hand-outs. A suggested donation per meeting shall be agreed upon for this purpose. Surplus funds at the end of the group are used to fund a group dinner or picnic.

5. Groups may be restricted to substance abusers only, or they may be open to anyone who works a 12-Step program on any issue. In the event that the group welcomes members of groups other than AA/NA, however, attendees must commit to not use alcohol or illegal drugs during the duration of the Workshop as a condition of attending.

6. Group meetings are weekly for two and one-half hours with two 10 minute breaks. Homework is two - three hours per week, on average. Members agree to take responsibility to keep up with assignments and be on time. Any missed meetings must be made up within the next week. For the sake of group continuity, more than three missed meetings, even though made up, terminates membership for the session.

7. Members agree to not bring distractions to the group – pagers, cell phones, crunchy food.

8. Members may speak or pass when it’s their turn to share in the group. Time-limits on sharing shall be established by the facilitators so that all shall have a chance to participate.
Starting A Workshop:

- Facilitators (2 minimum; ideally, 4) form a steering committee two or three months before the target kick off date for the Workshop. Job Description & Qualifications for Facilitator: Facilitators are clean and sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous or another 12-Step program who have worked all 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous program from the AA texts, Alcoholics Anonymous and Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions. They are able to commit up to five hours per week to facilitating structured Step study in a group, prepare leads, make themselves available by phone or meet with group members for make up sessions. (Once groups are on-going in a community, those who have completed the Workshop on both AA texts are encouraged to facilitate them.)

Within the first two steering committee meetings, the facilitators:
- Pick a chairperson and treasurer from among themselves.
- Decide whether group is to be men or women only, focus mostly on one text, etc.
- Establish a safe location for the Workshop. (Must be a location that will be available for the duration of the group – six months, a weekly 2 hr. time slot.)
- Create a flyer. (See example.) Flyer should have a contact phone number with an answering machine. Group registrants should be asked to pre-register so enough folders can be prepared.
- Decide on speakers to invite, which Step session(s) each speaker will lead, and see if they are available.

A month (or more) before the first scheduled meeting:
- The meeting location is firmed up.
- The flyers go up. Good locations for flyer-posting: recovery centers, alcohol programs, Alano Clubs and circulated directly among members.

Before the first meeting:
- Packets are prepared (see Workshop Packet Contents) for each registrant, plus several “spares” for late registrants (usually additional members can join in Weeks 1, 2 and 3, but not after.)
- Responsibility for leading the individual sessions is divided up, in rotation, among the facilitators, so each has time to prepare short “lead” talks to open sessions they direct.
- Arrangements are made for coffee, etc., and to set up the room. Seating shall be arranged in a circle or oval around tables set in a square or rectangle with the facilitators seated together in a group in a central location.
- Self-support envelopes are prepared for each meeting by the Treasurer. A summary of meeting expenses for set up shall be prepared and an estimate of the group’s fixed expenses made. This report may or may not be provided in the group packet; it is used to set the suggested self-support for each member at each session.
At the first three meetings:

• Facilitator-Chair opens the meeting (See Format) with the introductory material. S/he introduces himself/herself and then introduces the other facilitators.

• Each then takes about 5-8 minutes to qualify on Step 1.

• After introducing them, but before the facilitators begin to speak, the Chair states, “At this time I will pass around the sign in sheet and Workshop Packets. Please put your name, phone number, 12-Step program and home group (if you have one) on the sign up sheet, take a Packet, pass the stack on. If you signed in at a previous session of this workshop, please don’t do so again. Just pass the stack. There are no extra packets. Please take only one.” (Chair may start stacks around in both directions, to make this go quicker.)

• After the facilitators have qualified, the Chair states: “This is the (first, second, third) session of a Six Month Committed 12-Step Workshop through the AA texts, Alcoholics Anonymous and 12 Steps & 12 Traditions. Those who are members of (Alcoholics Anonymous) (any 12-Step program) may join this group at this time. After the third session, this Workshop is closed. No newcomers or “drop in” visitors may attend (unless they are invited by a facilitator to speak at one of our sessions.) Those who miss this chance are welcomed to sign up for another Workshop, to start soon. Thank you.”

• The Chairperson then passes the Self-support Basket, requesting materials costs and self-support. This should consume the first 40 minute segment of the first session. Break. (If there are no newcomers at 2nd or 3rd meetings, see Meeting Format, for alternate.)

Initial costs for supplies, copies and packet materials are sometimes advanced by a recovery program or agency. These costs are then paid back out of self-support funds during the term of the workshop. Many facilities lend Big Books and 12 X 12’s for use at the Workshop. Some programs also purchase a supply of workbooks which are available to borrow or on scholarship to members.

12-Step Workshop Packet Contents

• Workshop Calendar with dates and Steps.

• List of Required and Suggested texts for the Workshop.

• List of Facilitator Names and phone numbers. On same page or reverse: Instructions for making up missed sessions, Statement 3-session maximum absence rule and Group commitments to be on time, minimize distractions.

• Workshop expenses and suggested self-support.

• Guidelines on parking, use of the facilities, designated smoking areas, if any.

Optional contents:

• Any additional handouts on Step One and the Workshop as a whole that the facilitators choose to add to the program materials. Facilitators may continue to add new handouts as the Workshop goes along, to supplement the Step materials. (Recommended handouts are always anonymous, not promote or recommend a product, religion, therapy or institution.)

• Sheets of blank paper.

• Post-it sticky notes for comments.

• Promises, Steps, Traditions.

• Pamphlets.
OPEN SIGN UP NOW:
SIX MONTH 12-STEP WORKSHOP

Call: <phone #> Pre-Register

Begins: <D. of Wk., Time, Date>
Work all 12-Steps from the <Big Book /12 X 12> with a workbook. Facilitators are clean/sober members of <Alcoholics Anonymous> <a 12-Step Program>

<Location Address & Rm #>
<Parking or Other Information>


<Open to <Men> <&> <Women> <Only>

Group Closes <Date>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session # and Date</th>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>HOMEWORK/EXERCISES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. &lt;insert mo./date&gt;</td>
<td>STEP 1 – Intro./Powerless</td>
<td>Dr’s Opin., Bill’s Story, Chpt. 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>STEP 1 – Reservations</td>
<td>12 X 12, Exper./Strgth/Hope</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>STEP 1 – Unmanageable</td>
<td>Get a sponsor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>STEP 2 – Greater</td>
<td>All BB exer. + 12X12</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>STEP 2 – Sanity</td>
<td>Try Stp 2; see what happens.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>STEP 3 – About God</td>
<td>BB + 12X12 exercises.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>STEP 4 – Fearless</td>
<td>BB exercises.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>STEP 4 – Thorough</td>
<td>12X12 exercise.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>STEP 4 – Moral</td>
<td>Select Step 5 mentor.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>STEP 5 – To God, Ourselves</td>
<td>BB + 12X12 exercises.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>STEP 5 – Another Person</td>
<td>Complete Step 5.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>STEP 6 – Defects</td>
<td>Practice letting go.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>STEP 7 – Humbly Asked</td>
<td>BB + 12X12 exercises.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>STEP 7 – Shortcomings</td>
<td>Share at an outside meeting.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>STEP 8 – List</td>
<td>BB + 12X12 exercises.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>STEP 8 – Harmed</td>
<td>Discuss willingness w/sponsor.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>STEP 9 – Amends</td>
<td>BB + 12X12 exercises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>STEP 9 – Except</td>
<td>Make at least one amends.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>STEP 10 – Continued</td>
<td>BB + 12X12 exercises.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>STEP 10 – Admitted</td>
<td>Do Step 10 notebook for 1 wk.</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>STEP 11 – Conscious Contact</td>
<td>BB + 12X12 exercises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>STEP 12 – Awakening</td>
<td>BB + 12X12 exercises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>STEP 12 – Practice</td>
<td>Dinner: “What has awakened?”</td>
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</tbody>
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**Six Month 12-Step Workshop Basic Session Format:**

Meetings start on time. Breaks are respected. Members make a point of being in their seats, ready to go forward when the session begins and resumes. Interaction between members is good, but please not as private one-on-one conversations while the session is in progress! Thank you.

(First part: 40 min.) **Introduction, Check-In, Feedback:**

1. Facilitator-Chair opens meeting with Serenity Prayer, states which session and Step of the Workshop is the subject of study and introduces the lead-facilitator for the session. Lead-facilitator introduces him or herself, then asks someone to read “How It Works” and someone to read the Traditions. Introduces Speaker-guest (if present). Makes Workshop and fellowship announcements. Self-Support basket is then passed. (10 – 12 min. time.)
2. Lead-facilitator shares for 7 – 10 min. on the session’s Step topic from his or her own experience, strength and hope. While s/he is sharing, the session sign-in sheet is passed. (10 – 12 min. time.)
3. Group members share (2 – 3 min.) Check in on week, homework assignment. Break at end of 40 minute section: 10 minutes.

(See “Starting A Workshop” for special format for this part of initial start-up meetings.)

(Second part: 45 min.) **Q & A Discussion, CD/Tape or Speaker:**

1. Lead-facilitator reconvenes session after break. Members (if any) who hadn’t an opportunity to check in or give feedback on homework do so (2-3 min. each.) (Up to 15 min., maximum.)
2. A facilitator plays the CD/Tape for this session or guest speaker speaks. (12 – 15 min.)
3. Group Q & A discussion on the session’s topic, tape or speaker’s message. Facilitators respond to questions from the group. (Balance of period: +/- 15 min.) Break: 10 min.

(Third part: 45 min.) **Workbook Exercises, Discussion:**

1. Lead-facilitator reconvenes session after break. Members who hadn’t completed Q & A may have opportunity to finish up – or not, depending on Step. (Up to 10 – 12 min. max.)
2. Facilitators lead a panel discussion on the Workbook Exercises. All facilitators share briefly (5 min. ea.)
3. Group members share. Progress report. If this is the last meeting on Steps 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, or 8, are they ready to take that Step now? If Step 4, have they completed it in both texts? One text? If Step 5, have they taken it? Made a date to take it? If Step 9, have they completed at least one amends? If Step 10, 11, 12 have they begun to use it?

At the final meeting – usually a dinner or a picnic – the opening is limited to the Serenity Prayer, reading of the Steps and Traditions. The facilitators present the graduates with a certificate of completion, stating, “<Member ____> has completed Six Month 12-Step Workshop on <date> in <location>.” There are no breaks. Each facilitator and member is asked to share.
4. Academic Course Outline

Christian Ministry & the 12-Step Programs

Strategies & Guidelines for Assisting Families, Adults, & Youth
(20 Hr. C.E.U. to Health Care Professionals)

Course: A Ten Week Survey of the 12-Steps of Recovery (2-hour classroom sessions with homework) provides insights, techniques of direct value to those engaged in counseling substance abuse, domestic violence and related populations. Explores evolving roles of 12-Step programs as a component for Faith-Based Intervention, Treatment, Aftercare. Open to clergy, students, substance abuse professionals.

Unit One: Elements of Grace: Steps 1,2,3: Defeat, Hope, Decision

1. Welcome. Introductions: Materials distributed, Confidentiality (“Anonymity”) commitment discussed; Exercise; Presenting Participants. Brief Talk: Recognizing the physical, social & spiritual isolation symptoms of addictive disorders. Roundtable Discussion: The role of Grace (intervention of a Higher Power) in an alcoholic/addict’s life – can be his or her body, relatives, social setting (job, church, courts) and/or heart. Necessity to pierce denial. The special role of one sufferer reaching out to another: basis of 12-Step fellowships. Identifying our own powerlessness as a basis for greater compassion and usefulness. Homework Assignment: Read text. Explore the question, “What are the misunderstandings about an anti-religious bent to AA?” Apply one or more exercise from Steps 1, 2, 3 to a challenge with meaning in your life. Discuss your progress using the exercises with a family member or another member of this workshop. How are these elements similar to Christianity?

2. Exercise: Brief Check-In Circle. Roundtable Discussion: Are the 12-Step Programs Spiritually (Scripturally) Based? What “value-added” elements of Grace can you directly support in Steps 1, 2, 3 or indirectly support by encouraging 12-Step program participation? Exercise: Creatively Letting God In Exercise: Brief Share: How Did “Letting God In” Work? (Any New Ideas?) Homework Assignment: Considering what you have been challenged by, to the point of realizing your own need for the intervention of Grace, write your own brief anonymous story (1-2 pages, double spaced) of how it was, what kindled your hope and how you felt when you decided to turn your life and will over to the care of God as you understand God. Do issue-based conversions differ from other conversions?

Unit Two: Self-Discovery: Steps 4,5,6,7: Facts, Fears, Ideals, Goals, Dreams

2. Check in circle: Insights on Steps 4,5,6,7. Brief Talk: Dealing with ongoing family issues. Addressing "I'm here because I'm no good." Mandated reporting. Keeping the focus on Steps 1,2,3 as “first things first”? Role Playing: Addressing denial in family counseling. Do you ask those you counsel also to attend AA or 12-Step meetings? To get a sponsor? To see a medical doctor, therapist, other professionals? Homework: Using the AA texts and the Bible as sources, write a brief summary of why it is important that Steps 1,2,3 come before Steps 4,5,6,7 in personal recovery and in service work.

Unit Three: Demonstrations of Faith: Steps 8,9,10: Forgive, Recreate, Discipline.

1. Check in circle: Insights on being effective helpers. Brief talk: Helping to anchor predictability in the life-experience of those we help: --Security issues and neural pathways, prayer, childhood development. Releasing anger and grief in praise, affirmation, song, healing circles. Roundtable discussion: How do we help healing in families without putting serious problems and hurts “under the rug”? Homework: Read: AA Promises, texts on Steps 8,9,10. Work an exercise and discuss it with a family member or co-participant in workshop. Is full disclosure needed for God to forgive?

2. Check in circle: Insights on ingredients for “clearing wreckage.” Brief talk: Creating a network of growing trust-worthiness around each of us through good use of these principles; defining boundaries to protect and honor all; dispelling barriers of interpersonal fear and self-consciousness by building "fun" into our milieu. Roundtable discussion: Are there safety issues that need to be addressed in congregations that evangelize in this community? Q. & A. to follow. Homework: Create a plan to add an element of Step 8, 9, 10 work to your church. This may be a grief support group, a recreation activity or a pet idea of your own. Make sure it addresses looking clearly at a starting place and includes tools to work creatively to embrace and then grow from there. Your plan should have boundaries to insure innocent parties aren’t abused if it is implemented.

Unit Four: Elements of Simplicity: Steps 11,12: Prayer, Meditation, Embodiment.

1. Check in: Insights on engaging with others creatively. Brief talk: Being realistic about our role: leading a congregation, prayer, opportunities to share meditation, building the spiritual body in the community. Creative work: Praying as we are not used to praying: In this exercise, take up to 15 minutes to engage in prayer using one of the exercises in the workbook that is not your usual way to pray. You may draw God a picture, by way of a prayer. You may leave the room, if you choose, to pursue your aim. Clearing your mind of all self-judgement, you may, or may not, choose to share in the circle once the group has returned. Homework: Write a brief personal statement: “My best tool for helping others is:” in terms of what Biblical talents you have, or of the Steps you are able to demonstrate.

2. Check in: Insights on, “praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and power to carry that out.” Brief talk: Have the people we are counseling awakened? Done their own remedial work? Gotten started in a positive life? Are they living the message? Are we? Roundtable discussion: How does staying sober measure progress in a 12-Step program? Homework: Read the text on Step 12 in Alcoholics Anonymous and answer the workbook questions. Write a brief statement of how things are the same and how they are different in working with substance abuse in your community today and your opinion about it, if you have one.
Unit Five: Elements of Integration: Steps 11, 12: Useful to God, Others, Our Message?
1. Check in: Insights on community resources, history of AA. <BREAK> Roundtable discussion: How can motivated people of faith bring new or improved elements to the recovery milieu? Homework. Read the remaining workbook and text materials. Choose something you feel has awakened in yourself as a result of this study to share at the last meeting or prepare a brief statement on what you will take to apply from the group.
2. Check in: What has awakened as a result of these Steps? For those who choose to share. <BREAK> Brief comments on the group, distribution of Certificates, Class and Instructor Feedback Forms. Opportunities for Q. & A. Closing circle: Each member has an opportunity to make a brief prayer, affirmation or statement. **Session ends.**

All Instruction Units may be delivered in one or two section components (five weeks or ten weeks of instruction.) All 20 hours of classwork are provided as supervised instruction, utilizing the texts, *Alcoholics Anonymous* and *Twelves Steps & Twelve Traditions*, © AA WSO., NY, NY, and the workbook, *The Alcoholics Anonymous 12-Steps Made Clear*. © Ten Speed Press, 2007. The optional 3 unit semester format provides for additional out-of-class reading and exercises. Book reports, summaries of reading and a class project is required. These are included for a final course grade. Class project as at the discretion of the instructor. It should comprise original thinking and enterprise, provide a lasting benefit to the local community or community as a whole, in its scope and execution.

Additional Reading List:

Note: To design a spiritual rather than a Christian training, emphasis needs to be broadened to include other disciplines and religious thought for comparison. Christian 12-Step outreach is an option of individual choice, of interest to some ministers and their congregations. This is not a training program supported or sponsored in any way by Alcoholics Anonymous. Standard professional conduct, law, ethics and practice should be added as they apply to substance abuse workers and aides in particular states and jurisdictions.
28 – 30 Day In-Patient Programs

Generally, in short duration treatment programs, the goals are to get the recovering person detoxed, made aware of the health implications of his or her condition and then get him or her oriented toward a sound plan for follow up and after care. Structured in-patient programs usually emphasize Steps 1, 2 and 3 of the AA program as a major feature of engaging the client in his or her own effective treatment and follow up. There are exercises in the workbook that support these efforts.

Does the facility host in-house meetings? If so, are these conducted by AA’s Hospitals & Institutions (H&I) Committee or are these meetings on the regular AA schedule? If they are regular meetings, facility staff often encourage residents choose an AA sponsor from among regular attendees at in-house meetings. In the in house meeting is H&I, however, that Committee may have an independent plan for follow up.

Working the Steps with a primary counselor? In facilities where recovering alcoholics and addicts are (the majority of) staff, Step work may occur in the program, one-on-one or in group. In intensive programs, some clients complete Steps 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 (in broad terms) by the end of their stay. Other programs may be structured to ask the client to get an outside sponsor and work the exercises that relate to AA’s texts with that person. Recovery work at the facility may focus on family, health, legal, career and solving practical day-to-day living and coping realities.

After care options. Nearly all programs provide assessment and referral to “next steps” for each client and most make an attempt to track people’s recovery after treatment. Follow up groups for alumni in after care are common. A workbook study group using a facilitator for some of the optional exercises is often welcomed by those in recovery.
Six Month to Two Year Treatment Programs

There is a broad spectrum of programs available to substance abusers, to families of alcoholics and to individuals in transition from a less desirable situation to a better one. This is a testimony to the pragmatism as well as to the charity and good will that exists in communities all over this country and all over the world. Indeed, there is a great deal of wisdom and kindness that surrounds us, for which we all have reason to be grateful!

Substance abuse is a primary disorder. People who seek care for related problems are often required to also accept treatment for alcoholism. For example, families where domestic violence is an issue, remaining sober and attending AA meetings and outpatient treatment for substance abuse as well as submitting to random testing for substance is commonly court-ordered for the offender. This is in addition to anger management or other counseling for the family issues. The non-offending partner may also be required to stay sober and attend meetings if child endangerment is a factor in the family, whether or not that party has a history of documented substance abuse. On another front, veterans who seek treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) routinely have to undergo alcohol and drug treatment before they are admitted to VA specialized programs.

Why? Because both in the case of family violence and in treating PTSD, the correlation between substance abuse and these problems is very high and experience shows that effective treatment doesn’t occur until and unless the affected parties remain sober (clean.) This is what is meant by a primary disorder.

In working with populations that initially resist seeing themselves as alcoholic or substance abuse impacted, this workbook provides a variety of tools. While an individual may face expulsion from a program if s/he fails to remain sober, many exercises included under the various Steps dovetail with important treatment and therapeutic goals beyond the simple cessation of substance abuse. There are exercises that require discrimination between a variety of possible life-views and attitudes. Effort is made to offer a spectrum of approaches so that habits of self-honesty, self-awareness and improved self-control develop over time through the techniques provided. Others Step exercises ask for appropriate self-disclosure. Discussion is opened as to how to establish good boundaries and how to increase personal security and improve self-respect. The various practices, carried out in working the Steps gradually become integrated because they are undertaken in fellowship, rather than in isolation. Thus, without engaging in a head-to-head debate with anyone about their drinking, these materials provide useful information to the open-minded, allowing each to consider his or her own circumstances and draw his or her own conclusions.

12-Step programs have become an increasingly important feature in self-care and aftercare. Combining mentoring fellowship with structure (the 12-Steps), 12-Step programs offer powerful forms of on-going treatment!

12-Step programs also greatly assist in recovery of families living with domestic violence and abuse, veterans with PTSD, Driving Under the Influence (DUI) Offenders, and individuals in programs assisting Drug Offenders, Youth at Risk, and Homeless Seniors, even though many individuals within these programs may resist identifying themselves as substance abusers.
Functional Family Rules

Guidelines to build trust and security at home:

? *Love* is not conditional but *approval* usually depends on honoring our commitments.

? Each person has the right to set his/her own boundaries and is responsible for making these known to other people.

? It is OK to disagree; its not OK to bully, threaten, get revenge.

? Behaviors have consequences; these are not the fault of other people.

? Its OK for boys and men to cry, share their pain, express tenderness, sympathy or regret.

? Being angry is a feeling; its OK to express it but its not an excuse to hurt people.

? Its OK for women to express anger, have definite views and personal ambitions.

? Love makes a family; nothing more and nothing less.

? Seeking outside help is not a breach of family loyalty.

? Intimacy depends on direct communication, being available, listening and also talking.

? Leadership is shared; responsibilities are negotiated, not imposed or taken for granted.

? People in our lives today are not valid targets for projections or fears rooted in the past.

? Talents and short-comings are parts of the human spectrum; we are all spiritual beings.

? It is safe to admit mistakes, make amends, to evolve and grow in an atmosphere of love.

? No matter how they start, all on-going relationships are *voluntary*. 
Spiritual Progress Checklist

We have the right to grow and change. We can use this checklist to set goals. We can add some. We try not to measure ourselves by each other's pain or progress!

? I am able to give and receive unconditional love.
? I accept success; I receive praise and recognition gracefully.
? I recognize and avoid abusive behavior in relationships.
? I live in the present.
? I do not blame myself for other people's choices or behavior.
? Meditation and prayer are a part of my daily life and routine.
? My sex life is enjoyable, fulfilling, free of shame or fear.
? I accept my feelings just the way they are.
? I take time to smell the roses.
? I clearly get across my point-of-view in an argument; I don't get personal or rude.
? I am financially responsible.
? My community receives my care, devotion and commitment; I give something back.
? I feel centered in my body.
? I don't have to always win or appear in control to feel good about myself.
? I don't seek out or create crisis in my life, relationships or surroundings.
? Time is my friend, not my enemy.
? I am secure; I know that what I have to contribute has value; I respect myself.
? I am a good friend to my mate and other intimates in my life.
? I remember to relax in stressful situations, even if things aren't going my way.
? I take time for fun.
? I accept life on life's terms.
? I respect, honor and give care to my own body; I eat a healthy diet and get exercise.
? My life is an expression of my personal vision.
? I do not take the blame for other's mistakes or credit for their successes.
? I take the initiative to ask for help or to learn in areas where I know little.
? I receive Inner Guidance.