

## Revision #6 May 14, 2001 **The 2nd Step Proposition Exercise**

The 2nd Step Proposition Exercise is a specific Spiritual exercise for members of Alcoholics Anonymous interested in attaining a new level in the 4th Dimension of existence. The whole purpose of this exercise is to have a new experience and to discover that which has been blocking us off from God. In this exercise we will identify the areas of our lives where our ego is still trying to get away with control through self-will, justification and delusion. This exercise should provide each of us with tools and directions for how to get back onto the spiritual "beam". It is designed to guide us through the areas of our lives that need the immediate focus of God's Love, gives us specifics for our prayers and provides us vision for our lives, toward which we need to move.

On page 53:2 of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous we are given the Second Step Proposition - "When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either **God is everything or else He is nothing**. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?" For most of us, intellectually, we said "God is everything" and moved on to Step Three. But, for the real alcoholic, this decision has to be made "deep down within" at the gut level of concession. The same gut level where we finally had to admit defeat with respect to our alcoholism. For the real alcoholic, the longest distance in the world can be from the head to the heart. A mental decision of this magnitude just won't cut it for us. We have to admit to this concession at our deepest level for it to offer us humility in the amount we require to achieve success with serenity and to live a happy, usefully whole life.

Since most of us blow right past the 2nd Step proposition, we hit Step Three still operating within our minds. Therefore, we concede to Step Three only in our mind as well. Usually, and **only with respect to our drinking**, we agree in our minds eye to have a new director and to let God tell us what we should do. We agree to be God's agent and to let Him empower us in the works we do. And lastly, we agree that God is going to be our new Father, He will provide what we need "if we keep close to Him and performed His work well." Like a good Father, God will Love us unconditionally, He will provide what we need and if we get out of line, He will correct us back on track, gently.

So, with respect to our drinking, our A.A. life may seem somewhat manageable for a time. We have surrendered; we have given up and admitted defeat, conceded **to our innermost selves** that we are powerless and may have actually stopped trying to run the whole show. But, in relatively short order, this same alcoholic who is now "sober", only having conceded Steps Two and Three in his mind, can't figure out why he is having trouble in several other areas of his life, all at the same time. His A.A. life seems O.K. but the rest of his life starts to unravel. He knows he has missed something but he can't figure out what? Nor can he figure out why?

The answer for our real alcoholic is simple and it's because we have missed two major points....

First, **we have only conceded in our mind** and secondly, **we have left our Ego unchecked so it can rebuild**.

Let's take a look at each point separately:

First, where does the Big Book tell us the problem of the real alcoholic resides? (23:1) "...the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind..." So, conceding only in the mind doesn't work because, as alcoholics, we are masters of delusion. The Big Book says, (xxvi:4) "...they [alcoholics] cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false." As alcoholics, we lie to ourselves better than anyone else and unfortunately, we believe our own lies!

Secondly, our history books tell us of the dangers of the alcoholic Ego and how it rebuilds if left unchecked. Let's take a look at what Dr. Harry Tiebout, one of A.A.'s founders has to say. Dr. Tiebout writes in (A.A. comes of Age 311:2) "...the so-called typical alcoholic is a narcissistic **egocentric core**, dominated by feelings of omnipotence, intent on maintaining at all costs its **inner integrity**...**Inwardly** the alcoholic brooks no control from man or God. He, the alcoholic, is and must be master of his destiny. He will fight to the end to preserve that position...*if* the alcoholic can **truly accept** the presence of a Power greater than himself, [Step Two] he, by that very step, modifies at least temporarily and possibly permanently **his deepest inner structure** and when he does so without resentment or struggle, then he is no longer typically alcoholic. And the strange thing is that if the alcoholic can **sustain that inner feeling of acceptance, he can and will remain sober for the rest of his life.**"

(A.A. comes of Age 313:2) "...a religious or spiritual awakening is the act of **giving up one's reliance on one's omnipotence**. [Step Three] The defiant individuality no longer defies but **accepts help, guidance, and control from the outside**. And as the individual relinquishes his negative, aggressive feelings toward himself and towards life, he finds himself overwhelmed by strongly positive ones such as love, friendliness, peacefulness, and pervading contentment, which state is the exact antithesis of the former restlessness and irritability. (A.A. comes of Age 317:0) "...all members of Alcoholics Anonymous who succeed in remaining dry, sooner or later undergo the same change in personality. **They must lose the narcissistic element permanently; otherwise the program of individual attains in the course of time a sense of the reality and nearness of a Greater Power, his egocentric nature will reassert itself with undiminished intensity, and drinking will again enter into the picture.**"

Let's paraphrase what Dr. Tiebout just said:

- 1.) If we don't "**truly accept**" Step Two at "**our deepest inner structure**" we can't "**sustain that inner feeling of acceptance**" and "**remain sober**".
- 2.) We must give up "**reliance on one's omnipotence**" through Step Three and accept "**help, guidance, and control from the outside**". We have to "**lose the narcissistic element permanently; otherwise the program of Alcoholics Anonymous works only temporarily**" because...
- 3.) Our "**egocentric nature will reassert itself [rebuild] with undiminished intensity, and drinking will again enter into the picture.**"

So, back to our original question... Why is our life outside of A.A. such a mess?

Because our alcoholic ego has rebuilt itself! Remember, we only conceded our drinking and we only conceded that in our mind. We haven't conceded the "everything" that the Second Step requires to **our innermost selves**. We haven't conceded that our life **outside of A.A. is unmanageable!** We haven't admitted defeat or conceded to our powerlessness in running the rest of our life.

If our choice in the Second Step Proposition is: "God is everything" then, **we have to give God everything!** We can't just give Him the drinking aspects of our life. We must Give God complete control of **our entire life** through a concession at the deepest level, to **our innermost selves**. And let's not forget that we took the

Third Step where **we offered ourselves to God**. We offered ourselves for Him to: "...build with me and to do with me as thou wilt...". That means God is running the show, the whole show. We don't get a vote. As Don P. says "Your life is none of your damn business." The Third Step says, "Made a decision to turn our will [**what I want**] and our lives [**everything about our actions and our life**] over to the care of God..." From this point on, "**what I want does not matter**". It's what God wants that matters. That's why my sponsor made me write, "**What I want does not matter**" all over the place so I could see it all day, every day.

**O.K. you say, now that we know what the problem is, what do I have to do? Well, that's exactly what this exercise is all about...**

**First, before we begin to write, I suggest prayer and meditation. I pray and meditate because I have experienced what the Big Book says- that my own prejudice is one of my greatest roadblocks to true progress. Therefore, before I begin any inventory or Step work, keeping in mind my Powerlessness of Step One, I always seek Power through Prayer and meditation...I have included this set aside prayer which you may find helpful:**

"God, I ask you to be with me, to guide and direct me as I seek your truth. Father, please set aside within me, that which would block me off from the truth. Lay aside my Prejudices about what I think I know about this process, this exercise, and my spiritual condition. Remove my fears about what I may find out about myself Lord and help me realize your truth."

Top of column one write out this question: **What areas of my life have I not given or am I not willing to give to God?**

Then fill in column one with all the areas of your life where this applies. For me, I find it helpful if I use the tornado exercise to help me identify these areas of my life.

What is the tornado exercise you ask? Well, it comes from the Big Book (82:3) "The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others." So, if I'm the tornado, who gets effected first? The person who is closest to me-my spouse. Then mentally, I start spiraling out through my life. Who gets hit next? My kids. And next? My siblings, parents, friends, co-workers, church members, neighbors etc. Keep spiraling further out and ask these questions as you go. They will help you identify your problem areas of control: Have I given each of these relationships and their outcome over to God? Am I still trying to control these relationships? When I think of these people, does the hair on the back of my neck stand up or am I at peace? Do these people bother me? Are they a burden to me? And lastly...

I ask these questions: "In what areas of my life have I been generally unhappy, frustrated, angry, or upset about lately?"

What have I been complaining about? In what areas has my drama been lately? In what areas have I not been getting my way? Examples include: My job, finances, investments, relationships, spirituality, physical condition, etc. When you are done, move on to column two.

At the top of column two write this: **Why am I afraid to give these areas to God? I am afraid of:**

**Here (column two) we identify why we are afraid and we list all of our fears in reference to the areas of our life (column one) that we haven't given to God.**

Now, number your fears (1,2,3, etc.) and then flip your sheet over and write a corresponding number on the back of your sheet for each numbered fear.

Now that we have a list of fears, we can turn back to the fear instruction from the Big Book (68:3) “...We ask Him [God] to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be.” So, let’s follow the instruction and ask God to remove each one of these fears we have just listed...

The problem with us alcoholics is that most of us stop there. We miss the second half of our fear instructions (and direct our attention to what He would have us be). We may have asked God to remove the fear but we still don’t have a vision of where we need to go with God. Therefore, we now meditate on what we think God wants us to “**be**”. Notice that it doesn’t say “do”, it says, “**be**”. There is a huge difference between the two (“being” and “doing”) and the best analogy I can make is “going on a trip”. Before you go on a trip, you have to know from where you are starting (column one) then, you have to know where it is that you want to go (what God wants us to be) and only then can you figure a way to get there. It’s the same thing when dealing with our Egos; we need to know where our ego has us deluded (our starting point). Then we have to realize where we really should be going (what God wants us to be) and only then we can come up with a plan as to how to get from here to where we need to go. Remember the instructions we are given as part of the 10th Step, (85:1) “Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities. “How can I best serve Thee-Thy will not mine be done”.”

Once we have a vision of what God wants us to be, we write our vision next to the number of the fear to which it corresponds. When we are through filling out our worksheet, we transfer all the data from our worksheet vertically over onto a 3X5 card and it should look like this:

**Front of 3x5 card    Back of 3x5 card**

<b>Front of card</b>		<b>Back of card</b>
<b>What areas of my life have I not given or am I not willing to give to God?</b>	<b>Why am I afraid to give these areas to God? I am afraid of:</b>	<b>What God wants me to be</b>
Career Job	1. Not getting what I want 2. Not enough Money	1. Grateful for what I have. Patient and Faithful 2. Trusting, Faithful, Grateful
Health or Body	3. Looking bad, 4. Feeling Bad/Pain	3. Humble, Righteous, Confident, 4. Courageous, Trusting, Tolerant
Marriage or Relationship	5. Not get what I want, 6. Out of control 7. Unloved 8. Intimacy	5. Humble, Trusting, Faithful, Patient 6. Compliant, Tolerant, Loving, Prayerful, Faithful, Submissive 7. Trusting, Loved, Intimate, Loving, 8. Trusting, Courageous, Strong, Faith
Finances	9. Not providing for my family 10. Not enough \$\$\$	9. Trusting, good steward, Faithful, Humble, Honest, Prayerful 10. Trusting, Faithful, Grateful

Hobby	11. Not getting what I want	11. Humble, Trusting, Faithful, Patient
Sex Life	12. Not enough Sex 13. No Intimacy	12. Tolerant, Chaste, Loving, Intimate 13. Loving, Tolerant, Chaste, Patient
Spiritual Life	14. Out of Control 15. Trusting God	14. Compliant, Tolerant, Loving, Prayerful, Faithful, Submissive 15. Faithful, Compliant, Courageous

O.K., so now that we have the card, what do we do with it?

Well for starters, in our morning meditation from the Big Book it says that we (84:2) “Continue to watch...”. So, we add this card into our morning prayers, into our “watching” and we also carry this card with us for the next two weeks. From now on, every time we sense that we are out of sorts; we stop (pause), and go to the card. Since we have done all of the inventory work already, the card makes getting back on the beam a whole lot easier. Let’s take a look:

For this example let’s say that we just found out we didn’t get the promotion at work that we were counting on. We realize that we are agitated as hell but what can we do about getting our feelings back to normal? Oh yeah, we remember that damn card we have been carrying around for the past week. So we....

First, identify the problem area:

Which area of your life are you having trouble with (column one)? [Career, Job, Finances]

Which fear or fears has your Ego triggered (column two)? [1,2 &9]

Now that we know the problem, we take action. We pray and ask God to remove the specific fear or fears that have gripped us. “God please help me, Father I’m in trouble here and in this state I can’t be of help to you or those about me. Father please remove my anger and fear of not getting what I want, of not having enough Money and not being able to provide for my family. Amen”

Then, we flip the card over and we pray again. This time we pray for the vision of God’s will for us, which we have already filled out on the card. “God please help me, Lord, please remove my anger and fear. Please replace them with **Gratitude** for what I do have, **Patience** in knowing that you have a plan for my life, **Faithfulness** in the fact that you **Love** me and want the best for me, **Trust** in you, that you will always provide what I need if I keep close to you and perform your works well. Help me to be **Honest** with my family and to let them know what has happened today so that as a Loving family, we may help each other get through this crisis together and lastly; Father, help me to be a **Good Steward** of the gifts you have already given me. Amen”

Lastly, we answer this question ourselves: How specifically can I be a **Patient, Honest, Trusting, Loving, Grateful and Faithful Steward for God**, Right here, Right now? Now get to work and “resolutely turn your attention” to making this come to pass... It is through taking these actions that we will suddenly realize we are back on the “beam”. Give it a try...it really does work!