

Step 2: Who is God? How can I come to believe in a Power greater than myself?

In Step 2, we are faced with the task of coming to believe in a Power greater than ourselves who can and will restore us to sanity. When we work a spiritual program of recovery, we consciously and actively attempt to become part of something bigger, greater and more powerful than we are on our own.

In order to have a relationship with God, we each need to know what qualities we need God to have in order to have faith in Him. What is our conception of who God is based on our own personal experiences?

When doing this step together, we did this wonderful exercise on what qualities we need God to have for us.

Below are the questions and each of our individual answers.

If you were to become paralyzed and had to hire someone to take care of you, what qualities would you want them to have? (Write these down)

You are about to be born and the stork turns to you and asks how would you like your mother to treat you (take care of me, teach me right from wrong, etc.) – what qualities would you want her to have? (loving, caring, kind, etc.) (Write these down)

Then the stork asks about your father. How would you like your father to treat you? What qualities would you want him to have? (i.e., protecting, strong, etc.) Write these down.

Now, think about how this world was created. What qualities do you think this power, thing or person had in order to do this? (All powerful, capable of doing anything, etc.) Write these down.

Use whatever qualities from above that you would like your Higher Power to have in order to define your concept of a Higher Power.

So, although some of the qualities overlap, each of us came up with our own personal description of our Higher Power.

In addition, the qualities are accessible and attainable, since we all can be caregivers, parents and creators of our own world.

As it says in the AA Big Book:

55:2 Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there. **For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself.**

55:3 We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.

This is such a message of hope!

Step Two Sanity Exercise

We move toward and become like that which we think about. In order to get to where we want to go, we need to find out where we are (Step One), we also need to figure out where we're going (Step Two), and then we need to come up with how to get there (Steps Three through Twelve). In other words, we locate where we are in the following left columns, then we create our personal vision for a recovery and sanity ideal of what we want to move toward in the following right columns. We ask ourselves, "What would my life look like if I didn't have this unmanageability?" The idea behind this is that if we believe that God can restore us to sanity, what would sanity look like in these fifteen areas? We create a sanity ideal for the future in the right column by setting a goal for each of areas of unmanageability in the left column. - Barefoot Bill

STEP ONE - UNMANAGEABILITY <i>What does my life look like now?</i>	STEP TWO - A SOBER VISION OF SANITY <i>How would I like it to be, or what does sanity look like in these areas?</i>
1. I am restless, irritable (which means "easily annoyed") and discontented. (which means "never satisfied")	
2. I'm having trouble in personal relationships	
3. I can't control my emotional nature.	
4. I'm a prey to misery and depression.	
5. I can't make a living (which includes a career, finances, AND making a successful life).	
6. I have a feeling of uselessness.	
7. I am full of fear.	
8. I am unhappy.	
9. I can't seem to be of real help to other people.	
10. I am like the actor trying to run the whole show. I arrange the scenery & all the players because I know what's best for everyone.	
11. I'm driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity; so I step on the toes of my fellows & they retaliate.	
12. I'm an extreme example of self-will run riot, though I usually don't think so.	
13. I lead a double life by presenting a stage character so I can enjoy a certain reputation, but I know in my heart I don't deserve it.	
14. I'm like a tornado roaring my way thru other's lives. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections are uprooted.	
15. My selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept my home in turmoil.	

After filling this out completely, ask yourself an important Step Two question: Are you able to bring these right column sanity ideals into your life without God's help? YES ___NO ___.

(By the way, you start moving toward these right column ideals **AFTER** you work ALL 12 Steps!)

In the chapter "We Agnostics" in the Big Book, there are two groups of people mentioned. Which one more closely describes your CURRENT experience?

1 - (page 50-51) -- Group 1 -- "Here are thousands of men and women, worldly indeed. They flatly declare that since they have (1.) come to believe in a Power greater than themselves (Step 2), (2.) to take a certain attitude toward that Power (Step 3), and (3.) to do certain simple things (Steps 4 through 12), there has been a **revolutionary** change in their way of **living and thinking**. In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of the total failure of their **human resources** (Step 1), they found that a new power, peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them. This happened soon after they (4.) wholeheartedly met a few simple requirements (the Twelve Steps). Once confused and baffled by the seeming futility of existence, they show the underlying reasons why they were making heavy going of life. Leaving aside the drink question, they tell why living was so unsatisfactory. They show how the change came over them. When many hundreds of people (5.) are able to say that the **consciousness** of the Presence of God is today the **most important fact** of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith." (This is also called living in the solution.)

2 - (page 52) -- Group 2 -- "We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn't make a living (which includes not being able to make a successful life), we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people." (These are also called the bedevilments, which means, "**to torment maliciously**". They are the results of living a self-centered life, drinking or not, and describes the inner unmanageability mentioned in Step One. They are the mental state that precedes the first drink and are the result of untreated alcoholism, whether we are drinking or not. **They are the root of the problem.**)

STEP 2 PROPOSITION EXERCISE

This exercise is for members of Alcoholics Anonymous who would like to get back on the spiritual beam.

Page 53 § 2 of the book Alcoholics Anonymous (the 'Big Book') poses the Step 2 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?

What does God being everything mean?

Many members will concede that God has absolute power—through AA as the conduit—to keep alcoholics sober. In this regard, He is everything, and we are nothing—we could not stay sober on our own.

With regard to alcohol, we will agree to be the actor in life and let God be the director, to be the agent and let God be the principal, to be the employee and let God be the employer, and to be the child and let God be the father who provides everything we need 'if we kept close to Him and performed His work well' (p. 63 § 1).

Many of us balk at applying this with other areas in our lives, however.

We are 'victims of the delusion that we can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if we only manage well' (p. 61 § 1). Manage what? Ourselves and the people and circumstances around us.

Note that this is a delusion. This means that this idea is untrue.

If we are victims of this delusion, we will make a decision about (a) what we want (b) what we have to do and be to get this (the 'job description') and (c) what everyone else has to do and be for us to get this (the 'script').

This is the 'decision based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt'.

Why? Our alcoholic egos are over-ambitious and we cannot fulfil our own job descriptions. The rest of the world fails to follow our script, which places us 'almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good' (p. 60 § 8). 'Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows, and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt' (p. 62 § 1).

What is the result?

We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn't make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people... (p. 52 § 2—the 'bedevilments')

So, the delusion that, if we manage well, we will make ourselves happy gives rise to the decision about what we and the world should be and do, and, once this decision is implemented, we end up in conflict with the world and ourselves and find ourselves beset by the bedevilments.

Where does this delusion come from?

Dr. Harry M. Tiebout (the psychiatrist who advised and informed AA in its early years and acted as a non-alcoholic trustee of AA) wrote, in *The Ego Factors in Surrender in Alcoholism* (in 'Harry Tiebout: The Collected Writings', Hazelden):

Certain aspects of the infant's psyche may be usefully examined. There are three factors which should receive mention. The first is, as Freud observed in his priceless phrase "His Majesty the Baby," that the infant is born ruler of all he surveys. He comes from the Nirvana of the womb, where he is usually the sole occupant, and he clings to that omnipotence with an innocence, yet determination, which baffles parent after parent. The second, stemming directly from the monarch within, is that the infant tolerates frustration poorly and lets the world know it readily. The third significant aspect of the child's original psyche is its tendency to do everything in a hurry. Observe youngsters on the beach: they run rather than walk. Observe them coming on a visit: the younger ones tear from the car while their elder siblings adopt a more leisurely pace.

Thus at the start of life the psyche (1) assumes its own omnipotence, (2) cannot accept frustrations and (3) functions at a tempo allegretto with a good deal of staccato and vivace thrown in. In the alcoholic, this infantile ego persists into adulthood.

How does this ego manifest? Additional descriptive words provided by Dr. Tiebout include: *prideful, arrogant, pushing, dominating, attention-seeking, aggressive, opinionated, headstrong, stubborn, determined and impatient*

Ring any bells?

Dr. Tiebout continues:

Therapy is centred on the ways and means, first, of bringing the Ego to earth, and second, keeping it there. ... namely the astonishing capacity of the Ego to pass out of the picture and then re-enter it, blithe and intact. ... Like the cat with nine lives, the Ego has a marvelous capacity to scramble back to safety—a little ruffled, perhaps, but soon operating with all its former aplomb, convinced once more that now it, the Ego, can master all events and push on ahead.

The capacity of the Ego to bypass experience is astounding and would be humorous were it not so tragic in its consequences. Cutting the individual down to size and making the results last is a task never completely accomplished. The possibility of a return of his Ego must be faced by every alcoholic. If it does return, he may refrain from drinking, but he will surely go on a "dry drunk," with all the old feelings and attitudes once more asserting themselves and making sobriety a shambles of discontent and restlessness. Not until the ego is decisively retired can peace and quiet again prevail. As one sees this struggle in process, the need for the helping hand of a Deity becomes clearer. Mere man alone all too often seems powerless to stay the force of his Ego. He needs assistance and needs it urgently.

An alcoholic rock-bottom can bring the ego to earth, enabling the alcoholic to come to AA and accept help from outside of himself.

The problem is keeping the ego there. If we do not, and it returns—'a little ruffled, perhaps, but soon operating with all its former aplomb'—we will become prideful, arrogant, pushing, dominating etc. (see the list above!)

Where does that leave us? The bedevilments.

As if that were not bad enough, we are at risk of drinking again: what once successfully treated the bedevilments? Alcohol. And our alcoholic minds will always remember this.

To get back on the beam and remain sober by reducing the ego, as Dr Tiebout says, we need God's help.

... unless the individual attains in the course of time a sense of the reality and the nearness of a Greater Power, his egocentric nature will reassert itself with undiminished intensity, and drinking will again enter into the picture. (Therapeutic Mechanisms of Alcoholics Anonymous. American Journal of Psychiatry: 468–73.)

COLUMN 1: What areas of my life have I not turned over (fully) to God?

Meditate for a few minutes, asking God, before you meditate, to direct your thinking and asking to have prejudice (= prejudging the purpose, nature, method, or outcome of this exercise) set aside.

Go through each area of your life, each relationship, asking yourself these questions:

- Am I having trouble with personal relationships?
- Am I being controlled by my emotional nature?
- Am I a prey to misery and depression?
- Am I able to make a living?
- Do I feel useless?
- Am I full of fear?
- Am I unhappy?
- Am I able to be of real help to anyone?

List and number the areas of your life where this is the case.

If I am suffering from any of these bedevilments, it is pretty certain that I am operating out of self-will: there is something I want I am not getting or have got and am afraid to lose.

If I had given these areas to God, I would be trying to follow God's will in terms of what to be and what to do, and I would be matching even calamity with serenity:

Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity. (p. 68)

What I have now listed, in column 1, therefore, is the areas that I have not yet turned over (fully) to God.

COLUMN 2: What are my fears in these areas?

For each of these areas, write down your fears. Number them.

Unless we are trusting that God will look after us to the extent that we act as we think he would have us act, we will be seizing control ourselves or—perhaps worse—shivering impotently, waiting for doomsday.

COLUMN 3: What would God have me be?

We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. (p. 68 § 3)

Before we can decide what to do, we need to know what God would have us be. Just as we cannot set out on a trip until we know the destination, we cannot work out what actions to take until we know what the spiritual destination is—what God would have us be.

In the third column, against each numbered fear, write what you believe God would have you be.

This requires meditation.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE RESULT

Take the information you have found, and place it on a 3" x 5" card or in a notebook—anything easy to carry around with you, so that you can refer to it at all times.

It should look something like this:

What areas of my life have I not turned over (fully) to God?	Why am I afraid to turn these areas over (fully) to God? Fear of	What would God have me be?
1. Work	1. Not being good enough	1. Trusting, diligent, hard-working, accepting of myself, unselfconscious
	2. Being sacked	2. Trusting, open to change, flexible, accepting, unselfconscious
	3. Not having enough money to live	3. Grateful for what I have, trusting, accepting
2. Relationship with my partner	4. My temper	4. Patient, kind, tolerant, thinking before acting, unprejudiced, flexible
	5. Rejection	5. Accepting, trusting, selfless, self-forgetting
	6. Not getting enough sex	6. Giving, generous, accepting
3. Relationship with my sponsee	7. The sponsee not doing what I want him to do	7. Patient, non-controlling, loving, thoughtful
	8. The sponsee drinking	8. Patient, loving, accepting, trusting
	9. Me failing as a sponsor	9. Humble about my defects, open to the advice of others, accepting of myself
4. Relationship with my neighbor	10. Noise, being kept awake at night	10. Accepting, thoughtful, patient, understanding
	11. Confrontation	11. Patient, friendly, even-tempered

STEP 11 MORNING MEDITATION *On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. ... In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or decision. (p. 86 § 2)*

Our card gives us specific targets for meditation. When considering work, for instance, we can try to imagine how we could be trusting or accepting in particular situations we envisage. We can then ask God what actions would bring us into line with that mode of being.

STEP 10 WATCHING / "WHEN AGITATED OR DOUBTFUL" *"Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. (p. 84 § 2). We now have specific fears to watch for as we go through the day. As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. (p. 87 § 3). Since we now have a vision of what we should become, it will be easier to divine the right thought or action, as we have a 'spiritual destination.*

STEP 11 EVENING REVIEW *When we retire at night we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? (p. 86 § 1) We now have specific questions we can ask: "Was I patient with my sponsee?" "Was I selfless with my spouse?"*

Most of all, we have an 'instant vision' of what God's will is for us, like a North Star by which we can navigate: when we get out of whack, off beam, 'into a state', we do not have to start the inventory process from scratch—all we need to do is(a) go to the card(b) work out which area of our life we have stopped trusting God in(c) identify the fear(d) ask God to replace the fear with the qualities in the third column(e) ask God for the right thought or action in line with those qualities (p. 87)

Step 3 – Either God Is Everything or He is Nothing

I love this exercise which is also from *The Idiot's Guide*.

Faced with the First Step; a self-imposed crisis you cannot evade, are you now willing to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or He is nothing?

Page 53, Paragraph 2

Consider each of the following questions on the next page in two ways.

1. First, on each of the following questions, ask yourself “What are my prospects for the future in this area of my life if God is nothing, and does not exist; if all I have is what I’ve had in the past to deal with these things?”

2. Next, go back through these questions and ask yourself “What are my prospects for the future in this area of my life if God is everything, and does exist; and His power will deal with them?”

Are you having trouble with personal relationships?

- If God is nothing:
- If God is everything:

Can you control your emotional nature?

- If God is nothing:
- If God is everything:

Are you prey to misery and depression?

- If God is nothing:
- If God is everything:

Can you make a living?

- If God is nothing:
- If God is everything:

Do you have a feeling of uselessness?

- If God is nothing:
- If God is everything:

Are you full of fear?

- If God is nothing:
- If God is everything:

Are you unhappy?

- If God is nothing:
- If God is everything:

Do you seem unable to be of real help to other people?

- If God is nothing
- If God is everything

Do you believe the answer to these problems is inside rather than outside of ourselves? (52:2)

- Have your ideas been working as far as solving the problems listed above?
- Do you believe the God idea might, are you willing to try? (52: 3)

Do you agree God either is or He isn't, what is your choice to be? (53: 2)

Do you agree, that deep down within every man, woman and child is the fundamental idea of God? (55: 2)

Are you willing to search fearlessly within your own heart to find God, are you willing to believe He is there?

Do you agree that it is only there that God can be found? (55: 3)

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Third Step Exercise:

The following is taken from the Big Book, and phrased in the first person. Read this out loud to someone each day for a week, and then decide if:

- a. It applies to you.
- b. You are ready to quit living like this.
- c. You are ready to accept living on Gods terms.

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

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

I am self-centered - ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays. I am like the retired businessman who lolls in the Florida sunshine in the winter complaining of the sad state of the nation; the minister who sighs over the sins of the twentieth century; politicians and reformers who are sure all would be Utopia if the rest of the world would only behave; the outlaw safe cracker who thinks society has wronged him; and the alcoholic who has lost all and is locked up. Whatever my protestations, am I not concerned with myself, my resentments, and my self-pity?

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

So my troubles, I think, are basically of my own making. They arise out of myself, and I am an extreme example of self-will run riot, though I usually don't think so. Above everything, I, as an alcoholic, must be rid of this selfishness. I must, or it will kill me! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. I had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but I could not live up to them even though I would have liked to. Neither could I reduce my self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on my own power. I have to have God's help.

This is the how and the why of it. First of all, I have to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, I will decide that hereafter in this drama of life, God is going to be my Director. He is the Principal; I am His agent. He is the

Father, and I am His child. Most Good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which I will pass to freedom.

When I sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. I have a new Employer. Being all powerful, He will provide what I need, if I keep close to Him and perform His work well. Established on such a footing I'll become less and less interested myself, my little plans and designs. More and More, I will become interested in seeing what I can contribute to life. As I feel new power flow in, as I enjoy peace of mind, as I discover I can face life successfully, as I become conscious of His presence, I begin to lose my fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. I will be reborn.

I am now at Step Three. I said to my Maker, as I understood Him: "God, I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!" I thought well before taking this step making sure I was ready; that I could at last abandon myself utterly to Him.

I'll find it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as my wife, best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as I expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, will be felt at once.

1. Does this description fit you? How?
2. Are you convinced that your life, job, relationships, marriage, friendships and everything else in your life run on self-will is going to be a failure?
3. What meaning does this have in your life today?
4. Are you willing to follow up this decision with the action required of me in Steps Four through Nine?

If you are ready, do the Third Step Prayer (Page 63)

"God, I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

Homework and to be done together:

After reading the original excerpt from page 61 of the AA Big Book, write your name in the blacks of the "Personal Version" below. Cut and paste the personal version into your AA Big Book. Read it daily for 1 week.

What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. I, _____ begin to think life doesn't treat me _____ right. I _____ decide to exert myself _____ more. I _____ become, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit me _____. Admitting I _____ may be somewhat at fault, I _____ am sure that other people are more to blame. I _____ become angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is my _____ basic trouble? Am I _____ not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Am I _____ not a victim of the delusion that I _____ can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if I _____ only manage well? Is it not evident to all the rest of the players that these are the things I _____ want? And do not my _____'s actions make each of them wish to retaliate, snatching all they can get out of the show? Am I _____ not, even in my _____'s best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?

Answer the following questions:

- Does this description fit you? How?
- Are you convinced that your life, job, relationships, marriage, friendships and everything else in your life run on self-will is going to be a failure?
- What meaning does this have in your life today?
- Are you willing to follow up this decision with the action required of me in Steps Four through Nine?

Taking Step 3:

"Do you now decide to take the actions necessary to turn your will and your life over to the care of God as you understand Him?"

Please answer yes or no. Thank you.

Taking Step 3:

If you are ready, do the Third Step Prayer (Page 63)

"God, I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!" Say prayer. Comment but do not explain absence of "amen."

When you can sincerely say this prayer, you have taken Step 3.

1. Go through the prayer sentence by sentence, and describe what each sentence means to them.
2. Now, write a letter to God, asking Him to help you. Be very specific about what you would like Him to help you do.

Dear God:

I need you in my life. Please help me to: _____

3. Now, write your own Formal Terms of Surrender.

What are you willing to do to connect to your Higher Power? Again, be very specific.

Dear God:

I will _____ Signed and date:

Afterthought: