

A BRIEF INTERPRETATION OF THE TWELVE STEPS

(1)

1. WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL(And Drugs) ** THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGABLE.

On the surface this step appears comparatively easy since all alcoholics are powerless over alcohol, and all persons are powerless over drugs so far as addiction is concerned. However it is a noted characteristic of all drug addicts to rationalize that they are keener, more alert, and happier when they are taking drugs. Honest introspection will readily convince us that such a school of thought is false.

2. CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY.

Everyone who has habitually used alcohol or drugs has sometimes said to himself, "Well, just this once and then tomorrow I will quit." Tomorrow never comes. Every addict has been pleaded with by his loved ones to 'please stop'. Even strangers have tried to reason him into quitting. Likewise, threats are of no avail. In short there is no mere human power great enough. It takes a Power greater than ourselves.

3. MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD, AS WE UNDERSTAND HIM.

The existence of a God (call Him what you will) must be taken for granted and on faith. For him who can honestly say, "I do not believe in God, our profound pity". To such a person this program is of little value. It is beyond the scope of this discussion to point out or even suggest proof of God's existence.

4. MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

This step is the most difficult one so far. In each of our minds are hidden corners and recesses, closed to even our own consciousness. The doors to these recesses must be opened to root out their contents. We must be honest with ourselves. Here should be listed all our faults and our shortcomings.

5. ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS.

It has been said by teachers and philosophers ever since God admonished us to confess our sins and repent, that confession is "good for the soul." This confession will bring into our consciousness our misdeeds and shortcomings, and thereby compare them with the shortcomings and misdeeds for which we blame our fellow man.

6. WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER.

Having recognized our faults and shortcomings, we naturally want them removed, and since it is beyond the power of mere man to relieve them, we must appeal to the Higher Power to do so and then stand ready to do the foot-work, as we may be directed.

7. HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS.

In asking this Power for help and to remove these shortcomings, we must do so humbly and with contrition, and in a quiet manner. Here one must exercise his own individuality, it has been proven if we seek we shall find.

8. MADE A LIST OF ALL THE PERSONS WE HAD HARMED AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL.

A mental memo is not enough for this step. We must make a written list to which may be added from time to time, and from which may be erased when amends have been made. Attention is called to the fact that we only need to become willing. In other words, the will is the important part so far as this step is concerned.

9. MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS.

If only further injury would result from asking amends, we would only further our own selfish ends by doing so. If the hurt is only to our own pride, then amends must be made no matter how great that hurt might be, nor how severe the consequences -- they should be faced if they are to be conquered.

10. CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT.

An early admission of our wrongs is much easier -- the longer we nurse them, the harder it is to admit them. Any successful business man will tell you that a perpetual inventory is by far the best -- and what greater business is there than living?

11. SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD, AS WE UNDERSTAND HIM, PRAYING FOR KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT.

We all have our own ideas about prayer but only a few know how to pray. When we ask God to grant certain wishes or bring about certain things, be sure that they are the right things. If these things are for our own good, they will be granted without asking, we should pray for knowledge of His will, not that He will grant that our will be done. We should pray His will be known to us and we will be granted the knowledge to carry it out intelligently and faith enough to carry on when that knowledge ends.

12. 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.

This is the practical application of these steps. It is a known fact an alcoholic will listen to another alcoholic, or an addict will listen to another addict, even if they be strangers. We will listen to our own kind quicker than to loved ones or strangers. In relating to a newcomer this program, don't be afraid to tell the truth about yourself no matter how gruesome the details. This will accomplish two things; 1. It will let him know that you have been "through the mill" thereby building up his trust in you. 2. It will help straighten your own position and renew your own faith.

STEP NUMBER ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL (And Drugs): THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGABLE.

This is first of all an admission - an act of the mind. It is not something calling for strenght of will, but something that calls for a weakening of a rebellous will - an honest admission - a giving in - or in plain language a true act of HUMILITY, which is nothing more or less than absolute honesty. The objective fact that we are powerless perhaps has been there for years, but now we recognise that fact - we ADMIT it - we take the first step on the road to honesty and humility which alone can lead to a life free of alcohol and drugs.

We admit that we are POWERLESS. In the matter of alcohol and drugs we have absolutely no control, no will. The statements that are made so often by well-meaning persons about the alcoholic's or addicts will power being rejuvenated is a lot of nonsense. It is this fallacy that leads many after a period of sobriety to "try it again". It proves beyond a doubt that an alcoholic or an addicts can never hope to "rejuvenate" his will power and again use alcohol or drugs. He is POWERLESS. He has no will in the matter.

THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGABLE. We admit that we have drifted away from normal living and thinking! that we have been unable to perform our social duties, and that our behavior in general has been socially unacceptable.

Sincerity and honesty in making this admission in the first step is half the resolution. Many slip because somewhere in the back of thier minds they retain the false hope that maybe someday, somehow, they may be able to control a little alcohol or drugs. But that day NEVER comes. One who fully takes the first step once and for all will want and practice the other eleven. But one who takes it with some sort of mental reservation, a mental "maybe" will only half-heartedly if at all, practice the others. To honestly and completely admit that we are powerless over alcohol and drugs - that our lives have become unmanageable - is the only door that opens to the AA program.

In this step, the initial one of our program, we humble ourselves. We come to realize that we are helpless insofar as alcohol and drugs are concerned. We open the door and perhaps for the first times in our lives we actually become qualified to visualize the truth. Without so humbling ourselves we cannot begin to accept - let alone practice the program. The ultimate reason behind most slips is the refusal to make full admission in this first step, but having done so, we immediately aspire to obtain the knowledge and the practice the remaining eleven steps. This step must be taken once and for all, and in taking it we open the door to a new life.

The admission that our lives were unmanageable should not be too hard to admit. We have only to remember the hardships we have caused our loved ones. We need not look back at our record of nonachievement and antisocial behavior. Let us take this first step carefully and completely, leaving ourselves no reservations and the toney steps will all fall into line.

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STEP NUMBER TWO

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY.

"A Power greater than ourselves," i.e., a power outside and beyond human power, the Power which we call God. We have tried medicine and many other ways and methods to no avail, so now we are going to try the spiritual. This is not religion. Religion is the formal worship of God, and has nothing to do with AA, nor does AA have anything to do with religion. The second step simply means that we came to believe that there is a God and that God can restore us to a happy and normal living. We do not approach this step with an attitude of "show me" but with a humble attitude of acceptance, an attitude of faith and humility, with an open mind, willing to learn more about this Power whom we call God. If a person won't admit this he is rather hopeless and AA has little, if anything, to offer. For, the person who refuses to accept the fact that there is anything, or any power, greater than himself, is rather a hopeless egoist. To his stunted mind, nothing, no person, not even a God can do something more than he in his blinding pride thinks he can do.

"Could restore us to sanity" Do not become alarmed at the use of the word "sanity", that implies that we are, or were, insane. The meaning of the word 'insane' is coursed in the minds of the majority of people; to most people it implies madness and a diseased state of mind. However, Webster's dictionary says: "Insanity is more a social and legal rather than a medical term and implies a mental disorder resulting in an inability to manage one's affairs and perform one's social duties." And in the first step we admitted that our lives had become unmanageable. This means that we believe that God can restore us to a normal way of living so that we can manage our lives in a socially acceptable manner. Surely, we have proven that while we were using alcohol or drugs that we were incapable of managing our affairs and performing our social duties.

Perhaps the easiest approach to the second step is to think back to our childhood. When we got into trouble we ran to our parents knowing there was complete safety in their arms. We told our troubles and our minds were relieved. Picture, then, God as a Universal Father, ready to listen to your troubles, and ready to give you that same understanding and protection that you received from your parents in childhood.

AN A.A. PRAYER

God give me grace and guide my steps according to Your way... That I may live a better life... Than I lived yesterday... Show me the fallacy from which... a fool makes his mistakes... So I may grow in goodness and... In wisdom for Your sake... Let me improve my inner self... By learning... to subdue... my selfishness and everything... Worthy and untrue... Teach me, O God, to be a friend... and walk the kindly path... That I may always be sincere... and given not to wrath... Help me do my duty well... According to Your way... That I may live a better life... Than I lived yesterday.

STEP NUMBER THREE

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE UNDERSTAND HIM.

Once having come to believe that there is a Power greater than ourselves, it is not too difficult to turn our lives over to that Power.

It was explained in the second step that as rugged individualists we were rank failures. Forever looking into the future, we were forever disappointed when our plans failed. It is at this point that the Day by Day, or Twenty Four Hour plan comes to our assistance.

We have found that by giving up planning, by letting each day take care of itself - and it always will - we have been able to remain free of alcohol and drugs. We cannot control the future. The past is done and cannot be returned. And so if we can do a good job this day by deciding to abstain from alcohol and drugs for just twenty-four hours. We ask assistance from that Greater Power to not take any drugs or alcohol for that brief period. And when the day ends we thank that Higher Power for the help that has been given to us. And on the next day and the next we follow the same program.

This is the first step in turning our will and our lives over to the care of God, AS WE UNDERSTAND HIM. From this small beginning we develop until we find we are no longer headstrong; we are no longer trying to run our own lives and making a sorry mess of it.

If we are not willing to take this step unconditionally, then we should pray that our Higher Power will make us willing - praying for both the will to do and the strength to accomplish. This, for a time may be necessary for most of us. For, after years away from normal living, from God and His will, it is not going to be so easy to change and we may need to pray daily, even hourly, "God, make me willing to do THY will.

AN A.A. PRAYER

Our Father, we come to you as a friend. You said that where two or three gathered in your name, there you will be in the midst. We believe this is something you would have us do, and that it has your blessing.

We pledge with you always to be honest and search our hearts for weakness and errors that we may deserve your help.

We believe that you want us to be real partners with you in this business of living, accepting our full responsibility, and certain that the rewards will be freedom and growth and happiness. For this we are grateful.

We ask you at all times to guide us. Help us daily to come closer to you and grant us new ways of living, of gratitude.

Over.

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God grant us Serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the
courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the
difference. Amen.

STEP NUMBER FOUR

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

Again we come to a step that requires courage. One of our chief reasons for using alcohol and drugs was to escape from ourselves. We were afraid of our won thoughts and knew we could escape from them through alcohol and drugs. We were afraid to face facts. We were afraid of our jobs, afraid of our families, afraid of responsibility. And we were afraid of thinking about them.

So having fortified ourselves by taking the major hurdles embodied in the first three steps, we find the time has come to actually do something definite about our problems. So very much like a bather diving into an icy lake we plunge into an inventory of ourselves.

And what do we find? We have been dishonest. We have broken hearts. We have slandered others. We have let down employers, friends and families. We have broken faith. We have smashed most of the laws of God and man. And every one of these facts can be traced back to alcohol and drugs.

To continue the inventory, we consider our physical selves, finding that health is impaired, memory is faulty, and finances are at a low ebb. And having honestly taken ourselves apart we wonder how on earth people have put up with us all this time.

It is a brave act to dissect ourselves thus, but we are fully compensated in the great feeling of satisfaction we experience in having at last squarely faced an issue. No man in his right senses wants to continue in this manner when he finds out what is wrong with himself. So we take this inventory in an honest searching and fearless manner, and pay attention to our bad qualities rather than to our virtues. And once having recognized these defects of character we resolve to DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

MY PRAYER

Great Power, give me strenght, courage, patience and understanding in the work of this day... Let me not weaken myself by anger, cheapen myself by boasting or play the fool by lying... Help me to remember that there are others in this world besides myself, and that both friend and foe are of my won thinking and making... And at the close of the day, lead me to my bedside with the knowledge that greed, malice, envy and hatred have played a lesser part in my thinking, and that my weariness is the result of well doing. Amen.

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS.

First of all this step implies that we have sorrow for what we have done wrong, and that we admit that we have been responsible for it. It is sorrow that we have hurt or offended God and our fellow man, not that we have been hurt. We see the big difference between sorrow and self pity.

ADMITTED TO OURSELVES - This means we admit that we alone are responsible for the trouble we are in; We and We alone could have avoided it. For once in our lives we begin to accept the responsibility; the responsibility of our actions. ADMITTED TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING - admission to God and to ourselves is not sufficient; we want peace and contentment and we need big hunks of humility. Holding back from this step is nothing more or less than being too proud to let someone else know how loaded we are with faults and failures. Admission to God and to ourselves was not too honest; it came not from the heart but from the lips only. It is most helpful to take this step with one who has already taken it for with such a person we need have no fear of being honest, no dressing up, no cutting corners, but thoroughly and honestly, and EXACTLY admitting the nature of our previous and present wrongs.

It works, it really does! Together let us try to make this step. We are nearly to the half-way house on our journey to a New Way of Life. This step designates many times the point that our troubles start fading from our lives. We have unshouldered out burdens upon those who are willing to bear them.

IT SHOWS IN YOUR FACE.

You don't have to tell how you live each day
You don't have to say if you work or you play;
I tried, true barometer serves in the place
However you live, it shows in your face.

The false, the deceit that you wear in your heart
Will not stay inside where it first got its start.
For new and blood is a thin veil of lace.
However you live, it shows in your face.

If you have battled and won in the great game of life.
If you feel that you've conquered the sorrow and strife
If you've played the game fair and you stand on first base
However you live, it shows in your face.

If your life's been unselfish and for others you live
Not for what you can get but for what you can give.
If you live close to God in his infinite grace
You don't have to tell it, it shows in your face.

STEP NUMBER SIX

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER.

We are ready and willing. We place everything in the hands of our Higher Power. We are willing to let Providence work on our character in order to rebuild it. We may use some striking measures, but we are ready. We may be put into circumstances where someone is always aggravating us - that is to teach us patience. We may have associations with someone we don't like - that is to teach us charity and tolerance. We may be put into a position of inferiority - that is to teach us humility. We may have to do hard work - that is to eliminate laziness. We may have failures - that is to teach us courage and trust. All the disappointments, circumstances, or whatever we may face are all going to be opportunities to eliminate our defects of character.

It is well during such trying times to remember, and repeat over and over when things are all going wrong - or, at least seemingly wrong, the little AA Prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference."

We have previously admitted our helplessness over alcohol and drugs, and inability to control our lives. We have reached that place where we believe that a Power greater than ourselves is our only hope to return to normal living. We have decided that we will turn our will and our lives over to the care of that Higher Power and so understand it. We have taken stock of ourselves in a fearless and searching manner. We have already admitted to a Higher Power and to ourselves the exact nature of our shortcomings, and then told it to another human being and talked these wrongful acts and thoughts that we have possessed over with that other human being. So, after doing all these things we have reached the half-way point in the AA stairway to serenity and peace of mind - that New Way of Living. We have become ready and willing to let our lives be controlled and governed by Someone besides ourselves - The Higher Power.

JUST A THOUGHT

Temptation is always at hand, that's if you want to be tempted, and fear seems to be the instigator. Never be afraid. Be sure of yourself. Never let yourself get too tired, too hungry, and never feel that you're alone! Always remember that there's someone who is always ready to listen, always waiting to hear you. If you have complete faith, you need have no fear, at any time. I remember a slogan we learned in school. "You can and you will." The English language has no such a word as "can't". It's been a wonderful guide for me. After all, fear stems from insecurity, unsureness of yourself, your capabilities. If you're honest with yourself, remember, always the man in the mirror, you can't help but be safe and sure. Wasn't it Shakespeare who said "to shine oneself be true and it must follow as the night the day. Thou canst not then be false to any man."

STEP NUMBER SEVEN

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS.

Again we have humility. Realizing that the job we are ready to understak is humanly impossible,we ask our Higher Power to do it for us and give us the strenght to do the foot-work. We cannot ask God once then quit - we ask for daily help. We cannot ask for tomorrow,only for today. 24 hours at a time,oftener if necessary. It is normally a saww process,this rejuvination of our character and personaality. But,after all,we did not get this way over night. It is ordinarily a lifetime work.

We should always remember that we are working on the most difficult job in life - we are rebuilding,not a house,nor a town,nor a nation,nor a world,BUT A MAN OR WOMAN. That is show,it is difficult,and we should never be agitated over lack of progress. If we get made again,of we become resentful,or if all our faults pop back on occassion,we are suprised but we are amazed that we don't do worse. As long as we are honestly doing the foot-work, hand in hand with our Higher Power,we know that,in a course of time,succes will be ours - a gift from that Power greater than ourselves.

Remember, we cannot bargain with this Power,and that instead of asking for outright help,we ask for guidance to be shown the way so that we can do our part.

HUMILITY - Humility is the sornnerstone of the AA program. To be humble is not to grovel before man, It is not to become a doormat for society. Humility is based on the recognition that we are children of God. It is the consciousness of a need of a Power greater than ourselves,and a willingness to let that Power control our lives. Humility is teachability,and an open mind to the truth. Without humaility serencity is almost impossible.

JUST FOR TODAY

JUST FOR TODAY - I will try to live through this day only and not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do something for 12 hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

JUST FOR TODAY - I will be happy,This assumes to be true what Abe, Lincoln said,that,"Most folks are as happy as they make up thier minds to be."

JUST FOR TODAY - I will try to strenghten my mind,I will study, I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort,through and concentration.

JUST FOR TODAY - I will adjust myself to what is,and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my"LUCK"as it comes, and fit myself to it.

JUST FOR TODAY - I will exercise my sould in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn,and not get found out, I will do at least two things I don't want to do - just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt;they may be hurt,but today I will not show it.

Over.

JUST FOR TODAY ** I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticize not one bit. not find fault with anything and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

JUST FOR TODAY - I will have a quiet half hour all by myself to relax, During this half hour, sometime I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

JUST FOR TODAY - I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: Hurry and Indecision.

JUST FOR TODAY - I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

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STEP NUMBER EIGHT

MADE A LIST OF ALL THE PERSONS WE HAD HARMED AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL.

We have wronged persons, our families, our loved ones, and many others all persons with whom we have had any appreciable contact. Now, in AA, we have become willing to make amends to them and are ready to do so. There is no hesitancy on our part, yet we must not hasten. We take our time in order to be thorough. It is at this point we begin the physical act of our rehabilitation - There is something physical that we can do.

Our debts are of two kinds, the physical and the moral. The physical debts can be paid a little at a time, if only a dollar here and a dollar there, and in time we can all repay. There is your employer who has given you chance after chance - many more than you actually deserved. There are your friends whom you have let down. A few apologies are in order here. There are those you have maligned, ridiculed, slandered, or been arrogant with. As you make amends you will find yourself increasing in stature. Finally, there are your dear ones who have tried so hard to love you and to help you. How many times have you broken their hearts? How many times have you promised them to mend the error of your ways, only to break the promise in a few hours or a few days? How many times have you let them down in a crisis? And yet they have stood by you!! And they still love you. But whenever we can, and when it will not harm them or others, we should do so, if we can rectify the harm done them in any way.

It is probably better to consider the eight step in conjunction with the ninth step (Made such amends directly wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others) They are closely interwoven. Do not minimize the importance of these steps. Without having taken them we will never be on firm ground. But we should take these steps in order, and having once conscientiously taken them, our future life of sobriety and abstinence is assured.

TIME

Time passes quickly. There is nothing we can do about it except to see, as far as possible that it passes fruitfully. If, in passing swiftly than a weaver's shuttle, it never the less lays up its store of good deeds done, noble ambitions, clung to herocially and kindness and sympathy scattered with a lavish hand, there will be given to it permanence and enduring quality that nothing can take away.

The past is one, the future has not yet come; the present is all we have. We cannot change the past, nor can we draw upon the future, but we can use the present. So let us touch the philosopher's stone, for it is the foundation for successful living.

Take time to look in is the price of success. Take time to think - it is a source of power. Take time to play - it is the source of perennial youth. Take time to read - it is the source of wisdom. Take time to be friendly - it is the way to happiness. Take time to laugh it is the music of the soul. Take time to pray - it is conversation with God.

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STEP NUMBER NINE

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS.

The purpose of both steps 8 and 9 is to form some sort of outline as a working plan whereby we can atone for the harm we have done to others while we were drinking or using drugs. In step eight we made a written list of all those people to whom we owe moral amends or financial compensation, but in actual practice it would be impossible to make amends to some of them. In those instances where it is possible to make amends directly, we should do so unless such amends would cause harm or injury to them or others; and those to whom we cannot make amends, we should leave to God, as we understand God, asking for help.

In carrying out this step we will doubtless encounter certain difficulties, especially when we must make amends to people whom we dislike. However, if we are to succeed in our rehabilitation, we must make the attempt. In the first place we may find that most of the disagreements that we have had with others are largely due to OUR OWN FAULT; secondly, this is another of the steps in which we learn to practice humility. Possibly no other class of people need humility more than the alcoholics and addicts. This making of direct amends is one of the shortest routes to a true spirit of humility. However, if only further injury would result from the persons we want to recompense. On the other hand, if it is only our PRIDE that will be injured in the process, we must make amends - no matter how severe the consequences. THESE OBLIGATIONS MUST BE FACED AND MADE GOOD IF WE WANT PEACE OF MIND.

We cannot hedge in this matter of making restitution, nor can we hurry if we want to be thorough. In some instances it may be embarrassing, or nearly impossible for us - so we then go to some reliable friend for his or her advice about the situation - in other words we do not trust our own judgement where there may be doubt. Finally, as we make amends, we check it off our list (that we made in step number eight), and we thereby see the actual progress we are making, which helps renew our courage.

This business of making amends and restitution may take a long time. It probably will take many of us years and years, and we must be thorough. We do not hurry, but neither do we needlessly delay, for the longer we put it off, the harder it will become. Remember, you are rebuilding a MAN. Do a good job of it.

A mental memo is not enough for this step. We must make a written list to which may be added from time to time, and from which may be erased when amends have been made. Attention is called to the fact that we only need to become willing to make amends. In other words, the will is the important part so far as this step is concerned.

STEP NUMBER TEN

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT.

In step four we made a searching and fearless moral inventory and we no doubt found many things wrong. We probably found that many of our traits that we had thought to be virtues were falsely labeled. We found that Mr. ME was not quite a big shot at all, but found that the ego of Mr. ME had been in our way and had been a big stumbling block in our lives. Now we don't want this to happen again so we continue to take personal inventory so that our faults will not again accumulate. If anything that is not right or worthwhile begins to creep into our lives we want to know about it just as soon as possible so that we can try to do something about it, so we continue our inventory DAILY.

The tenth, eleventh and twelfth steps are the only ones that we try and work without fail daily. The first nine steps are taken and we use them to the betterment of our daily practicing these principles of this program in all our affairs. The tenth step is one of action and we should not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can mentally take this inventory and forget it. We must promptly admit, if we have said sharp, unkind things to another we should go to that person and admit it, even though our contention may have been right, we have no right to say the unkind things that would hurt another's feelings. Now, if the nature of some of our wrongs are such that it would hurt another's feelings, and such that it would be unwise to make them public, or such that it would not be advisable, to admit them to the person whom we have harmed, we should go to someone else and talk to them about it - but we must admit our wrongs to SOMEONE. Get it off your chest and rectify the hurt if possible. The tenth step is one of action, and the action consists of admitting our wrongs - and we must promptly do so as the longer we nurse them the harder they become to admit. Any successful business man will tell you that a perpetual inventory is the very best kind - and what greater business is there than living????.

If we will take this inventory regularly and make some attempt to rectify our wrongs, we will soon find that we cannot do it all ourselves - then turn to the Higher Power and ask for guidance and be ready to do the foot-work.

DEALING WITH OTHERS

When dealing with others remember to be...as fair as you'd have them be unto thee...be open and honest without holding back...and you'll never be open to an attack...remember to trust until happenings prove...that someone you deal with...has made a false move. , then be on your guard...but play fair till the end...and you will gain friendships as your dividend...be always above shady actions or deeds...and the peace in your heart...will fulfill all your needs...for sincerity, fairness and honor will pay...you'll be held in esteem and be free of dismay...allow for the faults that are common to all...and you will avoid being sneaky or small...so when dealing with others be free to condone...deal with their faults as gently...as you would with your own.

BOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD AS WE UNDERSTAND HIM, PRAYING ONLY FOR KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT.

Step eleven can be divided into three parts. Let us consider, first that part which recommends prayer and meditation to improve our understanding and contact with God. A prayer for improved contact with this Power, for a knowledge of it's will, and for the mental, spiritual and physical energy to carry it out requires the coordinated effort of all our faculties.

When complacency develops we are apt to forget the part that Power has played in effecting our rehabilitation. We overlook the fact that our nervous systems remain those of an alcoholic or addict. We fail to remember that as alcoholics and addicts, we are susceptible yet to the moods and emotions which we formerly appeased with alcohol and drugs. Complacency obscures the knowledge that our recovery from alcoholism and addiction was granted by a "Greater Power than Ourselves", thus without contact with this Power, we will probably suffer a reversion to our former low physical and spiritual level. The bitter experiences of members who insist upon learning this the hard way - the backsliders who return to alcohol and drugs - attest to the truth of the statement.

The second part of this step deals with PRAYER FOR A KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL. This knowledge will bring the proper use of our will which seems to be tied up in self-denial and service to others. The question which has repeatedly confronted members is - WHAT IS GOD'S WILL? AND HOW AM I TO KNOW IF FROM MY OWN WILL?. We do not attempt to answer this question directly. It is not our responsibility; it is your own priceless duty, and responsibility, to interpret God's will. Man's nature, however, is such that he is happiest when associating with and sharing his lot with others. That is the way Nature made him and he cannot fulfill his destiny otherwise. We therefore deduct that our understanding of God's will IS TO BE FOUND IN OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR FELLOW MEN and in the TREATMENT WE ACCORD THEM. We cannot live unto ourselves alone.

The third part of this step relates to prayer for the power to carry out the Will of God. This prayer is for mental efficiency, spiritual strength, and also for physical endurance. If you obtain no happiness from your efforts, you are not in the right attitude toward those about you. Correct this by discussion with the other members and then center your energies on an act that will not benefit you but will help someone else. This opens the channel of God's own Will, releasing this power to you. With a good purpose as a goal, you cannot fail if you will only carry a God-consciousness with you. The things which are so impossible for man are very possible for God, Keep an open mind and all this will come to you, Easy does it!

STEP NUMBER TWELVE

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRY TO CARRY THIS MESSAGE TO OTHER ALCOHOLICS AND PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS.

Now you are on your own. Your A.A. friends have given you your tools and have shown you how to use them. From now on it is YOUR job to fashion your life. The twelfth step is one composed chiefly of ACTION. Twelfth step work is one of the most important causes of your AA. insurance.

Now don't be thrown by the phrase "spiritual experience". It may bring to mind something supernatural - perhaps the lightning flashing, the thunder resounding; or, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, a blinding flash of light. A sudden spiritual experience or awakening is extremely uncommon. Perhaps a score out of the thousands of AA members have experienced it, but it is a slow process for the average person. We are inclined to confuse spirituality with theology, dogmas, creeds, and ritual. Some might think it will be necessary to "get religion" but religion has nothing to do with A.A. nor does A.A. have anything to do with religion. Just remember that most of us are pretty new to this useful, decent way of living, so we must learn the spiritual side of the program slowly and simply.

Remember these simple things: The entire structure of the Christian religion is built on Love. The word has many synonyms, such as Charity, Grace, Good-will, Tenderness, Generosity, Kindness, Tolerance, Sympathy, Mercy, and others. When we help a fellow being, when we are kind to one another, we are performing a completely spiritual act. Christ told his disciples that His Commandments to them was to love one another. When we help another alcoholic or addict and show some concern for his welfare, two people are helped, both the helped and the helper.

If you will start with this simple explanation of "spiritual experience" you will find the green light has been flashed on. And what you don't understand don't worry about. It will become clear in a short while.

This is the practical application of these steps. It is a known fact that an alcoholic will listen to another alcoholic, or an addict will listen to another addict, even though they be strangers. They will listen to their own kind quicker than to relatives and friends. In relating to another newcomer coming to the program, do not be afraid to tell him the truth about yourself no matter how gruesome the details. This will accomplish two things; It will let him know that you, yourself, have been 'through the mill' thereby building up his trust in you, and it will help straighten your own position and renew your own faith.

12 SUGGESTIONS THAT MAY BE OF HELP TO ANYONE ADDICTED TO DRUGS.

1. We should be convinced from our own experiences that our reaction to alcohol and drugs is so abnormal that any indulgence for us constitutes a totally impossible and undesirable way of life.
2. We should be completely sincere in our desire to stop using alcohol and habit forming drugs of any type. Once and for all NO COMPROMISE.
3. We should clearly understand that once we have attained sobriety and abstinence, we can NEVER again use alcohol or drugs.
4. We should be convinced that alcohol, narcotics and any habit forming drug brings to us, not happiness but unhappiness in its purest form.
5. We should come to realize that we have been trying to substitute a "drug phantasy" for real achievements in life.
6. We should realize that any reasonably intelligent and sincere person who is willing to make a sustained effort for a sufficient period of time is capable of learning to live without alcohol or drugs.
7. We should never be so foolish as to try to persuade ourselves that we can use alcohol or drugs "just once in a while". Remember that NO ALCOHOLIC OR ADDICT has ever been able to indulge in his "habit" just once in a while, without becoming a full-fledged alcoholic or addict in an incredibly short time.
8. We should learn to disregard the dumb advice and often dumber questions of well-meaning friends and relatives without becoming emotionally disturbed.
9. We should be particularly on guard during periods of our life when we are upset or depressed. We all are depressed occasionally but these depressions pass naturally, if given time. To turn to alcohol or drugs to blank out a depression is just as sensible as cutting off your head to cure a headache.
10. Whenever we find ourselves remembering the "pleasures" of using drugs or alcohol, remember also the defeat, degradation and heartaches that they brought us. Remember the abject misery of withdrawal from them, when you wake to find yourself a thoroughly beaten, friendless, and useless shell of the person you once were. Remember these things well and then try to think about something worthwhile.
11. We should learn to relax both physically and mentally without the use of alcohol, narcotics or any habit forming drug.
12. We should be exceedingly careful of drugs as a substitute for alcohol and never start SELF-ADMINISTRATION of any drug. The only way for us is to leave drugs strictly alone, except under the supervision of a competent medical practitioner, skilled in the treatment of addiction or alcoholism, prescribes and supervises such treatment. (To the narcotic addict or any addict to habit forming drugs, remember there is nothing that alcohol can do for you, that Good clean living and thinking cannot do better).

By. Betty. T.
HFD Group
Nov, 1950.

H.F.D 1951

THE CHALLENGE OF DRUG ADDICTION

The treatment for drug addiction, which is similar to that for alcoholism, involves rebuilding the patient mentally and physically. After the patient has successfully withdrawn from drugs and begins to regain his health, it is important that he learns to face his problems instead of running from them. This is the most critical aspect to any treatment that the patient might receive, because the same basic problems which drove him to drugs in the first place will still comfort him after he is discharged from a hospital or institution. He should, somehow, learn to resolve these problems without drugs.

The outlook for the drug addict is generally unfavorable, since it has been estimated that approximately 25% of those who are physically cured remain free of drugs after being discharged. This leaves a rather large margin of 75% who will relapse and return to drugs. Aside from the patient's own efforts to remain abstinent, he would be greatly helped if society could, and in some way learn to accept drug addiction as a form of mental illness, rather than a criminal activity. In some cases the social stigma of having been an addict puts an undue pressure on the patient after he returns home.

Where relapses are concerned, it is important that we know that have been addicted to drugs keep one thought uppermost in our minds; if ever we slip, or even feel that we are about to slip, we should at once seek competent medical care or advise, whether it be at a public or private institution. Those who have led successful A.A. lives of sobriety have found that the best antidote for "THAT URGE" to slip is to call another member of AA and just talk things over with him or her. Even a phone call will suffice.

As a whole, we addicts must particularly guard against certain characteristics, some of which are:

1. Resentment
2. Dishonesty
3. Fear
4. Self-pity
5. Jealousy
6. Criticism
7. Intolerance
8. Anger.

If in a personal inventory, we find one or more of these characteristics prevalent in our everyday living, we should take every possible step to neutralize them. Speaking of Steps, the Twelve Steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous program are sincerely recommended. These Twelve Steps were formulated strictly for the purpose of helping the alcoholic to overcome all of the ~~above~~ mentioned characteristics. And they can apply to the addict.

Betty.T.
HFD Group.
1951.

H.F.D 1951

QUESTION; What chances has a person who has been using drugs 30 years, who has been diagnosed as a confirmed addict by phsychiatrists, to stay off drugs.?

COMMENT: Irrespective of how long one has been using drugs they have a good chance to remain off drugs if they SINCERELY DESIRE TO DO SO. However if they allow themselves to think subjectively rather than objectively or have negative thoughts rather than positive thoughts, they have very little chance of staying off drugs whether they have been using them for one year or 30 years. It is very essential that they shut their minds to all negative thoughts. If a person thinks they will always be an addict they will always be an addict but if they will make some effort to DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT they have a good chance to stay off drugs. It is up to the addict himself whether or not he will always be an addict."I am the master of my fate,I am the captain of my soul."

QUESTION; If a person does not think he needs A.A.himself, can he contribute anything to A.A.by attending the meetings.?

COMMENT: If that person is familiar with the philosophy of A.A.,and then thinks he does not need such teachings he must be the supreme egoist. It would be well for him to attend A.A.meetings and try to absorb some of the teachings of the program. He would not contribute one thing to A.A.unless it was his own-self as material to be helped. He would have to get this own thinking straight first before he could even help himself, much less contribute anything toward helping anyone else. It is certain that the A.A.program could contribute a great deal to this type of individual -- and in the end it might be that after he absorbed some of the A.A.program, and started to live it in his daily life, he could then contribute something to A.A. -- but he certainly could not contribute anything as long as he thought he was so perfect that he did not need the help of God, or a Higher Power, and his fellow man.

QUESTION; Why does a drug addict resent being told that his thinking is not straight.?

COMMENT: Because he is a human being even if he is a drug addict. It is a human characteristic to resent being told that you are wrong about anything. The addict resents it more because he knows within his own mind that his thinking is, or has not been, straight; he probably has a guilt feeling and the resentment is a defense mechanism. If a person's thinking is straight they do not know the feeling of resentment, because they keep an open mind and an open heart.

REMEMBER: To keep your thinking straight -- That defects will creep into your life if given half a chance -- You are completely dependant upon God, AS YOU UNDERSTAND GOD -- To ask Him daily for His help, His mercy and His kindness -- To Try to carry the A.A.message to the alcoholic or addict who still suffers -- To pray daily.

H.F.D. ① 1954

In many American prisons and penitentiaries, drug addicts who are interested in group therapy movements are permitted to join A.A. in their institutions. It is believed that the A.A. Program is just as effective for drug addicts as it is for alcoholics, regardless of whether or not the advocates of AA for addicts are in agreement as to relationship between alcoholism and drug addiction.

Today, it is universally accepted that both alcoholism and addiction are, in reality, only secondary conditions and that the real trouble is a personality problem; whether a person tries to destroy his liver with cheap wine or shoots himself silly with heroin or morphine, with a lot of milk sugar and choral thrown in "for free" by the peddler.

The difference that counts most between addiction and alcoholism is that the average addict cannot take the FIRST STEP, toward a cure, and possible rehabilitation, without hospitalization and specialized medical attention, whereas, the average alcoholic can find his way back to sanity and health through A.A. Group meetings and whole hearted acceptance of the program, without being under a doctor's care or being hospitalized -- or thrown behind bars, incidentally, in the case of the addict, most cures -- although they are only temporary -- are effective in penal institutions, and not in hospitals or sanatoriums, simply because these cures, such as they are, were enforced on the addict when they got into trouble with the law. As an addict once put it. "AN IRON CURE IS ONLY THE LONGEST PERIOD BETWEEN TWO SHOTS -- THE LAST SHOT BEFORE THE CURE, AND THE FIRST SHOT AFTER THE CURE!"

An addict who is using habit forming drugs without interruption can do nothing about his condition through A.A. or any other group therapy movement. There is no religion strong enough, no philosophy sufficiently illuminating, no way of life, attractive enough, and no movement of any kind that could compensate the addicts need of drugs when he is TRULY HOOKED! Without drugs, an addict is a sick person and the sickness is real and overwhelming. On the other hand when the alcoholic works his way back to some degree of sobriety, he can still function more or less efficiently as a human being, without liquor.

Throw the addict and an alcoholic into a cell together and watch the results. In the time it takes the alcoholic to work his way back to relative normalcy, disregarding the "shakes" and other comparatively mild symptoms of withdrawal, the drug addict has worked his way down to a state of total uselessness, and it would take the addict at least THREE weeks to begin to recuperating. Convalescence is a longer period, sometimes running into THREE MONTHS OR MORE.

The only time the addict and the alcoholic can meet on what we will call COMMON GROUND is in a penal or medical institution where BOTH have been returned to normal health, regardless of the time it took. Since they are both without the STUFF which is the ESSENCE of their problem -- LIQUOR and DRUGS -- they are good material for the A.A. program. Now that their physical conditions have been cleared up.

their problem becomes the same, with the difference of DEPTH and INTENSITY. It will be more difficult for the drug addict because his DEPENDANCE on (and not "craving for") drugs is GREATER than the alcoholic's NEED for liquor. This NEED remains even though the addict cannot obtain any supplies.

The alcoholic, could be more amenable to a cure than the addict because the addicts case, this bout with ENFORCED withdrawal only crystalizes his NEED of the stuff.

Many alcoholics SWITCH from drink to BARBITURATES or NARCOTICS and find suitable, IF NOT BETTER, RELIEF, but the addict can SWITCH only to other opium derivatives, and there are not many to choose from. No addict has ever found relief from his SICKNESS FOR DRUGS in alcohol or the barbiturates, but the alcoholic will take READILY TO OPIUM DERIVATIVES. (And make his problem that much worse) For the addict there is no substitute for drugs, and there is no way back in CERTAIN progressions. For example opium smoking can make a comfortable switch from the pipe to the needle, but morphine or herion users cannot go back to opium because his reliance on either of those dirivatives has dulled his appreciation of and dependance on opium in its crude form.

Many addict tried alcohol while floundering around, looking for some agent that could inflate the deflated ballon of thier weakened personality. They found alcohol unsatisfactory and finally stumbled on opium derivatives as the abnormal solution of thier abnormal problem. It follows that as the alcoholic accepts liquor as his WAY OUT whereas, the addict-in-the-making cannot, the addicts problem is more, DEEP*SEATED or MORE COMPLEX, or more difficult to compensate. Following this line of thought, we come to the conslusion -- not necessarily correct in all cases -- that the alcoholic was seeking obliviousness to reality, which is what liquor and the barbiturates provide. Before acquiring his habit, The addict can find no relief in that state of oblivion to the world of reality that liquor and soprifices offer, but he does find the CRUTCH that supports his sagging personality in opium, morphine, heroin, pantapon, dilauded, demoral, or other lesser known, opium diravat-ives.

The limited space allotted this writer does not permit further elaboration on this phase of the problem, and it should be taken forgranted, for the sake of this discussion, that the difference -- chemical and physiological, as well as emotional, and psychological -- between the two forms of "compensating agents" liquor and narcotics is of great importance in dealing with the problem of the addict who is in CONDITION TO TRY, the A.A. way of life. Liquor did not help the addict when he tried it, simply, because his problem was deeper and more complex. And therefore HARDER TO REACH. The same applies to the A.A. Program. It could help him but it is much more difficult for him to benifit by it than the alcoholic.

A mathematical formula could help us get a better picture, Let "A" be alcohol, and let "B" be drug addiction. Similarly, Let "X" be alcoholism, and let "Y" be drug addiction. This gives us the proportion formula of A: A:B :: X:Y

The above equation, however, merely supports a statement we made, and proves nothing beyond our contention. But if we give X the value of 1 and Y the value of 3, arbitrarily we prove to ourselves that drug addiction could well be THREE TIMES MORE DIFFICULT TO HANDLE THAN ALCOHOLISM. From there, we move on to the problem we are trying to solve; "X" is to "Y" as the A.A. PROGRAM is to ????

Since nobody has found the answer to the above problem, all we can do is take the A.A. PROGRAM and multiply it by the difference between addiction and alcoholism, hoping that this simple solution might help fit into the A.A. Program, HE HAS TO TRY THREE TIMES HARDER THAN THE ALCOHOLIC. It might not be the right answer to a major social problem but it will have to do until the right answer comes along.

The lawmaker, the judge, the doctor and the psychiatrist, the preacher, the policeman, and a few meddlers, have all failed to come up with a satisfactory answer -- ACCEPT A.A. AS IT IS: LIVE UP TO IT 24 HOURS A DAY, and make a religion of it. That way, these addicts that HAVE SUCCEEDED IN STAYING OFF DRUGS AND ARE LIVING MORE OR LESS NORMAL AND HAPPY LIVES. They have, at least, made the SOCIAL readjustment expected of them, and that is a major step in itself. It spells REHABILITATION, and rehabilitation is about 75% of the cure.

Not every addict can benefit by the A.A. Program. Perhaps NOT ONE IN TEN! But there are addicts who have succeeded in this new way of life, and until the law and the medical profession, can come up with a better solution to drug addiction, the A.A. PROGRAM REMAINS THE ONLY WAY FOR ADDICTS to TRY to make that all-important social readjustment provided FIRST, that their PHYSICAL CONDITION HAS BEEN CLEARED UP UNDER PROPER MEDICAL CARE.

Emile.Z.
St Vincent de Paul
Montreal.P.Q.Canada.

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*The man who write this article is serving 22 years in prison, through correspondence and a mutual interest in drug addiction, both of us having been drug addicts. He wrote this article for the inmate A.A. Group in prison.

Betty.T. 1954.
H.F.D.Group.
Santa Monica, Calif