

POWERLESSNESS ... "THE ESSENTIALS" ... RELATIONSHIPS ... FELLOWSHIPS
A "BIG BOOK" STUDY OF FOUR "THREADS OF RECOVERY"

October 11 through December 27, 2021

(Page cites from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, except as noted)

POWERLESSNESS - Part 3. "Four categories" of alcoholics—differing desires to stop drinking.

We begin this third session on powerlessness with a brief review.

First, "The "Doctor's Opinion" states that "the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind." (p. xxvi) We learned in the "classification of alcoholics" that "all these, and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving ... the manifestation of an allergy ..." (p. xxx) "After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again." (p. xxix) **Our physical allergy is an unchangeable fact.**

Second, we learned in Chapter Three, "More About Alcoholism", that we alcoholics have a *mental* powerlessness. We repeat "time after time the **desperate experiment of the first drink**". (p. 35) We learned about "the great *obsession* of every abnormal drinker ... the persistence of this *illusion* ... the *delusion* ... he will control and enjoy his drinking." (p. 30) We saw *mental powerlessness over the idea of the first drink* with the retiree, young people, Jim the automobile salesman, the jaywalker and Fred the accountant. **The first drink is a choice!**

There is a third part of our powerlessness—our *physical* inability to stop, even after we want to stop: "What had become of their judgement, their common sense, their will power? Why could they not see that drink meant ruin to them? Why was it, when these dangers were pointed out that they agreed, and then got drunk again immediately?" (pp. 107-108)

Four "categories" of alcoholics are discussed, based on **desires to stop drinking**:

Category One: "... only a heavy drinker ... positive he can handle his liquor ..."

This drinker sees no need to stop; has no desire to stop. (pp. 108-109)

Category Two: "... showing lack of control ... tells you he wants to stop."

This drinker sometimes wants to stop. (p. 109)

"As we say among ourselves, '*He wants to want to stop*'."

Category Three: "... has gone much further than ... number two."

"He clings to the notion that he will yet find a way [to drink]."

"He may have come to the point where he desperately wants to stop but cannot." (pp. 109-110)

Category Four: "... in one institution after another ... violent ... appears insane when drunk ... perhaps has had delirium tremens ..."

This drinker does not believe he can stop, even if he desires to do so. (p. 110)

"Some day he will be unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it." (p.152)

Our inability to stop drinking once we start is a consequence of our physical allergy. Our physical allergy—and our unstoppable craving if we drink—are unchangeable facts.

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*I came to realize that the only part of my powerlessness over alcohol that was my choice was the decision to not take the first drink—I was unable to make that choice with my own unaided will power. It was the second part of Step One—my "**unmanageable life**"—that "backed me" into admitting my powerlessness over my choice to take the first drink.*

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Step One: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. (p. 59)

When I *deny* and *defy* my powerlessness over my choice to take the first drink, my choice to drink results in the ever-worsening consequences of my life being unmanageable:

"Now I was to plunge into the dark, joining that endless procession of sots who had gone on before ... loneliness and despair ... bitter morass of self-pity ... quicksand stretched around me ... alcohol was my master." (p. 8)

"... lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink." (p. 21)

"... sought the same escape with all the desperation of drowning men." (p. 28)

"... less control ... led ... to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization." (p. 30)

"... a basic solution to these bedevilements ..." (p. 52)

"... the hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a solution." (p. 92)

"... we became subjects of King Alcohol ... loneliness ... oblivion ... the hideous Four Horsemen—Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair." (p. 151)

The Twelve Steps of AA are a process, a recipe, that I follow to experience a spiritual awakening, learning how to stop making un-healthy choices, beginning with alcohol; then, to learn how to make **healthy choices**—like **not taking the first drink**—in each area of my life.

I came to realize that I had always been seeking the "sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks"—an unhealthy choice—and paying the price of an unmanageable life. I was no longer willing to pay the price of my unmanageable life:

I stopped *denying* that I had a physical allergy to alcohol;

I stopped *denying* that my physical allergy made my inability to stop drinking inevitable;

I stopped *defying* that I was powerless over my choice to take the first drink.

I admitted I was powerless over alcohol—that my life had become unmanageable.

In the beginning of my recovery, physical sobriety was all that mattered. My sponsor and fellow AA members reminded me: "Don't take the first drink—today—one day at a time."

We recall some benefits of admitting powerlessness:

Powerless—leads to hopeless—leads to desperation—leads to seeking help;

Powerless means "less power" ... "not enough power";

Admitting and accepting our powerlessness leads us to seek spiritual help.

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As I continue to grow in recovery, I realize I am powerless over much of my life and need God's help to guide my decisions each day. I have learned to deal with all manner of things without the false help—the unhealthy choice—of alcohol, as mentioned in the Big Book:

restless, irritable and discontent;

my personal relationships and my emotional nature;

misery, depression, useless feelings, fear, unhappiness;

obsession, illusion, delusion;

self-pity, hopelessness;

terror, bewilderment, frustration, despair.

I admit I am powerless over my choice to take the first drink—that my life is unmanageable by me alone. I am willing to seek help from a Power greater than myself.

Next Time: "THE ESSENTIALS" - Part 1. "Willingness": Appendix II, and more.