

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)

"THE ESSENTIALS" - Part 1. "WILLINGNESS". Appendix II, and More.

"We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program.
Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable." (p. 568)

I admitted I was powerless over my physical allergy with alcohol. I admitted I was powerless over my mental obsession to keep taking the first drink of alcohol, even after knowing I was powerless to stop drinking once I started to drink and triggered the allergy.

I admitted my life was unmanageable as long as I denied my powerlessness. I identified with the "methods we have tried" to control my drinking on p. 31. I accepted that I myself, as an alcoholic, "at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink." (p. 43) I accepted that my life was unmanageable, as outlined on p. 52 in the so-called "bedevilments". I accepted that I needed help, to stop drinking, and keep living.

I came to Alcoholics Anonymous for help. After a few months, I learned to stop taking the first drink. I started learning from the Big Book. One day, I read these words:
"Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are **willing** to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps." (p. 58)

The "thread of willingness" is essential to my recovery in AA, to my on-going spiritual awakening. In my recovery, I am willing each day to move away from my self-indulgent "self-will run riot" with the daily spiritual routine, or discipline, of "Thy will (not mine) be done".
The proper use of my will is to ask for, to seek, the Power of God's will to direct my will.

Not taking the first drink is the first healthy use of my willingness in recovery. The **will** to not take the first drink re-directs my **mind's** belief that I must take the first drink (to relieve "restless, irritable and discontent"). My changed **mind** then responds differently to my **emotional feeling** (desire for a "sense of ease and comfort") that I cannot live without a drink.

Recovery is more than physical sobriety. Recovery is a daily spiritual awakening, as
I seek God's will to direct my will to choose healthy ideas, feelings and actions.

In recovery, I learn that God's will can direct my will—that my will re-directs my mind—that my mind re-directs my emotions. In recovery, I become willing to seek God's will for me. When I "ask" for God's will for me, my will is involved—changing my mind.

Willingness seems obvious in recovery—but it isn't. I resist being willing to let go of my selfish ideas and feelings about how I, other people, and "things" should be.

Willingness seems easy in recovery, to "let go and let God"—but it isn't.

Willingness seems permanent in recovery—but it isn't. It is always temporary, daily.

I realize if I "want what we have" in AA—sobriety, recovery, spiritual awakening—then I need to become willing to do what AA "suggests"—work the Steps. I discover a remarkable truth. *Each Step has a willingness component*—moving me away from my selfish life—toward a more God-centered way of life. I become willing to work the Twelve Steps—of **willingness**.

The “Essential” of Willingness in each Step—seeking God’s will to direct my will:

STEP ONE.

I am **willing to admit** I am powerless over alcohol—my life is unmanageable.
My mind changes ... my “defense must come from a Higher Power”. (p. 43; pp. i - 60)

STEP TWO.

I am **willing to choose**—there is a Power greater than me. *My mind changes ...*
“to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” (p. 45; pp. i - 60)

STEP THREE.

I am **willing to decide** to “turn our will and our lives over to the care of God
as we understood Him.” I am **willing to find out** if “God could and would if He
were sought.” (p. 60) I am **willing to “offer myself to [God]”**. *My mind changes.* (p. 63)

STEP FOUR.

I am **willing to take a personal inventory**, a “strenuous effort to face, and
to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us.” *A new action.* (p. 64)

STEP FIVE.

I am **willing to share with someone**, to “pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating
every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past.” *A re-directed feeling.* (p. 75)

STEP SIX.

I am **willing to ask God for willingness** to *let go* of all the things which we have
admitted are objectionable”—to *let go* of things in me blocking me from God. (p. 76)

STEP SEVEN.

I am **willing to ask God for the willingness** to *let God* “have all of me, good and
bad ... to remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way
of my usefulness to [God] and my fellows.” *I decide to be grateful and forgiving.* (p. 76)

STEP EIGHT.

I am **willing to ask God for the will** to be responsible for wrongs I have done. (p. 76)

STEP NINE.

I am **willing to ask God for the will** “to make amends” for the harms I caused. (p. 76)

STEP TEN.

I am **willing “to carry the vision of God’s will”** into all my activities”—each day.
I decide to try to be loving and tolerant toward every one. (p. 85)

STEP ELEVEN.

I am **willing to say to myself many times each day, “[God’s] will be done”**. (p. 88)

STEP TWELVE.

I am **willing to try to share** the message of my spiritual awakening, and
I am **willing to try to practice these principles** in all my affairs. (pp. i - 164)

Observations on Spiritual Willingness: to seek the Power of God's will to direct my will.

1. My "will" and my "mind" are two different things—otherwise, there would be no way to "change my mind". My will is a power of my self that is more than my mind and my emotions. With the help of God's will, my will can re-direct my mind away from un-healthy thoughts. With God's will, my mind can re-direct my emotions away from un-healthy feelings. *Thus, with the help of God's will, my will can re-direct my mind and my mind can re-direct my emotions.* Fortunately, I do not need to understand this for it to be true!
2. The issue in recovery is not so much knowing the will of God as it is the *willingness to seek the will of God*. In simply being willing to seek God's will, I am already re-directing my will along a less selfish course. In simply being willing to seek God's will to guide my will, my will "changes my mind" away from un-healthy choices and directs my mind toward healthy choices—including choosing healthy emotional responses to the life around me.
3. I cannot align my will with God's will until I first become *willing* to seek God's will in my life.
4. I never trust myself alone to "know" God's will for me. I am *willing* to discuss my "life choices" with other men and women with whom I have a healthy, accountable spiritual relationship. I am fortunate to count my wife and my sponsor as part of that group.
5. Recovery began for me when I became *willing* to "give up" the one thing in the world that meant more to me than anyone or anything else in the world—alcohol. Today, I *remain willing* to be alert to anyone or anything in my life that becomes more important to me than my relationship with God.
6. In Step Ten, my *willingness* to try to carry the vision of God's will into all my activities each day really is a form of "course correction". I continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear as a way to let God help me before I get too far "off course".
7. In Step Eleven, my *willingness* to say to myself many times each day, "Thy will be done", usually comes out as "God help me with this", or "God help me with him", or "God help me with them". In this way, Step Eleven becomes my "course direction".
8. In Step Twelve, my *willingness* to try to carry the message of my spiritual awakening and to try to practice these principles in all my affairs is the sum of my willingness up to today.
9. I am *willing* each day to let God help me decide to be grateful and forgiving.
10. I am *willing* each day to let God help me try to be loving and tolerant toward every one.
11. As my *willingness* to put God first in my life grows, I become more sensitive to anyone and anything that threatens to interfere with that willingness.
12. Trying to live my life without a *willingness* to seek God's will for me would be like trying to navigate a course for a boat in the open ocean without a chart, a compass or a GPS. I would be trying to find my course and stay on course by "dead reckoning". I would be navigating with my "reckoning" alone—and I would end up "dead"!

Next Time: "THE ESSENTIALS" - Part 2. "Honesty": Appendix II, and more.