

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 3. "OPEN-MINDEDNESS". 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)

Open-mindedness is the third essential of recovery, along with *willingness* and *honesty*.

In our willingness discussion, we said that "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." *God can direct my will.*

In our *honesty* discussion, we said that "as I work the Twelve Steps ... I become honest about my limitations, my defects of character, my assets and my need for help. I become honest about what in me needs to be changed for the better. I become honest about seeking and receiving God's help to let go of the things in me blocking me from God's help ..." *I become honest about how dis-honest I have been.*

For me to be **open-minded** in AA, and in my life in general, I accept the principle "which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation." (p. 568)

I become willing to be honest about at least two things. First, I am open-minded when I accept the fact that not every good idea has to come from me. Second, I am open-minded when I accept the fact that not every idea I have is a good one!

These two features of open-mindedness are referenced frequently in the Big Book:

- "However, he did become 'sold' on the ideas contained in this book." (p. xxxii)
- "... there might be a God personal to me ... I didn't like the idea." (p. 12)
- "He wished above all things to regain self-control." (p. 26)
- "... real alcoholics are not going to believe they are in that class." (p. 31)
- "... throw several lifelong conceptions out of the window." (p. 42)
- "... we had to stop doubting the power of God." (p. 52)
- "Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did." "
- "*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*" (p. 12)
- "*Who are you to say there is no God?*" (p. 56)
- "... tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil ..." (p. 58)
- "First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work." (p. 62)
- "We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves." (p. 68)
- "... God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from [God]." (p. 71)
- "We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough." (p. 82)
- "... Thy will (not mine) be done." (p. 85)
- "The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house." (p. 98)
- "We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more ..." (p. 164)

I set aside "contempt prior to investigation". I work the Twelve Steps—of **open-mindedness**.

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The "Essential" of Open-mindedness in each Step—with God, myself and with others.

STEP ONE. "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable."

"... they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving." (p. xxx)

"If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol." (p. 33)

"... but he was a long way from admitting that he could do nothing about it himself ... self-knowledge would fix it." (p. 40)

"Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles." (p. 62)

Step One presents my problem—self. Am I open-minded to accept this truth?

STEP TWO. "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

"His defense must come from a Higher Power." (p. 43)

"... you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer." (p. 44)

"[The book's] main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem." (p. 45)

Step Two presents my solution. Am I open-minded to accept this hope?

STEP THREE. "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

"We asked [God's] protection and care with complete abandon." (p. 59)

"We had a new Employer." (p. 63)

"God, I offer myself to [You] ... Relieve me of the bondage of self." "

Step Three is my self-surrender. Am I open-minded to take this risk?

STEP FOUR. "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

"... a strenuous effort to face ... the things in ourselves ... blocking us." (p. 64)

"First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure." "

Step Four is a work of self-honesty. Am I open-minded to do this work?

STEP FIVE. "Admitted to God, ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

"Now [the weak items in our personal inventory] are about to be cast out." (p. 72)

"We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past." (p. 75)

Step Five is honesty with another. Am I open-minded to them knowing me?

STEP SIX. "Were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character."

"If we still cling to [an objectionable thing] we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing [to let go]." (p. 76)

Step Six is letting go of control. Am I open-minded to "let go" of outcomes?

STEP SEVEN. "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

"I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows." (p. 76)

Step Seven is giving God control. Am I open-minded to "let God" be in charge?

"Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding." (p. 76)

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STEP EIGHT. "Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."

"We have a list of all persons we have harmed ... " (p. 76)

"If we haven't the will to [make amends], we ask until it comes." "

Step Eight is my responsibility. Am I open-minded to accept responsibility?

STEP NINE. "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

"Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past ... out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves." (p. 76)

Step Nine is my opportunity. Am I open-minded to acting responsibly?

"Our real purpose ... to be of maximum service to God and the people about us." (p. 77)

STEP TEN. "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

"We have entered the world of the Spirit ... Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear." ("Course correction") (p. 84)

Step Ten is my acceptance of my limitations. Am I open-minded to limitations?

STEP ELEVEN. "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

"... we ask God to direct our thinking ... we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined." ("Course direction") (p. 86, p. 88)

Step Eleven is my seeking God's presence. Am I open-minded to God's guidance?

STEP TWELVE. "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

"Carry [the message of my spiritual awakening] to other alcoholics." (p. 89)

"Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. 'How can I best serve [God]—[God's] will (not mine) be done'." (p. 85)

Step Twelve calls me to service. Am I open-minded to serving God and others?

Observations about the three essentials of Willingness, Honesty and Open-mindedness:

1. The answer to my "contempt prior to investigation" is **W-H-O**, not simply h-o-w.

2. Contempt **following** investigation is even more dangerous to my well-being!

3. Every person in the Big Book, including Fitz M., overcomes "contempt prior to (and after!) investigation" with **W**illingness, **H**onesty and **O**pen-mindedness:

"The patient (Fitz M.) had made his own diagnosis ... deciding his situation hopeless ... determined to die. However, he became 'sold' on the ideas contained in this book." (pp. xxxi-xxxii)

"You take me, and all my troubles, and do anything you want with me ... It doesn't make sense ... utter hopelessness ... hope is born. It might be true." (p. 215)

"Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery." (p. 568)

Next Time: "RELATIONSHIPS", Part 1—"With God": "We Agnostics", Steps 1, 2 and 3.