

Spiritual Awakening and Personality Change in the Twelve Steps of AA

A Twelve-Step Study of Alcoholics Anonymous (the "Big Book")

July 3 through September 25, 2023. Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, Mo.

(Quotes from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

The Twelve Steps of our Spiritual Awakening change our personalities from selfish "ideas, emotions and attitudes" into God-centered "ideas, emotions and attitudes". We grow spiritually in our "personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism ..." (p. 567)

A word about Spiritual Awakenings, Spiritual Experiences and Personality Changes.

"The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection." (p. 60)

Our individual Spiritual Awakenings, Spiritual Experiences and Personality Changes *are* unique to each one of us. That doesn't mean that one is "right" and one is "wrong". We simply have different spiritual awakenings and personality changes when we work the steps. One of us isn't "better" or the other "worse". Comparisons are un-healthy and can even be dangerous.

*Each of our **spiritual awakenings** and **personality changes** are equally valid, as long as we each try to apply the un-changing spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps to our ever-changing lives each day with willingness, honesty and open-mindedness.* (See App. II, p. 568)

Each of the Twelve Steps is an un-changing spiritual principle. Water freezing at 32 degrees Fahrenheit at sea level is an un-changing principle that is part of a change process. Water changes from liquid form to solid form at 32 degrees Fahrenheit because of the un-changing principle of freezing. Likewise, we try to apply the un-changing spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps to our ever-changing individual lives each day so that God can continue to enlarge our unique, personal **spiritual awakenings** and **personality changes**.

Note. We can be grateful that Bill W. experienced his personality change of humility which led him to add Appendix II in the Second Printing of the First Edition, March 1941!

An "Outline" of the Big Book to page 62—our information about Steps One and Two.

Pages xi - xxiv. Preface, Forwards. AA history and changes to the book in each edition.
Pages xxv - xxxii. "The Doctor's Opinion." Diagnosis of physical allergy; need for more than human power; Hank and Fitz stories (pp. xxxi-xxxii)

Pages 1-16. "Bill's Story." What he used to be like (pp. 1-12); what happened (pp. 12-14); what he is like now (pp. 14-16).

Pages 17-29. "There is a Solution." No mental defense against the first drink (pp. 17-24); there is a solution ... accept spiritual help (p. 25); Rowland H.'s story (pp. 26-28); "our hope" (p. 29).

Pages 30-43 "More About Alcoholism." Mental delusion: not powerless (pp. 30-32); five stories about the illusion of control (pp. 32-43).

Pages 44-57. "We Agnostics." Our need to find a Power greater than ourselves (pp. 44-47); need to stop doubting (pp. 45-53); seeking faith (pp. 53-57).

Pages 58-62. "How it Works." Program "summary"; the "a,b,c's"; Steps One and Two again!

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Steps One and Two. Pages xxv through 62.

*Steps One and Two “work me” as I accept the information in the first sixty-plus pages of Alcoholics Anonymous. I “admit” and “come to believe” in these two “information” steps. “**The delusion ... has to be smashed.**” (p. 30) “... **stop doubting the power of God.**” (p. 52)*

Step One. “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” I AM INFORMED ... AND I ADMIT MY PROBLEM.

The first “work” of my personality change is “honesty” about my delusion that I am not powerless over alcohol—that my life is not unmanageable. As I begin to “let go” of my delusions, along with my illusions and obsessions, my dishonest personality begins to change.

Foreward to First Edition. Recovered from hopelessness.

We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.” (p. xiii)

“The Doctor’s Opinion”. The physical allergy—the phenomenon of craving.

“... action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is ... an allergy ...” (p. xxviii)
“Men and women drink ... they like the effect produced by alcohol.” “
“... drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control.” (p. xxx)

“Bill’s Story”. “What he used to be like ...”

“Liquor ... a necessity ... thought I could control the situation ...” (p. 5)
“The remorse, horror and hopelessness of the next morning are unforgettable.” (p. 6)
“... certainly selfish and foolish, I had been seriously ill, bodily and mentally.” (p. 7)
“Fear sobered me for a bit. Then came the insidious insanity of the first drink.” (p. 8)

“There Is a Solution”. The physical craving, plus no mental defense against the first drink.

“... the real alcoholic ... lose all control ... once he starts to drink.” (p. 21)
“... the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind ...” (p. 23)
“... alcoholics ... have lost the power of choice in drink ... beyond human aid ...” (p. 24)
“I have never seen one single case recover where that state of mind existed ...” (p. 27)

“More about Alcoholism”. The mental delusion—“I’m not powerless”; illusion of control.

“... the great obsession ... illusion ... the delusion ... has to be smashed.” (p. 30)
The Retiree - delusion of control (illusion) after years of not drinking. (p. 32)
The “young person” - delusion of control (illusion) drinking for a short while. (p. 33)
Jim the auto salesman - delusion of control (illusion) mixing whiskey with milk. (p. 35)
“Jay” the jaywalker - delusion of control (illusion) by changing circumstances. (p. 37)
Fred the accountant - delusion of control (illusion) with self-knowledge. (p. 39)

“We Agnostics”. Doubt and the unmanageable life.

“... was not a basic solution to these bedevils more important ...” (p. 52)

*In Step One, I “let go” of my delusion of “not powerless/not unmanageable and my illusion of control. I admit that I am powerless and that my life is unmanageable. I need a **personality change** from dishonesty and delusion towards self-honesty “... sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism ...”*

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Step Two. "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." I AM INFORMED ... AND HOPE FOR MY SPIRITUAL SOLUTION.

The Step Two information in pages xxv - 62 convinces me that I am "not God" and that I have a "close-minded personality" about my need for, and the possibility of, spiritual help. I "come to believe" that there is a Power greater than me than can help me make sane choices.

Forewards to Second, Third and Fourth Editions. Recovery centered in *spiritual remedy*, the sharing of our individual *spiritual awakenings* and *personality changes*.

"... the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady ..." (p. xvi)

"... recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength, and hope." (p. xxii)

"... A.A. members with computers ... share experience, strength, and hope" (p. xxiv)

"The Doctor's Opinion". *The need for more than human power.*

"... the Power which pulls chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death." (p. xxvii)

"... psychic change ... " (*"adjust how to emotionally respond to difficulties"*). (p. xxix)

"Bill's Story". *"... what happened and what he is like now."*

"... I was interested. I had to be, for I was hopeless." (p. 10)

"*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*" (p. 12)

"... *willing to believe in a Power greater than myself ... to make my beginning.*" "

"There is a Solution". *"There is a solution ... to accept spiritual help."*

"... our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives ..." (p. 25)

"... alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences ...". (p. 27)

"More about Alcoholism". *"...no effective mental defense against the first drink ..."*

"... but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life." (p. 35)

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

"We Agnostics". *Stop doubting and find faith in the **spiritual awakening.***

"To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis ..." (p. 44)

"... find ... a *Power greater than ourselves* ... solve your problem." (p. 45)

"... we mean your own conception of God." (p. 47)

"... we had to stop doubting the power of God." (p. 52)

*In Step Two, I "come to believe" with a more open mind that I need a **spiritual awakening** to produce my **personality change** "... sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism ..."*

A word about "God".

"*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*" (p. 12)

"... find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem." (p. 45)

"When ... we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God." (p. 47)

"... all we needed to commence spiritual growth ... God as we understood Him." "

Next Time Step Three: the "decision": to stop "playing God" and to seek "God's care".