

**The “Work” of the Twelve Steps in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.
From “Admitted We were Powerless” to “Abandon Yourself to God”.**

A Workshop on “How the Twelve Steps Work” in *Alcoholics Anonymous*,
from October 7 through December 30, 2024.

Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, Mo. USA

(All page numbers cited from *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

Summary: From “Powerless” to “Liberating Abandon”.

Our spiritual program of recovery begins with *admitting powerlessness*: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” (p. 59)

Our spiritual program of recovery uses “*abandon*” as *the fundamental requirement for our spiritual recovery*: “Abandon yourself to God as you understand God.” (p. 164)

We admit we are “**powerless**” over alcohol as part of the First Step in our recovery. And, in Steps Two through Twelve in our text book, we discover that *we are often “powerless” over more than merely the physical allergy and mental obsession of alcohol.*

Consider the term “**abandon**”. To “abandon” in the Big Book means more than simply “admit” or even “surrender”. *With our choice to abandon, there are no “ifs, ands or buts”.*

Consider the term “**liberation**”, the “act of setting someone free from imprisonment”:

“... a spiritual liberation ... rose above their problems.” (p. 55)

We ask God as *we understood God* in Step Three to “relieve me of the bondage of self”.

We decide to “abandon ourselves utterly” to God. *We seek “liberation” from our own self-will!*

In this study, we see how the Twelve Steps in Alcoholics Anonymous “work us” with the “Thread of Recovery” from “Powerless” to “Liberating Abandon”. We participate in the work of our spiritual awakening—we learn to let God be in charge of our spiritual awakening. We seek to understand the “liberating” effect in, and on, our lives of the harder-to-grasp, spiritual aspects of our Twelve Step process of “restoration”, such as “fourth dimension”; “sixth sense”; “Spirit”.

Step Four: “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (p. 59)

“... incapable of being honest ... rigorous honesty ... capacity to be honest ...

fearless and thorough from the very start ... we let go absolutely.” (p. 58)

“Though our decision [Step 3] was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom.” (p. 64)

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

“Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.” “

“Blocking us” ... from the help I need from God to “relieve me of the bondage of self”.

“Caused our failure” ... as an “extreme example of self-will run riot ...”

“What had defeated us” ... could not “reduce our self-centeredness ... on our own power.”

I decide to “uncover” what in me blocks me from receiving liberating spiritual help ...

to “discover” what God needs to change in me to liberate me from my “bondage of self”.

I learn what I need to “abandon ... utterly to [God]”: Resentments; Anger; Fear; Inconsideration; Lack of Forgiveness; Lack of Trusting and Relying Upon God.

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Step Four: “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (p. 59)

Step Four, Part One: “Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys ...” (p. 64)

“In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry.” (Column One on p. 65) (p. 64)

“We asked ourselves why we were angry.” (Column Two on p. 65)

“... our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened.”

“So we were sore. We were ‘burned up’ “. (pp. 64-65)

“On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries.” (p. 65)

“Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?” (Column Three on p. 65) “

With my self-will alone, I am powerless over other people and how they make me feel.

*My answers “uncover” how much my **powerlessness** and my desire to control “people, Institutions and principles”, cause me pain and distress. My self-worth, safety and security are threatened. I feel “at risk”—defensive—in every area of my life. It is all their fault!!!!*

Old Idea! “To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got.” (p. 66)

When it comes to other people, I desire control of their approval ... or their removal!

“... with the alcoholic ... resentment ... is fatal.” (p. 66)

“Anger ... dubious luxury of normal men, but for alcoholics these things are poison.” “

“... back to the list ... from an entirely different angle ... how could we escape?” “

God helps me “escape” my “self-will run riot” anger and resentment with forgiveness.

“We could not wish [resentments] away any more than alcohol.” (p. 66)

“... people who wronged us were ... spiritually sick ... too. (pp. 66-67)

“We asked God to help us show them ... tolerance, pity, and patience.” (p. 67)

“God save me from being angry. [Your] will be done.” “

“... avoid retaliation or argument ... God will show us how ... kindly and tolerant ...” “

I “abandon [myself] utterly to [God]” to find liberation from my “self-will run riot”.

“Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?”

“We admitted our wrongs honestly ... willing to set these matters straight.” (p. 67)

*I **feel** anger when things don’t go my way. I now have God’s help to “de-fuse” my anger before it “explodes” my thinking and “blasts” my behavior. I ask God to “save me from being angry”. I **decide** with God’s help to not have a resentment. I **decide** with God’s help to forgive them. I surrender my illusion of control—over “them”. I abandon my self-will to God’s liberating care.*

Next Time, Step Four-Part Two: Fearless Moral Inventory of Fears and Sexual Conduct.