

**“Unhealthy Old Ideas” that Block Spiritual Progress.**

An Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book” Twelve Step Study Workshop  
“Threads of Recovery” on Zoom at noon CDT from April 7 to June 30, 2025

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

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

This Twelve-Step study of the Big Book Alcoholics Anonymous, with some added insight from AA’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, discloses some “unhealthy old ideas” that prevent us from getting sober and make it very difficult to experience our spiritual awakening.

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path.” (p. 58)

“All went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life.” (pp. 14-15, p. 35)

“... tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.” (p. 58)

**My unhealthy old ideas cause me to fail to enlarge my spiritual life, or even get sober!**

“Unhealthy Old Ideas” *block me* from the prayers, practice and promises of each step;  
*shut me off* from “the sunlight of the Spirit”;  
*keep me* from entering “the world of the Spirit”;  
*prevent me* from having a spiritual awakening.

A member said in a meeting one day, “If I’m still thinking it *today*, it’s not an ‘old idea’ ”!  
*We let them go because the “cost” of holding on to them far exceeds their delusional “benefit”.*

**My unhealthy old ideas block my sober, healthy relationship with God, myself and others!**

*Our “unhealthy old ideas” block us from getting, or staying, sober:*

“Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics.” (p. 30)

“... must be no ... lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol.” (p. 33)

**With “healthy new ideas”, we get on the God-centered “path” of spiritual progress.**

*Our “unhealthy old ideas” block us from God’s help until they drive us to seek God’s help:*

“... sweep away prejudice ... think honestly ... search diligently ... join us ...” (p. 55)

*We grieve the loss of old ideas when we let them go—like losing a friend we once trusted.*

*(Seven stages of grief: Denial, Guilt, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance, Hope.)*

*Our unhealthy old ideas produce suffering and desperation in our lives that contain the seed that motivates us to “let go” of our unhealthy old ideas. We become “fearless and thorough” to get on the “path”, one step at a time. We become willing, honest and open-minded enough to let in the “sunlight of the Spirit”, to move through our grief, to live in “the world of the Spirit”.*

***We stop blocking our spiritual progress by letting go of unhealthy old ideas.***

.....  
**Step Five: “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”** (p. 59)

**My Fear of other people misleads me with my unhealthy old idea: *I don’t trust anyone.***

In our Fourth Step, we begin to face “the flaws in our make-up” that are blocking our spiritual progress—our resentments, fears and selfish inconsideration of others.

“Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path ... certain defects ... the trouble ... weak items ... cast out.” (p. 72)

***I don’t trust anyone.*** So God “empowers” me to trust someone to disclose to me the “exact nature” of my motives behind my resentments, anger, fears and inconsideration. God does me a favor by disclosing to me my hidden desires behind my character defects.

**“Unhealthy Old Ideas” that Block Spiritual Progress.**

An Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book” Twelve Step Study Workshop  
“Threads of Recovery” on Zoom at noon CDT from April 7 to June 30, 2025

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

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

**Step Five: “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”** (p. 59)

**My Fear of other people misleads me with my unhealthy old idea: *I don’t trust anyone.***

“This is perhaps difficult—especially discussing our defects with another person.” (p. 72)  
*I hold onto other “unhealthy old ideas” to justify my lack of trust—so I don’t trust anyone:*  
“... admitting these things” to myself ... ; “solitary self-appraisal” ... “sufficient.”  
I can hold onto my embarrassing secrets about me and not drink;  
I think “humbling” and “humiliating” mean the same thing (see AA 12x12, p. 58);  
I think I can overcome my selfish ego on my own (*I am still consumed in my “problem”*);  
I still think I can overcome my fears with self-reliance (*I still resist the spiritual solution*).

*In my confusion, I try to keep my secrets from others because I don’t even trust myself:*

“They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only *thought* they had lost their egoism and fear; they only *thought* they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else *all* their life story.” (p. 73)

*I ask God for help using our Step Four prayers. I do Step Five with less “egoism and fear”.*

“God save me from being angry.” (p. 67)

“We ask [God] to remove our fear and direct our attention to what [God] would have us be.” (p. 68)

“We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them.” (p. 69)

We “have the honest desire to let God take us to better things ...” (p. 70)

“... God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from [God].” (p. 71)

*I let God help me trust someone, and myself! I stop blocking my spiritual progress:*

“... we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step.” (p. 74)

“... find such a person quick to see and understand our problem.” (See p. 62) “

“... the right person ... able to keep a confidence ... understand and approve ... will not try to change our plan ... a life and death errand.” (pp. 74-75)

“... willingness ... confidence in the one with whom you share ...” (AA 12x12, p. 61)

**Step Five:** “We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past.” (*I let go of “I’m too good”—“I don’t trust”.*) (p. 75)

**Step Five Promises:** “... we are delighted ... look the world in the eye (*including the mirror!*) ... be alone at perfect peace and ease ...our fears fall from us ... feel the nearness of our Creator ... spiritual experience ... Broad Highway ... hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.” (p. 75)

***I am learning to trust God, myself and another human being! I enlarge my spiritual life.***

**Next Time, Step Six. Unhealthy old idea, “I’m not as bad as ‘them’ !”**