

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

An Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book” Twelve Step Study Workshop  
“Threads of Recovery” on Zoom Mondays 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, has disclosed 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; *prevent me* from getting sober; *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.

“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)

*We let “old ideas” go when the “cost” of holding on to them exceeds their illusional “benefit”.*

### **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.)*

*The suffering and desperation in our lives caused by our unhealthy old ideas contain the seed that motivates us to “let go” of them. We become more willing, honest and open-minded. As we move through our grief, we let in “sunlight of the Spirit”; live in “the world of the Spirit”.*

***We let go of unhealthy old ideas, step by step. We stop blocking our spiritual progress.***

### **Letting Go of Unhealthy Old Ideas—Embracing Healthy Ideas— IS Spiritual Progress!**

*An unhealthy old idea, or attitude, is one that is inconsistent with, or in conflict with, God’s will for us. Unhealthy old ideas, centered on self as they are, block our spiritual progress.*

***A healthy idea or attitude, old or new, is one that is in line with God’s will for us.***

*We continue to ask God to help us be willing to let go of these unhealthy old ideas:*

“Relieve me of the bondage of self ...” (p. 63)

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

“... Thy will (not mine) be done.” (p. 85)

“... Thy will be done.” (p. 88)

*With God’s help and care, we learn to live without “unhealthy old ideas”—to open our mental, emotional and spiritual “doors” to receive healthy new ideas, which enable our spiritual awakening, enlarge our spiritual life and enrich our spiritual progress.*

<b><u>Step.</u></b>	<b><u>Unhealthy Old Ideas.</u></b>	<b><u>Healthy New Ideas, especially the Steps!</u></b>
<b>One.</b>	<i>I am not the problem. I don’t need help; I’m not powerless; I have self-will; self-reliance is enough; “they” are the problem.</i>	<i>“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” (p. 59) “... no real alcoholic ever recovers control.” (p. 30) “Under the lash of alcoholism ... open- minded ... willing to listen ...” (12x12, p. 24)</i>

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<b><u>Step.</u></b>	<b><u>Unhealthy Old Ideas.</u></b>	<b><u>Healthy New Ideas, especially the Steps!</u></b>
<b>Two.</b>	<i>I don't need help, especially spiritual help, even though I have alcoholism.</i>	“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” (p. 59) “To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis ...” (p. 44) “God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?” (p. 53) “God will restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to Him.” (12x12, p. 33)
<b>Three.</b>	<i>I don't <u>want</u> spiritual help.</i>	“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as <i>we understood Him.</i> ” (p. 59) “... alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so.” (p. 62) “... Step Three ... the entry of God ... into our lives.” (12x12, 34)
<b>Four.</b>	<i>I don't have any resentments. I can handle my fear. I'm not inconsiderate.</i>	“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (p. 59) “We could not wish [resentments —or] fears, or inconsideration] away anymore than alcohol.” (p. 66) “God save me from being angry.” (p. 67) “... ask [God] to remove our fear ...” (p. 68) “... asked God to mold our ideals ...” (p. 69) “... relief at ... facing ourselves ...” (12x12, p. 50)
<b>Five.</b>	<i>I don't trust anyone.</i>	“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.” (p. 59) “... humility ... honesty ...” (p. 73) “... full confidence in the one with whom you share ...” (12x12, 61)
<b>Six.</b>	<i>I'm not as bad as “them”</i>	“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” (p. 59) “... things [we] admitted are objectionable?” (p. 76) “... ask God to help us be willing.” (p. 76) “... desires will always be found which oppose the grace of God.” (12x12, p. 66)
<b>Seven.</b>	<i>I don't trust God.</i>	Humbly asked [God] to remove our shortcomings. (p. 59) “Grant me strength ... to do your bidding.” (p. 76) “... humility, a desire to seek and do God's will ...” (12x12, p. 72)

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<b>Eight.</b>	<i>“They” hurt me more.</i>	“Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.” (p. 59) “... ask [for the will] until it comes.” (p. 76) “... beginning of the end of isolation ...” (12x12, p. 82)
<b>Nine.</b>	<i>“They” owe me amends.</i>	“Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” (p. 59) “...sincere desire to set right the wrong.” (p. 77) “... timing, courage, and prudence ...” (12x12, p. 83)
<b>Ten.</b>	<i>I’ll ask God for help if I think I need to.</i>	“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” (p. 59) “ ‘... Thy will (not mine) be done.’ ” (p. 85) “... keep in emotional balance ... live to good purpose under all conditions.” (12x12, p. 88)
<b>Eleven.</b>	<i>I don’t know how to meditate</i>	“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God <i>as we understood Him</i> , praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.” (p. 59) “[Prayer and meditation] works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.” (p. 86) “...we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action.” (p. 87) “... good results of prayer ...” (12x12, pp. 104-105)
<b>Twelve.</b>	<i>I’m too busy to try to help</i>	“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result <i>alcoholics, or to be kind</i> of these steps, we tried to carry this message <i>to others</i> , to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” (p. 60) “ <i>Tell him exactly what happened to you.</i> ” (p. 93) “Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords.” (p. 118) “True ambition is the deep desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God.” (12x12, pp. 124-125)

**Observations: Enable spiritual awakening, enlarge spiritual life, enrich spiritual progress.**

1. AA first offers me the opportunity to believe in a power other than myself. AA then enables my spiritual awakening so I can grow in my relationship with a Power greater than myself.
2. I let God change my mind. I let go of unhealthy ideas, letting them be replaced with healthy new ideas in line with God’s will for me. I ask God, and let God, enlarge my spiritual life.
3. I seek God’s will for my motives, ideas, words and actions—to enrich my spiritual progress.
4. I continue to seek to know and do God’s will, knowing I don’t always know what that is.
5. I now have God’s “care” (p. 63), my “purpose” (p. 77) and our “code” (p. 84).
6. *Humility and gratitude grow my trust in God. This is the most healthy idea of all!*