Preface

The following pages contain the basic material for the discussion meetings for alcoholics only. These meetings are held for the purpose of acquainting both old and new members with the twelve steps on which our program is based. So that all twelve steps may be covered in a minimum of time they are divided into four classifications and one evening each week will be devoted to each of the four subdivisions. Thus, in one month, a new man can get the basis of our twelve suggested steps.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - -that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. 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.
12. 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.

*These steps are divided as follows:*

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**DISCUSSION No. 1**

**THE ADMISSION**

The material contained herein is merely an outline of the admission phase of the program and is not intended to replace or supplant:

a. The careful reading and re-reading of the Big Book.
b. Regular attendance at weekly group meetings.
c. Study of the program.
d. Daily practice of the program.
e. Reading of approved printed material on alcoholism.
f. Informal discussion with other members.

This meeting covers:

**Step No. 1.** We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - - that our lives had become unmanageable.

This instruction is not a short-cut to A.A. It is an introduction - - a help - - a brief course in the fundamentals.

In order to determine whether or not a person had drifted from "social drinking" into pathological drinking it is well to check over a list of test questions, which each member may ask himself and answer for himself. We must answer once and for all these three puzzling questions:

*What is an alcoholic? Who is an alcoholic? Am I an alcoholic?*

To get the right answer the prospective member must start this course of instruction with:

1. A **willingness** to learn. We must not have the attitude that "you've got to show me."
2. An **open mind**. Forget any and all notions we already have. Set our opinions aside.
3. Complete **honesty**. It is possible - - not at all probable - - that we may fool somebody else. But we must be honest with ourselves, and it is a good time to start being honest with others.

**Suggested Test Questions**
1. Do you require a drink the next morning?
2. Do you prefer a drink alone?
3. Do you lose time from work due to drinking?
4. Is your drinking harming your family in any way?
5. Do you crave a drink at a definite time daily?
6. Do you get the inner shakes unless you continue drinking?
7. Has drinking made you irritable?
8. Does drinking make you careless of your family's welfare?
9. Have you harmed your husband or wife since drinking?
10. Has drinking changed your personality?
11. Does drinking cause you bodily complaints?
12. Does drinking make you restless?
13. Does drinking cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
14. Has drinking made you more impulsive?
15. Have you less self-control since drinking?
16. Has your initiative decreased since drinking?
17. Has your ambition decreased since drinking?
18. Do you lack perseverance in pursuing a goal since drinking?
19. Do you drink to obtain social ease?
   (In shy, timid, self-conscious individuals.)
20. Do you drink for self-encouragement?
   (In persons with feelings of inferiority.)
21. Do you drink to relieve marked feelings of inadequacy?
22. Has your sexual potency suffered since drinking?
23. Do you show marked dislikes and hatreds since drinking?
24. Has your jealousy, in general, increased since drinking?
25. Do you show marked moodiness as a result of drinking?
26. Has your efficiency decreased since drinking?
27. Has your drinking made you more sensitive?
28. Are you harder to get along with since drinking?
29. Do you turn to an inferior environment since drinking?
30. Is drinking endangering your health?
31. Is drinking affecting your peace of mind?
32. Is drinking making your home life unhappy?
33. Is drinking jeopardizing your business?
34. Is drinking clouding your reputation?
35. Is drinking disturbing the harmony of your life?

If you have answered **yes** to any **one** of the Test Questions, there is a definite warning that you **may** be alcoholic.

If you answered **yes** to any **two** of the Test Questions, the chances are that you **are** an alcoholic.
If you answer **yes** to three or more of the Test Questions you are **definitely an alcoholic**.

**NOTE:** The Test Questions are not A.A. questions but are the guide used by Johns Hopkins University Hospital in deciding whether a patient is alcoholic or not.

In addition to the Test Questions, we in A.A. would ask even more questions. Here are a few:

36. Have you ever had a complete loss of memory while, or after, drinking?
37. Have you ever felt, when or after drinking, an inability to concentrate?
38. Have you ever felt remorse after drinking?
39. Has a physician ever treated you for drinking?
40. Have you ever been hospitalized for drinking?

Many other questions could be asked, but the foregoing are sufficient for the purpose of this instruction.

**Why Does An Alcoholic Drink?**

Having decided that we are alcoholics, it is well to consider what competent mental doctors consider as the reasons why an alcoholic drinks:

1. As an escape from situations of life which he cannot face.
2. As evidence of a maladjusted personality (including sexual maladjustments).
3. As a development from social drinking to pathological drinking.
4. As a symptom of a major abnormal mental state.
5. As an escape from incurable physical pain.
6. As a symptom of constitutional inferiority - - a psychopathic personality.

   For example, an individual who drinks because he likes alcohol, knows he cannot handle it, but does not care.

7. Many times one cannot determine any great and glaring mechanism as the basis of why the drinker drinks, but the revealing fact may be elicited:

   That alcohol is taken to relieve a certain vague restlessness in the individual, incident to friction between his biological and emotional makeup and the ordinary strains of life.

The above reasons are general reasons. Where the individuality or personality of the alcoholic is concerned these reasons may be divided as follows:

1. A self-pampering tendency which manifests itself in refusal to tolerate, even temporarily, unpleasant states of mind such as boredom, sorrow, anger, disappointment, worry, depression, dissatisfaction, and feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.

   "I want what I want when I want it" seems to express the attitude of many alcoholics toward life.
2. An instinctive urge for self-expression, unaccompanied by determination to translate the urge into creative action.
3. An abnormal craving for emotional experience which calls for removal of intellectual restraint.
4. Powerful hidden ambitions, without the necessary resolve to take practical steps to attain them, and with resultant discontent, irritability, depression, disgruntledness, and general restlessness.
5. A tendency to flinch from the worries of life and to seek escape from reality by the easiest means available.
6. An unreasonable demand for continuous happiness or excitement.
7. An insistent craving for the feeling of self-confidence, calm, and poise that some obtain temporarily from alcohol.

We Admit

If after carefully considering the foregoing, we admit we are alcoholics, we must realize that, once a person becomes a pathological drinker, he can never again become a controlled drinker, and from that point on, is limited to just two alternatives:

1. Total permanent abstinence.
2. Chronic alcoholism with all of the handicaps and penalties it implies.

In other words, we have gone past the point where we had a choice. All we have left is a decision to make.

We Resolve to Do Something About It

1. We must change our way of thinking. (This is such an important matter that it will have to be discussed more fully in a later discussion).
2. We must realize that each morning when we wake, we are potential drunkards for that day.
3. We resolve that we will practice A.A. for the 24 hours of that day.
4. We must study the other eleven steps of the program and practice each and every one.
5. Attend the regular group meeting each week without fail.
6. Firmly believe that by practicing A.A. faithfully each day, we will achieve sobriety.
7. Believe that we can be free from alcohol as a problem.
8. Contact another member before taking a drink, not after. Tell him what bothers you -- talk it over with him freely.
9. Work the program for ourselves alone -- not for our wife, children, friends, or for our job.
10. Be absolutely honest and sincere.
11. Be fully openminded -- no mental reservations.
12. Be fully willing to work the program. Nothing good in life comes without work.

Conclusion

1. Alcoholics are suffering from a threefold disease, not only a physical illness. Fortunately, we in A.A. have learned how it may be controlled. (This will be shown in the next eleven steps of the
program.)

2. We can also learn to be **free** from alcohol as a problem.
3. We can achieve a full and happy life without recourse to alcohol.

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**ASK QUESTIONS**

No question pertaining to drinking, or stopping drinking, is silly or irrelevant. The matter is **too serious**. Any questions we ask may help someone else. This is not a shortcut to A.A., it is an introduction, a help, a brief course in fundamentals. In A.A. we learn by question and answer; we learn by exchanging our thought and our experience with each other. Any question you ask may help someone else. To cover as many questions as possible in the short time available, all answers must be limited to three minutes.

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I know that if this program works for me and I am able to maintain a sober, peaceful life, it will not be through any strength of mine, but rather, the Man Upstairs has reached down and given me a helping hand. *Strange as it may seem - - it works.*