

Surrender School Step Study

Work the steps using a “Study Guide for Overeaters”

Steps 8 and 9 – [Pages 47 - 53](#) and Video [Session H](#)

Big Book [“Into Action,”](#) pages 76 to 84

SET ASIDE PRAYER

God, please set aside everything I think I know about myself, my emotional sobriety, the 12 Steps and You; for an open mind and a new experience of myself, my emotional sobriety, the 12 Steps and especially You!

Step One Science

Two Offerings

Wednesdays at 3:00PM(PT) or Sundays at 11:00AM(PT)
beginning January 10, 2024.

[Click here to register](#)

**Why can't I (and/or my sponsees)
get and stay abstinent?**

*This 7-week workshop looks at the science of your powerlessness over your disease.
Learn why food addiction is the hardest addiction to live with. Discover how our
body/brain connection is broken.*

[Click here to:
Get the syllabus & study guide](#)

The Twelve Steps (Adapted)

1. We admitted we were powerless over **food**—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 compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

Review: Steps One, Two, and Three:

In **Step One** we found complete despair—powerlessness. We cannot solve the problem of our compulsive eating [addictive eating] by ourselves.

[Video Link: 34:38](#)
Step 1

In **Step Two** we will find hope—power. A power greater than ourselves will restore us to sanity.

[Link to 16:44 - 17:59](#)
Step 2

Step One is the problem. Step Two is the solution.

Step Three is merely a decision to do the rest of the steps:

[Link to Video: 6:31 - 7:48](#)
Step 3

If you are willing to try to find a Higher Power through the steps (Step Two), then you have to make a **decision** to work the steps. And that really is all **Step Three** is—a decision.

Review: Step Four

Let’s start with the overview. The Big Book suggests that in Step Three we were “**convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us**” (page 64). ***The Big Book has three aspects of self that it wants us to look at.***

The first is [resentments](#), and we’ll deal with them in this and the next chapter. We will find, I think, that a resentment is, in its broadest sense, the concept that “**the past didn’t go my way**”.

[Video Link: Step 4
Resentment](#)

The second aspect of self, which we’ll deal with the chapter after next, is [fear](#). We will find, I think, that a fear is, in its broadest sense, the concept that “**the future won’t go my way**”.

[Video Link: Step 4
Fear](#)

The third aspect of self, which we’ll also deal with the chapter after next, is [sex conduct](#). We will find, I think, that the purpose of dealing with sex conduct is to figure out how we should handle the most difficult of relationships in order to have good relationships of every kind.

[Video Link: Step 4
Sex Conduct](#)

So the Big Book’s ordering of Step Four is basically dealing with the Past, dealing with the Future, and then learning how to live in the present with other people. It’s very simple and very powerful!

Review: Steps Five, Six and Seven:

Step 5: The Big Book discusses Step Five from pages 71 to 75.

Why? [Video Link: 5:28 - 8:05`](#)

- The answer is ultimately pretty simple: **“If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking [compulsive eating].”** (page 72) The Big Book explains this in some detail.

Who? [Video Link: 8:25 - 11:20](#)

- The criteria are simple: **“It is important that he be able to keep a confidence; that he fully understand and approve what we are driving at; that he will not try to change our plan”** (pages 74-75).

How? [Video Link: 11:23 - 14:26](#)

Here they are: **“We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past”** (page 75).

- I take the **Step Four Resentment form** as folded over, with the name of the person, institution, or principle (column one), across from where I have been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened (column four). [Video Link: 11:23 - 14:26](#)
- Then I take the **Step Four Fear form** and read it across the columns. “Here is one fear [column one], here are the reasons I have it [column two], I placed my trust and reliance upon my finite self [column three] and it didn’t work [column four], and I said the Fear Prayer [column five].” I then discuss briefly exactly what I think my higher power would have me be in relation to that fear. [Video Link: 14:27 - 15:21](#)
- Then I take the **Step Four Sex Conduct form** and read it across the columns. “Here is a person I hurt [column one], here are the ways in which I was selfish, dishonest, and inconsiderate [column two], I aroused suspicion, but not bitterness or jealousy [column three], what I should have done instead was _____ [column four], the relationship was selfish [column five], and I said the sex prayer [column six] and the sex meditation [column seven].” [Video Link: 15:25 - 18:10](#)

We’ve admitted to ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs, but we haven’t yet admitted them to God. The Big Book tells us to go home and **“find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better”** (page 75). [Video Link: 22:35 - 24:45](#)

Review: Steps Five, Six and Seven:

Step Six: [Video Link: 24:45 - 27:33](#)

The Big Book promises NOTHING at Step Six. Our higher power is not going to remove our character defects at Step Six. The promise of that will only come halfway through Step Nine.

- **We are selfish**—we basically want our way, whether for good or bad or a mixture of reasons.
- **We are dishonest**—we don't tell others or ourselves the truth about reality.
- **We are self-seeking**—how others react to us defines how we feel about ourselves and we think of ourselves and not others.
- And we are **full of fear**.

Step Seven: [Video Link: 28:55 - 30:56](#)

You say the prayer on page 76 of the Big Book.

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.

But it's simply a prayer. The Big Book is very clear about this. There are NO promises for Step Seven either. You just say the prayer and then you're ready for some action!

Review: Steps Eight and Nine:

Step Eight and Step Nine:

Direct Amends:

- The first is **eyeball to eyeball**—“I am sorry for what I have done.” [Video Link: 21:52 - 23:45](#)
- The second is **restitution**—“I will make up for what I have done.” [Video Link: 29:30 - 30:39](#)
- The third is taking the **public consequences**—“I will make known to other people what I have done.” [Video Link: 26:27 - 27:49](#)

Living Amends:

- Here the concept is that direct amends simply aren't enough for people with whom we have had long-term relationships; they don't need apologies or restitution—they need a new person to have a relationship with.

Amends we cannot make:

- And on page 83 the Big Book discusses amends we can't make and promises us that if we are ready to make them, that is good enough.

The Complex Amends: [Video Link: 31:16 - 34:38](#)

- We don't blame ourselves for what we did or didn't do at an earlier time. We are looking to see what we COULD have done so we can make sure that things like that don't happen in the future.)

Steps 8 – [Pages 47 - 53](#) and Video [Session H](#)
 Big Book ["Into Action,"](#) pages 76 to 84

Clear Data

STEP EIGHT AND NINE LIST

This form is not taken in its entirety from the Big Book, but is a useful guide. Fill out the form directly from the saved copies of your Fourth Step Inventory worksheets. Complete all Amends marked in the "Now?" column. When done, move the items from the "Sometime?" column to "Now?" and the "Never!" items to "Sometime?" You'll find that the Nevers have turned into Sometimes, and the Sometimes into Nows. Continue this process until you complete all items on your Ninth Step.

Ready to do the Amend(s)...

Name of person harmed:	Harm done to that person:	Possible Amend(s) for that harm (Apology, Restitution, Public Acknowledgement, Living)	Will this Amend harm that person or anyone else?	Ready to do the Amend(s)...		
				Now?	Sometime?	Never!
Ex Lover and his wife	Gave a stranger his number & her name for spite.	Living Amends – I will NEVER intentionally try to ruin a marriage.	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stranger I gave the wrong info	Deceived him and possibly put him in an awkward position.	Living Amends - If the opportunity is presented, I will do a face to face.	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older Sister	Gossip and lying to others about her behavior (as revenge to an argument)	Living Amends – Because she does not know I did it, it will hurt her.	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step Ten

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”



Steps Ten and Eleven—Introduction:

We ended our discussion of Step Nine with the Hidden Promises of pages 84 and 85. The Big Book ends those promises with a very clear warning: **“That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.”**

If we do not keep in fit spiritual condition, we will relapse. Our mental obsession will return. We will become insane again.

How do we keep in fit spiritual condition? You might recall Dr. Bob’s summary of the Twelve Steps: **“Clean House, Trust God, Help Others.”** We will find that once we have recovered, that summary means **Step Ten (Clean House), Step Eleven (Trust God), Step Twelve (Help Others).**

Step Ten:

For my first six years in program, I went through a cycle of recovery and relapse, recovery and relapse. This happened until I was finally introduced to the Big Book's approach to recovery. As I began to recover using the Big Book approach, I analyzed what had gone wrong in my first six years. I discovered **two things that were the main cause of my relapses.**

Step Ten:

The first was that I had refused to accept that there were certain foods and eating behaviors that caused me uncontrollable cravings—the notion of the “allergy of the body” that I discussed at length in our discussion of Step One. I had fallen prey to the notion that all the diets I had ever been on, and all the “experts” I read, told me, which was that after I lost my weight I could eat ANYTHING in moderation; so I “took back” foods that I had eliminated during my weight-loss time, tried to eat them in moderation; and soon found that I was gorging on them.

The second, though, was far more serious: there had been a number of times when I was trying to stay away from my trigger foods but I still found rationalizations to return to them—the “mental obsession” that I also discussed at length in Step One. **Why was this mental obsession returning? Why were my “best” efforts not to eat these foods being undermined by my complete lack of will?**

Here are the Big Book's instructions for Step Ten:

Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.

If you look at those instructions, you will see pretty clearly that they are really the equivalent of doing Steps Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine. Here's the annotated version of the same instructions:

Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. [STEP FOUR—In Step Four we encountered the concepts of “selfishness, dishonest, resentment, and fear”. Clearly that’s what the Big Book is talking about!] When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. [STEPS SIX AND SEVEN] We discuss them with someone immediately [STEP FIVE] and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. [STEPS EIGHT AND NINE] Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.



I have a simple twelve-point checklist (it just happened to be 12!) for when I do a Step Ten.

I look at *"The Doctor's Opinion"* and find the words *"They are restless, irritable and discontented unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks"*.

I look at page 52 in *"We Agnostics"* and find the Bedevilments: *"We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn't make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people"*. I also look at my food issues.

So my Twelve Step checklist for when I do a Step Ten is:

1. Am I restless? (***Doctor's Opinion***)
2. Am I irritable? (***Doctor's Opinion***)
3. Am I discontented? (***Doctor's Opinion***)
4. Am I having trouble with personal relationships? (***Bedevilments***)
5. Can I not control my emotional nature? (***Bedevilments***)
6. Am I a prey to misery and depression? (***Bedevilments***)
7. Can I not make a living? (***Bedevilments***)
8. Do I have a feeling of uselessness? (***Bedevilments***)
9. Am I full of fear? (***Bedevilments***)
10. Am I unhappy? (***Bedevilments***)
11. Am I not of real help to other people? (***Bedevilments***)
12. Is my food or quantity of food getting sloppy?

If the answer to any one or more of these questions is YES, then it's time for me to clean house again. So I take out my Step Four forms and I fill them out; I do a Step Five, and then a Six and a Seven, and I figure out and then do my amends.

In Step Ten we Clean House. In Step Eleven we Trust God. In Step Twelve we Help Others. Dr. Bob's prescription for life is our guide!

R. H. SMITH, M. D.
2ND NATIONAL BLDG. AKRON, OHIO
TELEPHONE: HE-8523 REG. NO. _____

R FOR alcoholics
ADDRESS _____ DATE Feb 1937

always remember it

1. Trust God
2. Clean house
3. Help others

NR 1 2 3 INF. _____ *Dr. Bob* M. D.

This may or may not be a real “prescription” signed by Dr. Bob. A copy of his prescription pad is available, and someone may very well have created a great fake to circulate on the Web. On the other hand, it may be real, since Dr. Bob often said what’s written here. It’s great to look at, at any rate!

Step Eleven

“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.”

Step Eleven:

And now Step Eleven. If you have downloaded the Step Eleven form to be found at www.oabigbook.info, or look at the form preceding this chapter, you will see how that form provides all specific instructions from pages 86 to 88 (plus a few others),

STEP 11 PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

Evening Prayer and Meditation

Big Book, page 86:

On retiring at night, constructively review your day:

- Were you resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?
- Do you owe an apology?
- Have you kept something to yourself which should be discussed with another person at once?
- Were you kind and loving toward all?
- What could you have done better?
- Were you thinking of yourself most of the time?
- Or were you thinking of what you could do for others, of what you could pack into the stream of life?

Be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish your usefulness to others.

After making your review:

God, please forgive me and tell me what corrective measures should be taken.

Morning Prayer and Meditation

Big Book, pages 86-7:

On awakening pray:

God, I ask you to direct my thinking, I especially ask that my thinking be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.

Think about the twenty-four hours ahead, Consider your plans for the day...

If you are faced with indecision, pray:

I ask you for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision.

After considering your plans for the day, pray:

God, I pray that I be shown all through the day what my next step is to be. I pray that I be given whatever I need to take care of such problems. I ask especially for freedom from self-will. I ask that I be given strength only if others will be helped.

Also say the following prayers:

My creator, I ask that you show me the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love (page 83)

God, what can I do today for the man who is still sick? (page 164)

If you have resentment that you want to be free of, pray:

God, I ask that everything I want for myself be given _____, I ask for _____'s health, prosperity, and happiness (page 552)

Also select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles in the Big Book, such as the Step 3 Prayer (page 63), the Step 7 Prayer (page 76), the St. Francis Prayer (AA12&12, page 99), the Serenity Prayer, or any other prayer.

Daily Prayer & Meditations

Big Book, pages 87-8:

Constantly remind yourself:

I am no longer running the show.

Say to yourself many times each day:

Thy will be done.

When agitated or doubtful:

God, please give me the right thought or action

Page 85 (thoughts which must go with you constantly):

How can I best serve thee?

Thy will (not mine) be done.

Page 67 (if a person offends you):

This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.



The Big Book's warning about needing to keep in fit spiritual condition begins its discussion of Step Eleven. On page 84:

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. 'How can I best serve Thee - Thy will (not mine) be done.' These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.

Specific Directions:

These suggestions are, in effect, the MINIMUM we should be doing. I know many people who spend an hour or two meditation in the morning, using any number of powerful meditation techniques. They are very spiritual people, and I respect them tremendously. But at the minimum they also do what the Big Book suggests!

The Big Book has three kinds of prayers and meditations.

The **first is what we do on going to sleep**, as discussed in the first full paragraph on page 86.

The **second is what we do on awakening**, as discussed in the last two paragraphs on page 86, and the first three paragraphs on page 87.

The **third is what we do during the daytime**, discussed in the last paragraph on page 87, going on to page 88.

STEP 11 PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

Evening Prayer and Meditation

Big Book, page 86:

On retiring at night, constructively review your day:

- Were you resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?
- Do you owe an apology?
- Have you kept something to yourself which should be discussed with another person at once?
- Were you kind and loving toward all?
- What could you have done better?
- Were you thinking of yourself most of the time?
- Or were you thinking of what you could do for others, of what you could pack into the stream of life?

Be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish your usefulness to others.

After making your review:

God, please forgive me and tell me what corrective measures should be taken.

Morning Prayer and Meditation

Big Book, pages 86-7:

On awakening pray:

God, I ask you to direct my thinking, I especially ask that my thinking be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.

Think about the twenty-four hours ahead, Consider your plans for the day...

If you are faced with indecision, pray:

I ask you for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision.

After considering your plans for the day, pray:

God, I pray that I be shown all through the day what my next step is to be. I pray that I be given whatever I need to take care of such problems. I ask especially for freedom from self-will. I ask that I be given strength only if others will be helped.

Also say the following prayers:

My creator, I ask that you show me the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love (page 83)

God, what can I do today for the man who is still sick? (page 164)

If you have resentment that you want to be free of, pray:

God, I ask that everything I want for myself be given _____, I ask for _____'s health, prosperity, and happiness (page 552)

Also select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles in the Big Book, such as the Step 3 Prayer (page 63), the Step 7 Prayer (page 76), the St. Francis Prayer (AA12&12, page 99), the Serenity Prayer, or any other prayer.

Daily Prayer & Meditations

Big Book, pages 87-8:

Constantly remind yourself:

I am no longer running the show.

Say to yourself many times each day:

Thy will be done.

When agitated or doubtful:

God, please give me the right thought or action

Page 85 (thoughts which must go with you constantly):

How can I best serve thee?

Thy will (not mine) be done.

Page 67 (if a person offends you):

This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.

Evening Prayer and Meditation

Big Book, page 86:

On retiring at night,
constructively review your
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- Were you resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?
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- Were you kind and loving toward all?
- What could you have done better?
- Were you thinking of yourself most of the time?
- Or were you thinking of what you could do for others, of what you could pack into the stream of life?

Be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish your usefulness to others.

After making your review:

*God, please forgive me and
tell me what corrective
measures should be taken.*

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.

On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.

We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why.

Morning Prayer and Meditation

Big Book, pages 86-7;

On awakening pray:

God, I ask you to direct my thinking, I especially ask that my thinking be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.

Think about the twenty-four hours ahead, Consider your plans for the day...

If you are faced with indecision, pray:

I ask you for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision.

After considering your plans for the day, pray:

God, I pray that I be shown all through the day what my next step is to be. I pray that I be given whatever I need to take care of such problems. I ask especially for freedom from self-will. I ask that I be given strength only if others will be helped.

Also say the following prayers:

My creator, I ask that you show me the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love (page 83)

God, what can I do today for the man who is still sick? (page 164)

If you have resentment that you want to be free of, pray:

God, I ask that everything I want for myself be given _____, I ask for _____'s health, prosperity, and happiness (page 552)

Also select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles in the Big Book, such as the Step 3 Prayer (page 63), the Step 7 Prayer (page 76), the St. Francis Prayer (AA12&12, page 99), the Serenity Prayer, or any other prayer.

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day “Thy will be done.” We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.

It works—it really does.

We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.

But this is not all. There is action and more action. “Faith without works is dead.” The next chapter is entirely devoted to *Step Twelve*.

Daily Prayer & Meditations

Big Book, pages 87-88:

Constantly remind yourself:

I am no longer running the show.

Say to yourself many times each day:

Thy will be done.

When agitated or doubtful:

God, please give me the right thought or action

Page 85 (thoughts which must go with you constantly):

How can I best serve thee?

Thy will (not mine) be done.

Page 67 (if a person offends you):

This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.

Step Twelve

“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.”

Step Twelve—Introduction:

Why we have to carry the message:

On page 59 the Big Book tells us: ***“Half measures availed us nothing.”*** Eleven-twelfth measures avail us nothing either. We can do the steps from One through Eleven, but if we don’t get active and carry the message, we will die. It’s that simple.

Let me start with quoting Doctor Bob in ***“Doctor Bob’s Nightmare”***, the first story after the text of the Big Book. Doctor Bob, as many of you know, was the co-founder of AA:

I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.
3. Because in so doing I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.

SESSION J STEP 12
2023 STEP STUDY

STRANDERSCHOOL.ORG

Video Link: 12:00 - 12:35

Link to AA’s Big Book – [Doctor Bob’s Nightmare](#)
Pages 171 – 181
See page 180-181 for this excerpt.

The Big Book expresses this last thought very clearly. The beginning of Chapter 7, devoted entirely to Step Twelve, says at page 89: ***“Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail.”***

If you look at the Step Three and the Step Seven prayers, you will see that they are really all about becoming fit to help other people. Look at the Step Three prayer at page 63: ***“Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life.”*** We ask that our difficulties be taken away not for our own sake, but purely so that victory over our difficulties will show those whom we want to help the power of our higher power. And the Step Seven prayer at page 76: ***“I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.”*** We ask that those defects of character which hinder us from helping others be taken away from us.

Chapter 7 is basically a manual on how to do our job. Our job description is actually found on page 102: ***"Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others."***

We are disabled people. Other—"normal"—people don't have to do what we have to do. They don't have addiction problems. They can spend their spare time doing things they want to do for their own comfort and enjoyment.

But we cannot afford to do that. **If we don't help others, we will relapse.** We will go back to eating. And if we go back to eating, we will surely die. If you don't believe that by now, go back and think about Step One!

Some Step Twelve Promises:

Here are some promises of Step Twelve:

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. (page 89)

Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances! (page 100)

So even though we HAVE to carry the message, it turns out that carrying the message becomes, for us, one of the most significant things that we do.

One of the Promises is that ***“we will see how our experience can benefit others.”*** And at page 124, the Big Book says:

Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worth while to us now. Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have—the key to life and happiness for others. With it you can avert death and misery for them.

Meaning has now been given to our suffering or to the harms we've done others. We are different from what we used to be. The suffering we have undergone, or the harm we have done, were things that happened to someone we used to be, not to us.

How to carry the message the Big Book way:

Yet the Big Book's instructions are actually quite different. Here's the outline of the directions:

Pages 89 to 91: Finding the alcoholics to give the message to. Remember that the Big Book was written when AA was only in New York, Akron, and Cleveland. It was written as a textbook for those who did not have contact with AA and who did not have meetings to go to. So there necessarily had to be instructions for finding the right person. We're lucky in OA and in the other twelve-step programs—people come to us, and we don't have to find them.

How to carry the message the Big Book way:

Pages 91 to 95: The first meeting. The actual instructions for explaining the program to the person who still suffers. I'll analyze this in some detail below.

Pages 96 to 98: guidelines for dealing with a sponsee. I'll spend a bit of time dealing with this.

Pages 98 to 100: general issues and the family of the person who is working the steps. I'll only deal with a few points here.

Pages 100 to 102: what recovery is like for us. I want to emphasize this area.

How to carry the message the Big Book way:

Tell your eating stories in such a way that the other person understands. Don't say anything about what you did to stop. Just tell your stories

Then describe yourself as a compulsive eater. Never comment on the other person. I will often say something like, "You're probably nothing like me, but I realized that I was a compulsive eater."

Then talk about "how you finally learned that you were sick." (92) Talk about how you tried to stop but couldn't. I go into details on the many reasons I always slip. "I'm standing up so it doesn't count. I feel depressed. I've been good the last year or month or week or day or hour. I'll never have this taste again. It'll go to waste. Etc., etc."

How to carry the message the Big Book way:

Then ***“begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady.”*** (92) This is extremely important. You tell your story in such a way that the other person understands that you—not him or her but you— were in the grips of a hopeless illness. So I will say something like, “I don’t know about you, but I began to see how hopeless I was on my own, how I couldn’t ever solve this problem on my own. I couldn’t stop once I started to eat my binge foods, and I couldn’t stop from starting again even if I’d managed to stop for a while. That explained my yo-yo dieting. It explained why I felt so defeated.”

If the other person doesn’t show interest, don’t try to convince him or her. Just tell your story the best you can, thank the other person for letting you tell your story, say that if you can ever be of help, you’re available, and then leave.

How to carry the message the Big Book way:

The Big Book talks about how to deal with the higher power issue with both agnostics and religious people on page 93. It's pretty blunt stuff. For the agnostics you tell them that's no problem— it's their own conception of a higher power.

For the religious people you tell them that their religion certainly hasn't helped them at all, and they'd better remember that ***“faith without works is dead”***. And you go into detail about the inventory.

How to carry the message the Big Book way:

Here are some very important words on page 94:

Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to him.

Then basically, after pleasantries, you leave! You don't continue the conversation, you don't try to be a friend, you've conveyed information about yourself and told the other person that if he or she is interested ***"you will do ANYTHING to help"*** (page 95).

The Big Book thus describes a pretty short conversation—maybe a few hours at the most. Then it's up to the other person. Page 96:

We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy.

The Big Book cautions us about having the other person become dependent on us. Page 98:

The minute we put our work on a service plane, the alcoholic commences to rely upon our assistance rather than upon God. He clamors for this or that, claiming he cannot master alcohol until his material needs are cared for. Nonsense. [For Big Book trivialists, this is the shortest sentence in the Big Book!] Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job - wife or no wife - we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God. Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house.

The Promises of Recovery: The Big Book's promise of recovery is quite clear and quite unconditional:

Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so. We meet these conditions every 65 days. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, still has an alcoholic mind; there is something the matter with his spiritual status. (pages 100-101)

Step Twelve Continued:

As the Foreword to the First Edition says, “we have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.” And the promises of this recovery are the freedom from the bondage of self and the freedom from the bondage of food.

The responsibility for achieving a healthy body weight:

If we are to be of maximum helpfulness to others, we must carry the message to the compulsive eater who still suffers, and we must carry that message to the best of our abilities. What kind of a message are we carrying to the newcomer in our room, or to the person who has been coming for some time but hasn't yet worked the steps, if we are not working towards a healthy body weight?

The compulsive eater who still suffers wants one thing—normalcy. Now normalcy has two parts.

The first is the practical one—the certainty that working the steps will allow that person to look normal, to lose weight if he or she is overweight, and to gain weight if he or she is underweight.

The second is the one the compulsive eater who still suffers has never had from any other diet program—the spiritual sanity that provides freedom from food.

The responsibility for achieving a healthy body weight:

We have to model both of those if we are to be of maximum helpfulness to others. We should neither be living in fat serenity nor be white-knuckle abstaining.

We don't have to be thin to sponsor. Not at all. A person who has 300 pounds to lose/release and who has recovered within months, and is losing weight, is a tremendous inspiration, even if still morbidly obese. And there are people whose medical condition is such that they can lose no more weight, but if they have recovered, they can sponsor beautifully.

What I am talking about, however—and I have myself been an example of this—are people who talk about how they have been members of this program for a long time, how they have recovered, how food is no longer an issue for them, but who do not appear to have a healthy weight.

The question they must ask themselves—as I asked myself—is how well they are carrying the message. Are they carrying the message to the best of their ability? I know when I was among them I was not carrying the message well.

On the other hand, having a healthy weight does not necessarily provide the message either.

SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.