

Back to the Basics of Recovery

#1 – Overview and Steps 1, 2 and 3

WELCOME to the first of four *Back to the Basics of Recovery* meetings that will change your life! During these sessions, we will guide you through the Twelve Steps as described in the “Big Book” and you will recover from “**a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.**”

We have found a way out-an answer to the insidious illness of addictive and compulsive behaviors. We are here to share our solution with you – a spiritually based “**program of action**” that will provide you with a new way of living beyond your wildest dreams.

Our names are _____ and _____, and we will be your guides for this meeting. During this session we will take the first three Steps.

The directions for taking the Steps are in the “Big Book” of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Although this book deals primarily with alcoholism, it can be applied to any addictive or compulsive behavior.

The “Big Book” was first published in April 1939. It was written by several of the first men to recover from alcoholism. Since then, people all over the world have used the “big Book” as a textbook for recovery from any number of disorders. For these sessions, we have modified the applicable “Big Book” passages so they are gender neutral and applicable to all addictive and compulsive disorders.

So that we may complete each session within an hour and still have time for questions, we request that you write down anything that you do not understand or need clarified and save it until the end of the session. We will answer questions at that time.

In order for the process to work, participants need to be matched up with those who are willing to help guide them through the Steps. This is a **WE** program. No one goes through the recovery process alone.

- **We** attend the sessions together,
- **We** read the “Big Book” together,
- **We** take the Twelve Steps together, and
- **We** recover together.

So that everyone can better understand what is expected of them, we are going to explain some of the guidelines for being a sharing partner:

(Refer to Page 2 Handout)

FOR THE SHARING PARTNER:

- A. Your primary obligation is to attend all four sessions in order to offer encouragement and moral support to your partner. The conditions for being a sharing partner are:
- to be actively involved in your own Twelve Step recovery,
 - to be willing to listen to what your partner has to say, and,
 - to keep everything that is shared strictly confidential.
- B. We will guide you thru the Twelve Steps by reading the appropriate parts of the “Big Book” to you. If you follow the directions provided by the “Big Book” authors, you too will experience the **“personality change sufficient to bring about recovery.”**
- C. The Fourth Step consists of a simple assets and liabilities checklist that you fill out during the second session. If you believe your partner satisfies the conditions of a **“closemouthed, understanding friend”** please discuss your checklist with him or her. If your inventory contains specific items that you feel should be shared with a third party such as a person of the clergy, an attorney, a psychologist, or a counselor, explain this to your sharing partner. Make a commitment to you partner as to when, where, and with whom you will share those portions of your checklist.
- D. Between the third and fourth sessions, share your Eleventh Step guidance with your partner so he or she can see how two-way prayer is working in your life.

Before we begin, we need to make sure everyone has a sharing partner. **Ben will facilitate**

Now that everyone has a sharing partner, we can proceed. Let's start with the first paragraph in the Forward of the “Big BOOK”, which in on Roman numeral page 13 (xiii). It states:

We are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other(s) ... *precisely how we have recovered* is the main purpose of this book...”

(pg. xiii, para. 1, lines 1-5, edited)

So the “big Book” authors immediately tell us that the purpose of this book is to show us how to recover from our addictive or compulsive behaviors. This is a revolutionary statement, because before the “big Book” was written, there was very little hope for us. Now anyone who is willing to follow the directions **THEY** have provided, can overcome their difficulties.

This message of hope is expressed again in the third paragraph on page 17:

“The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in ... harmonious action. This is the great

news this book carries to those who (want relief from their suffering)."

(pg. 17, para.3, lines 1-5 edited)

In the first paragraph on page 44, the authors tell us what it is going to take to recover. Starting with the fourth line, they write:

"...If, when you honestly want to, you find that you cannot quit entirely, or ... you have little control over (your thoughts or actions), you ... probably (have a problem). If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer."

(pg. 44, para. 1, lines 4-9 edited)

To make sure everyone understands what we just read we are going to read the last sentence again:

"If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which ONLY a spiritual experience will conquer."

We now know what we have to do in order to recover. We must undergo a change in perception-a spiritual transformation.

Let's see what we can learn about this spiritual transformation. In the first paragraph on page 45, the "Big Book" authors state:

Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how where to find this power? "Well that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.

(pg. 45, para. 1, lines 1-4; para. 2, lines 1-3)

Back to the Basics of Recovery is not a religious program. We're free to call this Power by any name we wish, as long as it is a **"Power greater than ourselves."** The "Big Book" authors use many different names for this Power, including **"Creative Intelligence," "Universal Mind," "Spirit of the Universe," "Creator,"** and **"Great Reality,"** among others. Sometimes they call this Power, **"God"**, but they use the word God merely for convenience rather than for any religious purpose. Please refer to this Power by any name you believe in or feel comfortable with.

So, in order to recover, we have to find a **"Power greater than ourselves."** But where are we going to find this Power?

The authors answer this question in the second and third paragraphs on page 55:

"Actually, we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman and child is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or another it is there... "... Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but (the Power) was there. (It) was as much a fact as we were. We found the (Power) deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that (the Power) may be

found.”

(pg. 55, para. 2, lines 1-5; para. 3, lines 3-7 edited)

And, within the third and fourth lines of the fourth paragraph on page 55, they summarize the spiritual journey of recovery in four words:

“...search diligently within yourself....”

These are dramatic and for some of us revolutionary concepts. Let us summarize them for you. First, the authors of the “Big Book” announce they have found a way to free us from the bondage of addictive or compulsive behaviors. Next, they describe the solution as a **“Power greater than ourselves.”** Then, they tell us where we find this Power—right inside each and every one of us.

Now we know **WHERE** to find this power. Much of the rest of the “Big Book” is devoted to the question of **HOW** to find this Power.

Basically, we become empowered by taking the Twelve Steps. The Steps are described in depth and detail in the “Big Book.”

We have provided you with a list of the Twelve Steps along with the page numbers where each Step is located. We've also included the specific passage within each Step that contains the directions for taking that Step.

(Refer participants to the handout titled, “Suggested 'Big Book' Passages for Taking the Twelve Steps. Page 3)

Let's begin with the First Step. It reads:

We admitted we (had a problem)-that our lives had become unmanageable.

In order to recover, we must make a surrender. The “Big book” authors devote 51 pages to the first part of the surrender process which is to admit we have a problem.

In the first chapter of the “Big Book,” titled, “Bill's Story,” Bill W., describes how he made his surrender. In addition, he tells us how he took the rest of the Steps and recovered.

In the first seven pages of his story, Bill describes the progressive nature of his illness. In the 1920's, he was a successful Wall Street stock analyst. In a few short years he loses everything.

In the first paragraph on page 8, Bill has a moment of clarity. He realizes he is powerless over alcohol. He is licked-defeated:

“No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed....”

(pg. 8, para. 1, lines 1-4)

But Bill cannot stop drinking on this admission alone. In late November 1934, Bill is visited by an old high school friend, Ebby T. Bill is drunk. Ebby has been sober for several months. When Bill asks Ebby how he stopped drinking, Ebby tells him that all

he did was take a few simple Steps. Bill is shocked but he lets Ebby continue because, as he writes,

“my gin would last longer than his preaching.”

Soon after Ebby's visit, Bill checks into Towns Hospital. There, under the direction of Dr. Silkworth, Bill is physically withdrawn from alcohol for the fourth time.

While in the hospital, Bill takes the equivalent of the Twelve Steps as we know them today. With Ebby as his sharing partner, he completes the Steps in one or two days. Not one or two months or one or two years, but one or two days. This is how Bill describes his recovery.

In the second paragraph on page 13, Bill makes a complete **SURRENDER**:

“There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood (God), to (lead and guide) me. I placed myself unreservedly under (God's) care and direction....”

(pg. 13, para. 2, lines 1-3, edited)

Immediately after his Surrender, Bill begins **SHARING** his shortcomings with Ebby. Starting with the second line on the second paragraph on page 13, Bill writes:

“... I ruthlessly faced my (shortcomings) and became willing to have my newfound Friend take them away, root and branch....”

“My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies....”

(pg. 13, para. 2, lines 5-7; para. 3, lines 1-2, edited)

Together, Bill and Ebby identify the blocks that were preventing Bill from tapping into the Power greater than human power-the Power that would solve his problem. Then, starting with the second line in the third paragraph on page 13, Bill learns how to remove the blocks by making **AMENDS**:

“... We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.”

(pg. 13, para. 3, lines 2-7)

In the fourth paragraph on page 13, Bill gets quiet, listens to the indwelling spirit, and follows **GUIDENCE**. These actions are essential for establishing a two-way relationship with the **“One who has all power”**:

“I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problem as (God) would have me....”

(pg. 13, para. 4, lines 1-5, edited)

Bill then has a “**psychic change.**” In the second paragraph on page 14, Bill describes his spiritual awakening:

“These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most (people) gradually, but (God's) impact on me was sudden and profound.

(pg. 14, para. 2, lines 1-8, edited)

Bill made direct contact with the “**Spirit of the Universe**” and overcame his problem.

There is additional material within these 51 pages of the “Big Book” that further explains our physical and mental symptoms and how our lives have become unmanageable as the result of our self-destructive behaviors. We hope we've shown you enough for you to proceed.

Now, it's time for us to begin our journey toward the spiritual awakening that will change our lives. Let's see who is ready to take the first Step? Again, it reads:

We admitted we (had a problem)-that our lives had become unmanageable.

The “Big Book” authors tell us exactly what we have to do. In the second paragraph on page 30, they write:

“We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we (have a problem). This s the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.”

(pg. 30, para. 2, lines 1-4 edited)

Maybe your only problem is that your life is a bit out of control. If this is the case, you can take the First Step based on unmanageability. In the second paragraph on page 2, starting with the third line, we learn some of the characteristics of unmanageability:

“...We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were (suffering from) misery and depression, ... 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 ...”

(pg. 52, para. 2, lines 3-8, edited)

We have converted these statements into questions. If you can answer 'yes" to any of them, please raise your hand. If you've been in recovery for a while, please think back to when you first got here. Okay, let's begin.

(Ask the questions and ask for a show of hands after each question.)

1. **Are you having trouble with personal relationships?**
2. **Are you having difficulty controlling your emotional nature?**
3. **Do you suffer from misery and depression?**
4. **Do you have feelings of uselessness?**
5. **Are you full of fear?**
6. **Are you unhappy?**
7. **Does it seem like you can't be of real help to other people?**

According to the "Big Book" authors, those who raised their hands, in response to any of these questions, are ready to take Step One.

Now, let's answer the First Step question in unison. All that is needed is a "yes" or "no" reply. This is the First Step Question:

"Do you concede to your innermost self that you have a problem?"

And, your answer is?

(Have the participants answer the First Step question.)

Thank you. According to the "Big Book" authors, those who answered "yes" to this question have taken Step One.

Now, let's move on to the Second Step, which reads:

Came to believe that a Power greater than our-selves could restore us to sanity.

Now that we have admitted we have a problem, let's look at what we have to do in order to overcome this problem. According to the "Big Book" authors, we have to tap into **"the realm of the spirit," "a source of power much greater than (ourselves)"** that will free us from the bondage of our self-destructive behaviors.

In the middle of page 46, the authors ask us to set aside any contempt we might have for spiritual principals and consider our own concept of a Power greater than human power-a power that resides each of us. If we do, we will be in a much better position to understand the spiritual solution the "Big Book" authors are talking about. Starting with the third line in the first paragraph, they state:

"... We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power..."

(pg. 46, para. 1, lines 3-8)

Basically, the "Big Book" authors tell us it is impossible to fully comprehend the **"Power of God."** We have to stop trying to grasp this Power with our mind and start accepting this Power with our heart. In the first paragraph on page 47, they explain the

concept of **“God as you understand God.”**:

“When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood (God)....

(I)f we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere. So, we used our own conception, however limited it was.”

(pg. 47, para. 1, lines 1-9, 11-13, edited)

Once again we need to make a decision. We have to decide whether or not we believe in an indwelling spirit – a **“God-Consciousness within.”** In the second paragraph on page 53, the “Big Book” authors write

“When we became ... crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else (God) is nothing. God either is, or (God) isn't. What was our choice to be?

(pg. 53, para. 2, lines 1-5 edited)

Now, it's time to choose. Are we willing to concede that there is **“Power greater than ourselves?”** If we are, we're ready to take the Second Step.

In the second paragraph on page 47, we find the directions:

“We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. 'Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?' As soon as (someone says) that (they do) believe, or (are) willing to believe, we emphatically assure (them) that (they are on their) way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.

(pg. 47, para. 2, lines 1-8 edited)

Let's see who is ready to proceed? We asked that you answer the Second Step question in unison, with a “yes” or “no” reply.

This is the question:

“Do you now believe, or are you even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than yourself?”

And, your answer is?

(Have the participants answer the Second Step question)

Thank you. According to the “Big Book” authors, those who answered “yes” to this question have taken Step Two.

Now, let's look at the Third Step, which reads:

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood (God).

Even though we may believe that the **“Power of God”** is the answer to our problems, this doesn't necessarily mean that we are willing to implement this solution. In order to recover, we must make a decision to put this Power to work in our lives.

On pages 62 and 63, the “Big Book” authors show us how to become God directed. But, first they tell us how being self-directed keeps us separated from the spiritual solution to our difficulties.

In the first paragraph on page 2, the authors declare that it is our selfishness and self-centeredness that gets us into trouble. We need to take responsibility for this self-interest and self-absorption and ask God to remove this shortcoming from our lives:

“Selfishness – self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt. “So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves and (we are) an extreme example of self-will run riot, though (we) usually (Don't) think so. Above everything, we ... must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without (God's) aid. ...”

(pg. 62, para. 1, lines 1-8; para. 2, lines 1-8 edited)

Then in the third paragraph on page 62, the authors tell us what happens once we rid ourselves of this selfishness:

“This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our director.

“When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new employer. Being all powerful, (God) provided what we needed, if we kept close ... and performed (God's) work well. ...”

(Pg. 62, para. 3, lines 1-4; pg. 63, para. 1, lines 1-4, edited)

Now we know our place in God's universe. Contrary to what we may have thought in the past, the whole world does not revolve around us.

Realizing there is a **“Power greater than ourselves”** is the essence of God Consciousness. As we become aware of the **“realm of the spirit,”** our lives change. We begin to **“lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter.”**

It is decision time once again. The “Big Book” authors state we are now ready to take the Third Step. They even provide us with a prayer we can use to take this Step. The prayer is in the middle of page 63, starting with the second line in the second

paragraph. We would like each of you who is ready to take the Third Step to read this prayer along with us.

Are we ready? **(Have participants repeat lines after you read them)** Okay, let's begin:

“... God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. 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. May I do Thy will always!”

(pg. 63, para. 2, lines 2-8)

According to the “Big Book” authors, we have taken Step Three.

That's enough for this session. In the past hour, we have covered 71 pages of the “Big Book” and taken the first three Steps. This is a remarkable achievement. Congratulations!

During the next meeting we will provide you with guidelines for taking the Fourth and Fifth Steps. You will fill out a Fourth Step inventory and discuss it with your sharing partner between the second and third sessions.

Are there any questions?