

University
Group
Commitment
Step
Action
Meeting

The University Group

The University Group began in September of 1984 when, at the request of the University of Manitoba administration, some members of the Big Book Group sought to start a group on the Fort Garry Campus.

The request to establish a group arose from the favorable reaction of the University Administration to a Public Information Luncheon held in May of that year at the University Centre as part of the Annual Spring Into Action Roundup. Thus began one of the biggest Twelve Step calls in Manitoba, when we began to carry the message to a community of 35,000 people...the third largest community in the province.

The University Group traces its history – both as a group and in its approach to the program of recovery – directly to the Big Book Group, which in turn, grew out of the Tiger Group.

The Big book Group had its beginnings when some half-dozen members of the Tigers broke away in November, 1975, to return to Windsor Park, where the Tigers had their origin some 11 years earlier.

The Tigers sprang from discussions in 1964 when members of the Winnipeg Group wanted their own meeting in the St. Vital – Windsor Park area.

So it can be said that the University group actually traces its origins, one step at a time, all the way back through many groups and many years, to that first meeting between Bill W. and Dr. Bob S. in Akron, Ohio in June of 1935.

The founders of the University Group brought with them the purpose of following the belief that the Big Book contains the only written record of the precise plan of recovery experienced by the first 100 members of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. We believe that the same recovery experience enjoyed by those first One Hundred whose recovery experience was the basis for the Big Book, is available to anyone who will follow the specific directions described in the book; and that the result will be happy sobriety.

Thus, the University Group is dedicated to the principle that everything in the group should operate on the basis of what is found in the Big Book.

Traditionally, the group has followed a carefully planned and structured program; designed, on the basis of several years of trial and error experience, to provide group members with the best possible opportunity to achieve rewarding and happy sobriety.

Naturally, as an AA group, our meetings are open to any alcoholic. Over a growing period of time its become recognized and accepted, on the basis of the group

conscience of all the members of the University Group, that we follow a definite plan for our meetings.

It is our present conviction that the plan which the group now follows, and which we have followed since the group started, has proven its value. It is an accepted and agreed policy among members of the group that no change will occur in the essential manner in which the program is presented in our meetings except as may be approved by an expression of the group conscience as directed by a loving God.

The University Group meets twice a week... Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. and Wednesday night at 8:00 p.m. (the group holds open birthday speaker meetings the first Wednesday of each month at 8:00 p.m.).

We hold only two meetings per week because it is our experience that what happens between meetings is very important. You work with your sponsor between meetings. You share your living experiences with your sponsor and begin to apply the principles of the program in your daily life.

By sharing with a sponsor we learn that recovery in AA is not something to be read in a book or to be discussed in a meeting. It is a plan for living to be put into action in the daily experience of our everyday lives. One day at a time. It applies, at home, at work, at play. Your sponsor needs to see you in action where you live.

The Sunday morning meeting is our action meeting at which the recovery plan is read, chapter-by-chapter and our experience in the current action of the step work is shared, member-by-member. On Sunday mornings, the members of the University Group take the world famous 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous together as a group. Our meeting format has been carefully planned and designed to permit the necessary changes in action and attitude to come about so that those members who do the action of the steps may begin to enjoy good recovery and happy sobriety.

The Wednesday night meeting is really a sharing session where we are privileged to share our living experiences and participate in the Fellowship of AA. At the Wednesday night meeting, we might receive presentations on sponsorship, anonymity, service and other like AA topics. Group inventory is taken, old and new ideas are discussed, AA stories, and the myriad of recovery experiences are shared and discussed under the guidance of a meeting chairman. Sooner or later we all get to share our experiences.

It is a natural tendency for alcoholics to resist change and to resist almost any degree of discipline, however slight. As the Big book says, there is real; resistance in all of us. So we have deliberately built into our meeting format certain disciplines or requirements in order that each member may immediately begin to discover the necessity and the benefit of experiencing surrender, however small, and to feel the joy of sharing each surrender with others. We know that without surrender, no progress can be achieved.

We don't have rules just for the sake of having rules. We are not playing games. Our group is in the recovery business and it is serious about that. It is the sole purpose of our group to provide its members with the best opportunity of experiencing a good recovery. If we knew of any other way out that would work better, or be more effective, we would use it.

So we do have certain rules, and the only reason we have them is because they work!

While there is only one requirement for membership in Alcoholics Anonymous, generally speaking, there are five requirements to participate in the recovery program presented by the University Group.

1. Commitment

Our book says that we must find a spiritual basis of life – or else. It is our experience that there is no purpose to be served in fooling around. Either you mean business or you don't...we may as well find that out as soon as possible.

The University Group runs two series of Commitment Step Action Meetings each year. Each series takes from 20 to 22 weeks to complete. Each member, in turn, receives a loving invitation to stand up at the first meeting of the series and make a verbal commitment to the Step program. How a member makes that commitment is up to that member, but many of us do it by simply standing up at the meeting and saying something like:

“My name is _____ and I am an Alcoholic and I commit myself to this series of steps.”

In so doing, each member undertakes, or commits:

- a) to myself for me and my recovery
- b) to start the series AND finish it
- c) to attend every meeting of the series
- d) to enjoy it!

We think it easier, and more pleasant for everyone, if you make up your mind to enjoy your recovery. Old St Frances de Sales said: “It is not enough to do God's will. We must do it cheerfully.” So be of good cheer, lift up your hearts, and enjoy it. That is what it is for. It's a fun deal. And if you cannot enjoy it, you may not stay. We really want you to stay.

2. Take the time

Each series runs one Sunday morning meeting per week for 20-22 weeks. Each meeting takes about 90 minutes – so we ask you to commit to that amount of time for yourself. Would you take a day off work to do a thorough Step 4? It may not be necessary in your case, but if it were, would you do it? Would you invest 24 hours of your life in happy sobriety? Will you invest this 24 hours? You cannot have sobriety without paying the price, and the more you fight it, the higher that price will go. You have to earn your sobriety – don't let anyone kid you about that! Our book says that peace, serenity and happy sobriety will “always materialize if we work for them.” Things take time.

3. Get a sponsor

The AA recovery experience is always done eyeball-to-eyeball. Therefore, each member of the University Group is required to have a sponsor in the group. Even though you may have one or more sponsors outside the group, we still insist that you have one in the University Group who is taking the steps with you. We want to know where you are. If you cannot find a sponsor, the Group Sponsorship Committee will “give” you one. You may change your sponsor at any time you wish. But it has been our experience that people given sponsors often don't want to give them up. They often keep their “given” sponsor. Each sponsor does each Step with each sponsee. As a group, we cover each Step in the Action meeting as well. You should avail yourself of the Conference-approved pamphlet on Sponsors and Sponsorship. One day, you too will be called upon to sponsor. This is an experience you must not, and will not, want to miss.

4. Learn to do it

Do each Step as we come to it. Precisely as the Big book directs you to do it. Do the Steps in series, with your sponsor, with the group. As you do the Steps, your attitude will change. Right thinking follows right action. Action is the key to sobriety, and the University Group is an action group. So we keep repeating the action in each step until we begin to learn to do it. If we take the action, we get the result. If we fail to take the action we get NO RESULTS.

5. Be stupid

Experience has shown that it does not pay to be too intellectual or too brilliant for the simple program of AA. The plan for recovery in AA is a spiritual experience, not an intellectual exercise. What is required is humility. If we can get simple enough to live each day as it comes, just doing the things the program of recovery outlined in the Big Book tells us to do, without argument, without reservation, without prejudice and without objection, the result has got to be good.

This short description of the requirements of the program as presented by the University Group is intended only for members of the University Group and is introductory only. The intent is to help each member readily understand what is required and the reasons behind that requirement. We are not writing an AA manual or

commenting, criticizing or referring to any other group. It is our experience that every AA group has requirements – whether they are written down or not. Every group in Alcoholics Anonymous is autonomous. How other groups do the program is none of our business, so we live and let live. We decided to write our requirements clearly, on paper, for ready reference by all members of the University Group.

The forgoing has application to the University Group and has no reference to any other group of Alcoholics Anonymous. It does not constitute a statement, policy, position or opinion of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is simply the way we do the Steps as a means of recovery from alcoholism and achieving happy and contented sobriety for fun and for free.

I WILL NOT FEAR

Lord, God, I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me.

I can not know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following Your Will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You, and I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this You will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore I will trust You always, though I may seem lost in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for You are with me, and never will leave me to face my perils alone.

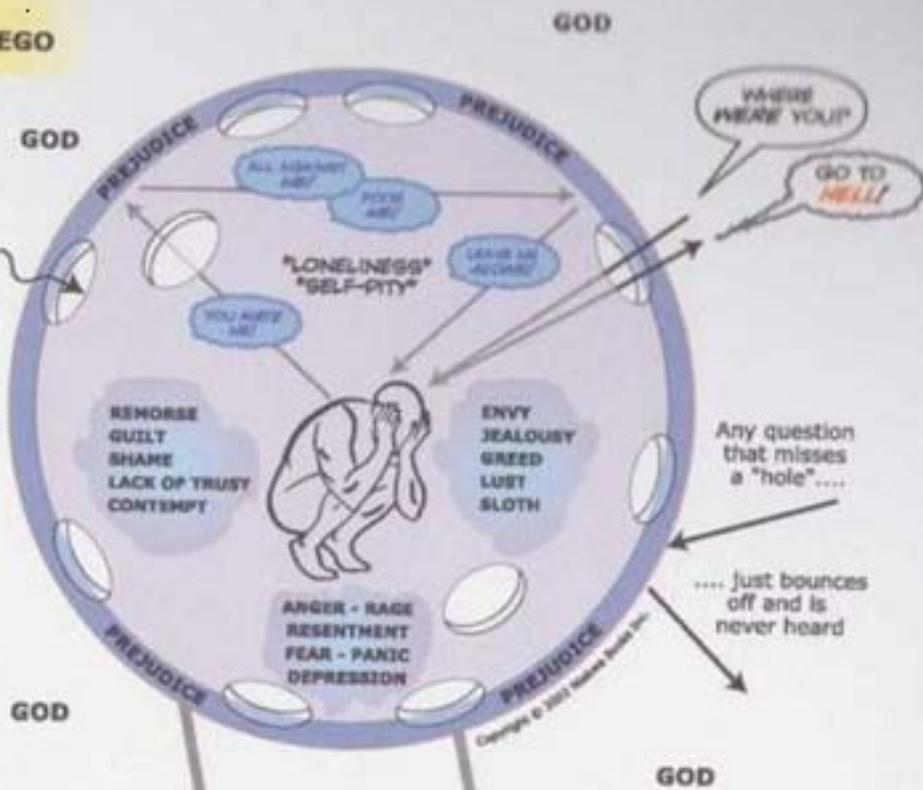
Thoughts In Solitude— Thomas Merton

ALCOHOLIC (OBSESSED) EGO

ONE problem which includes ALL problems

CHILDREN OF THE EGO
The obsessions of the Mind which cause us to drink

THERE IS NO LIFE APART FROM GOD BUT THERE IS EXPERIENCE APART FROM



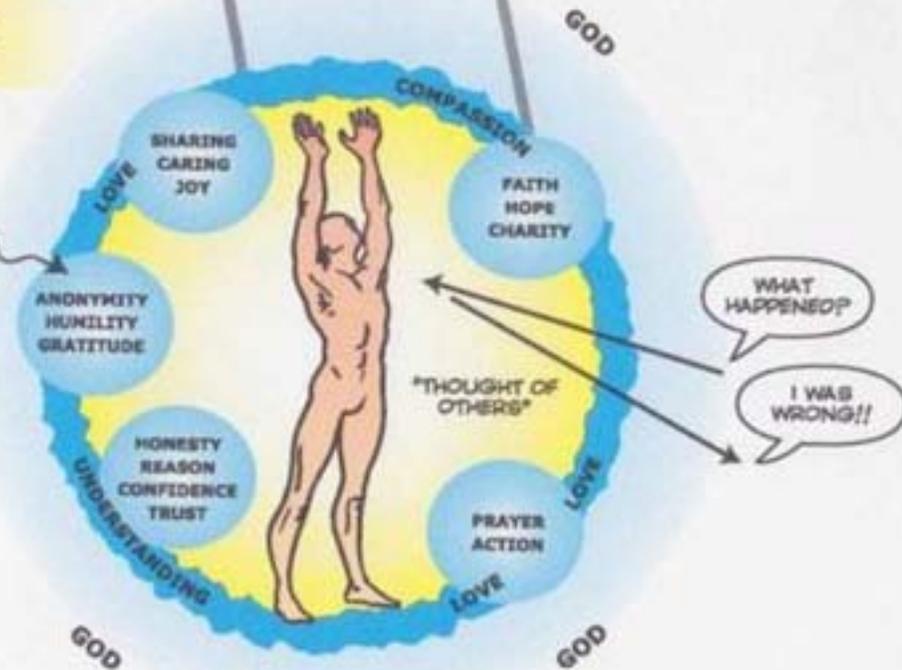
THE PATH

HEALTHY EGO

ONE answer which includes ALL answers

CHILDREN OF THE SPIRIT
The positive qualities of the Real Self

I CAN'T CHANGE THE REALITY OF MY OWN BEING. BUT - I CAN CHANGE MY EXPERIENCE IN REALITY



THE OBSESSED EGO

(Or - - the ALCOHOLIC ego)

- On page 311 of Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age our beloved psychiatrist friend and benefactor Dr. Harry Tiebout explained to us that “Inwardly the Alcoholic brooks no control from man or God. He, the alcoholic, is and must be master of his destiny. He will fight to the end to preserve that position.” Harry used the words “defiant individuality” and “grandiosity” that he thought aptly described us.

- My old California sponsor Chuck C. described to me the feeling of Conscious Separation where we might feel totally separated from everything -- from Love, from Life, from God, from ourselves, from our family, from everything and everybody. As he described all of this to me I knew exactly what he was talking about because I had felt consciously separated all of my life. I grew up in a wonderful family but I wasn't part of it - not like my siblings were. And the same was true of all my other associations and relationships. At school, in the community, on sports teams, in orchestras, at church functions I was always separate and apart from every thing and every body and never knew why. Chuck told me that I would never hear a better definition of Human Ego than “The Feeling of Conscious Separation”. That happened many years ago and I don't think I have ever met an alcoholic since that day that hasn't felt that way – consciously separated. He told me that I would never find a better definition of Human Ego because he believed that the Alcoholic Obsessed Ego was responsible for the feeling of separation, and he could find nothing good about the human ego. As I continued to research the problem, studying my ego and the egos of those close to me, and reading everything I could find on the subject it gradually became evident to me that the real problem was not the Ego per se, but the fact that the Ego of the alcoholic (and perhaps many others) is obsessed with itself.

Some study showed me that this is not a new condition nor is it of recent development. The ancient Greeks had a story about a young man(a lesser god) named Narcissus who was so beautiful that he fell in love with himself. People who are extremely conscious of themselves have long been called “Narcissistic”. When that self-concern is carried to the extreme it becomes an obsession and constitutes a serious problem for the unfortunate person. An obsession is the preservation of one idea to the exclusion of all others. Any one having such an Obsession, as the world famous psychologist Dr. Carl Gustav Jung tells us, experiences a spiritual problem where that person's spirit seems split off and apart from “The Spirit” or God, and the Obsession takes over. The situation is so serious that Dr.Jung said that the only solution for the alcoholic is through “Union with God in the medieval sense” which is to say, actual union – a spiritual solution.

- A thorough inspection of the graphic of the Obsessed Ego will immediately draw to your attention the sad little creature huddled in the center of a smudgy blue haze and surrounded by emotions of anger, resentment, fear and loneliness, bonded on one side by defects of envy, jealousy, greed, lust and sloth, and on the other side by the tortures of remorse, guilt and shame, compounded by contempt and lack of trust. We call all of these

defects the “children of the Ego”. When the “children” are present in our life it means the Obsessed Ego is present and in control. When we are able to deflate, discharge and rid ourselves of the Obsession of the Ego the “children” disappear and we experience the great and beautiful freedom from all of those limiting injurious defects.

Wonderfully the program of Alcoholics Anonymous provides us with a means of deflating the Ego and ridding ourselves of the “Obsession with Self”, at first in temporary measure and later, as we continue and improve the repetitious practice of our world famous program of Recovery, and Unity, and Service, the measure of freedom from the Obsessed Ego enlarges in gradual stages, eventually to become almost permanent, in ever improving degrees, so that we come to experience fulfillment, peace, and joy.

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Our graphic says that the “Children of the Ego” are the “Obsessions of the Mind” which cause us to drink. as our beloved co-founder Bill W. warned us about the Obsessions of the Mind, in our Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, and in several of his other writings.

Looking next at the construction of the Obsessed Ego that surrounds and imprisons the poor little alcoholic (that’s me), noting it is contained within a hard shell that is all but impervious to any outside force except perhaps through one or another of the holes that appear in the outer shell. Any item directed at the alcoholic not hitting a hole just bounces off and is never heard. Any item that enters by way of a hole in the shell does so, without any protection to the alcoholic, and stabs him, or her, painfully. Even the most innocent or innocuous question sounds like an accusation and in fear and anger the alcoholic fires right back inappropriately. Any such question gives rise to fear and the alkie (male or female) believes people hate him and are out to get him (paranoia). The question keeps on bouncing around inside of the shell of ego, the alcoholic seems incapable of letting it go, and the entire space is filled with a blue haze of ever increasing anger, often resulting in Depression. Depression is the result of Inward Anger.

One might be tempted to say “Just give the Obsessed Ego what it wants so it will be satisfied and leave us alone” That might be a good suggestion except for, (as my rugged old sponsor so frequently pointed out to me) “It is a divine impossibility to satisfy the human ego”. Thus it is immediately imperative to find some other successful method of ridding ourselves of the Obsession and deflating the Ego thereby solving the dilemma. In that dilemma we find ourselves consciously separated from everything, from God, from our loved ones, from ourselves, and from each other. When the Obsession and the Ego are gone the Power flows in automatically and we are at peace. And we call this peace of mind. We say that because “mind” is a medical term for “soul” and when we are free from the children of the Ego our “soul” – i.e., our real self – (that part of us that is divine and “of God” which we believe to be our “spirit” and part of “The Spirit”) is at ease and at rest and in a State of Conscious Unity with the Power - (The Great Reality). At that point we say we are “one with the Power” and we may recognize the truth of the statement that “God in me, as me, is me.” Which is the clear recognition that my True Self is a part of God, and is my “son ship” in and with God, and is Eternal. We may say

that we are the Infinite Children of the Infinite Father on an Infinite Journey.. Indeed it is the very heart and core of our relationship with Our Creator, God the Father.

The very miracle of AA is the wonderfully simple fact that in fulfilling the conditions for Sobriety we automatically fulfill the conditions for the Good Life, and in doing so fulfill the conditions of God. They are all one and the same thing. And that, my dear brothers and sisters, is a good and perfect gift directly from the Merciful Loving Hands of the Father of Lights.

Now let us turn our attention to the composition of the shell or skin of the Obsessed Ego. We know it to be impervious, hard and brittle – permitting nothing to pass through -- except by way of one of the holes in the shell. We note that the shell is labeled to be composed of “Prejudice” that results from pre-judging – some call it “inventory taking” – or arriving at a conclusion without all of the facts, what the Big Book says in the appendices is “contempt prior to investigation”. All of that gives rise to prejudice – that’s where it comes from. Prejudice is like a fence standing before us. You can’t see under it, or over it, or around it. Something could be present right before your eyes, but if you are prejudiced you will not see it or even be aware of it. Maybe even God. Prejudice hems us in and limits us and keeps us in a prison of our own manufacture. Because of our prejudices we do not see things as they actually are – but often we see things as we would like them to be – unaware and unbelieving of our prejudices that blind us.

Given a choice every one of us would reach for the Healthy Ego. We are attracted by the up-reaching figure of HOPE basking in the warm and reassuring glow of LOVE the Sunlight of the Spirit. We can’t make a decision because we don’t see any path leading from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego. Thus when a sober member refers to our path or even points it out to the new person, the new guy or gal says, “What path are you talking about -. I don’t see any path”. And the sober member says, perhaps with a smile, “Yeah, I know – I couldn’t see it at first either. “Here, take my hand – just walk along with me and do what I do, and as we go along, the path will emerge and you will be able to see it for yourself as clearly as I now do. Then one day, maybe even one day soon, you will be able to find a new person and help them along this very path to a new life.” And so the new person does that and as the path begins to emerge, a very firm faith begins to develop, maybe for the first time, in the life of the new person.

Now let us take a look at the Healthy Ego. We note that the covering is thick and resilient. It is composed of Compassion, Understanding and Love. Anything directed at the alcoholic who is surrounded in and by the Healthy Ego must pass through the thick layer of Compassion, Understanding and Love so that when the message reaches the alcoholic it is not hurtful or scary. The sting is taken out of it. And the alcoholic is well able to assess the item and form a reasonable and sane response, to be delivered in a reasonable and sane manner. We see the occupant surrounded by the “Children of the Spirit” filling the life of the sober alcoholic with positive loving energy and action.

We see that the graphic declares that there is one problem that includes all problems and that there is one answer that includes all answers. We find that the one

problem is the Obsession of the Ego – the Obsession with self – our Spirit is literally obsessed and thereby appears separated from God the Power. It is no wonder that Dr. Carl Gustav Jung referred to the Obsession as “a force for evil very aptly called the Devil”. We see that while there is no life apart from God – God is Life – there may be experience apart from – blocked off as the Obsessed Alcoholic is from God, we are in that instance living as “apart” from God. While we cannot change the Reality of our own Being we can and do change our experience in Reality. The Program does that for us by changing our self centered, selfish, negative actions, for positive loving, other-centered, actions. When our action changes our attitude changes and with the change of attitude our thinking changes and so does our experience.

There is a law of life that says, “Whatever I give to life, Life must give me back”. The Scripture says we get it back in full measure – it says – “Heaped up, pressed down, shaken together and running over.” And thus is Bill’s promise fulfilled and a new Life is given to us, a new Freedom and a new Happiness. How does all this come about? -- The answer is “just live the program a day at a time – take the actions laid out for us in the Big Book - and the result will be happy joyous sobriety.

The University Group Commitment Step Action Series

Curriculum

The Planning Committee

For several years the entire Step Action Series was chaired/ lead/ facilitated by one person. This person was an older member who had been through the series many times and had much experience to share.

It became apparent that several members of the group had acquired the experience of several series- or at least more than one series- and were willing and ready to participate further by leading one or more of the meetings. It was understood that they would always carefully adhere to the series meeting format adopted by the group, following closely the instruction provided by the book "Alcoholics Anonymous".

A group of six or eight such people was formed under the leadership of an older experienced facilitator as a planning committee, which meets each Sunday immediately following the regular meeting to;

- A) Review and constructively critique the meeting just concluded.
- B) Outline the material to be covered at the next regular meeting of the series.
- C) Assign or name the person or persons who will present the material at the next regular meeting.

-Sometimes presenters are named two or more weeks in advance.

-Often two presenters share the meeting by sharing the reading and commentary from experience with current material presented.

It really is a further extension of how we all sponsor one another in action. The result is that by the end of the series we are left with an enthusiastic group of people ready and willing to take on the responsibility and privilege of presenting the next following series. From which group is chosen or elected a facilitator who is experienced and fully capable of leading the next following series, with the assistance of a group of six or eight presenters who share equally the privilege of presenting the weekly materials to be covered

The Meeting and The Commentary

The meetings start exactly at 9:30 A.M. every Sunday morning-Grey Cup, Super Bowl, Christmas, New Years- each Sunday. A.A. Comes first. The meetings last 90 minutes. We open in the usual way up to announcements after which the meeting is turned over to the facilitator who introduces the topic and the presenters.

First Part: reading and commentary by presenters (usually 30-45 minutes). The commentary is sharing experience, A.A. history, insight and suggestions by the presenters. It may be given before, during, or after the reading.

Secretarial Break: serves the usual group function; provides opportunity to replenish coffee, improve lungs, answer nature (we avoid doing these things during the meeting of course).

Second Part: Group sharing. The secretary maintains a list of all persons who have made the commitment, name, dry date, sponsor (must be a sponsor in the group), and telephone

number. The secretary calls each person in turn from the list Sunday by Sunday so that everybody in the group has the opportunity to speak. Speakers are actively encouraged by the facilitators to stick to the topic and limit remarks to give others a chance. The facilitator may cut off offenders. Secretary carries on the rotation of the list meeting by meeting, thus everyone has a turn to share. Uncommitted members or visitors are made welcome to attend but may not be called upon to share as their names are not on the secretary's sharing list.

Sponsorship Meeting

Each Sponsor is encouraged to meet at some regular convenient time and place with his/her Sponsees each week. Thus commitment, step action, prayers, experience and comment are all shared in group meetings and the Sponsorship meetings each week. This "meeting between meetings" provides vital help, encouragement and support particularly to members who relate best in smaller meetings. Of course sometimes it's one on one, so everyone has an opportunity to review the information, ask questions, offer comment and help one another with the action being taken.

Basic Literature For The Series

Although we are working with the actions outlined in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, some additional helpful information from other resources is also utilized. Suggested literature to have on hand (and to be pre-read and drawn from by commentators) is as follows;

- Big Book
- Reflecting On Relationships by Tom G., from Niakwa Press 1999
- Reflecting On Recovery (An AA Life Lived) by Tom G. Niakwa Press 2000
(Much of the commentary we have received from Tom can be found in these books. It is part of the legacy of love that he has accumulated in his experience and the books were prepared to better share that legacy with others, we hope you find it helpful in conjunction with whatever action you may be taking).
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- As Bill Sees It
- Best Of The Grapevine (the Bill Wilson / Carl Jung correspondences)
- Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age (Appendices by Dr. Harry Tiebout, Father Ed Dowling, and various historical examples).
- Handout on the series and how it operates
- Step four guideline sheets
- The Soul of Sponsorship (correspondences between Father Ed Dowling and Bill W.) by Robert Fitzgerald S.J. Hazelden Press.
- Twenty-Four Hours a Day, daily meditations from Hazelden.
- For a better understanding of our third legacy- Service- "The A.A. Service Manual, Twelve Concepts for World Service" or the pamphlet "Twelve Concepts for World Service, illustrated".
- The pamphlet "The Co-Founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, Biographical sketches, their last major talks).

Basic Outline

We allow 20 to 22 weeks for the action series; this has some flexibility to it in terms of the groups need. It is important that the group decides on a basic outline before hand and that the entire group be aware of it. People need to know how long they have to do their Step Fours, for instance, and often step five appointments require a little notice. It's important to stick to a consistent plan. Also, The amount of material being covered and the process of change isn't something to be rushed. Here is a basic weekly structure;

1. Introduction to the series
2. Preface and forwards / our purpose
3. Obsessed Ego to Healthy Ego
4. Doctor's Opinion
5. Bill's Story
6. There Is A solution
7. More About Alcoholism / Step One
8. We Agnostics / Step Two
9. How It Works / Step Three
10. How it Works / Step Four- *(Sometimes more than one week is given to Step Four. This is why it is important for the group to decide the schedule of this part in advance and to give people an idea of the format in order to be prepared).*
11. Into Action / Step Five
12. Into Action / Steps Six and Seven
13. Into Action / Steps Eight and Nine
14. Into Action / Step Ten
15. Into Action / Step Eleven
16. Working With others / Step Twelve (continues through the remainder of the series).
17. To Wives
18. The Family Afterward
19. To Employers
20. A Vision For You
21. Dr. Bob's Nightmare
22. Wrap up (closing meeting)

Brief Summary Of Each Week*

**This is really only a thumbnail sketch of a few of the key points addressed in the commentary and action of a series. Each series as well as each person's experience with the series can vary, but the basic essence as well as the outline in the Big Book is, of course, always consistent.*

Week One

- **Topic:** Introduction to the series.
- **Opening Prayer:** *from the book " Reflecting on Relationships";*

" Dear God: Let me set aside everything I think I know about You and me and this program and these steps, for an open mind and a new experience with You and me and this program and these steps".

- **Reading:** The handout on the series.
- **Presenter Commentary:** why we have rules, importance of sponsorship (to keep a check on our attitudes amongst other things). How meetings get structured and the importance of the sponsorship meeting between these meetings, sharing with each other. *The "Reflections On Relationships" book talks about the sponsor / sponsee relationship. Why it is so important that we stick together and not miss out on the action. Keeping this commitment is important; we are all great starters but lousy finishers. Three sides to the triangle; Recovery- as brought about through the steps, Unity- as brought about through the traditions and Service- as brought about by the concepts (for more information on the concepts see the book " The A.A. Service Manual-Twelve Concepts for World Service" or the illustrated pamphlet "Twelve Concepts for World Service").*
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**
- **Action:** each person in turn stands and affirms their commitment to the rest of the group, saying "my name is _____ and I am an alcoholic and I commit myself to this series of steps". Those who don't have a sponsor in the group speak to the sponsorship chairperson and one is assigned. The secretary takes down names, dry dates, telephone numbers and the sponsor of each committed member; these names go onto the "sharing list". Each committed member will have a turn to share on the point we are at in the action of the steps.

Week Two

- **Topic:** Our Purpose.
- **Opening Prayer**
- **Reading:** Big Book- Preface and all of the Forwards.
- **Presenter Commentary:** Why we follow the specific directions-to get the same results as the people in the book. If you take the action you get the result. No action- no result. Importance of sharing and caring- to see God in others. *Developing a relationship with each other, the Power and our innermost self, is covered in the Reflecting on Relationships book.* Importance of the first 164 pages (plus “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare”) remaining untouched, helping each other through hurdles by relating to the book and each other. Reading the book is one experience, having it read is another. Why Step One doesn’t happen right away (it’s on page 30- “we learned”).
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing:** from this point on in the series this means commentary from committed members (called by the secretary from the sharing list)
- **Action:** Anyone who hasn’t yet made their commitment is encouraged to do so, members get to know and encourage one another, phone lists are given out to fellow members. Sponsorship groups and meetings are arranged and occur before the next regular meeting.

Week Three

- **Topic:** the real nature of our problem, the obsessed ego
- **Opening Prayer**
- **Reading:** Handouts were given showing the diagram of going from obsessed to healthy ego, from the book “*Reflecting On Relationships*” chapter 4

- **Presenter Commentary:** as summarized in chapter 4 of the book “*Reflecting on Relationships*” the diagram was explained.
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**
- **Action:** With our sponsors and with each other we went over the diagram, relating to it and seeing more clearly what we are really here to see changed.

Week Four

- **Topic:** The Doctor’s Opinion; we examine four doctor’s opinions; William D. Silkworth, Carl Jung, Harry Tiebout, William James.
- **Opening Prayer**
- **Reading:** The Doctor’s Opinion from the big book, and the personality overview of alcoholics from “Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age”, page 311-Appendice B by Dr. Harry Tiebout, also a short section of the Bill Wilson / Carl Jung correspondence in “Best Of The Grapevine”.
- **Presenter Commentary:** Bill was greatly helped and guided by Drs. Silkworth and Tiebout then by the works and writings of Dr. Jung (through the Roland Hazard contact). William James’ book “Varieties of Religious Experience” helped him to see the importance of each person developing a personal relationship with, and “psychic change” through, the Power. Importance of Action as not just activity, but rather activity with a plan. Alcohol is not the problem, alcohol is what we do after we are in trouble. Whole permanent sobriety is our goal. The Jung article in its second suggestion for recovery gives us the action we have to follow “honest communication with friends”.
- **Break**
- **Group sharing**

- **Action:** with our sponsors and with each other we shared and related about the obsessions that caused us to see drinking as a past solution and that continue to require a spiritual solution.

Week Five

- **Topic:** “Bill’s Story”
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Big Book, chapter one, “Bill’s Story”.
- **Presenter Commentary:** “Enlarge his spiritual way of life” means relating to each other, the Power and our selves. How we are preparing for Step One. We have a fourfold illness-physical, emotional, mental and spiritual with a spiritual solution. Learning to spot the obsessed ego- being critical is a warning signal. “I must turn in all things to the Father Of Light who presides over us all”. “God is concerned with us when we want him enough”.
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**
- **Action:** Sharing about spiritual experience, looking at the ego drive in Bill’s story and relating/sharing about it.

Week Six

- **Topic:** There Is A Solution
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Chapter Two “There Is A Solution”.

- **Presenter Commentary:** Elimination of drinking is but a beginning, physical sobriety is essential but just the start. Not conditions but rather how we react to conditions is the problem. Explanation of our next action; making a list of all the people who ever tried to help us, not just with drinking but anywhere we were in trouble with life and also what happened in these instances. Why making this list is important, partly as an exercise in discipline and how it lays the groundwork for further lists and further action and to teach us we truly are “beyond human aid”. Just do it!
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**
- **Action:** We made the lists of all the people who ever tried to help us, not just with alcohol but wherever we felt we were in trouble with life. We looked at where these human resources failed us and why. Any uncertainties or areas of resistance get identified and shared. We reviewed what we have learned about ourselves.

Week Seven

- **Topic:** More about alcoholism / Step One
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Chapter Three “More about Alcoholism”.
- **Presenter Commentary:** Review of what we have been looking at thus far to insure that we have learned what it is that we have to concede *to our innermost selves*, that we were alcoholic and our lives were unmanageable by us. The futility of “self-help”. Noticing the faulty forms of self-treatment and escape we have sought.
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**

- **Action:** Each member in turn stands and affirms their step one saying “*My name is _____ and I fully concede to my innermost self that I am an alcoholic and my life is unmanageable by me*”.

Week Eight

- **Topic:** We Agnostics / Step Two
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Chapter four “We Agnostics”, Appendix II Spiritual Experience- especially the quote from Herbert Spencer.
- **Presenter Commentary:** The word “we” in the chapter’s title emphasizes that we all are, or have been, agnostics. The bedevilmments on page 52, paragraph 2 are a test for untreated alcoholism. How this Power has been trying to get through to us all along but our prejudices get in the way. Examples of prejudices are clearly given in the chapter (for additional comment along these lines look in *Reflecting On Relationships*). We are all part of The Power’s Plan, nothing is ever wasted. The starting point is specifically pointed out on page 47. We need to identify what our prejudices are and ask God to remove them. We also need to develop a personal relationship with the Power in terms that we understand in order to better develop personal values. We ask ourselves if we now believe or are willing to believe.
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**
- **Action:** Each member in turn stands and affirms step two by saying “*my name is _____ and I am an alcoholic, I now believe (or if the member prefers; I am willing to believe) in a Power greater than myself that can restore me to sanity*”. We made two lists, the first being a list of the prejudices that blocked us from having relationships with our innermost self, each other and most importantly the Power. These lists could include, for instance, religion, fears of what we thought God wanted from us and not measuring up. The second list was of spiritual terms found in the book (starting with those found in this and the preceding chapters) and what they really mean to us. We shared these lists and our uncertainties with each other. We started to note the parallel between the prejudice list and the list of

those who tried to help. We also specifically related to the “Bedevilments” on page 52.

Week Nine

- **Topic:** How It Works / Step Three
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Chapter five “How It Works” to end of page 63. Also some of the more in-depth experience of Bill’s in “Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age”.
- **Presenter Commentary:** Very directly, it tells us on page 62 what the “How and Why of it” is. We have to quit playing God. The Action of Step three is the acceptance of a contract, the terms of which are specifically laid out. There is no such thing as a step three problem, if we are having difficulty it lies in the fundamental acceptance of step one. The aim is to fit ourselves into the stream of life and better serve in God’s plan. Anything that is a means to an end (selfish end) ends up being self-robbery. We are making an offering because we are still very hazy about who and what we are. “We aren’t human beings trying to have a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience”. We asked ourselves if we were willing to go to any length. Were we ready to let go of our old ideas (asking God to help us do so)? Remember that we deal with alcohol (obsessed ego). We get well with God’s help. We don’t worry about getting good. There are four requirements in this step:
 1. We have to be convinced that a life run on self will is not successful
 2. Selfishness, self-centeredness (self in obsessed ego) is the root of our problem.
 3. We must be rid of this selfishness or it kills us (not just physically but also in being spiritually dead).
 4. We had to have God’s Help.

The Prayer in this step has no Amen, as it continues till the close of step seven. Step Four is not just an inventory. It is a prayer step. It is the process of step three in application. Results of prayer are not in the feeling it produces but the action it produces.
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**

- **Action:** In unison as a group, we affirm, out loud, the step three prayer. Many of us continue to reaffirm that prayer with each other outside the meeting, sharing what it means to us. One important suggestion was to make lists on the same page in two columns, down the left we wrote what a Director, Principle and Father does. Down the right we listed what an Actor, Agent and Child's responsibilities are (our job is to keep to the right). We discussed the spiritual contract and its consequences in this step (page 63, paragraph 1- "we had a new Employer" to end of paragraph "We were reborn").

Week Ten

- **Topic:** How It Works / Step Four
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Big Book, Chapter five "How It Works" (page 63 to end of chapter). Big Book, page 552 from the story "Freedom From Bondage" (for reference to taking action on resentment). The step four handouts.
- **Presenter Commentary:** This step is often seen as a writing step, an inventory step, or worse- torture, even as self-analysis. We've already seen that we cannot help ourselves through the preceding steps. If we were capable of self-help we wouldn't be here! More than anything it is really a *prayer* step. This is the action where we are preparing to communicate ourselves with the Power. This is not about rationalizing. Action is activity with a plan- we follow the plan as laid out in the book. The positive actions at this point are in the form of sharing and writing. We share experience (what it was like) strength (sobriety) and hope (maintenance and growth of spiritual experience through action). We are looking for causes and conditions of what brought about our downfall. There are 6 separate areas to this inventory process with numerous prayer suggestions given for each part of the process (example on page 67, first paragraph). The first area is the grudge list or resentment category (from which stem many of our grosser handicaps). We don't skimp as this area yields insight for the rest of the step. We keep it simple (point form) to avoid rationalizing. WE DON'T TRY TO FIGURE OURSELVES OUT. We simply face ourselves as honestly as we can. We all experience fear in this process, usually along the lines of "why would God want to have anything to do with me"? Remember we aren't here to get good, or find out we are good or bad. We are here to get well. There is only good and bad use of ourselves. We look at cause and effect. What happened, what we felt and why. We start to see that the same patterns happened again and again in our lives, whenever the obsessed ego was perceived as being threatened. Our alcoholism is

a perceptual illness affecting how we viewed reality. This is a feeling disease with a feeling answer. Second area is the fear list (look at the fears present in the resentment area and list them as well as any others). Page 68 contains the suggestions for how to let God and others in on our fears, rather than the faulty self-reliance we have leaned on up till now. Third area is the interpersonal relationships, or put simply, sex list. This is not just instances of physical activity but rather how we have transferred our obsession with self onto others. We didn't just list sexual partners; we looked at people who influenced our relationship perceptions (parents, siblings, coaches, friends etc.). Areas of damage or abuse (to self and/or others) were important to note. Again directions are given as to how we can let God in on these things and where counsel with others is often necessary. Sex itself was often tied in with feelings of power and approval. It was the ego's way of protecting and asserting itself (as in Tiebout's article where the obsession was described as defiant individuality, brooking no control from man or God). We are not arbiters of anyone's sex conduct. Sex is one of God's gifts not to be used lightly nor to be despised and loathed. We look at where we have been warped in our relationships. Our real reliance has to be on God, we can't use people as a higher power. We listed where we had been selfish, dishonest and inconsiderate. Where we had aroused jealousy, suspicion and bitterness, (all result from self obsessed action). We are beginning here to let God mold our ideals. Many people struggle with sex as if it were a matter of self-control. Like our drinking it is part of an obsession only God can remedy. We treat it as we would any other problem. We let God be the judge and we let go then we ask God to show us how to be useful. We seek counsel with others but we don't hurt other people in the process (for instance-we don't burden our partners with information that would hurt them). The fourth area was our faults and the fifth our defects of character. We set down the misperceptions that were previously running the show. The sixth area is the amends list, which will be covered in steps eight and nine. We never really finish with step four, as it is part of a process, which will continue to be practiced for the rest of our lives. The chapter mentions meditation for answers as essential. We begin seeking by quieting ourselves and listening to what our true feelings are. We name those feelings by sharing them with God and others. We listen and feel what comes back. We practice, practice, practice and surrender, surrender, surrender. Another way of putting it is; we uncover, we discover and we discard.

- **Break**

- **Group sharing**

- **Action:** With our sponsors and sponsorship groups we went over the step four process. We followed suggestions like working in point form (not writing a novel) and going down each column, one at a time, rather than across. We identified and

used the many instances of prayer throughout the chapter. We especially prayed for the people we resented (also look at page 552 of the Big Book, in the story “Freedom From Bondage” for additional suggestion on resentment and freedom of it). We ask for the well being of these people and look for qualities in them we can admire. We prayed for the people we had hurt. These prayer actions are to be ongoing and we noted changes as a result. We found that wanting things for others more than for ourselves was growth. Sometimes these things are slow but they come if we keep taking the action.

Week Eleven

- **Topic:** Into Action / Step Five
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Chapter six “Into Action” to page 76, with selected segments of the Step five chapter in “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions”.
- **Presenter Commentary:** For those who think there are no rules in the Big Book, it was pointed out that on page 74 it says, “The rule is we must be hard on ourselves, but always considerate of others”. We particularly paid attention to the “seven five” checklist on page 75 (second paragraph). The checklist gives us an answer to the “Bedevilments” that were covered in “We Agnostics”. We looked at the need to work with each other on the things in our step four. Some may need to do their Step five with a stranger (one who is qualified, such as ministers, priests, rabbis, psychologists, therapists etc.), but many of us found it far more beneficial to share these things with others who had experience directly, in other words our sponsors. We are looking for the cause and effect of our obsessed egos. We see in step five the patterns that have recurred again and again. We also noted the relationship between the different sections of step five. Our resentments were most important as they were where the obsession originates and from it we see the faults and underlying fears that have warped our relationships. This is why looking back as far as possible is important, farther back than just our drinking. We may need to look at areas where resentment has been present and no longer is apparent as our tendency is to dismiss things and these areas tie into patterns. A useful question might be “where have there been other instances where I have felt this way” or “what does this remind me of”? We bear in mind that this is NOT the last time we will approach this action so we don’t over analyze. What we don’t see this time will be revealed in future step action experience. We don’t burn our step 4’s, as we need them to go over in the steps ahead. We also refer back to them in future step action to see changes and growth. Remember belief and understanding are not necessary but taking the action is. The action produces

understanding and belief not the other way around. We don't work on our fears or over analyze or pray twenty-four hours a day. We simply take the actions as outlined and they fall from us.

- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**
- **Action:** We did our step fives according to the book. We also took the time to do steps six and seven as outlined in the book although we are about to learn more about these steps on the following Sunday. We shared with each other about our experience with this step and the results we are experiencing. We continued to use the prayer actions in terms of resentments and having the willingness to put things right and be of service. Many of us noticed by this point a greater sense of closeness with the Power and each other.

Week Twelve

- **Topic:** Into Action / Steps Six and Seven
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Chapters Six and Seven from "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions". The Soul Of Sponsorship (page 40). The Big Book (page 76).
- **Presenter Commentary:** This is the step that separates the men from the boys. It is also a reminder that we can't run the show or our recovery. We don't get rid of our defects, we get ourselves ready with willingness and God does. "No matter how far we have progressed, desires will always be found which oppose the grace of God". We are in the business of growing up by developing and listening to, a relationship with the Power. This gives us values. God may help those who help themselves but we are proof that God helps those who cannot help themselves. Humility is essential and its most basic ingredient is a sincere desire to seek and do His will. Self-reliance cannot come first. We don't use God as the pinch hitter. We let God in, in all the preceding steps. Pride (also known as Hubris, or false pride) has to be moved aside and our dependence cannot be on people or circumstances it must be upon God. We stop making unreasonable demands upon

God, others and ourselves; instead we concentrate on the demand of an outgoing love toward others (service). We have to do the actions of honesty, and willingness. Most of us wanted two things – more and something else. The most urgent thing is to make a beginning and keep doing. It isn't a win / lose scorecard. It is about letting God in on our growth and being ongoing creations with a present participating Creator. We cannot wish or will our defects away. The more we concentrate on getting rid of defects ourselves the more we obsess about ourselves. We are responsible but we are not in control. We surrender all good and bad, God takes the good and clears aside the bad. We don't have the power to judge what's really good or bad. Two quotes from St. Frances de Sales: “ We ought to have patience when we see them (our defects), there being nothing which more preserves our faults than a troubled eagerness to get rid of them”. “When you cease to help yourself so eagerly, He will help you”. This is why the ongoing action of surrender (Step One) is so vital. It is the necessary means to a humility that allows the grace of God to do what we cannot do ourselves. We were reminded again to uncover (Steps One to Four), discover (Steps Five and Six) and discard (Steps Seven through Ten).

- **Break**

- **Group Sharing**

- **Action:** As a group we stood and said the Step Seven prayer on page 76 of the Big Book. We follow the action outlined in that prayer; we concentrate on the action of loving rather than being loved. This is what is meant by “usefulness”. The more useful we become the more the obstacles are removed. “Out from here” means out of self-centeredness and into The Great Reality. The great defect is the obsessed ego. In our sponsorship meetings we discussed ongoing surrender. Surrender and anonymity are very closely related. Both involve humility. Going to meetings is important because it is there that we really see the connection with the Power. Six and Seven cease to be optional as we come to see more about ourselves. We don't look for pats on the back and we stop trying to prove we are right. We surrender everything, good or bad (nothing is good or bad in itself its in it's use. When we experience doubt we don't struggle, trying too hard is a trap. We asked ourselves what five things we would give up for a relationship with the Power? We don't over complicate things. God's clearest will for us is to be sober and the best members of AA we can be. We are reminded not to get worried or discouraged. We looked at part of page 152- we are not consigned to a life of being stupid, boring or glum-so we don't dwell on self. We were reminded of the two great failings we often have in common: 1. Failure to commit and 2. Failure to let go (hanging on to faulty beliefs, obsessions, situations or relationships).

Week Thirteen

- **Topic:** Into Action / Steps Eight and Nine
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Big Book pages 76- 84, selections from Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions – chapters on steps Eight and Nine.
- **Presenter Commentary:** “If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes”. We don’t approach amends to prove how spiritual we are or to gain absolution or approval. We are there to set right the wrong, demonstrate good will, forgiveness and above all to fit ourselves to be of maximum service (carrying the message, not just to other alcoholics and not just about alcohol). “If everyone before his cottage sweeps, the village shall be clean”. This part of our journey frees hostages and ends emotional blackmail. We have to do this face to face; this step (Nine) has a sound-“knock knock”. The book tells us to follow a procedure; secure consent from those associated, obtain permission, consult with others (sponsors), ask God to help, take the step indicated and do not shrink. We don’t crawl before anyone. We don’t needlessly implicate other people. We also look at the ongoing amends of daily living (page83), as this work is never finished. We make sure of our attitudes and motives before approaching anyone by sharing with God and our sponsors. We let go of our old attitudes, expectations and obsessions before making the approach. We pray for the people to whom we owe amends (review prayers from step Four). We avoid rationalizing or blaming.
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**
- **Action:** Some additional insight from a sponsorship meeting;

This is not a separate part of the recovery process, rather it is a continuation of surrender, a necessary part of the obsessed ego’s deflation and an answer to the Step Seven prayer (particularly where it says to be useful to the Power and our fellows). The real purpose of these steps is not so much to allay guilt or any other reason (although these may be bonuses that occur) but rather to clear whatever has been blocking our real relationship with the Power. That Power is revealed in our relationships with our fellows and in the better connection with our own spirit. Most of us begin making amends when we first get sober, but these amends are different, they aren’t just damage control, more gets revealed the more we work the steps. We are concerned here with where we

have done harm, not just emotionally, but mentally and spiritually to others and to ourselves. Forgiveness of ourselves is equally important as forgiveness of others, if God can forgive who are we not to? We don't have the right to hold things against ourselves any more. If we are denying ourselves freedom and that is the obsessed ego at work, (who are you to deny yourself freedom?). We have to be patient with ourselves, make an effort and keep trying. It is vital to check with our sponsors before proceeding on an amends. Face to face is better than any other way of making amends and we have to be specific. Be very careful of putting things in writing, (check legal implications in some cases). Our attitude changes as we take the action, sometimes it's about putting one foot in front of the other. Most amends are an ongoing process. These are what are called "Living Amends" and they are the change in behavior and attitude demonstrated in our actions to the relationships in our life, actions outlined in the steps, the traditions and the concepts. "The spiritual life is not a theory, we have to live it". We made our lists, checked with our sponsors and began the process of making direct and living amends.

Week Fourteen

- **Topic:** Into Action / Step Ten.
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** 12x12 (the chapter on step 10), Big Book pages 84 & 85, As Bill Sees It page 293 (as well as many helpful insights under the topics of prayer and inventorying).
- **Presenter Commentary:** The word "axiom" means a self-evident truth. The different types of ongoing inventory (spot check, daily balance sheet and with our sponsors) were described. Learning how to have accurate self-appraisal is an ongoing job that starts off with a lot of work, the benefits of it become readily apparent and it becomes a more natural process that is often even enjoyable. This is not self-obsessing, but rather a more honest communication with the Power each other and with our selves. We cannot rest on our laurels, as that will result in emotional relapse or worse. We learn how to look at our mistakes (which we continue to make- that's life) and to set them right. We don't worry about being right, so much as making things right. We are becoming teachable. We take note of the actions in this step whenever we get tangled or intolerant. It is useful to review the bedevilmments (on page 52 of the Big Book) and the 7-5-check list (page 75 of the Big Book). We know we are making spiritual progress if we are comfortable with each other, the Power and ourselves. Progress not perfection. The 22 paragraphs that start at the top of page 85 were of particular interest. Bill's

reference to resistance (which we all experience from time to time) was mentioned, this can be found in As Bill Sees It, page 293. It is at this point we can look at the positive side of the balance sheet (unlike step 4 which is chiefly focused on obstacles and blocks to progress) and see growth. Asking God to help us to forgive others as well as ourselves is vital. We have a daily reprieve requiring daily maintenance (part of which is our ongoing action with fellowship and meetings, these have to be part of our routine and lifestyle). Step eleven is a natural and necessary accompaniment to step ten, as they flow together.

- **Break**

- **Group Sharing**

- **Action:** We utilize the different forms of inventorying described in the 12 x 12, spot check, morning and evening. The balance sheet inventory where we look at areas of growth as well as ongoing areas of challenge. We noted progress from the last time we took stock. When wrong we promptly admitted it and looked for ways in which we could be of help and service. We remember that “fit spiritual condition,” means being comfortable with the Power, each other and with ourselves. We find we are naturally less judgmental. The Power is Love and Law; we reflect that love in service to all (not just other alcoholics) through the law of the program in the steps, traditions and concepts. God’s will is revealed when we work at being the creation the Power reveals. We start enjoying eternal life NOW. We continue to watch out for the crafty obsessed ego. Watching ourselves in action we come to see where the ego is trying to intrude, when this happens we stop, share with others and say the step ten prayer “how can I best serve Thee, Thy will not mine be done”. We remember that God didn’t bring us this far to abandon us now. God does is not love, God is love. God is not forgiving, God is forgiveness. We join with the Power when we love and forgive. We continue to make mistakes but we live and let live with ourselves. Our lives change naturally the more we learn about and apply the principles.

Week Fifteen

- **Topic:** Into Action / Step Eleven

- **Opening prayer**

- **Reading:** Big Book pages 85-88, 12 x 12 selected readings

- **Presenter Commentary:** We look at having a “proper attitude” about prayer; this is in accompaniment to what we have been looking at with step 10. Again we are reminded that the steps work together, they are not separate. We look at what we are packing into the stream of life. We work with God all through the day. Resistance was discussed, we all have moments or times of rebellion, the important thing is to pick up the connection again as soon as we are able. We don’t go off into fantasizing or wishful thinking, we become comfortable with the realities of life. The St. Francis prayer is the prayer of a healthy ego. One of the most important benefits is a feeling of belonging. Every meeting is a prayer. Our chief aim is to keep recalling ourselves to the realities of life. Journaling is often useful. We look at our relationships, achievements and failings throughout the day and we let go of them, we don’t carry baggage. Intellectual knowledge is the much lesser necessity. Knowledge plus experience (as the result of action) equals wisdom. We look at what we can add to the lives of others rather than make others unhappy through selfish action. Selfishness results in disconnection. Caring and sharing result in connection, with each other, with our true selves and through these to God.
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**
- **Action:** We work at implementing the inventory / prayer actions into our 24 hr living. As suggested in the book, we ask on awakening for God to direct our thinking (immediately not after getting out of bed). We constructed an actual balance sheet that we look at, at day’s end, listing areas of progress or challenge. The key in this is noticing, asking forgiveness and inquiring as to right action or the ideal we are to grow toward. We don’t judge or beat ourselves up. Our communication with each other is part of how we get answers, we are more open and teachable, we admit when we don’t know. We began to learn about attitude in step Two when we ask God to remove prejudice and help us to have an open mind. We ask for experience from our sponsors and fellow members, and then we listen and share. We share and carry the message in so doing. Meditation practices develop over time. These are disciplines that we have to work at. One suggestion is called “The golden Key”; it is to sit quietly and to simply concentrate on God. We find ourselves paying more attention to the Great reality not dwelling on ourselves. When we review our progress, triumphs and pitfalls we let go of them at the same time. Bragging is a killer as it goes straight to pride, so we let go of the good as much as the bad. We use constructive, inspirational, healthy tools for progress. We develop prayer resources. We look at and try to implement the actions outlined in the St. Francis prayer daily. The simplest prayer is often “show

me the way". These things become a natural process, helping us to our true purpose- to be of maximum usefulness to the Power and our fellows.

Week Sixteen

- **Topic:** Working With Others / Step Twelve
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** Working With Others (entire chapter)
- **Presenter Commentary:** This step insures our immunity from drinking and re-emphasizes all we know about our common problem and solution. We notice that in the book we make more than one twelfth step call, interacting not only with the alcoholic who suffers but also the spouse and community. Be friendly, first contacts may not click but we leave the door open. We don't place any strings on our own recovery or that of those we help. Sobriety cannot be based on conditions (romantic relationships, jobs, financial security or the lack there of). We don't allow anything to come between our relationships with the Power. We access, learn from and make our selves useful to profession folk (Doctors, clergy, social workers) in carrying the message. We stress the spiritual solution freely without being crusaders, judges or reformers, simply stating what works for us. This chapter mentions a foundation stone. The cornerstone is step two; the keystone is in step Three. As we progress in all the steps we learn to stop seeking ego satisfaction. Particular emphasis on page 96 par.1 and page 100 par.2.
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**
- **Action:** *(these are some further notes from a sponsorship meeting, pertinent to the necessary attitude of service);* There are three parts to this step. First the spiritual awakening as a result of these steps. Second, carrying the message to other alcoholics. Third, practicing these principles in all our affairs. This is the change of attitude from alcoholic negative to sober positive. We are reborn from chaotic conscious separation to conscious unity. The following readings are excerpts from Hazelden's "Twenty-Four Hours a Day" meditation's book (from the dates of Dec. 28th to the 31st);

"A.A. may be human in its organization, but it is divine in its purpose. The purpose is to point me toward God and the good life. My feet have been set upon the right path. I feel it in the depths of my being. I am going in the right direction. The future can be safely left to God. Whatever the future holds, it cannot be too

much for me to bear. I have the Divine Power with me to carry me through everything that may happen. Am I pointed toward God and the good life?"

"Participating in the privileges of the movement, I shall share in the responsibilities, taking it upon myself to carry my share of the load, not grudgingly but joyfully. I am deeply grateful for the privileges I enjoy because of my membership in this great movement. They put an obligation upon me which I will not shirk. I will gladly carry my fair share of the burdens. Because of the joy of doing them, they will no longer be burdens, but opportunities. Will I accept every opportunity gladly?"

"To the extent that I fail in my responsibilities, A.A. fails. To the extent that I succeed, A.A. succeeds. Every failure of mine will set back A.A. work to that extent. Every success of mine will put A.A. ahead to that extent. I shall not wait to be drafted for service to others, but I shall volunteer. I shall accept every challenge and perform my task as best I can. Will I accept every challenge gladly?"

"I shall be loyal in my attendance, generous in my giving, kind in my criticism, creative in my suggestions, loving in my attitudes. I shall give A.A. my interest, my enthusiasm, my devotion, and most of all myself. The Lord's Prayer has become part of my A.A. thoughts for each day: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Have I given myself?"

With reference to the Tenth Concept- Our ability to work capably with any degree of service is directly proportionate to the strength of our sobriety. Nothing is impossible in human relationships if we believe in God and follow through with action. We were again reminded that our well being rests not in our thinking (which can easily drift into rationalization) but rather in positive action.

Week Seventeen

- **Topic:** To Wives / Step twelve
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** To Wives
- **Presenter Commentary (and guidelines for action):** This chapter is not just about wives. It is a continuation of the action of Step Twelve. We see the

suggestions in this chapter being important in all of our relationships: sponsorship, friendship, business as well as our “at home” relationships. There are four rules in this chapter that are vitally important (especially in sponsorship):

1. Don't get angry (anger ruins relationships).
2. Don't tell people what to do (watch out for advising, it comes from the ego and doesn't add to the stream of life. It's not the same as sharing experience or feelings).
3. Don't try to reform (attraction, not promotion).
4. Be helpful, as opposed to being critical.

The four types of alcoholics are reviewed in this chapter (pages 108-110). There is a lot of love in this chapter that doesn't seek a return for the ego. We are cautious of enabling (this was covered in the preceding chapter too). We watch out for the snags we can easily encounter, such as irritation, hurt feeling and resentment.

- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**

Week Eighteen

- **Topic:** The Family Afterward / Step twelve
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** The Family Afterward
- **Presenter Commentary (and guidelines for action):** For many of us the word “family” refers to much more than our actual family of origin, or our immediate households. It covers our relationship with the AA group and the rest of humanity. This chapter is a continuation of step twelve where we “practice these principles in all our affairs”. This chapter also contains guidelines for improving relationships, strongly emphasizing love, tolerance, usefulness and understanding. We see growth from the obsession with self where there is distortion of values and twisted thinking to healthy cooperation and understanding. We also see the common experience of going overboard with work or spirituality and how these things eventually (have to) even out. “We insist upon enjoying life” and avoid the deliberate manufacture of misery. We learn how to let go and stop trying to run other people as well as our own lives. God's will for us is to be happy joyous and free. Freedom from the obsessed ego. Action, action, action and surrender, surrender, surrender. We begin to learn about relationships by the sharing and relating that go on in our groups; we also watch how others relate to one another.

In our family lives we start to see how our illness has affected others, then we see the opportunity to let the solution have its effect. Love is not something that gets measured, although relationships and priorities are different, the love is the same. Love is love, we either love or we don't. If a relationship is to change (separation divorce) we do it without anger or violence or rancor, we have to be considerate of all involved. Our business is to love everyone with understanding not judgment. The Father (God, Power) loves us all the same, there are no "chosen People" (either in or out of A.A. or anywhere). The only judgment comes from within; this is where we are reminded of the Step eleven format of positively, constructively looking at ourselves. We observe ourselves and develop better understanding in all our affairs. As we practice this understanding, self-observation we find we want to change and in that desire we are not helpless. This is why Bill says "after a while we find we have to have a spiritual way of life, or else". We grow by working with others and staying on safe spiritual ground. Pleasure is ego gratification and is fleeting; real happiness is the ongoing development of our relationships with all (the Power, others and ourselves). It is hard work but we don't work it hard. The mottos at the end of this chapter are vital (with a fourth that we write into our books "action, action, action).

- **Break**

- **Group Sharing**

Week Nineteen

- **Topic:** To Employers / Step twelve

- **Opening prayer**

- **Reading:** To Employers

- **Presenter Commentary (and guidelines for action):** This is a further expression of Step twelve, giving us guidance for our relationships as employers, employees, and coworkers and also as sponsors, sponsee. There is a need for being direct with people in the problem. We have to be firm about what works and what doesn't. This is why we don't waste time with people who don't want to get well. When we do see willingness in others we show them understanding and support. The chapter continues to outline how we work with one another, keeping confidences, not gossiping etc. Importance of working with professional people and carrying the message of problem and solution was strongly stressed. We constantly look for areas where our experience can be useful and share what we have found.

At this point some mention must be made of the importance of anonymity. Stressed by Bill (in his last talk)* as one of the crucial principles (along with self-support) that we must never lose, anonymity, like many of the spiritual terms in the book, comes to have a different meaning as we go along. For many of us it initially meant the security of knowing our common problem was confidential, and then it came to mean the safeguard against the ego intruding into service (we cease to seek approval or recognition). Ultimately anonymity comes to mean the letting go of self and self-seeking as we come to feel a part of greater fellowship with the rest of the program and the world. We come together in AA with one primary purpose- to help the alcoholic who still suffers- but as individual members we also have the ability to be helpful to others. We come to see changes in our ability to share and find that we have a common language of the heart with newcomers and long time members alike. We see changes in our perceptions and understanding of spiritual terms. How we deal with criticism changes the more we work at being useful. We remember that sobriety is a process not an event. All of the chapters we have been working through chart an evolution and provide guidelines for emerging relationships. We see in this chapter the guidelines for those holding responsible positions of trust and authority both in employment as well as directly within the fellowship.

**(This is covered further in the pamphlet "The Co-Founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, Biographical sketches, their last major talks).*

- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**

Week Twenty

- **Topic:** A Vision For You / Step Twelve
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** A Vision For You
- **Presenter Commentary (and guidelines for action):** We look at how groups have started and what their histories are. We take our places in community. This begins whenever two alcoholics share the program as outlined in the book. The spiritual element grows in us, changing our motivations and moving us out of self towards others. The chapter re-emphasizes points from earlier parts of the book.

Everything about us changes, sometimes quickly sometimes slowly, so long as we continue to stay connected to the power and each other and take the action. The destination is the journey we are all part of and on together. If you want what we have do what we do, not know what we know. Membership and fellowship are different. Fellowship happens when we take part, take action and accept responsibility in the group and towards other alcoholics. We are reminded that this chapter is called a vision for you, not your vision for you.

- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**

Week Twenty-One

- **Topic:** Dr. Bob's Nightmare
- **Opening prayer**
- **Reading:** *Important to read the prefacing page to this story entitled "Pioneers of AA." As well as the entire story.
- **Presenter Commentary:** This is actually the twelfth chapter of the Big Book and should be regarded as such. Both Dr. Bob and Bill had connections to Oxford Groups. Dr. Bob had had a great deal of spiritual knowledge and had been seeking answers and solutions. Bill had been trying to work with other alcoholics by trying to sell them on his "hot flash" spiritual experience. Dr. Silkworth advised Bill to stress the hopelessness of the disease. What worked was the sharing of one alcoholic with another alcoholic on the basis of spiritual first hand experience. Sister Ignatia helped Dr. Bob a great deal. Although Dr. Bob wanted no memorial and his wish was honored. After his death, Sister Ignatia created the Rosary Hall Solarium (R.H.S.) at the hospital where Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith (R.H.S.) twelve stepped a multitude of eventual members. The simplicity of his story is a reflection of his approach to the program of action. *Keep It Simple.*
- **Break**
- **Group Sharing**

Week Twenty Two (optional)

- **Topic:** Wrap up Meeting (allows people to share their experiences with the series)

AA'S FOURTH STEP

**"made a searching and fearless moral
inventory of ourselves"**

**From Chapter Five
Of the basic text of**

**"ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS"
(The Big Book)**

RESENTMENT LIST

AA, pages 63-67

I AM RESENTFUL OF.....	THE CAUSE	AFFECTS MY...
The names of people, institutions, or principles with which I am angry.	Why am I angry? Basic Text – ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, Chapter 5 (see the book), "How it Works" (a) Please read from bottom Of page 61 through page 65. (b) After following these suggestions, read through Page 67, 2 nd paragraph. (c) After following these suggestions, read the next 2 paragraphs of page 67. To follow these suggestions, use the next page.	Self esteem?* Security?* Ambitions?* Personal or Sexual Relations?* Fear?*

**Relate to: Pride – Anger – Lust - Envy – Gluttony – Sloth – Greed (12 x 12, page 60)*

"We went back through our lives, nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty"

FAULTS LIST

1. Where have I been?

- Selfish?

-Dishonest?

-Self-seeking?

-Frightened?

2. Where was I to blame?

3. In each case:

- a. "Putting out of our minds the wrongs other have done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes"
- b. "Where we saw our faults, we listed them."
- c. "We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight".
- d. "The inventory was ours, NOT the other man's".

FEAR LIST

AA, pages 67-68

MY FEARS...

WHY I HAVE THEM...

SOLUTIONS...
(Big Book, page 68)

(You may pick up some from Resentment List and/or Faults List.
Be sure to list those where there are NO resentments.)

SEX PROBLEMS LIST

AA, Chapter 5 (How it Works)

Read from last paragraph, page 68 through 3rd paragraph of page 70 of that book. Follow these suggestions.

*"In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We asked God...
The right answer will come, if we want it."*

Review of my own
conduct over the
past.

Whom did it hurt?

Where was I at fault?
What should I have
done instead?

Solution...

Where was I...
Selfish?
Dishonest?
Inconsiderate?

We must be willing
to make amends
where we have done
harm, provided we
do not bring about
still more harm in so
doing."

"We ask God to mold
our ideals and help us
live up to them."

"We ask God... In
mediation we asked
God what we should
do about a specific
matter".

Where did I
unjustifiably arouse...
Jealousy?
Suspicion?

"We remember always
that our sex powers
Were God-given and
therefore, good, neither
to be used lightly or
selfishly, nor to be
despised or loathed."

"God alone can judge
our sex situation."

RELATIONSHIP:
(we get this all down
on paper)

MY DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

(Taken from a written inventory)

SOURCE:

A. Fault's List B. Resentment List C. Sex Problems List D. Fear List

(You may wish to add to this after STEP 5.)

Page 75-76, Check List...

After Step 5, see pages 75 and 76 for directions:

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. Carefully reading the first five proposals (the first five steps) we ask:

1. Is our work solid so far?
2. Are the stone properly in place?
3. Have we skimped on the cement put in the foundation?
4. Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at STEP 6.

MY AMENDS LIST

For use in STEP 8.

A LIST OF ALL PEOPLE I HAVE HARMED:

Names:

Page 76, 3rd paragraph: "We made it when we took inventory."

SOURCE: Resentment List, Sex Problem List, Fear List, Redoubled Efforts at STEP 8. (You may wish to add to this after Step 5)

"If you haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember, it was agreed at the beginning, we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol."

SEE PAGE 76, THIRD PARAGRAPH, AND READ ON...

GUIDE

To

**THE FOURTH STEP
INVENTORY**

**“made a searching and fearless
moral inventory of ourselves”**

*From Chapter Five
Of the basic text of
“Alcoholics Anonymous”
(The Big Book)*

Note: Do not write on this Guide. You will want to keep it clean for future Step Fours. You will want to make copies for friends and sponsees.

Fourth Step Inventory

One of the requirements for sobriety is the need for personal recognition of personality defects, a moral inventory, and Step Four is designed to be just this. Everything contained in these sheets is directly taken from the Big Book ‘Alcoholics Anonymous’; there is no opinion, just fact. To be ready to start on this step, the previous three steps should, of course, be in place, so before starting check with your sponsor, spiritual advisor, or best friend.

Know this – a problem with Step Four arises if:

1. You still do not believe you are powerless, or;
2. If you have not made an honest effort to sweep away your prejudices as suggested in Step two.

Some people may react negatively when they reach this step. Why? They may tell you the pain of dredging up memories long buried is too much to endure, or some other excuse. The plain and simple fact is that freedom from self is made impossible by holding on to fears and secrets we’ve harbored all our lives. The way of strength, paradoxically, is in surrendering everything that stands between you and the Power.

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves”

It is interesting and even instructive to take an overview of Step Four in the Big Book and realize how carefully and powerfully Bill sets out the method of working this step. Left to my own devices I was powerless to arrive at any sort of meaningful, effective plan for working this step. Bill very wisely breaks it down into three main areas of our lives; starting with

- (1.) Resentments followed by
- (2.) Fear and then by
- (3.) Our Interpersonal Relationships (including sex).

When I first started working step four I desperately needed a plan-preferably a simple plan. I knew so little about myself, and I could not be honest with myself, so that I actually believed that I had no resentments! I did not think that fear was a factor in my life and I certainly had never carefully and specifically considered and examined each of my relationships

with other people or with institutions, never had I examined where principles fitted into my life.

It took me years and much understanding (with what cogency Bill's step four plan made possible) for me to develop a searching and fearless inventory of my "self" so that I was able, little by little, step four after step four, to identify and use the solutions that Bill provided to us. So if this is your first attempt at Step Four, and your result seems less than adequate (you should realize that after Step Five and also over time) your next attempt at Step four will be better. You will grow in Step Four.

It took time and several repeated attempts to really identify the major resentments I held against people, institutions and principles and I had no idea and certainly I had no plan as to how I could go about dealing with resentments when discovered. I had no recognition of the serious unhappy consequences of harboring resentments. I had almost no insight as to how my innermost self operated and didn't even realize that I had an innermost self.

I knew I had anger – but didn't know why.

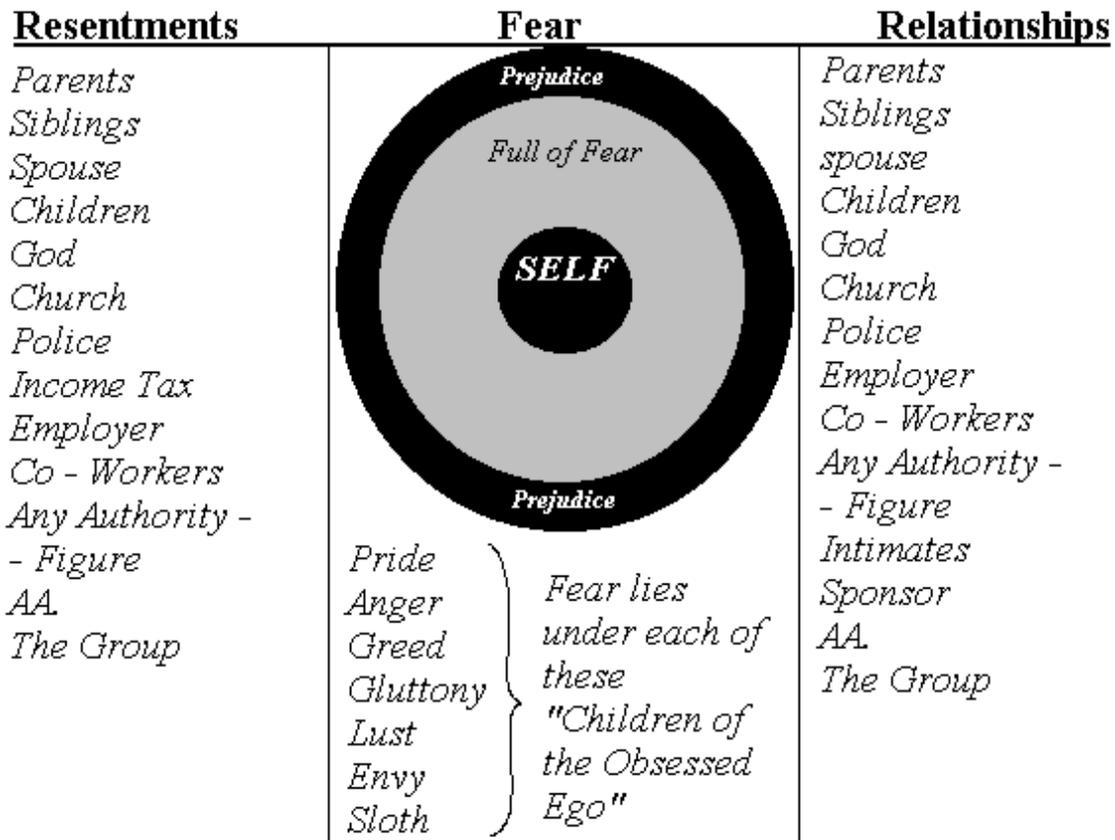
I knew I was frustrated – but didn't know why.

I knew I couldn't control my emotions – but didn't know why.

I knew I was very sensitive – but didn't know why.

I had never collected any facts about myself and never looked at causes or conditions. I lived by the seat of my pants – no plan – no direction. It has taken me this long to learn, action by action, to work Step Four fully so as to result in the discovery of my inner self and to discover who and what I am; and to discover the Power that makes it all possible.

Obsessed Ego



Before attempting the Step Four Moral Inventory:

1. Make sure the Step One list of "Names Of People Who Tried To Help Us" is done to prove to ourselves that we are beyond human aid.
2. Make sure the Step Two "Prejudices" list is done and that we have asked to have them swept away.
3. Make sure the list of "Spiritual terms" is done; this is the starting point of conscious contact with God.
4. Carefully read Bill's essay on Step Four in the book "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions".

Bill sets this step up and arranges very simply the main factors of resentment on the one hand and relationships (sex) on the other. The evil and corroding thread of the factor of fear comes right up the middle and ties our great bundle of “ Self Obsessed Ego” together. Fear occupies the whole area between resentment and relationships and permeates every negative action in resentment and every negative action in relationships. Bill gives us the powerful tool of prayer with which to work towards a solution of these equally powerful forces that are at work, often unconsciously, in and through my obsessed ego.

It took me a long time to understand that when Bill says “ *Now about sex...*” he is really talking about all my interpersonal relationships – as he says “*including sex*”. He says “*we reviewed our own conduct over the years past*” – all of our conduct, not limited to sexually active relationships. He further says “ ***We Subjected Each Relation To This Test – Was It Selfish Or Not?***” This step is very specific, so we have to take our time and examine each of our relationships, one after another. Then we are given the prayer tools; “*we asked God to mold our ideals and to help us live up to them*” – and – “ *In meditation we asked God what to do about each specific matter*”.

It took me an even longer time to gain insight into the fact that what I had long accepted as “the imperious urge” (which I had long accepted as a natural and instinctive need for sexual activity) was actually frequently nothing but fear. My Obsessed Ego, which I came to see as being totally determined to manipulate and control my life, was exposed as a master at disguising the drive to control by transferring the obsession with self from one thing to another; from booze to sex, to money, to power, to whatever. What a revelation to gain insight that my obsessed ego was using fear to continually set me up to dispute, deny and refute my own powerlessness. Sex was a good way to do it. I feel powerful when the imperious urge is operating. What a discovery!

It is very important that our inventory be written out in our own handwriting. Something happens when we write things down. Somehow our Resentments, Fears and prejudices seem to fade and lose their power once they are put down in writing. It is almost as if they are literally “put down”. Like Magic!! It is in writing each Resentment, Fear and prejudice down that we begin to be able to give them up. In writing the surrender process begins!

It was gradually made apparent to me that my Obsessed Ego, each and every time it felt threatened, or frustrated, or dissatisfied, will use any and every emotion that is available within me to prompt me to believe that I do have power of my own and to refute and deny my own powerlessness. When Bill describes alcohol as cunning, baffling and powerful it is my conviction, at least for me, that he really means the Obsessed Ego and not alcohol.

With more digging around inside of me, my inner self, it became clear to me that I had long formed the habit of using resentment, fear and sex, in almost any or every combination, to try to alleviate and allay any emotion (or any combination of emotions) which I could not tolerate. I came to see that my Obsessed Ego dominated every situation and was totally relentless in it's quest for satisfaction. My sponsor always told me that every time the will and the emotions are in conflict, the emotions are going to win out. So my Obsessed Ego successfully used my emotions to cause me to try (in any way possible) to satisfy it, at any cost in order to deal with my intolerable feelings. Thus I denied my own powerlessness (and feelings) and was on my way into deeper trouble. Fortunately Bill provides me with a means of dealing with such a situation and I have come to see Step Four as very much a prayer step.