

How to Work the Steps

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Transcript

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Thanks, Camille. My name is Gary Brown. I'm not calling. Hi, Charlie. I think how Camille got all this started. And we've heard of it. And the crew of us have had a brief discussion and thought the best thing we could do tonight was perhaps share with you this process that we stumbled into quite a while ago. And the process has worked and worked and worked time and time again with a number of people have been told, touched by the twelve steps by the big book.

If I don't know how the big book says, if you will. The line in AA is that you'll hear so often when you go to meetings, you know, read the big book and go to meetings and nobody says and do what the big book says. Early seventies and we decided we wanted to have a big book meeting. I was just a tall, scared, skinny kid and some lunatic showed up from the prison. And we were just kind of there. We were trying to say so. We didn't have any real seniority in the young people's group at the time.

Other than one tall, skinny Indian and he didn't have enough stuff. And so we started from meeting groups and in homes, excuse me. We just got to start to travel around and meet in homes. We really didn't have a place to meet. So the book has that wonderful line that we are people who would normally not mix. Well, you should have seen that bunch of puffs because I'll guarantee you we wouldn't have met. And we were street people. We were young professionals. We were about to name it. We covered the gamut.

We met in places like Goat Hill. And there really is a goat Hill. And I presume it's still there. There were more goats and people, but that's where we lived. And that's where we went for our meeting on Thursday night. We wanted to do. And Don can tell this part of it better, but there was a fellow from Winnipeg named Max Sheeter who had shared with people in Denver that processed. They used to go to the big book of the sacred host. And to do some things. And from that we took the idea.

We didn't do it like they did. But we just took the idea that maybe we ought to try reading the big book together. And then as we started doing that, the idea of doing what it said together kind of fell into place. And I wish I could tell you that we had some tremendous guiding force that laid it out. But we did some things with some tremendous results. And I'm sure we'll get around to that later. The end result of that first time we did this, I'm kind of getting ahead of myself or us here.

Then the goal of that is if I remember my number right down mine, but I think there was 14 of us that started out in that. And we went through the 12 steps together as best we could. That is, we did them at the same time. And out of that bunch, all but one of them is still sober. And he's dead. And he froze death. He died in our own death. And we tried to convince Don and I that we shouldn't take these 12 steps together.

We can show you 10 to 11 other people that believe that way too. It's worked out. My diabetes the third day of December 1964, Don shortly behind that. And that's not really significant because most of those guys have been sober about that long. And most of us are under the age of 55. Maybe we all are. That's what happened to us. And that's what we're going to try to share with you. A little bit tonight. We had a brief discussion back there.

And we thought maybe we would do it as briefly as possible.

If you have a question come up, make a note of it and try to ask it as appropriate moment of it's kind of out of context before what we're trying to do at the time. But we need your questions. They'll help us a great deal. If I should do it, you won't pick it up. My name is Don. I'm an alcoholic. It's funny. We have a little sponsorship line here realizing that there is a sponsorship line and somewhere along the way we made an awful mistake.

They had to be said. My sobriety date is December 26, 1967. And I got sobering to call our state penitentiary. And the only method they had there was a five-week 12-step study school. So we were hand carried through the steps out of the big book only in five weekends. And not knowing that it can't be done that fast, we did it that fast. I had a series of spiritual awakenings. One of which is that I understand there's no perfect way to do this.

There is one way to do this, but there's no perfect way. I continually stand bald and necessary sponsorship because that's the end result of this is to carry the message on. I hear a lot today about the promises of alcoholic synonymous. This book is filled with them. In fact, the first two sentences of the first four words to the first edition of the big book carries the two main promises of my life. We of Alcoholics Anonymous are more than 100 men and women who have recovered from the seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.

Had it not been for that promise, I don't believe I'd have stayed here. Had you asked me to learn to cope with whatever was wrong with me, my cope were broken. It was not possible for me to learn to cope with anything anymore. I was in the state of surrender and I needed a full-blown, full-time, lifetime answer not how to cope. The second promise to me is to show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.

I am promised that I will no longer be useless. I now have a life work and it's a simple one to show others precisely how I recovered. So we're going to ask you to be kind to us tonight because we are not big book experts. But we have been living by the principles and the methods of this book for a number of years quite successfully. That means despite good and bad, I haven't had a drink with alcohol. It's because of what I found in this book, including what an alcoholic is, that I'm still here.

I didn't know I was one. I had an in denial system that said I was a psychopath, a sociopath, a drug addict, a manic depressive and a son of a bitch. None of which are treatable by the way. So I learned through here how to live. So, wrong with me, what to do about it and how to live. I was told by my early sponsors that I had to have a spiritual awakening of my own. And then learned to live by spiritual principles. And that's what the big book is for me.

And I had a spiritual awakening. I now need to learn how to live by spiritual principles in a world that quite often doesn't. And with a set of emotions and a self-centered mind, they quite often doesn't want to. So this is my guide book to how to live a spiritual life. I'll probably harp on promises all through the evening because the book is filled with it. So we're going to go off from there. Joe, you've got a couple.

Dr. Remark? My name is Joe. I'm an alcoholic. It's good to be here. I'm the younger one of the group. I got sober August 17, 1982. And I get to wear short pants and they have to wear long pants. I got excited about this book when there was nothing left for me to do and I had to decide about doing this work. And I think at that time

when I was five and a half months sober, ready to die of untreated alcoholism, further away from my last drink than I'd ever been in 17 years, I really had run out of options in and out of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I had done the 90 meetings in 90 days. I had done 12 years of therapy. I had been to 10 treatment centers. I had become a therapist in one, which is the only thing left to do when you've been to five or six. I had done everything I was told to do in Alcoholics Anonymous because I came here beat. I came here in a state of surrender, but it took me five and a half months to work the first half of the second step and try to manage my life on my own power sober to see that it had nothing to do with the first half.

That my life wasn't just unmanageable because I drank alcohol. I had this idea that now that I was sober there might be some way to run my life and it didn't work. And I hit that bottom at five and a half months. That time is still foggy to me and went out to Don's house and I had heard him in my very first meeting. But I think he was so much like me that it scared me and it took that kind of a bottom in sobriety. And he said he only knew one way to do it and that we were going to start on the title page of this book and we were going to go through it together and my life's never been the same since.

Because of people like Don and Gary and some other people in my life who continue to do the work of Alcoholics Anonymous on a regular basis. I've decided that that's what I want to do in anything. It's been about each year for me. I go through the first nine steps. Some things had happened. I kind of became excited about this book for the first time in my life. I had something that maybe I could share with other people.

And some people were actually even asking me to help them in whatever way I could. And that was new for the way I had lived my life. I have months and meetings from the first day that Don talked to me about the circle and the triangle. Not to belabor that, but I was at a place where I did not know almost six months in Alcoholics Anonymous terribly involved in the fellowship. I did not know there were three parts to Alcoholics Anonymous and I was sitting in one part expecting the results of the other two.

And when he talked to me about Unity Recovery and Service and asked me about my involvement in each of those parts, I had to admit to him, I was in one-third of the program because I was not involved in Recovery or Service. That was an eye-opening day for me to also realize there are a set of 12 spiritual principles for each part of the program. And then he also talked to me about a three-part disease. Anywhere I had ever been, ever talked to me about a spiritual malady.

Now I knew a lot about the physical aspect for you all, had never looked at it myself when I was working in the field. I knew a little bit about the body and the mind to me about emotional things that I could do to fix myself. No one ever talked to me about a three-fold disease that no human power could relieve. I became excited about the history also and I have gotten to travel quite a bit since. And it was exciting for me. I never got to meet Mac Jeter, who had a group in Canada called the Golden Slippers, where they used to do these workshops with men that couldn't seem to stay sober.

And they were staying sober. But to meet his sponsor last summer in Seattle, Cease Corbel, who was doing workshops ten or fifteen years before Mac Jeter ever did one. To find out the lineage of that and then to start some of myself in California where I moved almost five years ago and watch people go through this process. This isn't to pat myself on the back or to brag about the great way that I do this, but I can tell you about 50%

make it from four to nine.

Shops like Gary was talking about, not including those workshops in the last five years. I've worked with 60 people one-on-one that have made it to the ninth step, and not one of them has drank, that have submitted themselves to this process. And I don't think that's what we're seeing in the fellowship nowadays. I don't ever want to drink again, ever. I don't ever want to live the way I was living. And for the last eight and a half years, it's been pretty damn great.

So I think where we wanted to begin was with the problem. Let me jump back just a little bit. What we have here is a textbook, by what it says anyway. It's a book that shared experience. A group of people did the same thing the same way and came up with the same result. And they put together a textbook. And as with textbooks, it has philosophical ideas and very specific directions on how to have very specific results.

And as with well-written books, it tells us first what it's going to tell us, then it tells us, and then it tells us what it just told us. That's why it's so redundant. It tells us the same thing in many different ways early on in the book, because so many of us come here warped. And I know you've had the same experience. Suddenly you hear something, you've heard from the last six months of meetings, but all of a sudden this person says it, and I hear it.

It's the same thing. Well, here's what it's going to tell us about the recovery process that we're going to get involved in. On page the Roman numeral, 16 in the forward, talking about Bill and though he could not accept all the tenants of the Oxford group, he was convinced of the need for more inventory, confession of personality defects, restitution to those harmed, helpfulness to others, and the necessity of belief in a dependence upon God.

That's the path we're going to walk. And this isn't the only place, but to me that says if I want to walk this path, I will do what it says here, and if you don't want to walk this path, then that bother with this. Now, there are several warnings in this book. If you don't want what we have, don't do what we did, because it'll happen for you anyway. You, old Bob Boy from Texas, God-loving, is most profound message to me was always, all we do here is comply with the conditions.

And if I will comply with these conditions, then I will get these results. But that's what we're going to walk through, more inventory, confession, restitution, helpfulness to others, and the necessity of belief in and reliance upon God. You mentioned that Bob Boy from the first time down in Iran, came to him, we were at a conference down in southwest Kansas. The first annual southwest Kansas A conference was a matter of fact.

Well, I mean, I do that to see if I can say it. Now from Texas, and he is a big white-haired man. He looked a lot like Andy Griffith. And, but he had something about him, and doing I watched him all weekend. And finally, we're all getting ready to go home. Everybody's hugging each other, say goodbye and crying. It's kind of crazy. And I went up to him and I said, Bob, I don't know what I got to do to get it. I said, but I want what you have.

You really got something I want to clip. What do I have to do? And at that point in time, Bob was 18 and a half years sober. And he looked at me and he said, well, sugar. He says, I think you probably have to do this program the best you possibly can every day, one day at a time, for 18 and a half years. And that was a heavy message he had for me. And probably the most honest one I ever got with this is, I have attempted to read the big book many times and zeroed out every time.

It just didn't happen. Now, it wasn't stupid. I don't like to call it draft or got sober and got through college. I wasn't no big deal, but I couldn't read this book. I'd read a paragraph or a page and put it down, didn't have a lot of fabulous. So when we decided to start reading it together, it happened there. And I'm not sure what it was. It's kind of fun to remember that you've remarked people made. And every one time I said the way I interpret that, and Don or Lee or somebody said, Gary, we don't much care how you interpret that.

We're really concerned with the black print on the white page. And they said that to me a lot over the years. But those are some of the things that helped me. But I think what helped me most was doing it with these guys. They don't think there's any doubt about it. And there was a night that I went to that meeting, and we were reading in the third chapter more about alcoholism. And if you look at your book, that's first step.

You know, that's the first step discussion. And on the first page here, that third chapter, page 40, excuse me, page 30, second paragraph starts out that we learned, we had to fully concede to our animal cell that we were alcoholic. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people or present, we may be half to be smacked. And the reason I remember that is that the night that I was given the key to the kingdom.

And I say that with all sincerity. I quote that line about every time I open my mouth in an A meeting because it has that kind of importance to me. But I was still suffering from untreated alcoholism after four years of floundering around like Joe talked about. And I was in Wyoming for a good part of that time, and it wasn't around a very large A community. I just wasn't exposed to the kind of thing that happens when you're around a lot of meetings and a lot of A members.

And I never heard from my first four years of sobriety that you ought to take the big book and do what it said. Or if it was said to me, I certainly didn't hear it. And I really don't believe it was said to me, but I'll allow that there's a possibility that I was a little arrogant. And the hole in my belly with the wind blowing through it and never went away those first four years in sobriety. It just didn't do it. And I was sitting meetings and people would say things like, I wouldn't trade my best day drunk for my worst day sober.

And I'd think, wait a minute, let me think that over. I wouldn't have any fun here. I had a job out of college as an accountant, and I couldn't look you in the eye and talk to you. I didn't keep the job long. They thought an accountant ought to be able to look them in the eye. I had no sense of humor. So my experience with discovering what the unmanageable life was all about happened in large part through my first few years of sobriety, I've always known that I was powerless over alcohol.

And I've known that probably as far back as I remember. I didn't admit it right away, but I've always known that. And I knew that if I drank, I'd die. And I knew there's nothing I can do about alcohol, whether I'm drinking it or Joe's drinking it or you're drinking it or you're drinking it, I'm powerless over. I can't do a damn thing. And then somewhere in there, we read this line, and there was kind of an a-ha thing that I couldn't articulate.

But I found that all of a sudden things were working out for me. I began to realize that all those things I had been trying to do, I didn't have to try anymore because I can't do anything about it. Those times I tried to make the sheer go away and couldn't manage that, couldn't make it happen. The times when everybody around me was happy and I couldn't make it happen. You know, the booze had quit working. It worked real good for a while, and it quit.

And that night, and something happened, and all of a sudden I didn't have to be like other people anymore. And I am what I am. I pop-eye, and it was the biggest relief I knew. And it's all a sudden that I had been powerless and unmanageable, made sense, and alcohol was a big part of it. Joe touched on another thing that we talk about here a lot, and I questioned a lot of what goes on in the A, at least in Indianapolis and other places that I get.

But I think we're forgetting about how important it is at this point. If we don't have a first step, we don't have a thing. We're just flat-knock going to cut it. This is a program of alcohol, it's anonymous, and that means it's for alcoholics. This is for those alcoholics who want to be here, which means I'm not going to four-speed somebody to get here, though that's how I got here. Need to make it clear to some of the deaths what this is about.

A number of people, the friends of ours and all that, have been using an example that I think is wonderful, and helping people find their first step, and particularly now that we're in a fellowship that is full of Andas, I'm in alcoholic Anda, and we're full of all these other things, and the treatment centers have to fill a lot of beds. They have a good reason to put out a lot of things that put out. This example is so good, and the way it was explained to me is if you go find any ten people on the street, randomly, go get ten.

And for two weeks, give those people a drug. Alcohol, it's not a drug. Give them cocaine, give them heroin. I don't care what you did. Two weeks later, you go open that door and you're going to have ten addicts come out of there because that's an addictive drug. There are ten other people randomly and put them in that same room. Some good booze. And guess which ones come out hooked on the booze? It's only the alcohol.

I like to have used other drugs. I know one are too pretty good, you know. They've done something. And they don't have any argument at all with what I'm saying here. But they're not Andas, they're alcohol, who happen to use them up. I think that's kind of critical, and it's helped a great deal with some of the people I've been working with in Indianapolis, and Jim's been working with. It just works the processes work.

My experience with the first step has been wrapped so much around those lines I cited to you in the term of real alcoholic. I mean the old 12 and 12 meeting in Denver one time, and a bunch of those monkeys introduced themselves as real alcoholics, and I thought, oh shit, now I'm with the elite, taking me off. And then the more I got to look at it and look at how the big book, you know, the big book says a real alcoholic just about on every page, you know, probably has some intensity, so it might mean something.

And that had a great deal of sense. And when we do a workshop, I'll ask the guys in that workshop to look at the work real alcoholic, you know, and it's kind of fun to look them in the eye when I say that, because it ticks a few of them off when I do it. But after a while, they're together with it in their life against the change, and it works. And I guess the biggest line in the third step, in their third chapter to me is the last one that the alcoholic at certain times is no effective metal defense against that first drink.

The help must come from a higher power. Jim and my home group had a meeting here a month or so ago, and I think we had four or five guys went back out and tried it again. Was it that many? And some of them were guys that apparently were really working at the program. And one of them in particular was honestly trying to take a look at it, but he was so damn mad at one working real well. And the alcoholic at certain times had no effective metal defense against that first drink.

He said, well, yeah, maybe. And I said it's me to have a defense, you wouldn't have drank. He said, well, yeah, maybe back to say or not. I hope so, we love it. I'm facing with a constant reminder that when I'm talking with someone about this program, their lives are at stake, and so is mine. It's a life of death deal. And it's imperative for me to try to maintain an attitude of how much rather be effective than be right.

And my early sponsors helped with that. They said anything that we tell you that you cannot reconcile with this big book even ignore it because we're full of crap or you're just not ready to hear it yet anyway. But check it. This is my bullshit sifter. Because I hear a lot of good ideas. Gary mentioned the delusion that we're like other people in president that maybe had to be smashed. I came here whining because I felt different.

My sponsor says that's because you're different. And I said, well, I feel weird. He said, well, that's because you're weird. And I said one day I'm terrified of my own mind and he said, you have good reason to be. But he always took me back to precisely how I am different. I've always known I was different. Now that I know how I'm different, I'm a piece of it. I'm different with it the same way he was. He began in the doctor's opinion.

I found me in the doctor's opinion. I found out precisely what's wrong with me. On page 24, Bill says in this statement, which is to follow, this doctor conference will either suffer alcoholic torture, or must believe that the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind. I am abnormal. There's a doctor that says that. That's interesting how I, in our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.

Now I understand why chips didn't work. Why psychiatry didn't work? Why dynamics didn't work? Why pay only didn't work? Except temporarily. Why none of those things work. They never addressed the physical aspect of my disease. I have a disease. And I needed to learn about that. Because I am different than my neighbor. My neighbor doesn't have my disease. I've got a lovely neighbor. He owns a bar. And we were talking one afternoon.

And I can only talk about crabgrass and stuff just a certain amount of time that I've got to talk about the only thing I know about, and that's alcoholism and God. And he was interested. He and I share a common experience. He told me about an eye to get drunk. He drank too much whiskey and he got a drunk and he fell down and threw up and made a fool of himself. And he hasn't done that since. Now my reaction is very different than his.

I had exactly the same experience. I drank too much one night and I fell down and I threw up and made a fool of myself. And I got up and did it again and again and again and again. But one of the reasons, and there are several, but one of the reasons is that he apparently does not have the same reaction to alcohol that I do. I sponsored a psychiatrist who founded one of the finest alcohol treatment centers in the world.

The peer-to-one concept in Colorado, the University of Colorado. He's had a regular call time staying sober himself, but he was really good at fixing it up for other people. And I think it's important that while I stick with the experience here, I have the tendency to get stuck with the words. The words can be said in many different ways to say the same experience. And we were going through this. Dr. Schopler talks very plainly about this.

The normal page 26 that we believe in social justice a few years ago that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy. That the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperature. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all, and once having formed the habit of found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance

upon things human, their problems pile up on them, become astonishingly difficult to solve.

And he goes on at the bottom of the page to talk about how we drank essentially for the effect produced by alcohol. Their restless irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks, drinks they see others taking in impunity. After they succumb to the desire again, and the desire is different from the craving, after they succumb to the desire, so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of the spree.

Well, we're going over that with my psychiatrist friends. Now, that's pretty high-tone stuff, and it's going over him because he knows too much. He hasn't been grasping this for ten years. He's been drinking because he can't grasp this. And I pray about it. How can I say this so this brilliant man can hear it? I understand it. How can he hear it? I'm praying. I said, well, don't what happens to you after the first drink?

He said, well, around the fourth of the fifth drink, I just lose control, and I start going all crazy, right? And I said, now, after the first drink, what happens to you? Around the fourth of the fifth drink, I lose control, right? So crazy, and I miss appointments, and I beat my wife, and I. What happens to me after the first drink is the second drink. That's what he's trying to say, and I may have to put it in those words for someone, because that's how simple it was.

That's all I was saying. It's phenomenal craving to go. This would put me in prison when I was 19 years old. I took a drink in Long Beach, California, and 23 days later, when I went back to my ship, it wasn't there, and it was just, they put me in prison for that. I took a drink and couldn't go back. For 22 days, I had to drink. No thought of what my responsibilities to life were or what I wanted in life. I loved my Navy time.

Except when I kept getting back late. That's what he's talking about to me. They helped me understand why I'm different. I have duck feathers. If this describes a duck, I quack, and I fly south in the winter. I do what ducks do. This happens to me. So I could reconcile that with this book, and it explains things which nothing else explains. Some of my behavior was explained because I have a physical allergy to alcohol that says, if I drink one drink, I will drink the second drink.

And the thing that turned it for down was the word, pretty. What he'd been missing all over the years was that he did, he might take a drink tonight and go home. Tomorrow night, it might be two, and he'd go home. About the fourth or fifth drink, which might have been the fourth or fifth day down the road, he lost control. Until he identified the second drink came, whatever day it came, and that's a spree. A spree may last overnight, and it may last ten years, but it's a spree.

So using this tool through my experience, we were able to race a third person. And he's a wonder now. I don't know how many folks he's destroyed this last year passing that information. I'm not even muck with it. But that's how I used that, and still use it, because I don't know exactly what to say. But I know this is truth. One of the things that was really beneficial for me, this attachment I had to the drama of where my drinking took me.

I didn't talk a lot in those first five or six months, but I suppose I probably spoke a couple of times. I had a hell of a drunkah law. What it was like, what it was like, what it was like, because nothing had happened. But most of what it was like, I was talking about things that separated me from you. And I somehow thought I was

talking about a common problem that we all had, and I was only talking about the drama of where my disease took me.

And when some men had enough love in their heart to ask me a question that I'm as guilty of as any of us, not asking as much anymore, unless somebody literally asked me for help. They started to ask me, why do you think you're an alcoholic? There's a philosophy nowadays in Alcoholics Anonymous where I live, where I play. Now that's a big mistake. This is just a mistake. And these men started to ask me why I thought I was an alcoholic, and I would go right to the drama.

Don't you understand, I've been to ten treatment centers. Drinkers go to treatment more than ones that are about as much alcoholic as the man in the moon. And some of us have never been to treatment. What does that mean? We're not. Paul put me in the Michigan State Penitentiary. Drinkers go to Michigan State Penitentiary behind booze that are about as much alcoholic as the man in the moon. And some of us have never been there.

What does that mean? We're not. And I started to find out that the stuff I was using to justify why I was an alcoholic, so I could once again fit that were separating me from a lot of you. And I was not doing what our preamble talks about. I was not sharing my experience, strength and hope that we could solve a common problem, because I didn't know what the common problem of alcoholism was. See, I think I had gone so far against things about human booze.

Now I knew that I had gotten in a lot of trouble. But I think on top of that I had so much information. First thing Don never said to me, you better. See, I think I had gone so far, yet I came here knowing certain things about human booze. Now I knew that I had gotten in a lot of trouble. But I think on top of that I had so much information. First thing Don never said to me, you better pray that everything you think you know be put aside, because you know enough about alcoholism to be dangerous to yourself and everyone around you.

And for some reason I used that prayer, and I used the prayer the first time asleep. Didn't even know what was happening, and it worked. I found myself in the middle of step one or two or three or inventory, and I wasn't drawn on things I learned in college or when I worked in treatment. I've been using that prayer ever since when I start to work. I encourage people that I work with when they start to work to use a similar prayer.

And I've had some powerful experiences with that prayer. Am I willing eight and a half years sober to put aside what I think I know? I used to mark in my book. I used to mark what I thought was important. Well the big joke was I make is after three or four years, every word in the book learned the same thing they learned, but they didn't have to mark their book for three or four years. Am I willing to put that aside?

So I can see some of you have done some things in alcoholics, and I'm just in some of your habits. I don't know if they would agree with this or not, but this is my observation from looking around in the last couple of years, a little more awake than I was a few years ago. I think to do the work in alcoholics, and I'm just about minding the big book has gotten to the point in the fellowship where it's really something that we each need to decide whether it's what we want to do or not.

It's really come to the point where you have to decide about it. Because there's so many options now. How many of us sit in meetings all the time where they say, there's as many ways to work the program as there are

people in it, but they'll do anything but what our founders gave us, and hundreds of thousands of people have done since. For me it had to do with options. So there were some things about this book that were interesting to me, and that are still interesting to me when I'm working with someone, because they don't always have some of the experience that we have with this book.

The first time they told me how to use the doctor's opinion, as I saw Don doing by example, it was really interesting because it changed it from a doctor's opinion to a story about me, because I found he was using a trick on me. We would sit at a house and we would read this book, and every time the book made a statement, he would turn it into a question and say, what about that? Is that you? So I learned if you take the doctor's opinion and put aside the idea that it's written by a doctor that none of us know in 1935, and it's his opinion about alcoholism, and when you read the doctor's opinion, every time he makes a statement, try to turn it into a question for yourself.

Same thing with Bill's story. They told me to mark what I could relate to in the first eight pages of Bill's story, and I got in touch with the progression of my disease. There's an idea in AA nowadays too that's also a mystery sometimes, even to me, and a lot of us, especially when we're new. This idea that you're hearing meetings, are you willing to go to any length? Stand on my head in the corner, push a peanut down Colfax Avenue.

What do they really mean? And I have found if you look at the second half of Bill's story after he gets sober, you get a great outline of what you're going to be able to do and the rest of the work, and I ask people now to mark what they're not willing to do that Bill did to recover, because in the second half of his story, you get a great outline of what it means to go to any length, and I also because of some encouragement from another guy that's not here tonight, had been trying to recently myself the last time I did the work, and I've been trying to recently with new people, read the 12 steps one at a time in how it works, and pause at the end of each one and ask yourself, is this what I want to do?

And am I willing to go to any length to do this? And there's something about hooking the ego at the beginning of this work before God has had a chance to come in and convincing myself, this is what I want to do, and you find there's not so much resistance in the rest of the steps before something really happens. There is a solution from page 17 to the top of page 23, which is really where they stop talking about this physical part of alcoholism, the craving.

And like a good textbook, the top of 23, ends with a statement that sums up everything you really need to see, as far as the physical craving for booze. And it says, the experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this. Does my experience abundantly confirm that when I put alcohol in my system something happens, which makes it virtually impossible for me to stop, right from the bottom of 22? I learned how to turn that into a question.

There they're going to move to a whole other part of the disease about what gets me back to the first drink, time after time after time. But learning a little bit about how to use those chapters was helpful. This is a toolkit. There were some helpful tools. And I started to see that when I put booze in my system, I crave more. And that my experience abundantly confirms that. I think we probably have to ask Don, but I would like to ask him and

Gary that if they were working with someone or if when Don was working with me, if we got to the top of that page as we were reading this book or he thought it was time to go on and start looking at the next part of this disease, what they would have done.

If I said to them, you know, I really don't see that. I've never really craved alcohol. I don't really lose control when I drink booze. For me, there would be no reason to go any further. Because then you can just drink that way. Just drink that way. That's an interesting point. I've been in that situation. You had to do this thing. I think these checkers will watch this era. Maybe you've learned that we're not in somehow hoping maybe they'll be some more agreements if they're willing to go to any line.

We'd like to hear some thoughts if you want to share something about your experience with your first step. We'd like to. Just again with the very real awareness that it's not going to be possible to get all this done in three hours. We should at least four to do the entire big book. Kind of keep it moving and that's part of what we're going to try to do. Did anybody come up with any questions while you were out on this part of it before we started moving forward?

Yes. Or if there's a more massive relation in personal experiences that's been the emphasis on the more through that still is the humanity building part of how we can do that. His experience he says is that in the first step his emphasis has been on the unmanageability. For me they made it real simple. There's more on the book covers that the first part of the book covers that. What was truly unmanageable I was told and I had accepted was that it was my thinking that's unmanageable.

The circumstances of my life you have to understand by the time I got to AA my life was being totally managed by the state. There was nothing unmanageable outside but look at it anywhere. I was dressed, fed, clothed, showered, everything was being done for me. So there were no more out of circumstances but my thinking was unmanageable. We refer to that rather specifically as we move through. But until I understand that we have a friend 12 years sober that got so good at this he even adapted it for churches and normal folks and went on the lecture tour in a 12 years he drank.

Now we can debate all the reasons he drank but he told us afterwards because he got back that the basic thing was he had never ever really believed in the allergy idea of alcoholism. So when the blank spot came he had a door through which he could walk. He believed after 12 years in all this work he could drink successfully. That's unmanageable thinking. Gary did you want to address it or Joe? I'd like to say something about that.

I've seen people do the work based on the second half of the first step. Without an honest admission in the first half do the work because their life is unmanageable. The first three or somewhere in inventory or by the time they get to amends usually poop out. I think if you've been around here for as far as these symptoms whatever your symptoms might be as far as what program you're in, as far as what your power is sober.

To do the work just because of the unmanageability I have seen doesn't always work for alcoholics and things about stuff like that. But he used to drive me nuts because at least once a week the son of a bitch would say it doesn't matter how far you are from close you are to your next hearing. And I hated it when he said that. After all I've been working the steps and I've been a star in AA and I've been doing it all.

It's some time earlier recently my friend Jim's sitting over here might have picked it up. 26 years from down here. Now there's a lot revolving around that one reason I'm list of other friends. I loved it. The dearest ones too me and do that sort of thing. But the real reason I'm here is I have no idea how close I am to my next drink. Absolutely powerless over alcohol. Thankless me. I said I knew I was powerless over just how in the program.

I can give you a quick example and then I don't want to spend much time on it. Not too many years ago I had a beef with my boss. My boss was cut out because earlier that day I'd had a beef with a customer and the boss didn't think I was supposed to behave that way. And I had to spend more money at the garage and I wanted to. I went and got the car and I myself am just incensed going down interstate 69 and I looked at the speedometer on that point and it was hovering around 90.

And somewhere the thought came to me. And the thought was just this is getting your powerless over alcohol. You screw with this much longer and you're going to be dead drunk came through to me. It wasn't the unmanageable life to come back with some time. Don't dismiss it. I understand your struggle and I did the same thing for a while but don't dismiss it. And what you'll say is true too. If you've got to light one place you won't finish with the step.

I'd like to touch on a couple of things before we move real quickly past where we are. On the bottom of page 20 we have to keep in mind there's a lot of Al-Anons here tonight and get past this stuff that separates us even though it's important for the alcoholic to identify. This differentiation between me and the hard drinker and what separates me from him. Now I never had a problem with the moderate drinker. He can give up liquor entirely if he has a good reason.

I had good reason after good reason after good reason he could never give it up entirely. I could not take it or leave it alone. But the hard drinker started to scare me a little bit because I had to have it badly enough to gradually impair me physically and mentally. And it definitely could have cost me to die real soon. But one of the points that separates me from this guy is you give him a sufficiently strong reason.

It'll help follow the love, change of environment, worry of a doctor, and some more that I had as we each have our own. I had things like wealth, opportunity, family, education, given a sufficiently strong reason to stop. I always drank again. And then the other point when they described the real alcoholic is that somewhere in my drinking career I began to lose control over the amount once I would start to drink. So we find on those couple of pages really only two things in this sense that separate me from him.

You give him a sufficiently strong reason he can stop. I can't. And somewhere during my drinking career I began to lose control over the amount once I would start to drink. Then to move into this idea of what always takes me back to the first drink, this stuff that goes on in my mind, we basically find another 20 pages in this book that can be used the same way that we've used it so far. Go through these pages that give you all kinds of things like Dom was saying to drive home really two basic points in the first 53 pages of the book.

So we started looking from 23 to 43 and he would ask me questions. So when I read this with someone we ask questions. Does this have to give you stories? They give you point blank statements. They give you another story. They give you another story to really see one point in this quality what Gary mentioned. That at a certain time there will be no effective defense against the first drink. Except in a few cases neither me nor any other

human being can provide that defense.

And my defense must come from a higher power. From page 23 and 24 to the second section of this effort the main problem of the alcoholic center is in his mind rather than in his body. He's lost control. We're up on page 24 now. At a certain point in the drinking amount of every alcoholic he passed it into a state where the most powerful desire to stop drinking is an absolutely whole veil. And I ask myself has that happened to me?

It also makes it imperative me to think and make a separation here. The only requirement for membership in our fellowship is a desire to stop drinking. But what this says is true. That's not enough to keep me sober. I have passed into the state where the most powerful desire to stop drinking was absolutely no avail whatsoever. The fact that most alcoholics for reasons yet obscure have lost the power of choice in drink.

Here in Mexico some things I did. I did have to make sure 14 years with LSD and peyote and smoked a little of that and I had it for me weed. So I had to make some peace with that. One thing I did to go get choice came out. I was disturbed. I didn't understand. Well it helped me make my peace. My judgment of choice was always messy and fit in me and hide before it. If I had a choice that's what I'd take. The trouble of which I had never had any choice whatsoever was alcohol.

And that's what makes me alcoholic. I've lost the power of choice in drink. And to this day it has never returned. I have heard it meeting people say Eddie gave me back the choice. And I suppose it may have for them that it hasn't for me. It's no longer my business. That's what I mean by understanding that it's none of my business. I've lost the power of choice. I said well well well becomes practically non-existent.

We are unable at certain times to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. My neighborhood doesn't do that anymore because he can remember how badly he felt and it attaches to a thing in him that says don't do that again. I can remember how badly I felt. It doesn't attach to anything at all. Or not enough. It doesn't attach against the first drink.

I'm totally about mental defense against the first drink and I know that. In one of the six years over I got an experience that hammered that home to me. We were having lunch with some businessmen at the Old Wales in Denver. One of the fellows had discovered a new liqueur, grain of stuff and a tall skinny glass and they were passing it around so that everyone could sit there. All of my memories came up with sufficient force.

Everything I know about alcoholism, everything I know about me. I wasn't that great. That I wasn't even afraid. There's no question that I would drink that. But as it came by me I thought I'd sniff it and see what it smelled like. And while it was under my nose it burst into my mind that the difference between life and death for me at that moment would be the twitch of a muscle. See when I have something in my hand and it gets here, that's what it does.

Now that's powerlessness. I am without choice. God was at work that day. I got in my body and he moved my hand off. And I don't sniff me instead of anymore. But that's what this says to me. Given the choice, I have always and will always make the wrong one. And the rest of the book of course explains some of the reasons for that. The horror of alcoholism, no matter what choices I make, is that quite often as an alcoholic, I don't have any reason for drinking.

Other than I'm alcoholic. I drank when I felt good, I drank when I felt bad. I drank when I didn't feel, I drank to feel you, I drank to stop feeling, blah, blah, blah, blah. I drank. The first drink of alcohol I took at 15 years of age or so, I drank without choice. I drank for a lot of reasons, but never, never had a choice. And more questions. That'd be the answer I have for that. The second way to define alcoholism is I ain't got it.

Except what it means for them is they can't drink. I can't drink. Just spent 15, 20 years, no matter what they try they drank. And now they've seen step one and it means they can't drink. I think the bottom line for me for step one is on the bottom of page 41 where it says, if I have an alcoholic mind, the time and place will come that I will drink again, 43. My defense must come from a higher power. Left to my own devices, I saw the nature of my condition and what was going to happen to me.

Left to my own power. Now I think there's some stuff on 44 that the longer I've been doing this, the more. I see more stuff crammed onto 44 than a lot of these pages where they put a lot of important stuff that we've covered already. Because here we are after all these chapters, they've spent about 53 pages, and then they repeat the very two points that they have hoped that we've seen. We hope in the preceding chapters you've learned something about alcoholism.

We hope we've made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic, and then they repeat those two points that they've just spent all these pages looking at. If one you honestly want to, you find you can't quit entirely, and when drinking you have more control over the amount, you're probably alcoholic. Now I believe there's a trap there, and I believe if you're ever working with somebody and they're looking for a way out, there's one word that they'll always go to, and you'll know they're looking for a way out, because the one word they'll go to, and it's a great drum trap, is ORM.

And they'll say I don't have to have both, I only have to have one, because it says right there ORM, and all you have to do is reassure them. If they got the craving, but they don't get the obsession, then just make up your mind never to drink again. And if you get the obsession, but if you get the obsession but you don't get the craving, I think there's a question after that, that I've seen people who can be absolutely convinced of those two pertinent ideas and still have a whole lot of reservations about the next line, and that is, do I believe I suffer from an illness which only a spirit's experience will conquer?

Because they want you to get, they want you to, they want to get you to see what the next paragraph talks about, that there's really only two alternatives. You could be absolutely convinced that once you start drinking, you crave more, and that once you stop drinking, you drink again, but not be quite sure that you suffer from something that only a spirit's experience will conquer, and you can explore that with them.

Maybe the right woman, the right man, the right amount of money, the right job, the right amount of therapy, the right amount of self-knowledge, the right amount of fear, the right amount of meetings, the right sponsor. All kinds of reservations a person can have of what might else could save them, but to see that to be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not easy alternatives to face. They might have a similar experience to our head, and you know why? Those two alternatives aren't easy to face.

They're the only two, and I've never been able to pull through my behavior. I have tried to die in alcoholic death many a time, and I've failed at it, and I have tried to make myself as spiritual as I would like to be, and I

have failed at that too. That's why for me those alternatives aren't easy to face. Then there's a whole other philosophy in Alcoholics Anonymous nowadays that says, take the principles. I'm talking about before doing any of this.

Not that these guys can't do that. Not that these guys can't take principles now that they have some power and incorporate them in their lives, but there's this idea nowadays that you can take the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and just incorporate them in your life. Or, I don't need to work the steps. I need to incorporate them in my life. I need to live the steps. You look on the bottom of 44, and it says if a code of morals or a better philosophy of life, which these steps and these principles are, were enough to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago, but we couldn't will these things with all our might.

We could wish to be more, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, but the needed power wasn't there. We had to find a power by which we could live, and they finally, after all these symptoms, or these two symptoms, and these ideas about two alternatives, they finally come down to what the problem is that joins all of us, whatever program we're in. Lack of power is our problem. We have to find a power by which we can live.

Another page they used with me to look at the unmanageability, and this does join all of us, whatever program we are in, and that's page 52. They take me through each area of my life. Relationships, my emotions, making a living. Misery, depression, uselessness, happiness. And there's two great ways to approach that. Each of those areas, the way I would like them to be. And I started to see what they meant by my life as unmanageable.

And then, if you want to bring it right back to the first half of step one, and you're an alcoholic, you can look at the idea if each of those areas was exactly the way I wanted them to be, would that be enough to keep me sober? And really start to see that whether those things go your way or not has very little to do with whether you drink again or not. Because I've had times in my life where all those areas were in a row I was stopped, and I drank again when they were the way I wanted them to be.

And I've had times when they were all a mess, and I drank too. So there's a great page there to get in touch with this third part of the disease. They'll later go on and say we're not only bodily and mentally ill, which they've covered in the first part of the book, but we're spiritually sick. This is what we start to get to look at in inventory, but I think this unmanageability is the spiritual melody. So all of a sudden there's a need for some power.

When this sort of thinking around bottom of page 24, this sort of thing is fully established in an individual alcoholic tendencies, he's probably placed himself beyond the human age. Unless left out may die and will permanently insane. There was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple truth, get it spiritual tools later in our feet. The great fact is just this and nothing less. We've had deep and effective spiritual experiences, which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows, and toward God's universe.

I still want to get here that this was about change, that we could not fix my sick mind. Then I would get an inward starting at the beginning when Dr. Silkworth mentioned that it takes an entire psychic change. That means a new mind. There's a little hope in recovery. I have to have my mind revolutionized, turned about, from selfless to selfless. And I can't do that, and now I'm told I'm beyond human age, you can't do that for me either.

I wondered what Ruth said, and he said that's fine, but I can't give it to you. I can show you how I got it. And that's what he did. He showed me the things he did. I had a common experience. Just as in the early parts of identifying myself as an alcoholic, there are some things in there that didn't happen to me. I don't identify with them. I identify with enough of them. When I hear it, that's typically alcoholic, it makes me nervous.

The only thing typically alcoholic is the allergy alcohol. And an obsession with the idea that no matter what I'm drinking, from there on, we're just loony. Now, a lot of similarities, but they're not all typical. But there's a common experience. And if I'll comply with that, I accept the fact that I have reached the stage where I must either be locked up or go permanently insane or die. And I was facing the prospect that I was locked up, and I was insane, and I had tried to die and failed.

There's nothing left to do with pick up this kind of spiritual tools. What I agree with it or not, and go have a deep and effective spiritual experience that will revolutionize my whole attitude toward life. Now, that's a big order. You can't do that for me. I can't do that for me. And I don't know anything about God or am I even sure I'm believing God. But I believed in the power that changed through the three people I was working with.

Their lives were changed. They were different. I could see that. I'm not an idiot. That I could see. If you're a serious alcoholic and we weren't, we believe there isn't a minimum. It's all or nothing. That's what they said. It's all or nothing. Half-major available is nothing. Half-major don't get me 50% results. Does that mean I'm only going to drink half a drink today? It won't work. Now, they describe spiritual experiences because I needed the descriptions.

I've had some beauties along the way. Southern comfort, RF and Felix Arizona in summer will give you a spiritual awakening. Eating peyote with the Indians in an Easter ceremony in Nevada gave me some spiritual experiences. First time I had sex, it was a spiritual awakening. I can name you a number of them. None of them had any lasting stuff because they didn't change anything. So, they described what's going to happen and I have to ask myself, do I want this?

It's a beautiful description. You're not remembered. They all had a spiritual awakening and his first thought was, I'm insane. Somebody needs to tell me I'm not nuts, so they called a doctorate. My experience with people over the years is as you have a spiritual awakening, the first thought I had when they had is, whoops, have I just lost it? I was talking to Chuck just the other day. He said, I'm Looney. I've never seen him in better shape.

But he thinks he's Looney because he isn't thinking like he did last week. Some can't beat him up and his initial response would have been to get a two before and get him back. He says something's wrong. I don't want to be angry anymore. He thinks he's crazy. So, through the book, we are given what to do and then as an act of mercy, I believe we're told, this is what, if you've done this, this is what it's going to look like and taste like and feel like and be like.

Here's what to look for. This is happening to you. You're not learning. You're having a spiritual awakening. On page 27, Dr. Carl Young describes the spiritual awakening as he saw. To me, these accounts are phenomenally appeared to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions and attitudes which once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side. And a completely new set of conceptions and motives begins to dominate it.

And people will say, but mine were suddenly cast to one side. Well, mine were. They took months and months and months and months. For me to recognize them, that's all. But they were changed immediately. I just didn't know it. And in terms of eternity, a few years is kind of suddenly anywhere. And then he pronounced do, but gave us freedom. He said, in fact, I've been trying to produce such an emotional, rearrangement venue.

With many individuals, the masses I've employed are successful, but I have never been successful in an alcoholic in the air description. No human power can do this. But I saw it happen. So I started to trust it. Clear-cut directions are giving, showing how we recovered. But joyful thing that is. I'm only told when it can happen. I go across people who have had it happen. And then they say, we'll show you precisely what to do if you want that to happen for you.

And that's all the rest of this book is about. I was there, don't remember some things. I had a good memory the first time we did this together. We saw the line that said that's precisely what this book is about. There you go. And yeah, you remember that? We'd like somebody to hit us with that too. I hung around, and whatever was going on with the first step was happening to me finally. And I've had that experience when I learned that I didn't have to be like other people anymore.

And we began to read in this part of the big book. And at this point in my life things were happening to me. And I guess I really want to make that clear. So much of this happened to me. I was reading, and we were exchanging ideas. And some of us were reading stuff that seemed really neat. There's a wonderful thing that happens when you read the big book with somebody else. You'll run to the meeting and you say, Joe, see this line?

Much to our relief. We discovered we did not need to consider another conception of God. Isn't that great? And Joe said there are pickings, no. Big deal, you know. Finally, inside the God was talking to me. I wasn't talking to Joe on that line at that time, at that day. And that kind of thing kind of started to happen. It was four years' shoulder, understood and manageability finally. I had a better handle on being powerless.

Had no concept of God whatever in my life that wasn't a part of my upbringing as a child other than out there in Wyoming where I was raised. We went through a lot of droughts out there. You don't get a whole lot of rain. And my neighbor used to run over the Mormons once in a while. My dad used to run over the Mormons, the neighbors. And asking to pray for running. And sometimes it would ring. And that was about as much of a concept as I had.

I didn't know much more about it. And so the confusion when I came into A.A. was pretty great. I learned the Lord's prayer in Amings. I didn't know it before. And that's kind of fun because you don't want other people to know that you don't know it. And so you mumble your way through it so they don't know that you don't know. It gets a little crazy. Been sober all this time. Job sober. I still couldn't look in the eye.

I was still uncomfortable unless I was with a very tight group of friends and I was beginning to get some of those right past me. And I'd watch them. I mean I could watch some of them because they could look in the eye when they were talking to you. And they were holding their job. And here I was still intentionally writing bad checks. On punches around the house. I was sober and I was still lying like a fish. And I knew we were supposed to be trying to be honest.

And it wasn't working. And I'm watching people come in and go. Going right past me. There must be a gun. And that's kind of what happened. There are people who have tried virtually everything to get sober. Job touched on no human power being able to do that. And I know guys have tried every human power.