

Steps and Service Workshop

2002 | Part 2 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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My name is Don, and I'm an alcoholic. And, uh, let's see what fella... Tom Ivester, an alcoholic. We're both members of Alcoholics Anonymous. In good standing today, we haven't had a drink. Fix that. Of alcohol. We've never done this before. Tom and I have never done this before. So, we're in for an interesting day. Uh, we hope that you will also find something useful here, but we really don't much give a damn. We're in for an interview. So, Tom hit on a little bit last night. I won't just lay a little bit of groundwork, because there is a tendency in any organization, and that includes this one, that once you find a method, or a way, you'll lock in, and everybody else is wrong. And, and we don't mean to do that.

But that's just the way the human condition presents things. At Arnobelus, they're not wrong, but I'll give them the right to be wrong. They're not quite right yet. I'm probably closer to this man than I am my own brother. In so many ways, it's hard to describe. We're just, we're kin. Uh, we have worked together both in AA and professionally. Our approaches are different, but they're the same. The easiest way I've, I've been able to put it, is that I came to the fellowship through the big book. Tom came to the big book through the fellowship, but it's the same thing, the same place. One of the concerns I personally have with me doing this, over and over, is that it's wonderful while I'm here, and you hear what I say, but you never hear what I say. And I come back and you tell me what I say, and I didn't say that at all.

So, and it's the same thing with, with individual sponsorship. We're all clear when we're in the room, but when one of us goes home, there's a shift on them. And that's just natural and normal and correct. One of the things that I would like to do this time, how many of you've been here in a room like this with me sitting in a chair running my mouth before? Haven't you heard me yet? Yeah, I know. See, I almost stopped doing these. I've been doing this for 30 years, because this is what God called me to do. I haven't ability to open my mouth, and stuff comes out, and people say, oh, that one did I say.

They don't say it's wonderful, at least they stay. The only time I know it's a fact that I'm being affected, there's two ways I can measure my effectiveness. Somebody gets up and leaves, or somebody goes to sleep. And if I can accomplish that, we'll have a good day. But let's say it, I don't know any more than you already know. Please know that. Probably less than some of you know, I have to keep going over it and over and over. And this is rigorous.

I got up at 3.30 yesterday morning and got on an airplane and went through the stuff you go through now with security. I caught the fact that my ticket said I was going to Washington DC, which is where my luggage went. And that's as far as it got. I managed to get here. There are some rigors involved. And then there's the rigorsness of sitting here. I know what I have to do. Tom knows what he has to do. You know what you have to do. So all of this compounds and then I get tired of hearing the same thing. I only have one story. I have different approaches and different pieces of it. He and I have been around so long.

There's a six hour talk in each one of us. And that's just the beginning. So I've been living with a sense of where I am God is for 34 years. And that means every day of my life, something incredible has occurred. And I

want to tell you about all of them. We just don't have that much time. Anyway, I was doing one of these things in New York probably seven years ago or so. And I'm a believer of being right out front. There's no levels here. We're peers. So I will tell the new person exactly the same thing I'll tell him.

And if he isn't around, you're going to get it. And I was talking to my little one of my spiritual daughters Ruth. I'm told her I'm getting ready to quit doing this. I was also just finishing up inner fear on treatment for hepatitis. That makes you tired. I just want it out. I'm a private person. My greatest joy is to just be by myself in my little room. Looking at all the stuff I've got hanging on the wall and listening to Mozart. I like it. Anyway, I told Ruth I'm really I'm thinking I'm not doing this anymore.

She said, oh, don't stop. When you come, we all get together. And it's like having a grandpa or an uncle show up and tell us stories. And that's why I'm here this weekend. As long as that's all I have to do, we're going to be okay. In fact, I catch Helen. I know you do. We're not telling some of the stories. Why don't you talk about that one? I come from a family and intact functional family. I'm sorry, but I do. I'm the only alcoholic in it. We now have five generations in my family living on this planet. And there's no sign that my mother's giving up.

She's finally gotten a cane, but my sister said that isn't so much for walking. It's that she's getting cranky. So be careful when she's got her cane. She has attitude. She has to wear her hearing aids and if she's sick, listen to you. She just turns them off. That's functional. But I never fit in that family. There's always that sense of alienation. I look like him, but that's because the space people who dropped me off were good modelers.

Okay. I didn't feel like him. Didn't act like him. Good morning, Shelley. Y'all know, Shelley? How you do? She's from the old Denver young people's group. We were front pew sitters. Yeah. Tom talked about process last night. Part of the process is becoming a member of the family. Now, I see AA as a big family. But as an anti-family, there's kissing cousins and there's an immediate family. And it's the same here in this spiritual family of ours.

An immediate family are those folks that you kind of do the same things with. My brother's a professor of music at the University of Colorado, one of the foremost synthesizer musicians in the world. Just got back from Russia. They take him over there every year to teach in the summer. And I love him dearly and I'm proud of him and we're close. But we don't do much together. He has in our talk when we put our lives back together when I was making amends.

He pointed out that he and I do the same thing. Our goals are the same. We are trying to touch people at a depth that is so deep that when we leave, they have been changed. That's what we're supposed to do here, you know. This isn't about just chatting with each other. This is about profound changes in people's lives that are so profound they don't even know they've been struck for four weeks. He says he makes his music the way he makes his music and I make mine the way I make mine.

But we're both just singing our song. We're co-owners of a cabin in the high country. I never go. That isn't how I do high country. That's how he does high country. But one of the ways I had to make amends is that he wanted to have cabins to be able to taste it. And I'm one of the three of the siblings we all chipped in and got to cabin. I can use it any time I want. I've got people I fish with and I've got people I bowl with.

And I need to pay close attention that I don't take my bowling partner fishing. We had Jackie and I love Epcot. We go every couple of years. We're part of a group of people circulating a petition to band children. They got their own place next door. So a couple years ago we had occasion to make a big mistake and didn't know it at the time. Her sister and her husband and Jackie and I and some dear dear friends from Lafayette, Louisiana and some very close friends from Houston, Texas.

The four of us went as couples down there. You know you can get a villa for a thousand a week and when you split that up to about four people it's nothing. And we almost destroyed the friendships. Our rhythms are different. We like one another but when I'm an Epcot I don't want to be fooling around. I'm on a mission. And those damn cajuns were just way too laid back for me. And I was just way too, anyway. You hear what I'm trying to say?

So our recovery process has some basis and truth in that. There are different ways of doing the same thing. And I must be, I'm a big book person because I came to AA. They put me immediately into the big book. We did the steps and then they immediately took me out of the big book and put me to work. In five weeks we had completed the step work out of the big book. I personally had a series of spiritual awakening. It's not everybody in my same group did.

I caught the fever. In the sixth week they gave me the next group of people. It was my job to sit there and do the same thing and be done with me. And that's still how I do things. But let me read a piece from this. Because it's kind of where I'd like to go with some of this this weekend. I use this book because it's a guide. These are people who did certain things. Made some bad mistakes and killed some folks. Did some things right and other people lived.

Just like me. But in it they describe not my personality, not my style. But what do I look like? I get a guide here for doing the work. And please understand I don't think working steps is doing the work. That's preparation for doing the work. The work here is to help others. So on page 18, and I looked it up. I don't memorize this. He tried to ask me if I was sure that was a page. And I'm sure because I looked at it yesterday.

There's a description of when I'm through here. Or if you're approaching me as a new person. This is kind of how I should look. The ex-problem drinker. That's me. Who has found this solution I have. Who is properly armed with facts about himself. I am. See I can check this off before I go trying to kill you. Can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached little nothing can be accomplished.

Tom hit on that last night. The process of finally identifying I am an alcoholic. I am one of these. It can take a day or it can take months. When I have a young fellow and I'll tell you about that it took over a year before he felt this identification. So this is what I'm supposed to bring to the table. The man who's making the approach has had the same difficulty. Not been the same place. My first sponsor was doing a natural life sentence for a double murder he'd committed when he was 17 years old in a jewelry store robbery.

That's high drama. I'm a sneak thief. I didn't do that. You know why I could identify with that. Don't give me a gun. I know something about guns. I have one and you have one. I might get shot. Me? No, I'll throw up on you. I won't see you. But he described the morning that that occurred. He told me what was going on in his head

in his emotional state. He said he woke up with the feeling that nobody cared whether he lived or died.

And the pain of that was so great that he started drinking to kill the pain. You can't live with that pain. Only this morning it didn't kill the pain. It intensified the pain. And there's only one honest emotional response to feeling alienated and set apart. That's outrage. My spirit knows that as good as you are and as bad as I am, I'm as good as you are as bad as I am. I belong here and I know that. So I get outraged.

I create the loneliness, by the way. It doesn't look that way for me in here, but that's working. And in that rage he decided to hell with it. I'm going to go get mine. I went down to Robert Jewelry's store in a shootout with the police killed some people on the street. 17 years old. So I could identify with I've had the same difficulty. The drama doesn't define the alcohol. I've met people in the penitentiary doing life sentences who were not alcoholic.

They're just bad behaviors. I've met people who did crimes that weren't even drinking. In fact, I challenge you with this. I came in here thinking at one point, I did what I did because I was drinking. Most of the time I was drinking so I could go do what I did. In my sickness I'm a moral coward. A lazy moral coward. I lived my principles all of my life. My principles were screw you. That's a principle. Get yours first.

Otherwise you won't get it. What I did to do that of course was get yours. I thought yours was mine. Anyway, that's... The man who's making the approach has had the same difficulty. I listened closely to this man. Did you listen closely? He kept coming back because of the spirit that was with the movement to where he's sitting here this morning came as a result of finally understanding, oh, you had the same difficulty.

I may be weird, but so are you. Thank God. Same difficulty. What are some of those difficulties? Drinking is not a difficulty for me. It's a way of life. It's something I will do. It's natural. From the first drink it's natural. What are the difficulties that we have to face? How about getting out of bed in the morning? Tough one. Tough one. Because the minute I come out of the dream state, which is where I'd rather spend my time because I went in there, my mind never ever stops ever.

I've got a hunch with my mind that three weeks after I'm dead, it's still going to be working. Trying to figure it out. Uh-oh. I'm in trouble. So I wake up in the morning. And as I'm waking up, I realize I'm in trouble. I have to go to work. I don't want to go to work because I don't like my job. It's beneath me, or I don't know how to do it. Or I won't look at any number of a hundred reasons. It shows up. I don't want to go.

And if I do go, I'm going to be in trouble anyway. Because I'm going to be late. That damn old karma, I'm going to have trouble with it. And then the traffic's going to be late. And my boss is going to give me hell. Early in the morning. I don't argue anyway. And I know me pretty good. I'm going to say something dumb. And get fired. So why get out of bed? Sounds funny, but you're laughing because you've all done something.

What are some of the other difficulties? I want to be a good father. I had one. Good one. Didn't always like it. In fact, a good part of my life, I didn't like it. Which is kind of a shame because he was a good man. He went through changes. My dad and grandpa back in the late 20s and early 30s when they headed the Colorado Ku Klux Klan. So we had some kind of funky ideas in the house for a while. They both had spiritual awakenings.

And put the robes inside. And spent the rest of their lives undoing some of that. I never took the robes off of them. That was part of the problem. That was the separation. I never took the robes off of them after they did.

We do that to people. So I missed a good deal. But one of the things I remember about my dad, mostly, was that he was there. I didn't always like that, but he was there. I have a model of what I would like to be.

I would like to be there for my kids and for my family. And once my difficulty, I'm so obsessed with me, I can't be there. Even when I'm in a room with you, I'm somewhere else. And so you, as children do, you want my attention. You become an aggravation to me. I'm busy doing something else. Sitting quietly in this chair. Doing something else. That's a difficulty. How do I overcome that? Well, I first have to identify with it.

And we could go on and on. The man has the same difficulty, big difficulty. That's the same. When I started drinking, I can't seem to quit. I had to work around the idea that if, when you want to stop entirely, you can't. It never occurred to me to ever stop entirely. I didn't even know I was an alcoholic when I got here. One of the reasons I think God put me where I did is because immediately upon entering AA, I was taken to the description of what alcoholism is.

Because I was certified as an associate path type 2, bad stuff. I don't know what for sure what it is, but you don't want it. Federal man said I was a psychopath. The doctor said I was a man who depressed the drug addict because I had learned what keeps folks back. And that'll do it. You're getting a little cramped because there's too many people around you. Throw a couple little mood swings. You've got to get good at it.

If you do it too much or too loudly, they'll put you in an institution. If you don't do it quite enough, they just invite you to the parties because you're the entertainer. Same difficulty. I'm self-centered. I'm spending all my life in here. And this is what they're talking to me about, so I can identify. And if I take a drink, I can't not take another drink. As we begin to describe that, I found out why I went to the penitentiary when I was 19 years old.

I took a drink in Long Beach, California on a 24-hour liberty. And what's described in this book as a phenomenon of craving, which is a big word for I can't quit. The next drink becomes paramount to all other, and what a relief that was. Because my sponsor helped me understand that doesn't mean you don't love your children. You don't love your family or yourself or anything. It's just they are now seconds. Your body is craving something and your mind is craving.

David Huff, God bless him. Fuck that. I went in to have a couple beers. I just changed my mind. And we just let him keep saying it until he finally heard what he said. I changed my mind. My mind got changed. And I could begin to identify with that. I'd missed some appointments because of the alcohol. Over a 14-year period, I also used a lot of speed and acid, but I'm not a drug addict, so we wouldn't go into that. I was just looking at my alcoholism.

Long before any drugs enter my life. It was five years of just drinking. The main reason I started using amphetamines is because it made drinking easier and impossible again. You're drinking war out for me. Same difficulty. I want to be like him. The human condition is a wonderful thing. When you find a newfound friend or a peer, you want to be just like him. What are you laughing at, Marcy? The problem is, we all have clay feet.

I had good sponsors. He didn't want me to be like him. He wanted to be like me. He wanted me to be like me. Anyway, we made some identification with a number of people. There were three of them that I stayed close with, and I began to recognize something even then. There's some fakes and I ate. Did you know that? There's

some people who sound really, really good. But if you watch how they live, you wonder, this doesn't quite match up.

And I bitched about that once. I come from a line of sponsorship that says, if you don't like it, bitch, about it. To me, so I can set you straight. He said, Dummy, that was my name. Well, before I met you, I was 38, 9, 84. That's pretty good leap up. Dummy. He said it doesn't make the slightest bit of difference what anyone else is doing. What are you doing? That's clear. I'm bitching. Well, quit it. If I bring a new person to a meeting who's already confused and frightened and who's looking for something new, and he comes from an environment where the F word is every other word, and where complaining about the state of life is the conversation piece, and hate is the motivator, and fear is the motivator, and if I bring him to a meeting and all you're doing is bitching and cussing, complaining about everybody else.

What the hell would he say? I wouldn't. And I have to create that arena where that will occur only minimally. It's bound to occur. There's days when I've earned the right to bitch. In fact, I've reached an age time where I think I'm going to become cranky, and I'm not even going to have to work it. Very lonely. Yeah. Yeah. I tried it for about two weeks, and you're right. That he obviously knows what he's talking about.

I've been continuously sober since December 26th of 1967. That statement should tell you something. I know what I'm talking about when I say simply, if you're alcoholic, you don't ever have to drink again. I can't show you a way in which you can live a life that will make sense to you without us. I know what I'm talking about. I hang around with guys who are 45. And Yale's 51 now. If you want to see some examples, we know what we're talking about.

Shall I hear what, 34? 33? Yeah. Well, we'd come from the old then to the young people's group. We were something to be old. About 15 of us. We had a meeting on Tuesday night. It was ours. You were welcome to come if you could stand the heat. You know, young people have confrontation meetings and work steps like their lives depended on. And then Sunday night, we sponsored a meeting where the whole town was there at York Street.

It was a call up speaker meeting. Nobody knew who was going to cheer till they walked in the door. And nobody knew who was going to speak until they got there. We thought that was pretty nifty. And it really was. Nobody had time to figure out what the hell they were going to talk about today. And the rest of the week, we went other places. We came to your meeting. We went to Grady and Fort Collins and the north side of Denver and hospitals.

We were a very busy involved group. We met in homes back then too. I can remember it clearly. We had an old dog. Big old black dog. We met in our home. And the dog would just lay there. And the minute we started the lowest pair of the tail, we started. We did things together. We know who we're talking about. Can I meet that? Yeah, I can meet that. Not from here, but in my heart I can tell you I've been married to the same woman for 25 years.

I've been in the same house. I know what I'm talking about. Don't come to me with your relationship problems. I've never figured out how to help a healthy, sick relationship. So I can't do you any good. But you don't know how to have a healthy relationship. I can show you how to have a relationship with God and that will

translate into everything. Anyway. But as a whole department shouts to the new prospect who is a man of the real answer, people don't listen much to what we say.

Words are good carriers, but because words in the English language, words mean so much, they don't mean much. So in order to overcome that, we have developed a storytelling way of presenting our message. I can show you a technique until it's running out your ears. I won't. I save that for the really sick ones that come to mind. Because it keeps them busy while we try to figure out how we're going to keep them alive for one more.

My deportment. That means how I conduct myself. If I sponsor you, you will show up at my house the sixth morning. I love this couple of guys since I've retired and pushed me to seven, but I like six. Couple of reasons when I was working that was the only time I really had available. But mainly I want you to see how I recovered alcoholic and his family prepared for the day. That's the toughest time in any alcoholics life.

We think it's the afternoon. No, it isn't. In afternoon, we're getting ready to drink. That's the easy time. It's this early morning stuff. That's what was done for me. When I came out of the prison, I had a little hotel room and then I moved into a little apartment with the toilet down the hall. And then I finally got one that had the toilet in the same room again. Well, it had its own door, but it was in the same room.

And I wanted to be a family man. So I picked a man to sponsor. He not only had an answer technically, he had a family. And I just got in Gary's back pocket and watched how he did that. And he wasn't very good at it, but he was better at it than I was. At least his kids talked to him. Had a job. Let me tell you real wisdom from a sponsor, a big book fanatic, gave me this. Gave me two things. First of all, he said, are you tired of being arrested?

And I said, yeah. He said, then quit going where there's cops. Profound? He said, do you want money? I said, yeah. He said, well, get a job. Then once you've got it, show up for it. Kind of regularly. And on time, if possible. And while you're there, you might even consider doing some work. He was a smart guy. And at the end of a given period of time, they'll give you money. And it'll never be enough. It'll always be enough.

Now, that'd be smart, Alec. If I hadn't been watching him, he had a job. Even in the penitentiary, he had a job. And he did that job. And he had another job, which was liaison with the administration so we could have our meetings. And he had another job, which was wandering the tears, talking to needles like me. In fact, that's one of the things that brought me a step further in the process. When I was locked down at night, because this is an environment where if you're not doing something, they put you back in your cage, so they don't have to worry about you.

Now, when I was in my cage, he would come by and visit with me. And I realized one day, he can't do that. Inmates are not allowed to wander the tears. You're either on your job, or you're in your cage. I want what he has. He's getting out of his cell wherever he wants to. I want what he has. And I finally got him. That was his main job, was going around, talking to the people who were coming along in the process. In the school we did this.

The rest of the time it was by example. His deportment. He was clean. He got two kinds of people in the prison, in terms of dress. There's the ones that just have the clothes that go to the laundry and come back and they look kind of shabby. We don't have very many tailors there. And then there's the players. And our clothes are

always needle sharp pressed. Avoid them. If you're not through drinking here, you'll end up in a penitentiary.

Remember that one. Stay away from tightly pressed closed people. He exhibited the same thing I'd seen in my dad. He was there. So I began by watching examples to understand one of the things that I must develop in me. Is to be there. My dad gave me a little piece of wisdom. Didn't come out of here, I'm sorry. It's in here, but you won't find it in these words. He said, Don, all the man needs is two things to live a good life.

Honor and wisdom. You need enough honor to keep every promise you ever make, despite the personal consequences. And enough wisdom not to make too many promises like that. It's a principle that suits me. Comes right out of here. If I get rid of all the self-interest and all those things that are going on in my head. And I keep making promises I can't keep because it makes you feel better. And you'll, you know, it's the old Kong game.

If I get rid of all that, I can just show up. I don't have to go through all that stuff in my head about am I pleasing you or not. Don't much care. I know I won't do it into displease you if I can help it. But if it does displease you? Well, okay, talk to me about that. And then get the hell away from me. He was always there, not at my back end call. But he was always there. Somehow he showed up just when he needed to show up.

He was always there. And he was available. That's another aspect of being there. He was available. Folks who know me know that I'm very easy to reach if you need me. There's an awful lot of people who say they can never reach me. Well, it's because they don't need me. Okay. Is that esoteric, Tom? Probably emotional. So I'm watching. In beginning to develop, I guess you could call them skills, to develop internal, they're not even principles.

They're not intellectual things. They're not the ways of being. If I give you my word, I will keep it. Know that. That's where I stand. Don't ask me for my word unless you intend for me to keep it. Because I will. If you don't really want it, we got conflict. He has no attitude of holier than now. Today that concerns me, I must tell you the truth. Lots and lots of places I go. Have a holier than now attitude. Some of it comes from people who use the big book and some of it comes from the action folks and some of it comes from the who cares folks.

Holier than now. My effectiveness is the fact that I know I am you and you are me. It was my big spiritual awakening. How can I be holier than you are? Sit around and listen to the war stories. It's not the high-drama stuff. It's the really chicken shit stuff like stealing a kid's piggy bank as you need a drink. And I know that and I can project that. And I don't come down to your level and I don't raise you to my level where we are.

And that's good enough for me. I expect the very best out of everybody I meet. I also know that whatever you brought to the table today, that you're very best, okay? I'm not going to make any judgments on that. Nothing, whatever, except the sincere desire to be helpful. Can I fit that or do I have an agenda? If I decided that you should be in your fourth step in your sixth week. If I have, I'm not matching this. You need to tell me how to work the steps.

I don't need to tell you. The pacing is different for everybody. I need to be and talk quickly about Chuck. Chuck softened me. I was a big book fanatic of the kind that got rigid for a while. If you weren't doing it exactly this way, you weren't doing it right. And I cherish those days. Oh, horses ass. God sent me Chuck. Five foot two, made it a snake, dangerous. So dangerous when you walk in the room, you didn't even have to say anything.

People just backed up. It was clear, this one would eat you alive if you sent it wrong. I'm not even using a toothpick afterwards, just bad to the bone. He'd been sober eight years and worked with Hazleton to drink. He had several two-year periods of sobriety and then he drank. And he was done. He was trying to drink himself to death and couldn't, and that made him even matter. So they sent him over to our group in Denver when you got one that you just can't do anything with, sent him to us.

I think it's probably revenge. Anyway, Chuck got right up in my face. He'd been told to talk to me. Got right up in my face. He just dared me to say anything meaningful. He said, and don't give me that big book crap. I've tried that and it didn't work. What am I going to say? He tried it and it didn't work. And I love that because then I pray, which means I get into a state where I understand. I don't know what to say to this guy.

He either put some words in my mouth or get me the hell out of here. And I heard it, come on. I said, well, Chuck, what do you think of God? Oh, I hate the son of a bitch. I understand that someday we each get a couple minutes with him and I can't wait for lunch. Tell him, well, I think of this shitty deal. And I'm going to hell with my friends. And I said, good. He believes. He believes. We have an attitude problem.

This man was so deeply wounded by life and by alcoholism. And by life, I mean, he came up in a family. He was wounded. This was a wounded animal. And I knew that there's no way I can do anything except nurse this guy if he'll let me. And I did the only thing he needed. He needed a friend first. He needed to feel somebody on this planet cares about me even though I hate everybody. So I just had him come by my house every day and I was in a business that I traveled around town.

And he just rode around with me spewing hate. I don't care. That just goes right on through. There's nothing to worry about there. Almost a year before we could do anything. Except right around. The change occurred in Chuck because of my wife, not me. We stopped by the house one day and she made chocolate chip cookies. And she gave us each one. But they're really good, by the way. And Chuck ate his and said, that was good.

Which to a cookie maker means, well, here, have a bag. And we got back in the car and he broke my heart because he described his condition to me. He said, why would she give me a bag of cookie? I was able to say it's because she thinks you remember the family, Chuck. And I watched the change take place. Then we could get into cutting it away. There's no fees to pay. I'm going to challenge you on that one. I'm sorry. I give a lot of meetings.

We're right in the middle of somebody's talk, which is very rude. Somebody starts passing a basket. No explanation whatsoever. And I got into a new guy's head one day watching that happen. We thought, wait a minute now. I'm new here. I'm still shaking. I've got fifty-seven cents in my pocket. Some other idiots have told me to make ninety meetings in ninety days. That's a setup. I'm sorry. I don't believe in that. You should make far more than that.

Don't put a number on people who can't show up anyway, for God's sake. It becomes a target. Anyway, I'm listening to you and I'm watching you because I'm suspicious. I've tried a lot of stuff and nothing's working. I probably tried this four or five times. It didn't work either. And right in the middle of someone sharing something, they start this basket around. No explanation. And I'm watching the people go into their pockets and come up with a buck and throw it in the basket.

I got fifty-seven cents. I'm going to be here for ninety days. And it doesn't take the rocket signers to understand that this thing's going to cost me ninety bucks. And I got fifty-seven cents in my pocket. And I might not eat tonight. I probably won't come back here. So maybe a little explanation would be appropriate after the person finishes sharing. No fees to pay. I've done to a young people's group. We used to tell them, if you're new, don't put them in that basket.

You don't remember yet. We used to tell them to take it. Yeah, we'd quit that though. No access to grind. I'm sorry. I try to live up to that one and I just don't do well. Grinding access is one of the few pleasures I have left. But I'll try not. I'm not going to grind them with new people. No people to please. If I sponsor you, you do not have to please me. You don't have to do a damn thing, I say. If you don't, you won't get the results that you came to me for.

You don't have to please me. You do have to show up on time. Regularly. If you don't, then you don't have that time anymore. I assume you don't want it. I don't fire people. I get fired a lot. And that's good because it clears the deck for somebody new. You don't have to please me. You don't have to dress a certain way. You don't have to clean your mouth up to please me. I will suggest you may want to do that if you want to make any friends somewhere along the way.

Well, they did that for us. It was suggested by my sponsor that I learned to speak English instead of street. And if you're getting into corrections you are, please don't try to talk content. You don't know right off the bat, you're fake. I mean, I'm going to listen to the thing you say and you're not very good at it. They are. They're tested a lot. No lectures to be endured. Oh God, save me from that. I love lectures.

One of the ways that I finally gained the trust of my children is that I stopped raising them. I think raising children the way most of us do it is a criminal activity. It's an imposition of my values on you and you will by God reflect well on me. And you do that by lecturing. Remember when you were a kid and all the lectures you got? Remember the lectures. I just remember all those I got. There's a minute to start that.

These are the conditions we found most effective. And there was a second piece that I was to become effective in my life. I just tripped through. Most alcoholics have that. We really want to be effective. I want to know that somewhere along the way my being on this planet counted for something that I wasn't just another number that went through here. That somewhere somebody can say don't remember exactly who it was, but this happened in my life changed a little bit.

It got better. I think we all want that. I've got to be effective, not right. That was the way it was put to me. Learn to be effective, not right. Get you out of the debating society. None of us makes a sole vocation of this work and don't do we think it's effectiveness would be increased if we did. That kept me out of the treatment business for a lot of years. I got back into it, but in a different role. I applied for a job three years solo with Joe Wright, not at Fort Logan, his house father.

We practiced as amateurs and I was going to get pro. She said, honey, you can do this job very easily, but if you do you lose some of what you've got. So I did not take the job. I want to be effective. He was a parent. What does that mean? What is an effective parent? I'm not going to define it for you. I just want you to think about it. I can see the results of effective parenting. My two-year-old grandson comes to the house.

He gets a big grin and he runs at me and almost knocks me over. I've done something effective. He trusts me. Anyway, we feel that elimination of our drinking is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations, and affairs. The implication is that I will have each of those things. A home, an occupation, and affairs. I just have to be careful not to have more affairs than I have principles.

This is, I'm going to let Tom talk now. This was just the introduction. So that took so long. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our greatest respective occupations, homes, and affairs. How can I take what's in here out here? Because if it stays in here and I stay in here with it, I'm useless. No use to anybody. How can I take this out? Well, even people whose methods may be different, whose style may be different, we can work in brotherly and harmonious action.

That's what this is really all about. How do you do it on the job? I've got some stories later about how that plays out. Spiritual life is very real right now on the street. Let's get with it, life. Meditation is important. A business that takes no regular inventory will soon go broke. A business that stays in inventory all the time is also going to go broke. You got to be open for business. Never known that. Notice I didn't pass a basket while you were talking.

I appreciate that. I feel, excuse me. I'm not running out on you. Yes, but I'm old. I don't know. It's ten o'clock. Let me get logistically solid here. Nine o'clock, what time do we break to meet those sandwiches you make? Need it ten-thirty? Not just a break. I mean the lunch deal. Oh, that's a twelve o'clock. Okay. That sounds like a square deal. It's so great about ten-thirty. I like to do that. It sort of puts me at ease.

It also helps me know what I'm doing. Sometimes people just turn loose and say, do whatever you want. Just be wonderful, you know. Let me rehash it all. Let me just piggyback a little bit what Donald was talking about. This chapter, there is a solution. It's what we're about. It's about how we make this solution come alive. How do we make the solution really be a solution and be effective? A lot of times when I first looked at the big book, it looked like just jumbled to me.

It just looked like a whole bunch of philosophical stuff. But what I find when I get into it is that it's about as detailed and manual as you'll ever see in terms of laying out in specific kinds of terms, how we make these things happen. And that very much is true to me. I appreciate what Donald was sharing there. I was thinking that I think probably the most uncomfortable I have ever been trying to talk to an A guy asked me to speak in Charlotte.

And he was a lawyer. I mean, that doesn't excuse everything, but it explains a lot. And the guy had gotten hold of my professional resume from somewhere. And he introduced me to an A group by my professional resume. And I swear to God, I have never felt more awkward in a meeting in my life. How do you get from that to what we're about? And I bet you it took me ten minutes to get reoriented and reintroduced to a way that we're on the same sheet of music.

And what that does is, it came out and he was talking about this, that unless we get those essential ingredients for making the solution come alive in place, it doesn't happen. You ever go to a meeting and somebody lectures to you, somebody just makes a speech? That has to be a classic demonstration of how to turn off somebody. I mean, drunks won't listen to that. They absolutely won't listen. I don't care how good it is.

It just doesn't have the ingredients that earned the conference of an alcohol. We had a really wonderful person. I'm speaking our group a while back. And they spent the first 30 minutes just launching in to an abstract presentation of history. History is interesting if it's coming from a grunt. But if it's a history lesson, you can thump it up. So for 30 minutes, everybody was kind of restlessly shifting around and politely listening.

And then, half hour into it, they got drunk and started talking about drinking and rasping and throwing up and rowdy behavior. And my god, the crowd just became electric, you know. And some of that, when that's not in place, it just doesn't work. So I tell you, we get some brain deaths and I'm listening to drunk stories. But thank God for them. Because they're the heart and soul of the Henry you needed. Don't you go too far away?

I guess they're the heart and soul of this thing of what it is that earns the rest of the conference. Because if you hadn't been there, I don't particularly want to hear the philosophy unless you're coming from the same place that I'm coming from. So to me, that's awfully important, that this is an ex-problem drinker. That if I can establish the fact that that's who I am, that I'm a guy who has had this problem, then everything I offer is valid.

And the same with you, if you're telling me something and I know where you're coming from. Now I learned a long time ago that alcoholics don't invest real trust very readily. It's got to be on the basis of a proven relationship, a trusting relationship. But once it happens, it never stops. It never quits. Because it's a lifetime deal. I'm constantly amazed at how many people I have called me that I worked with 20 or 25 years ago.

And there's something about that connection that occurs that just becomes almost like a sacred trust. And when you start getting shaky and unsure, you want to reach back to something that you trust. You want to get something that you know you can hold onto. And so I think it's an awfully vital thing about the solution that is not enough just to have a lot of glib words that describe something. Very important for me to understand that it's based on my experience.

This thing of one alcoholic honestly sharing their experience with another alcoholic has had effectiveness like nothing this world has ever known. And that's why I've got a shared share with Donna. There's a notion that if we start moving it into a technology and we get two studios in it, we lose the spirit of what this dude's about. So it's tremendously important to me to always keep in good sharp focus. That my experience is what's valuable.

Not my wisdom or wit or all that stuff, but it's the experience. And first and foremost, and then has found a solution, pretty important to be able to have a valid story of recovery and not just a drug story. So pretty pretty short criteria for that. The arm was faxed about himself. Not about the illness, about the sociology of alcoholics and alcoholics, but the arm was faxed about himself. And then it comes from a good, solid, confident kind of place.

It earned the entire confidence in just a few hours. The other thing I just wanted to mention a little bit, it's the thing about a whole year of the Nile. And that is a kind of a sneaky thing to, in subtle things kind of make that happen. It's the thing of, I see it's core sort of collectively doing it sometime. Well, let me go back to a prison thing and then branch that out just a little bit. Some people, when they do institutional work, get in to sort of group thinking, your group thinking, put everybody in one box.

And one of the things that I used to really dislike in those early days was people who would come in and talk

about you guys like this. That there's one monolithic set of people sitting in these chairs. And my guide is all different people. They're totally different people, but it's sort of looking at folks as a class. And I don't know of a less engaging thing that you can do because there's no connection. And that's just sort of a kind of a class action stuff I get.

But it happens. And folks will tend to sort of lecture and advise people that they see as a same group. And it really works against this business of earning trust and confidence in me. When I can't get away from this kind of separation of seeing myself in one category and seeing you in another. Very important to me to recognize that us, we as us. I see it also in some of the ways we deal with people who come into our meetings who are sort of like, for example, people who come in with a court paper.

And we'll tend to deal with those people as if they were one thing. And sort of write them off as people who are in a different category because they happen to have a different hook in them. And we'll tend to sort of routinize how we deal with them and miss the opportunity to really relate to those interviews. One of the real challenges that I've been trying to work on and been trying to enlist others in to do it, too, is how we deal with people who come into A.

And I think it comes under that holier dial even though it may not be thinking that way consciously. Like if people come in to meetings from a facility. I was speaking somewhere the other day and three people got up and left at a certain time. Well, I mean, I've been around long enough to recognize the behavior. I knew they were reporting somewhere because it wasn't you like random acts of desertion. This is like somebody wrong about it.

So I kind of leaned over to the guy beside me. I said, where are they going? He said, oh, they come over from the jail and they have to be back. But see, it was they, it was compartmentalized thinking. And those folks came in as a unit, sat as a unit, left as a unit, and never really shared their experience the same way those of us did were sitting there. And so thinking of that, whether you're thinking holier than now, or just that these folks are different, absolutely block that thing of connecting and earning the confidence and trust of people.

Treat percenters, same thing. I wonder about here, but a lot of our treat percenters have waned and not as evident. But people from halfway houses and treatment centers, it's always been a real perplexing concern for me. That they tend to operate like a guarantee I could go to, to a jaywalkers. And if people were coming in from a facility, I could spot them. And so could you. Because if you watch them, they'll move like they're in a cube.

They'll come in and sort of cubed up on a bus or a van or something. And then they'll march like soldiers into the meeting, and then they'll sit together. And some of it is regimentation. Some of it is just the thing that that's where they feel safe, I guess, or something other. But I've seen people watch them walk into the meeting, in the cube, sit in the cube, move into whatever group they're going as a cube, get back on the bus as a cube and never interact with the folk in the meeting.

They're subtle things, but they're ways that we display this kind of sort of put it under holier than now, this thing of not breaking through those barriers in the ways that we can. And if we don't get past that and get it to a personal level, I'll give you one other example thing I'm ready to. And part of it got me trouble about court papers. I was in a city out in Mid-West while back. And there was a meeting that I don't go to a lot of daytime meeting, but they had a noon meeting at this particular place, and I said, well, she's going to think I'm going to

catch that.

So we're in, and I was kind of like the psychiatrist at the Burlesque show. I was watching the audience. The meeting was fine, but I got interested because they had a deal there where the secretary of the meeting sat on a raised platform at a desk and sort of ran the show, but thought she wasn't. And nobody paid attention to her. But I started watching the people who came in with papers where somebody had mandated them to be there and get signature.

And they had a ritual. When you came in, you went up to that desk and you put the paper in the inbox on the desk and sit down. So I picked a guy just to sort of see what happened. I picked a guy who walked in, ran him selection, came in, put his paper there, just like he was trained to do it. I don't know if he'd teach it on the street or what, but he just came right in, put the paper in, went down, sat down about in the middle of the crowd.

The meeting was on step five. And I kind of watched him to hold me. And he was, I didn't disrupt anything, he was properly attended. Got through with the meeting, got up, walked up to the desk, got his piece of paper, walked out. Never interacted with one human. Now we would put him under the heading of having been to AA. Has he ever been to AA? No. He came in and observed the meeting. He didn't engage in a meeting. He got into no fellowship, got into no conversation.

And I got into no personal interaction with a single human. And to me that's that thing that happens when we start thinking collectively of people, that we just kind of ride off a whole place. And we don't use it, we don't want to be ugly with that. But it's just something we do. And so, just mention that thing of thinking, collecting with people. I tell you one thing I ran into when time goes so fast when I'm talking.

I got time to do this, one little war story that kind of makes the example of it. When I got out of the institution and went back to Michigan on my first trip, I was going to the state convention in Lansing, Michigan. And I had a lot of buddies, I hadn't been back since I left up there. And I had a lot of dear friends that I wanted to see. I started in the hotel and there was a real nice-looking guy standing there with his name tag on, well dressed fellow.

And it looked like a Wall Street guy. But he had the name tags. I knew he went over it. January was a minute and I asked for a guy. And he recognized the guy that I mentioned is doing a lot of work down at the institution I was in. And he said, oh, oh, you must have met Peter. You were around Jackson. I said, yeah, I was there. He said, well, Pete does an awful lot of good work down there. He speaks your fellow's language.

Well, now I know that that was a mild and innocuous statement. But it's also the kind of statement that can drive you out of here. And I said, could I ask you what language is that? He said, oh, you know what I mean. I said, yeah, I do know what you mean. But I hope you know what I mean because I speak the same language you do. I don't speak a foreign language because I happen to be in a different city. There's simple things here.

And I wasn't being scornful of the guy. But it's very important because that attitude can be the barrier to somebody coming here. So when we're looking at things about what makes the solution come alive, what makes it effective? I think that's one of the book points I just kind of think is that those little attitudes can make the difference. Now, if you have that kind of feeling about somebody, you don't need to tell the new guy.

Guarantee, his feelings are out there sharply enough that he'll pick it up. You can't hide it. So I think it awfully important that in doing that, it's kind of like Donald said, it's not so much how much I know or how good I am or anything like that. It's about how well I can present myself to the person and earn that trust in common. If I don't, the rest of it's an exercise in futility. How long do we break? About ten minutes, I noticed what he said.

Here is never neat.