

The Road Back

Jan/Feb 2018 - Issue 414



Step Four

It begins and ends with 'me'.

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid.

(Page 62, Fourth Edition, 2001, The Big Book)



A word from the Editor

Step Four

There is a universal rule viz. 'clean up your own mess'. In matters spiritual in AA, we practise this exercise as part of our recovery programme. Step Four is a beginning Step in conducting this major overhaul and completing it in Step Five (see second next issue of The Road Back). This work continues for our lifetime through the subsequent Steps.

For us alcoholics, perfection invariably creates more problems than solutions. We will procrastinate rather than do. An old axiom in AA was that anything that was worth doing was worth doing badly. The essence of this is that we are far better taking a shot at this Fourth Step work rather than analysing it or debating it. It may not be a perfect Step Four but it will have broken the ice on a Step that is a daunting task for most of us. We have a maintenance Step at number 10 to tackle any issues that may have slipped our mind when writing out our inventory. (And if needs be, we can always repeat this Step again when we have matured more in recovery). Our Big Book strongly suggests that we write out our list, this is, as it puts it "a fact finding and fact facing exercise".

Writing something gives us a little distance from ourselves, in fact the business of writing can be a very useful reflection for us in our inner growth and development as we move on in AA. We need perspective and a balanced one at that. It is important to look at the stock-in-trade and look at the assets there. Our programme is not meant to negate all that's good in us. The exercise is to list the obstacles that stand in the way of our contented sobriety and at the same time look at the good that's in all of us. (Maybe listing at least one good thing about ourselves in every area where we are listing defects.) Our self worth has been shot right through. While deflation of ego at depth is essential for recovery, much of that 'humiliation' has already played out in our latter days of drinking. In recovery, we invariably find that 'humiliation' precedes the grace of humility entering into the spirit of what we are. Humility is an objective perspective of who and what we are, that essentially is the object of Step Four.

A useful definition might be 'a clear recognition of what and who we really are, followed by a sincere attempt to become what we could be, based on a desire to seek and do God's will.' Uriah Heep is a fictional character created by Charles Dickens in his novel 'David Copperfield'. The character is notable for his cloying humility, obsequiousness, and insincerity, making frequent references to his own "umbleness". His name has become synonymous with being a sycophant. Like any of the 'virtues'- as soon as they recognise themselves as being virtues, they are no

longer virtues! And so we accord in finding so many spiritual paradoxes in AA also.

We are cautioned that failure to complete Steps Four and Five can lead us back to drinking so we take the prescribed medicine. We may not like the medicine but we swallow it for we know it holds the promise of being restored to health. There is an interesting quote in Tradition Nine (page 174): 'Unless each A.A. member follows to the best of his ability our suggested Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant'. Strong language, and one doesn't have to agree with it, but it's there.

Our book suggests writing out our life story also and attempting to get fresh perspectives on the various happenings and influences that have shaped our character and personalities. These kinds of insights are important to give us clarity of thought and new insights into our behaviour patterns and personality traits. We are able to look at our motives. When we crave, we know that we slave. Where we had lost the power of choice in drink, we had compromised ourselves on many fronts. Again, this is not an exercise in self-downing but a dispassionate look at our lives in order to see the forces that have shaped it thus far. Our 'close mouthed' sponsor or confidant in Step Five will help throw further light on the labyrinths of conscious and subconscious motives that have destroyed so much of worth in us.

Doubtlessly our motives based on self were propelled by a love for ourselves, however this 'self love' was both unwise and unwell. What is the difference between selfish self-love and wholesome self-love? It is sometimes suggested that the journey in recovery is towards self-love and becoming one's own best friend – in a healthy, wholesome and life-giving way; recognising that this is also a friendship with our Higher Power. Then, from that wholesome place, to reach out to others.

The Big Book suggests that we look at our fears, our resentments and our sex conduct. When we list these in a detached a fashion as we can, without becoming too caught up in judgement and blame or emotional downers we begin to get a clearer picture as to the various motives that have been driving us.

In doing any Step it is often suggested that we revise the previous Step. Nowhere is this more applicable as in this surgical operation. We need a Power greater than ourselves to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Step Four is the first Step in implementing our decision in Step Three.

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The Road Back

A meeting in print

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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Step Four

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Photos courtesy of Ken O'S

The Views and opinions expressed in The Road Back are not necessarily the views and opinions of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.



From "How it Works"

Selective extracts from the Big Book
Chapter 5- page 64-71

....Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.

Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. *This was Step Four.* A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values.

We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.

Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stems all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were "burned up."

On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?

We were usually as definite as this example:

(see grid on next page)

I'm resentful at:

Mr. Brown

The Cause

His attention to my wife.

Told my wife of my mistress.

Brown may get my job at the office.

Mrs. Jones

She's a nut — she snubbed me.

She committed her husband for drinking. .

He's my friend

She's a gossip.

My employer

Unreasonable — Unjust — Overbearing —

Threatens to fire me for my drinking and padding my expense account.

My wife

Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown.

Wants house put in her name.

Affects my:

Sex relations

Self-esteem (fear)

Sex relations

Self-esteem (fear)

Security

Self-esteem (fear)

Personal relationship

Self-esteem (fear)

Self-esteem (fear)

Security.

Pride — Personal

sex relations —

Security (fear)

We went back through our lives.

Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we

considered it carefully. The first thing apparent was that this world and its people were often quite wrong. To

conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed sore.

Sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got. As in war, the victor only *seemed* to win. Our moments of triumph were short-lived.

It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent

that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while. But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harbouring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die.

If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of normal men, but for alcoholics these things are poison.

We turned back to the list, for it held

the key to the future. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than alcohol.

This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended us we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."

We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.

Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely.

Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults, we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.

Notice that the word "fear" is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer, and the wife. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn't deserve. But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling? Sometimes we think fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble.

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.

Perhaps there is a better way - we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the

extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.

We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.

Now about sex. Many of us needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes - absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation.

Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind. They see its significance everywhere. One school would allow man no flavour for his fare and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the

arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?

We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relationship to this test - was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.

Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.

God alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical

about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice.

Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so. But this is only a half-truth. **It depends on us and on our motives.** If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience.

To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. **If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves all the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.**

If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. **We have listed and analysed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.**

In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves. **We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him. If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself.**

∞∞∞∞∞



Slow Me Down Lord

Slow me down Lord - slow me down.

Slow me down to lean and watch the crows caw as they go city bound in whirring flight, to hear the sound of the wind in the overhead wires – the humming of the telephone poles along the road.

The speckled sparrows, lost deep in the hedges of the thorn ditches ...slow me down.

Slow me down Lord – slow me down.

Slow me down Lord – That I can walk in the forest all by myself and search for nothing. To see the moon rising up behind dark green conifers, to feel the rain pour over silver leaves in an orchard, to walk on paths, damp between gooseberry bushes, apples displaying themselves red against the ocean of drizzling air.

To see the shadow of a small flower standing – shining like a blob of melted gold-beautiful as tender eyes - on all sides, hosts of tall dark nettles of blooming.

Slow me down Lord- slow me down.

Slow me down... to flatten my nose against the window pane and count the people crossing the street – distant dots along the edges of the vacant square of anticipation.

To lay my ear to the green cheek of the grass and hear the redeeming rhythm of the showers, till the sun spreads its softening light. The splash of the waves against the pier stones, the night streaks over the water, the solitary darkness about my head - The bubbling stream running past into the sea.

Slow me down Lord-

To feel how quiet the world can be and in the veil of the twilight- so cosy and so lovely just like a peaceful chamber where the troubles and sorrows of the day can be slept from off the soul.

Slow me down Lord- on the road back.

Vincent, Raheny



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ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS 61st ALL IRELAND CONVENTION

AA Singleness of Purpose



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Victor E

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This is a closed meeting of
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In support of A.A.'s singleness of
purpose, attendance at
closed meetings is limited to
persons who have a desire
to stop drinking.

If you think you have a problem
with alcohol, you are welcome to
attend this meeting.

We ask that when discussing our
problems, we confine ourselves
to those problems as they relate to
alcoholism.

*(The 1987 General Service Conference
made this statement available as an A.A.
service piece for those groups who wish to
use it.)*

Step Four

(Step Four; wonderful Step Four; a Step which helps the spirit soar; a Step that I came to adore.)

I knew nothing about it - or any of the other Steps - when I arrived in AA, over twenty years ago.

I had no idea that AA was a spiritual programme of action; a programme that, through Step Four, would involve my taking a personal inventory. This meant looking back at my past, looking at the resentments I had and writing them down in three columns, as set out in the Big Book.

When I arrived in AA, I knew nothing about resentments and the corroding effect they have on our lives. The Big Book, Page 64, says, "Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically."

Now, with the benefit of my time in AA, the beautiful knowledge in the Big Book and the wonderful guidance of my sponsor, I realise the destructive

nature of resentment.

With my sponsor's guidance, I set out my resentments on paper. Before doing this, my sponsor had introduced me to something called 'defects of character'. Up until my arrival in AA, I had (also) no idea about these, either.

AA is like a great spiritual college. We learn so much; not only about alcoholism, but, through doing The Steps, we are shown spiritual tools which not only help us to stop drinking but help us to connect with a Higher Power; a God of our own conception; a God who, as it says on Page 133, "wants us to be happy, joyous and free."

As I said, I knew nothing about how AA worked, on the day that I arrived. I realised that it was there to help me stop drinking; However, I had no idea that the word God would be used, or that it was a spiritual programme of action.

I met people on my first day who were very, very helpful. They knew about the spiritual programme of action and wanted to pass on this knowledge to me. I was taken for tea afterwards. We chatted and I talked about my problems and my drinking.

I was asked if I believed that I was powerless over alcohol and when I

replied, “Most certainly!”, they introduced me to the concept of a Higher Power. They said that they, too, were powerless and that, each morning, they got on their knees to ask the Higher Power of their own understanding to keep them sober that day; all so that they could be helpful to others.

Each night, they got on their knees also, to say thank you to this same power for keeping them sober that day.

It did seem very strange. It was not what I thought I’d hear, but they said that, as it had worked for them, I should give it a go. I was in so much pain - who was I to argue? I just did it that night and again the next morning and I have done it, night and morning, ever since; and I have not had - or wanted - a drink in all that time.

I went to lots of meetings and I got involved in service. After about two months, I asked someone to sponsor me. He asked me the magic question, “Was I willing to go to any lengths?” I thought that they were strange words at the time, but I now appreciate that they are repeated in the Big Book a number of times. The wording on Page 79 is just one example. Basically, what it means is, was I willing to do what he had done and pick up the spiritual tools of AA; the spiritual tools of life?

I went round to his flat and, after talking about the first Three Steps, we got down on our knees together to say the Step Three prayer - the prayer that’s shown on Page 63 of the Big Book.

After saying it, he introduced me to Step Four, by showing me how to write it in three columns, as set out in the Big Book.

It was all new to me, but doing it proved to be a revelation. In writing it, I started to realise that the problem was not alcohol, but life. When something happened that I didn’t like, the way I reacted - or rather, why I drank - was because of my resentments and defects of character.

I was told that I have fourteen defects of character; pride, self-pity, self-centeredness, dishonesty, sloth, lust, arrogance, impatience, greed, gluttony, envy, jealousy, intolerance and selfishness.

This was all in line with the Big Book. On Page 64 it says, “Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.” Step Four, through looking at our resentments and defects of character, allows us to do this. At the same time, I was shown how to do a Step Ten, too, in order to deal with daily resentments, as they

occur.

The importance of doing Steps Four and Five is also described in the Big Book. Page 63 says about Step Four, “Next, we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had not even attempted.” I certainly hadn’t.

Of course, Four leads to Five and Page 72 says about Step Five, “The best reason first: if we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk.”

I never thought I would ever do anything like a Step Four. I wrote and told my sponsor everything; nothing was hidden. After coming to AA, doing Steps Four and Five has certainly been the best thing I’ve ever done in my life.

Thanks AA, thank God for The Steps and thanks for reading this.

DENNIS,

Ealing

(compliments of ‘Share’ magazine UK.



The AA Promises

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through . . .

1. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
2. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
3. We will comprehend the word serenity.
4. We will know peace.
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
8. Self-seeking will slip away.
9. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
10. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

*Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th edition, pp. 83-84,
with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.*



Universe 2

Before God's time began

A tiny thought

in His great

Thinkers mind.

That tiny thought that's now

**a ball of ravelled WOOL
underneath a small cat's paws –**

**Bedevilled mess that is astronomy
of physic science**

**they call the composition of the
world.**

Vincent

Raheny

My Step Four

Step Four for me was a most nerve wracking and fear-filled step. ... *"made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves"*

There was definitely no absence of fear. I detested the word "moral" and didn't understand what "inventory" was. Neither did I want to ask anyone for advice or direction. I can't say that I trusted anybody. I was consumed with guilt, fear and recrimination for my past.

They say that there are none so blind as those who cannot see. In my case it was 'none blinder than those who wouldn't even look!'

The most difficult ego deflating exercise in AA is to begin listing one's faults. The step didn't ask for 'courage' but the absence of fear. That word fear again. Its acronym was 'freck everything and run' or 'face everything and recover'.

I suffered from 'anticipatory anxiety'. A form of worry. I hid my story under lock and key. I returned to the tome I had begun to compile and wasn't altogether sure where I had left off. I was distracted by detail and never looked at the real character defects. I was just like "hop along Cassidy"... going to the dump, the dump the dump!!

One member used to share on this step that it was like looking at the seven deadly sins. My guard was up immediately and I would rationalise against this approach as it smacked too much of religion.

I knew a priest who was also a member of the fellowship and did a type of confessional 'vomit' just to unburden myself of the guilt and remorse for my actions in drink, after drink or in anticipation of the next session that

might help release me from the mess I was in.

The process of the Fourth Step completely escaped me. It wasn't a 'fact finding mission' in my case but 'a drop and run' exercise.

The Third Step prayer asks that I be 'relieved of the bondage of self'. I had used drink to do just that for years but it was always temporary. I always woke again to the reality of my condition which simply set the fugitive off in me again.

The notion of the triad of unease, ill-at-ease and 'dis-ease' all made sense to me when eventually I learned to listen. I really felt a coward at heart and hated myself for being so.

Realising I had no option I reluctantly picked up the 'simple kit of spiritual tools laid at my feet' and tried to work through them as best I knew how.

When I finally confided in a sponsor with whom I shared a similar background in work and someone whom I felt had a great insight into the programme, I surrendered to the idea that I had to subject myself to change or face the consequences. He suggested I answer the 29 questions in the "Twelve and Twelve" on Step Four.

It really was 'catch 22' situation. I knew deep down that drinking could never be an option for me and yet I couldn't face this humiliating step. Members whose 'cred' I admired shared about 'deflation of ego at depth'. "If you don't grow you'll go" I used to hear often. A friend of my sponsor's told me I was full of horse s.t. "Hell hath no fury like an 'alkie' scorned!" I was devastated by this but didn't drink, - couldn't drink really.

For me change meant a change of personality, becoming a different

person. As bad as I was I didn't want to be a 'holy Joe' or find myself turning into a self-righteous git.

I had to do a lot of 'retreating'. I had to retreat to my concept and sense of what my Higher Power was to me. This exercise of uncovering and discovering the truth about me was overwhelming.

I remembered a film I had seen of St. Joseph of Cupertino as a boy. Joseph spent most of his life tending the animals and had little education. His defenceless innocence and devoutness saw him being blessed with the gift of spontaneous levitation. It was suggested he sit the exam for the priesthood. He was asked the one parable he knew... the parable of the lost sheep.

While I'm not a religious person this simple memory helped me to look at the parable of the prodigal son. This notion of a Power greater than myself offered unconditional acceptance and forgiveness. I read the story as it was relayed by Emmet Fox and later told by Chuck C and it resonated for this alcoholic.

The notion of projection was often shared at meetings in my time. Projecting to times ahead and trying to resolve problems before they had even arrived!

My pride and ego were under threat

Responsibility Declaration

I am responsible.
When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help,
I want the hand of AA always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible.

then but I couldn't see it. How often did I hear the words "we cannot see until we can see... we cannot hear until we can hear" and "when the student is ready the master appears".

I don't know where the new impetus for growth came from but I threw myself into finding out about this "spiritual malady" and the spiritual solution. I read everything in sight. I read the books that Bob and Bill read... all the Emmet Fox books, the William James classic "Varieties of Religious Experience" and Henry Drummond's famous treatise on St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians i.e. "The Greatest Thing in the World" and much more as the book says that was "revealed to us".

Before I began "I knew but a little" and as Dr. Bob said as soon as we reach one horizon another one stretches out in front of us. The graces of willingness and earnestness became key for me. The HP did for me what I couldn't do for myself. I found contrition for my past. I also had as AA puts it "a healthy regret for harms done" while at the same time I came to accept my past as being necessary to having me where I was in AA.

In an early edition of the Big Book on page 449 it developed the notion of acceptance and explains that "nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake". This for me was difficult to digest but it explained an awful lot.

In AA I heard the alcoholic described as one "having a super ego coupled with an inferiority complex". Such sharings cut me to size and allowed me to accept fully the humiliation and powerlessness of my condition and helped to free me, one day at a time, to 'walk humbly under God'.

This new found Power has removed the fear and grip of the past over my life

today. As much as I see that all that happened to me was necessary for me to be where I am today I also see how it is necessary for others to go through their own growth, however painful it may be. It has taught me to feel for others and to look back with love and understanding on my own life and to have compassion for those I judged so cruelly. It was as Bill W. puts it "the touchstone of spiritual progress" for this alcoholic.

Moral to me today means truth. Not right or wrong or good and bad. There are really only forms of wellness or unwellness. I see the wisdom of the scripture that says "there is a time for everything" in God's world... a time for love and a time for hate, a time for war and a time for peace. And in my experience a time for rampant alcoholism and a time for recovery.

Beet had to be pulped before it was fed to animals back in the day and I definitely needed to go through the pulper process to make me in any way palatable to both myself and to those around me.

I am grateful to AA and its program of spiritual recovery for all it does and continues to do for me.

Not alone did I find a HOME in AA but it helped me to finally come home to myself.

Anonymous

Declaration of Unity

*This we owe to A.A.'s future:
To place our common welfare first;
To keep our fellowship united.
For on A.A. unity depend our lives;
and the lives of those to come.*

Beauty and the Bottle

I knew a beautiful young woman who lived by the bottle
She had her foot on the pedal and was reaching full throttle

The full moon shone in her sad blue eyes
Her happiness was just the drink in disguise

She's spent her life searching for the meaning of love.
She's searched the all of stars that lay up above

But used and broken hearted she's always been left.
Her relationships always ended in a train wreck

To the bottle she became nothing but a slave
She was headed for a head stoned grave

Her beauty like a dying rose began to fade
And it always seemed to rain on her parade

She possessed a heart full of love and care
But when she turned around there was nobody there

She knew she'd given all that she can give
But she wasn't so sure she really wanted to live

She used to comfort herself with just one last drink
Witnessed her hopes and dreams began to slowly sink

Though she knew she was slowly dying
She had almost given up on trying

The bottle had become her only true friend
And it comforted her right up to the end

I remember the day she forever closed her eyes
Her teardrops fell from cloudy November skies


Her restless spirit still haunts my dreams
Still searching for love or so it seems

She cast her dreams by the ember lined shore
She secretly knew that life must mean a little more

I will always remember her as being kind and true
My hands were tied there was nothing anyone could do

We scattered her ashes on the hillside overlooking the sea
A lovely place where the wild horses still run forever free

*By Gary E. A 1997 ©
Dedicated to the memory of my friend Dar*



Each
day, somewhere in the
world, recovery begins when one
alcoholic talks with another alcoholic,
sharing experience, strength and
hope'

God grant me the
Serenity
to accept the things I
cannot change...
Courage to
change the things I can
and Wisdom to
know the difference...

A.A. PREAMBLE®

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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Hard of Hearing is now available at GSO.*

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Some A.A. Acronyms

**PAID = Pitiful And
Incomprehensible
Demoralization**

**SPONSOR = Sober Person Offering
Newcomers Suggestions On Recovery**

NUTS = Not Using The Steps

ISM = I Sponsor Myself

**HOPE = Hearing Other Peoples'
Experience**



APPROVED FORTHCOMING MINI CONVENTIONS AND ONE DAY EVENTS



ALL IRELAND CONVENTION 2018

20th-22nd April 2018	61st All Ireland Convention	The Clonmel Park Hotel, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. Tel: 052 6188700 Theme: AA Singleness of Purpose
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FORTHCOMING MINI CONVENTIONS IN IRELAND

DATES	AREA	VENUE/THEME
4th-7th January 2018	Galway West Area Convention	Galway Bay Hotel, Galway City Theme: 'A Design for Living'
12th-14th January 2018	Wexford Area 14 2018 Convention	The Amber Springs Hotel, Gorey, Co. Wexford. Theme: 'I can't, We can'
19th-21st January 2018	Waterford Area Convention	The Woodlands Hotel, Dunmore Road East, Waterford
23rd-24th February 2018	Limerick Area 38th Annual Convention	The Castletry Park Hotel, Dublin Road, Limerick. Tel: 061 335566. Registration €6.00. Dance €10.00. Theme: It Gets Better
2nd-4th March 2018	Sligo/North Leitrim Area 2018 Convention	The Clayton Hotel, Sligo Town, Co. Sligo. Theme: Live and Let Live
9th-11th March 2018	Mullingar Convention, 50th Anniversary Celebration	Mullingar Park Hotel, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Email: mullingarconvention18@gmail.com. Theme: Steps to Freedom

ONE DAY EVENTS IN IRELAND

DATES	AREA	VENUE/THEME
Saturday 20th January 2018	Tyrone Area Day of Gratitude	Silverbirch Hotel, 5 Gortin Road, Omagh, BT79 7DH. Registration from 11am

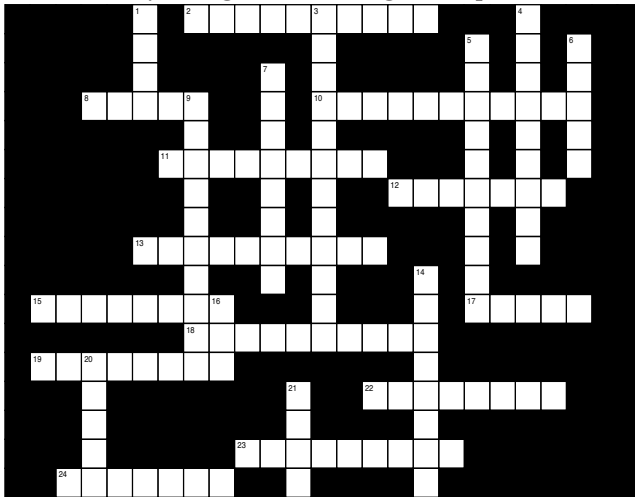
FORTHCOMING CONVENTIONS ABROAD

DATES	COUNTRY	VENUE/THEME
25th-27th January 2018	2nd International Convention in India	St. Sebastian Auditorium, Bendor, Mangaluru, Karnataka, India. Celebrating 60 Years in India and Karnataka. Theme: To Serve with Gratitude
26th-28th January 2018	9th Annual AA Convention, Lanzarote	Occidental Lanzarote Mar Hotel (formerly Barcelo Hotel), Avenida del Mar 5, Costa Teguise, 35508, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain. Theme: How It Works
2nd-4th February 2018	36th Philippines Convention	Holy Family Retreat House, Nivel Hills, Cebu City, Philippines
16th-18th March 2018	Highland Gathering Convention Scotland	Jury's Inn Hotel, Millburn Road, Inverness, IV2 3TR. Theme: Sobriety is Freedom
23rd-25th March 2018	Malta AA Convention	Seashells Resort, Suncrest Hotel, Qwara, Malta. Theme: One Day At A Time. Website: www.aamalta.org/convention/
17th-20th May 2018	24th AA Convention in Greece	Grand Bleu Sea Resort Hotel, Eretria Evia, Greece. Theme: HOPE (Happy Our Programme Exists)
12th-14th October 2018	2nd Biarritz AA Convention in France	Radisson Blu Hotel, Cote des Basques, 64200 Biarritz, France. Theme: A Vision For You

The Big Challenge Crossword 414 The Funny Side

Step Four

Test your Big Book knowledge on Step Four



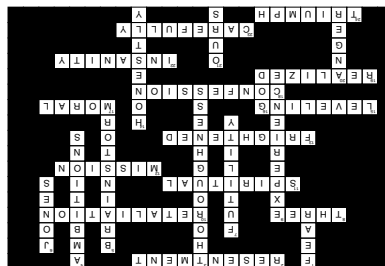
Across

2. is the 'number one' offender.
8. In Step 4 we implement a decision in which Step?
10. We avoid or argument.
11. When the malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.
12. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and fact-finding
13. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and?
15. Almost none of liked the self-searching, the of our pride. (P. 25)
17. "searching and fearless inventory"
18. ---the of shortcomings which the process requires.. (P.25)
19. We r that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick.
22. The of alcohol returns and we drink again.
23. When we were finished we considered it
24. Our moments of were short-lived

Down

1. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives.
3. We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but and honesty
4. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our , our personal, or sex relations which had beer interfered with?
5. The grouch and the were not for us.
6. Who committed her husband for drinking? Mrs.
7. It is plain that a life that includes deep resentment leads only to
9. ---whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual
14. We took stock
16. ... save me from being angry. (P.67)
20. If we were to live, we had to be free of
21. The inventory was, not the other man's.

Answers



Challenge your Big Book knowledge

Step 4

It could be worse!

Joe was renowned for his retort when any news was discussed in the pub "it could be worse" he'd always reply.

Mick asked if he heard about Paddy. Seemingly he went home and found his best friend in bed with his wife. He shot them both and is now facing life in prison?

It could be worse says Joe. What says Mick exasperated. His wife and his best friend gone and he now facing life. What could be worse than that?

Well says Joe I was with her the night before that ... It could have been me!

oooooooo

The Tiffany Fart

A lady walked into Tiffany's. She looked around, spotted a beautiful diamond bracelet and walked over to inspect it. As she bent over to look more closely, she unexpectedly farted.

Very embarrassed, she looked around nervously to see if anyone noticed her little woops and prayed that a salesperson was not anywhere near. As she turned around, her worst nightmare materialised in the form of a salesman standing right behind her – good looking as well.

Cool as a cucumber, he displayed all of the qualities one would expect of a professional in a store like Tiffany's. He politely greeted the lady with, "Good day, madam. How may I help you today?"

Blushing and uncomfortable, but still hoping that the salesman somehow missed her little 'incident', she asked, "Sir, what is the price of this lovely bracelet?"

He answered, "Madam, if you farted just looking at it, then I'd be afraid what might happen if I told you the price!"

Have a nice day.

oooooooo



THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

- 1.** We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2.** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3.** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- 4.** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5.** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6.** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7.** Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8.** Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9.** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10.** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11.** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12.** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

- 1.** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
- 2.** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
- 3.** The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
- 4.** Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
- 5.** Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
- 6.** An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- 7.** Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8.** Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- 9.** A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10.** Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11.** Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
- 12.** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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Next issue: Singleness of Purpose

March/April 2018 – Issue 415



Your invitation to share at our meeting between meetings.

Just like membership of our Fellowship, you don't have to be a special type of alcoholic to write for The Road Back. Whether you are a newcomer or an old timer we need to hear your experience strength and hope.

Putting pen to paper (or by email) can enhance your sobriety and that of the whole Fellowship. You don't need to be a polished writer either, spelling and grammar can be amended if necessary. You can write a few lines or a few pages.

Remember The Road Back is your magazine.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Please share your experience strength and hope with us on the following topics:

Singleness of Purpose

March/April 2018

Articles should be submitted by January 26th 2018 for issue 415

Step Five

May/June 2018

Articles should be submitted by March 30th 2018 for issue 416

Please mark your mail with the relevant Issue and email to –

roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

or post to:

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