



▲ Step Five: A Clean Slate

Those Tormenting Ghosts of Yesterday - *By Rick R.*

We were all born with a clean slate. From the first day of our lives, we started to experience different emotions and those feelings had to do with the way we evolved into who we are today.

Instinctively, we responded to the different Threats and Comforts, of life, and these were the things that established our mental Strengths and Weaknesses.

I believe, our problems can be traced back to the conditioning we experienced as we formed our Mental and Spiritual makeup. The perception we have of ourselves may

be likened to a chalkboard containing every experience of our lives. If we can look at it and be satisfied that we had a good track-record, we would be comfortable with it and lead a normal life.

If, however, we find ourselves on the negative side of the ledger in our formative years, we may develop abnormal feelings of guilt and shame, that triggers the beginning of the compulsion to drink excessively.

In the beginning we get a temporary relief that tells us that we are fine, but it only lasts until we wake up the next morning and find ourselves in

Dr. Bob's Last Drink

June 10, 1935

The date that is celebrated as Dr. Bob's last drink **and** the official founding date of Alcoholics Anonymous.



**Humility is not thinking less of yourself,
but thinking of yourself less.**

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an even deeper quandary. We reach for the bottle, and again it gives us that temporary euphoria, and we repeat this process over and over until, something tragic in our lives drive us to Alcoholics Anonymous where we are encouraged to go through a process that can restore us to a more normal life.

Steps One through Four are about surrender, acceptance, and discovery. Step five is about disclosure. And, for me, it was the gateway to how I was to live the rest of my life. After two attempts at Step Four, I was faced with the decision as to whether my future was going to be honest and meaningful, or just a meaningless facade.

Fortunately, for me, I took a leap of faith and disclosed all those, so called, tormenting ghosts of yesterday (12&12 p.55). Looking back on it now, I realize that the decision to do this was the hinge pin for my thoroughness, with the rest of the steps. Had I not Cleaned the Slate at that time, I just don't see how I could have followed the spirit of truth and honesty, with myself and others that would have resulted in the peace of mind that I enjoy today.

My inventory had to deal with bad, habits and deeds which had to be changed by the process suggested in steps six and seven. That was the easy part of step five.

However, those tormenting ghosts of yesterday were another story. These were not habits, but deeds that I had done as an adolescent that seemed unforgivable. No one should ever know; I would take them to the grave with me. Mustering the strength to take that risk may have been the most crucial step forward I have ever made.

My brain had been lying to me, after all; how bad could a thirteen-year-old kid be? That one decision is what I credit with giving me my life back and if I had not done it, I don't see how I could have given a good effort to the rest of the steps. I often hear members of the program that seem to resist looking deeper into their regrets and seem to build a wall of reasons why they don't need to. I wonder if they might be caught up in the same dilemma that I was in when I took my fifth step.

I wish I could reassure them that it is not worth the mental torment that it puts us through and that it may be wise to revisit that step and clean the slate. We cannot live alone with them; we must talk to someone about them (even A.A. old-timers, sober for years, often pay dearly for skipping this step.—12&12 p.56).

If, you are that person, I encourage you to try to garner the strength to take that risk, and clean the slate; After all, we only live once. Let us not waste the opportunity to live a peaceful and contented life.



▲ Peace of Mind and a Quiet Heart

What More Could a Person Want, *By Rick R.*

In my early days of sobriety, I was hearing a lot of words that were unfamiliar to me and I did not pay much attention to them at the time since I had bigger fish to fry. I had a drinking problem and everything else took a back seat to that. I was overwhelmed by marital, legal, and economic problems. Words like love, patience, spirituality, and forgiveness were foreign to me. And, I did not see how they mattered when all I wanted to do was quit drinking.

I stayed close to my home-group, and they started calling me the fortunate one. At the age of 28, I was the youngest one in that group. The rest of the members in the group were over forty and it stayed that way for quite a while as drug problems had not evolved enough at the time (1969) to affect the influx of younger members. I felt like the elders of the group took a special interest in me and that endeared me to them in a special way.

I was always listening for the magic word that would inspire me and give me a purpose in life and one day it happened. Tears come to my eyes when I recall the memory of the gentle voice of an old farmer named Harlan. As he talked about all the trials and tribulations in the past he endured, he explained how he had stumbled into A.A. and that all the answers were there, but he did not understand it until he had a goal to reach for.

The next words that came out of his mouth changed my life forever. He said, "All I want from life is peace of mind and a quiet heart." The next thought that came to me was, what more could a person want? To this day, I still quote Harlan and credit him with the inspiration. He passed away in 2007 being sober 51 years.

I have been through the big book and the 12&12 many times and have made a slow but very purposeful attempt to rid my mind of all the tormenting memories and regrets of the past, and as I processed each one of them, the more I realize that peace of mind is the natural result of living by these principals.

Clearing the wreckage of the past, and changing those behaviors that caused it, and practicing unselfish behaviors, with the help of seasoned veterans like Harlan, I move closer and closer to the promise: We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.

My books are marked and highlighted over the years as I evolved through the step study meetings or checked out the references to the Big Book in the Daily Reflections. Recently, I have been focusing on the word peace and underlining it, and it is amazing how often it is linked to other words that, seem to get more attention.

Peace of mind encompasses the spirit of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous and I will be forever grateful that God saw fit to lead me to this wonderful program. Harlan, rest in peace and thank you for the inspiration.

▲ 12 Step Clear-Cut Directions Are Not on the Wall

Before studying the Big Book, I thought if I memorized the Twelve Steps from the clubhouse wall or from pages 59 and 60, then practiced them every day, that mental obsession would finally disappear. It didn't work! After five months sobriety I marched into a bar with gin and tonic on my lips. I was in deep chicken fat trouble!

I didn't order that drink, thanks to God, but I was terrified!

Returning home, I immediately prayed to be shown the path to sobriety. God answered with a new sponsor who taught me the clear-cut directions directly out of the Big Book.

We read on page 29 that: "Further on Clear-cut directions are given showing how we have recovered." We then read the "outline" on pages 59 and 60. It was explained that these are not the clear-cut directions of recovery; the 12 Steps hanging from the meeting room walls are also not the program of recovery! Both are simply a description of what the Big Book is going to explain further on.

Bill Wilson tells you what he is going to tell you (as above); then he tells you the directions on pages 60 thru 103, then he tells you what he told you on page 164—3rd full paragraph.

Please notice how many directions exist in Step 3. Step 4 has more than I can count—Plus it shows how to face and be rid of our defects, etc. Step 10 has five directions.

I believe a newcomer is being short-shrimped when taught that the steps on the wall are sufficient for recovery. Here are a few important bits of information not found on the wall:

Step Three: The 3rd Step promises, the 3rd step Prayer, and who to do it with, or not. That Step 3 is only a beginning.

▲ Rule 62



Step Four: When to begin Step 4. Why we need to do this step. How to face and be rid of resentment by using a spiritual tool and a logical tool. How to be rid of irrational fear. How to develop a new sex ideal.

Step Five: When to do this step and where it comes from. Whom to do it with. Precautions about sharing particulars. Why this step is so important. Discover the 5th Step promises.

Step Six: When to be convinced we are ready to allow God to remove defects blocking our sobriety. Suggested prayer for help.

Step Seven: A humble request for God to remove the "bondage of self, "now that we realize what they are.

Step Eight: Explains where our list comes from. Offers a prayer to help to complete this list.

Step Nine: When to begin making amends. Why to make amends. How to prepare how to present your amends. How to handle financial amends. How to avoid jail time for alimony. What amends are inappropriate. Forgiveness.

Step Ten: Explains this step is for a lifetime. On the wall and page 59 and 60 there are only two directions, but on page 85 there are five clear-cut directions. We learn the important 10th Step promises.

Step Eleven: How to pray at night, morning and through the day. How to find forgiveness. 11th Step promises.

Step Twelve: Prerequisites for 12-stepping. Rewards for carrying this message. What message to carry. How to prepare before approaching a newcomer.

By Bob S.

▲ A Quote

FROM MY SPONSOR

Before you speak...

- T** - Is it True?
- H** - Is it Helpful?
- I** - Is it Inspiring?
- N** - Is it Necessary?
- K** - Is it Kind?

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