



▲ Step Three Need Not Be Difficult

Abandon Our Failed Ego Driven Insanity - *By Rick R.*

I do not believe any two people in Alcoholics Anonymous have settled into a concept of a Higher Power that are identical in every respect. As alcoholics, we have been off the grid for such a time that our concept of everything must be recalibrated into a workable form or strategy, whether anybody else understands the linguistics used to describe it.

In taking Step Three, we decide to abandon our failed ego-driven insanity and find another source of principles and behaviors to replace it. Some members return to the religion of their choice, while others may struggle with the idea and settle

for an approach that is more practical.

We, in AA, see successful examples in a variety of approaches when it comes to turning our will and our lives over to a power greater than ourselves. If this were not that way, where would the Agnostic and Atheist go to get relief from this terrible disease?

I get an uncomfortable feeling at a meeting when it starts going overly religious and I see a new member squirming in his seat. I was one of those described in Step Two in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,

Who Was That Masked Man?



On May 17, 1942 the Dayton Journal Herald published a big story about the “evolutionary nature of the program” with pictures of AA members wearing masks to protect their anonymity.



Let go of old ideas.

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who “have tried faith and found it wanting,” but I stayed with the program. Having the option to come to terms with this issue opened the gate to a path which has worked for me.

On page 34 in the 12 & 12, it says: “This is the way to a faith that works.” I simply combined that idea with the suggestion on page 27, which says: “You can, if you wish, make AA itself your ‘higher power.’” When I addressed it in that way, I had no problem moving on with the rest of the steps of the program.

I am not driven away by anything I have read in the Big Book or the 12 & 12. I have never wanted a drink since I entered the program, and the only answer to this that I could produce was the influence of AA in my life. I went from a guy who could not conceive of a day without alcohol to a guy who has never wanted a drink since — this was all I needed to know about God.

I wish I could tell you who or what God is, but I cannot. I have researched things I have heard concerning how the AA program came to be what it is today. The thing that’s had the most influence on me, concerning this issue, was the book *The Sermon on the Mount*, by Emmet Fox.

That book highly influenced the founders of AA as to how to address spiritual aspects and how to apply them. The Grapevine article from February 1996, “Emmet Fox and Alcoholics Anonymous,” explains these things.

I have read *The Sermon on the Mount* more than ten times. For me, that book defines and reinforces all the principles that we learn in the AA program.

When I pray, I simply ask God for his guidance and for the strength to carry out what comes to me as the answer I seek. When I do it in that way, I become a better listener, and the answers do come to me eventually.

I do not consider myself a Christian, but I practice principles that are consistent with Christian teaching as well as any Christian I know. They are similar to the values of most religions. I also find these principles in most historical philosophies. I have studied Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, who lived three hundred fifty years before Christ.

As the result of all my studies, I have settled into a way of life based on unselfish principles and values that govern all my motives and actions. And it has led to a life of meaningful purpose and a peace of mind that I never thought possible.

▲ Step Four Need Not be a Saga

Exposing the Root of Our Faulty Behaviors, *By Rick R.*

The faulty behaviors that caused us to damage our relationships with other people are the subjects we need to address in

Step Four. To get down to the core issues that caused us to behave the way we did, it is not necessary to drag these episodes out ad nauseam.

The Big Book starts the process with our resentments. This is just the first topic we will address in our inventory. Some others may deal with subjects such as gossip, dishonesty, selfishness, neglect, character assassination, etc.

These issues arise when our natural instincts for protection far exceed their intended purpose. More topics will be revealed through the “why we did these things” part of this step. I would have one page for each of these matters, and, as a new issue came up, I would open another page.

I would start with the most obvious person I had a resentment for and try to determine the cause and effect of my behaviors. Once I discovered why I felt threatened by this person or issue, I could deal with it at that level. Then I would move on to the next person on the list, and so on.

After going through three or four of these people I found that I was repeating myself, and I would move to the next topic: Fears.

Then, I see that most of the fears stem from my own insecurity. For example: I was talking to a friend awhile back and I questioned how we could talk about another person without it being considered gossip. His response was life changing for me. He said: “All forms of criticism and character assassination stem from low self-esteem.”

The low self-esteem was the defect of character. The criticism and character assassination were the shortcomings (faulty behaviors).

To put it in simpler terms, let’s say you just purchased a brand new SUV and drove away from the dealership. As you approach the first stop sign you hit the brakes, but the vehicle didn’t stop properly and drifted into the intersection.

You carefully drive back to the dealership and explain what happened. The salesman said the mechanic will check it out and see what went wrong. Shortly thereafter, the salesman returns and explains that they put the wrong brake pads on the SUV. They would have them replaced, and things should be fine.

You get the vehicle back and drive off. When you reach the first stop sign, the SUV stops perfectly. And it stops perfectly at all of the other stop signs you approach. The defect was the faulty brakes; the failure to stop was the shortcoming. Once the defect was corrected, the short coming went away. The defect was the cause, and the shortcoming was the effect.

If we simply look at our irrational fears and insecurities as the defects in every case, we can get through Step Four quickly. I

find it best to add any new shortcomings, as they become obvious, to an additional page and expose them to the light.

Without a thorough Fourth and Fifth Step, I can't see any way that a person can do the rest of the steps and not have those tormenting Ghosts of yesterday still rattling around in their head. They may never drink another drop of alcohol, but if they never rid themselves of those corrosive mental issues, they'll miss out on what I see as the most important promise in the program: peace of mind.

Ridding ourselves of the root causes of our behaviors is the solution to our mental unrest. In time, we will develop a life of credibility, integrity and, above all, a clear conscience. It gets easier as we move forward and get right with ourselves and the world around us.

▲ Step Five Rewards

My Fourth Step inventory focused the light of truth onto unrealized driving forces of selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. It also provided certain necessary tools to 'face and to be rid of' these newly discovered grosser handicaps. (Great reward!) But still, countless other destructive little demons, of the grosser variety, lurked in some dark, dank space deep inside.

They freely frolicked in this invisible environment, happily protected from the Sunlight of the Spirit. It was as though the grosser handicaps of selfishness, dishonest, resentment and fear were protected under a very opaque umbrella.

▲ Rule 62

My name's Steve, and I'm an alcoholic. And I'm pretty sure the guy vomiting behind my chair is too.



My sponsor informed me that Step Five was to include a detailed revelation of these defects of character and shortcomings. Those little demons and devils of conceit, jealousy, carelessness, intolerance, ill temper, and all the rest were about to be exposed—not only to my sponsor, but also to God!

Although my sponsor had not the power to close that umbrella, the Big Book tells me that God could and would if he were sought. (Those little fiends must have been trembling down there!). The sunlight of the Spirit was about to shine on those little demons—for they cannot survive in the sunlight of God's Truth!

The Fifth Step promises, on page 75, tell us that we now begin to have a spiritual experience. Well, the realization that God will remove the very things that blocked us from seeing and acting on the truth indeed speaks to a radical inner transformation. I believe the main goal of this vital step is to allow us (me) to realize exactly what dominant inner forces have been blocking the truth; only then will I know exactly what imperfections to ask God to remove in Steps Six and Seven.

It was very important that I act before my mind decided to remember only what it wanted to remember. I believe that the Big Book timetable is very important here. We are told to do Step Four "at once," Step Five at "first opportunity," review for a short period and "then" (not later) do Step Six, go right into Step Seven "when ready." Steps Five, Six and Seven are often referred to as the same day steps.

I am very happy that my sponsor, Carl, helped me close that umbrella via the Big Book directions. I haven't had a drink of booze since!

By Bob S.

▲ A Quote

FROM MY SPONSOR

**A *shortcoming* is like a flat tire.
A *character defect* is like
driving on it.**

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