Recovered

The Book's own word for what happened to the people who wrote it: where it says it, what it means there, and why this site says it too.

The word · Sixteen times

The Big Book says *recovered* sixteen times, and *recovering* never. The first two are the first two sentences of the Foreword to the First Edition, the book introducing itself; the rest run from the Doctor's Opinion to *To Employers*.

> *We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.* — BB p. xiii ¶1

> *To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.* — BB p. xiii ¶1

> *In that brief space, Alcoholics Anonymous has mushroomed into nearly 6,000 groups whose membership is far above 150,000 recovered alcoholics.* — BB p. xv ¶2

> *Their very first case, a desperate one, recovered immediately and became A.A. number three.* — BB p. xvii ¶1

> *This man and over one hundred others appear to have recovered.* — BB p. xxv ¶5

> *He had but partially recovered from a gastric hemorrhage and seemed to be a case of pathological mental deterioration.* — BB p. xxxi ¶2

> *Nearly all have recovered.* — BB p. 17 ¶1

> *Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body.* — BB p. 20 ¶1

> *Further on, clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered.* — BB p. 29 ¶1

> *If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago.* — BB p. 44 ¶4

> *If he says yes, then his attention should be drawn to you as a person who has recovered.* — BB p. 90 ¶4

> *He often says that if he had continued to work on them, he might have deprived many others, who have since recovered, of their chance.* — BB p. 96 ¶1

> *He knows that thousands of men, much like himself, have recovered.* — BB p. 113 ¶1

> *We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others.* — BB p. 132 ¶2

> *We, who have recovered from serious drinking, are miracles of mental health.* — BB p. 133 ¶1

> *An alcoholic who has recovered, but holds a relatively unimportant job, can talk to a man with a better position.* — BB p. 146 ¶2

Fifteen of the sixteen are about the alcoholic. The sixteenth, on p.xxxi, is Dr. Silkworth describing a patient's stomach, and it shows the word meaning what it always means: not better for the moment, but well.

Recovered, continued

The Book's own word for what happened to the people who wrote it: where it says it, what it means there, and why this site says it too.

The sense · What the Book means by it

The Book is careful about what it is not saying. It is not saying cured: "We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition." BB p. 85 ¶1 The body does not change. Dr. Silkworth's allergy is for life, and the only relief he had to suggest was "entire abstinence". BB p. xxx ¶5

What the alcoholic recovers from is the thing the Book names as the real trouble: "the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body." BB p. 23 ¶1 It is the mind that has "lost the power of choice in drink" BB p. 24 ¶1, that at certain times "has no effective mental defense against the first drink" BB p. 43 ¶3, and that carries "the great obsession of every abnormal drinker" BB p. 30 ¶1, the idea that one day it will control and enjoy its drinking. That is what changes. "Lack of power, that was our dilemma" BB p. 45 ¶1, and the Steps are the way to a Power that solves it. The Book even says when. At Step Ten, "by this time sanity will have returned". BB p. 84 ¶2 At Step Twelve, "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps". BB p. 60 ¶1

So *recovered*, in the Book's mouth, is a plain claim about the mind: the obsession has been lifted, sanity has returned, a Power has been found, as the result of the Steps, and it is kept by a reprieve renewed daily. Recovered and cured are two different things. Go back to self-reliance and the insanity returns, and with us, to drink is to die.

The argument · Recovered or recovering?

Two groups whose pages are kept in this repository's library make the same case from the text, and this page owes them its shape. Cliff B. of the Primary Purpose Group of Dallas, in *Recovered or Recovering?* (about 2000 to 2005), points out that the basic text was written by recovered alcoholics, and that the pages where the word appears say what they recovered from and how. In his reading a recovering alcoholic is someone between Step Three and Step Eleven, in the middle of the work, and someone who has not taken the Steps is neither one nor the other, whatever the count of meetings. NoNameYet Online A.A., of Elkhart, Indiana, in *We Have Recovered!* (2013), takes the line from p.132 as its banner and reads the Steps as a restoration of sanity, a reliance on God in place of a reliance on alcohol, rather than a programme of abstinence. Neither page is reproduced here. Both are linked below, in their own words.

Here · Why this site says it

The statement at the foot of every page says the site is kept by a *recovered* alcoholic and drug addict, and this page is that word's footnote. It is the Book's word for the people who wrote it, and it is what the people I sponsor are after: not a lifetime of recovering, but the thing p.132 names, having recovered and been given the power to help others. The reprieve is daily, and the work of Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve is how it is kept.

Sources

- Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition. Every quotation above opens at its page and paragraph in the Book on this site.
- Cliff B., *Recovered or Recovering?*, Primary Purpose Group, Dallas, about 2000 to 2005. The article as the group published it (a Word document, through the Internet Archive).
- NoNameYet Online A.A., Elkhart, Indiana, *We Have Recovered!*, 2013. The page on their site.
- The Step Twelve guide on this site, the sponsor's guide, where the sixteen pages are a sponsee's assignment.

bigbook.it/recovered · every line checked against the Fourth Edition's text · Cliff B. (PPG Dallas) and NoNameYet Online A.A. credited for the argument