The Promises, Read Backwards

what my drug of no-choice did for me first — qualifying the spiritual malady

MY DRUG OF NO-CHOICE _____ *alcohol · meth · pills · whatever you lost the power of choice over (p. 24)*

> *"Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one."*
>
> — The Doctor's Opinion, p. xxviii

What effect? The Ninth Step Promises (pp. 83–84) describe the life the Steps give back. They are *Ninth Step* promises — earned after the amends — but we borrow them here for one reason: read each one beginning **"In the early days, when I had a few _____..."** and see what your drug did for you first. Check the ones that are true, and write one example.

	THE BOOK SAYS (PP. 83–84)	IN THE EARLY DAYS, WHEN I HAD A FEW _____ ...	DID YOU?
1	*"We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness."*	...I knew **a new freedom and a new happiness**.	☐ yes ☐ no
2	*"We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it."*	...I **didn't regret the past** nor wish to shut the door on it. *Ever come out of a blackout, swear it was a secret — then tell a stranger in a bar the whole story after a couple?*	☐ yes ☐ no
3	*"We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace."*	...I **comprehended the word serenity** and I knew peace. *Did the turmoil go quiet with a few?*	☐ yes ☐ no
4	*"No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others."*	...I was glad to tell my whole life's story to any poor drunk who'd listen. *Loved to talk about how bad my life was.*	☐ yes ☐ no
5	*"That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear."*	...that feeling of **uselessness and self-pity disappeared**. *Did you feel you just might have a purpose in this world?*	☐ yes ☐ no
6	*"We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows."*	...I **lost interest in selfish things** and gained interest in my fellows. *"Can I buy you a drink, honey?"*	☐ yes ☐ no
7	*"Self-seeking will slip away."*	...**self-seeking slipped away**. *"Drinks for everyone!"*	☐ yes ☐ no
8	*"Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change."*	...my **whole attitude and outlook upon life changed**. *From a gray, gloomy day to one that was bright and hopeful — with just a couple?*	☐ yes ☐ no
9	*"Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us."*	...**fear of people** and of economic insecurity **left me**. *Could you stand a room full of people sober? How were you going to pay the bills — after a couple?*	☐ yes ☐ no
10	*"We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us."*	...I **intuitively knew how to handle** situations which used to baffle me. *"I had answers to questions that hadn't been asked."*	☐ yes ☐ no
11	*"We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves."*	...the bottle / the bag **was doing for me what I could not do for myself**. *It played God. That is the whole trouble.*	☐ yes ☐ no

That is what it did for you — and that is what makes you an alcoholic / addict. It does not do that for people who aren't. "The sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks" is the effect Dr. Silkworth is talking about. Turn the page.

Then It Stops Working

the spiritual malady is what is left when the effect is gone — sober, or trying to be

THE EFFECT FADES

pp. xxviii–xxix, 30

> *"They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks which they see others taking with impunity."*
> p. xxviii–xxix

> *"All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals—usually brief—were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization."*
> p. 30

Pretty soon you can't get the promises out of the bottle at all. All you get is worse. And stone cold sober, the thing that made you drink is still there — that is why detoxes don't produce winners.

THE REAL PROBLEM

pp. xxix, 23, 62

> *"…unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery."*
> p. xxix

> *"Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body."*
> p. 23

> *"Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles."*
> p. 62

Your problem was never the drug. The drug was your **solution**. Your problem is what you are like without it.

SYMPTOMS OF THE SPIRITUAL MALADY — SOBER

p. 52 — untreated alcoholism

> *"We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn't make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people…"*

Read it in the second person, when you are not using:

- ☐ *I have trouble with personal relationships.* YES / NO
- ☐ *I can't control my emotional nature.* YES / NO
- ☐ *I am a prey to misery and depression.* YES / NO
- ☐ *I can't make a living.* YES / NO
- ☐ *I have a feeling of uselessness.* YES / NO
- ☐ *I am full of fear.* YES / NO
- ☐ *I am unhappy.* YES / NO
- ☐ *I can't seem to be of real help to other people.* YES / NO

Now put the two pages side by side. Page 1 is the list of things you *got* from a few drinks. This is the list of what you are like *without* them. They are the same list. **That is the spiritual malady. The drug was its counterfeit cure; the promises are the real one.**

WHERE THE REAL PROMISES COME FROM

pp. 64, 84

> *"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."*
> p. 64

> *"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."*
> p. 84

The whole program is a single trade: the counterfeit for the genuine. The same eleven things, from the only Source that does not run out — *"God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves."*

Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book): The Doctor's Opinion pp. xxviii–xxix · pp. 23, 30, 52, 62, 64, 83–84 · the exercise is from the PPG Foundation Meeting; Joe McF walks it the same way (Online Workshop, June 2020, 13:33)