Steps One, Two & Three

the sponsee's packet — from first contact to a taken Third Step, in three meetings

"It wasn't so much about the education. It wasn't so much about the information. What it was, it was the **identification**." — Joe McF

> *"To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book. For them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary."*
>
> — Foreword to the First Edition, p. xiii — highlight this in your book

THE ROAD MAP

1. **First contact** — stories, the book, the question: do you want to quit for good, and would you go to any extreme to do so? (p. 90)
2. **Assignment #1** — then 24 hours to decide. Yes or no. Nobody pushes.
3. **Meeting #1 — Step One.** The problem: body, mind, spirit — and the door into Steps Two and Three.
4. **Assignment #2** — pages 60–63 with your own name in them.
5. **Meeting #2** — the abandonment list. **Assignment #3:** meditate on it; *you* call when you're ready.
6. **Meeting #3 — Step Three, taken.** On our knees. Then at once into Step Four.

WHAT "YES" MEANS

- **Any lengths** for victory over alcohol (p. 76) and any lengths to find a spiritual experience (p. 79) — written in the front of your Big Book, and signed.
- **Take direction.** Take actions that go contrary to your emotions.
- **Talk to your sponsor every day.** A meeting every day in the beginning.
- **Assignments done on time.** No assignment, no meeting — and that only delays you.
- **The Big Book only** until the steps are done. It is the basic text; the recovery is in the first 103 pages.
- **The non-starter:** everything you receive through these steps you agree to pass on. Yes or no.

ASSIGNMENT #1

before we meet again — call tomorrow with your decision

1. In the Big Book, read the first 63 pages (the Doctor's Opinion through page 63) and **find the four things that will NOT keep you sober.**
2. **Visualizations I** (page 7 of this packet). Say them out loud four times a day. Write down everything your sponsor gives you.
3. **Make a list of everything alcohol and drugs has cost you** — the Loser List — and, beside it, everything you have tried in order to stay stopped — the Log List.
4. Fill in the **Cycle of Addiction** worksheet.
5. **Call tomorrow:** yes or no.

You are going to become a sponsor. In a one-year study of 500 addicts in NA/AA, **75% of those who sponsored others** stayed clean — against 39–45% of everyone else (Crape et al., 2002). The book knew it first: "Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough." (p. 97)

Step One — The Problem

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable." — p. 59

> *"We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed."*
>
> — More About Alcoholism, p. 30

FOUR THINGS THAT WILL NOT KEEP YOU SOBER

> **Self-knowledge.** *"But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge."*
> p. 39

> **Will power.** *"Our so-called will power becomes practically non-existent."*
> p. 24

> **A long period of sobriety.** *"…he fell victim to a belief which practically every alcoholic has—that his long period of sobriety and self-discipline had qualified him to drink as other men."*
> p. 32

> **Other people.** *"…he has probably placed himself beyond human aid, and unless locked up, may die or go permanently insane."*
> p. 24

ALCOHOLISM AFFECTS THE BODY, THE MIND, THE SPIRIT

> **Body — the allergy.** *"…the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker."*
> p. xxviii

> **Mind — the main problem.** *"These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body."*
> p. 23

> **Spirit — lack of power.** *"Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves."*
> p. 45

A body that says **I can't**, and a mind that says **I must**. If the allergy were the whole problem, detoxes would produce winners.

THE TWO QUALIFIERS

p. 44 — the first one is the mental obsession, the second the physical craving

> *"If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer."*

- ☐ *When you honestly want to, do you find you cannot quit entirely?* YES / NO
- ☐ *When drinking or using, do you have little control over the amount you take?* YES / NO
- ☐ *Do you fully concede, to your innermost self, that you are an alcoholic / addict?* YES / NO

What Alcohol Did For You

the effect — the progression — and the two alternatives

THE PROMISES, READ BACKWARDS

what alcohol did for you first — pp. xxviii, 83–84

"Men and women drink essentially because they like the **effect** produced by alcohol." (p. xxviii) What effect? Begin each of the Ninth Step Promises with: **"In the early days of my drinking, when I had a few drinks…"**

- …I knew a new freedom and a new happiness. *Did you?*
- …I didn't regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. *Ever tell a stranger in a bar the secret you'd sworn to keep?*
- …I comprehended the word serenity and I knew peace. *Did the turmoil go quiet?*
- …that feeling of uselessness and self-pity disappeared.
- …I lost interest in selfish things and gained interest in my fellows. *"Can I buy you a drink?"*
- …self-seeking slipped away. *"Drinks for everyone!"*
- …my whole attitude and outlook upon life changed. *From gray to rosy pink with just a couple?*
- …fear of people and of economic insecurity left me. *How were you going to pay the bills — after a couple?*
- …I intuitively knew how to handle situations that used to baffle me. *Answers to questions nobody asked.*

That is what alcohol did for you — and that is what makes you an alcoholic. It does not do that for people who aren't.

UNTREATED ALCOHOLISM

the trouble starts when you're *not* drinking — p. 52

> *"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…"*

☐ *Sober, is this you?* YES / NO

Your problem was never alcohol. Alcohol was your **solution** — and your problem is what happens when that solution stops working. That is what the Steps treat.

ALL OR NOTHING — THEN THE TWO ALTERNATIVES

pp. 18, 25, 152, xx

"Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished." (p. 18) There is no good news at the end of Step One, and you can't *almost* take it — that is like almost having a parachute. But the bottom of page 25 gives exactly two roads:

> *"…we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help."*
> p. 25

> *"Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom and worry. Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at last. The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead."*
> p. 152

Which one are you going to be? "Of alcoholics who came to A.A. and really tried, 50% got sober at once and remained that way; 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with A.A. showed improvement." (Foreword to Second Edition, p. xx) *Of those who really tried* — are you going to get a sponsor, go to meetings, read the book, take the steps?

The modern numbers agree about who stays. The Baltimore study — 500 injection drug users in NA/AA followed for a year (Crape et al., 2002): *not sponsored*, 44.7% stayed abstinent; *sponsored*, 39.1%; but of those who **sponsored others, 75%** did — "being-a-sponsor was very strongly associated with sustained abstinence." Really trying means taking the steps and then giving them away.

Two Diagrams

the loss of the power of choice — and what the Twelve Steps do about it

Power of Choice

"…most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink." — p. 24

DRINKING / USING

Pros	Cons
+	−
+	−
+	−
	−
	−

THE FIRST DRINK

Reasons to take the first drink	Reasons NOT to take the first drink

At certain times the right-hand column simply does not come to mind — "We are without defense against the first drink." (p. 24)

Fill in both ledgers. Then read p. 24 again: "We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink." At certain times the right-hand column is simply not there. That is the insanity.

What the 12 Steps Do

an entire psychic change — "Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces… are suddenly cast to one side" (p. 27)

BEFORE — MY WHOLE LIFE



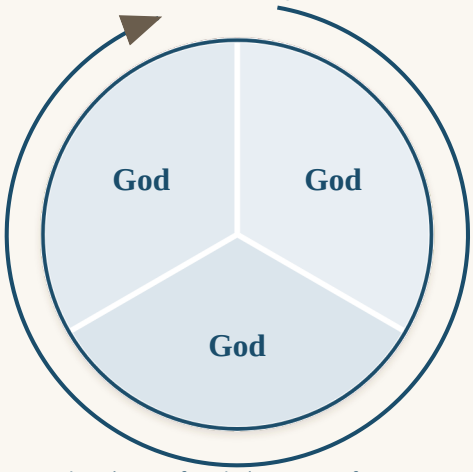
restless, irritable and discontented
"This is repeated over and over" (p. xxix)

12 Steps

BIG BOOK

pp. xxv–103 · with a sponsor

AFTER — MY WHOLE LIFE



"rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed" (p. 25)

AA 12-Step Packet · "What the 12 Steps Do" · Alcoholics Anonymous pp. xxix, 25, 27

Every part of life filled with drugs and alcohol — through the Steps, out of the Big Book, with a sponsor — every part filled with God. "Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them." (p. 27)

Step Two & Step Three

the solution — and the decision

STEP TWO — CAME TO BELIEVE

pp. 44–57

> *"…we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?"*
> p. 53

> *"(c) That God could and would if He were sought."*
> p. 60 — do you believe this?

> *"When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God."*
> p. 47

> *"…as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results…"*
> p. 46

You won't change — but you will be changed. If you could change, you wouldn't be here.

☐ *"Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" (p. 47)* YES / NO

STEP THREE — THE FIRST REQUIREMENT

pp. 60–63

> *"The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good."*
> p. 60

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

> *"First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work."*
> p. 62 — the keystone of the arch

We read pages 60–62 together **with your name in them**: *"The first requirement is that ___ be convinced that his life run on self-will can hardly be a success..."* — and we stop at the keystone.

☐ *Are you convinced? Because we're not reading on.* YES / NO

ASSIGNMENT #2

after Meeting #1

1. Read the Visualizations out loud, four times a day.
2. Read **pages 60–63** and **insert your name** into the discussion — three times a day.
3. Read **pages 25–29** and **55–57**. This describes the spiritual experience.
4. Make a list of **three things you might have trouble abandoning to God.**
5. Make a list of **everyone you know in the fellowship.** Keep adding to it.

MEETING #2 — THE ABANDONMENT LIST

would you give control of this to God?

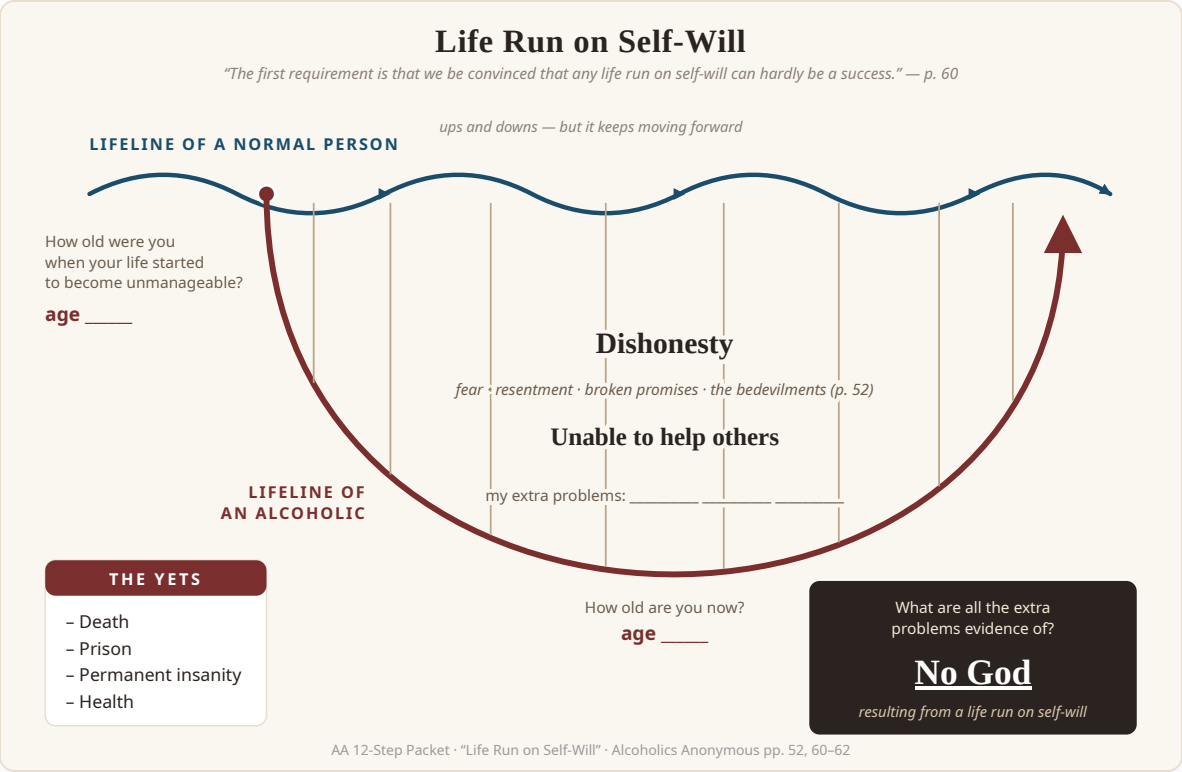
We look at your list of people, at pages 60–63 (could you identify? is your life run on self-will?), at your three things — and then, one by one, these twelve:

1. My perceived inadequacies.
2. The bad things that have happened to me in the past.
3. The way I spend my time.
4. My finances.
5. My job.
6. The way I treat other people.
7. The way I think about others.
8. My minute-by-minute day-to-day living.
9. My future.
10. The bad things that might happen to me.
11. My service to others.
12. My sex life.

Assignment #3: go home and meditate on the list. **You call me** when you are ready to take the Third Step.

A Life Run on Self-Will

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." — p. 59



Fill in the two ages. The gap between the lines is every *extra* problem — dishonesty, unable to help others, the bedevilments of p. 52. What are they evidence of?

MEETING #3 — TAKING STEP THREE

p. 63

> *"We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him."*

☐ *Are you ready to abandon yourself utterly to God, as you understand Him?* YES / NO

ON OUR KNEES — OUT LOUD, TOGETHER

"God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

"When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer... We were reborn." (p. 63) — **How do I know I took the Third Step?** Because you begin to take 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 never attempted. 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."*
>
> pp. 63–64

Visualizations I

say these out loud, four times a day, from Assignment #1 on

You are not describing today. You are describing the man you are becoming — and saying it until it is habit. **"Repetition confirms and strengthens, and a working faith becomes habitual."** — Joe McF

ASSIGNMENT #4

the same day

1. **The Third Step Prayer every morning**, on awakening. The Visualizations four times a day.
2. **Start the Fourth Step on paper** — the grudge list, Columns 1 and 2 only (who, and why). The instructions are in the book, pages 64–69. Stop there and bring it back.
3. **Commit to a date for the Fifth Step:** _____

1. I see myself going to seven meetings a week.
2. Going to meetings is fun and interesting.
3. I look forward to each meeting.
4. Meeting and talking to people is fun.
5. I stay and talk to two people after each meeting. I talk about the fact that I have a sponsor and we are going to be doing the steps together.
6. I see myself focusing on the needs of others, rather than myself.
7. I see myself establishing a relationship with the God of my understanding.
8. I read the Big Book every day.
9. I fulfill all assignments my sponsor gives me, with eager anticipation for the next assignment.
10. I am eager to forgive people for the wrongs they have done to me.
11. I recognize that the growth and maintenance of the spiritual experience is my only hope for recovery.
12. I love everyone in the fellowship even though sometimes I may not agree with what they say or do.
13. I see myself sober, happy, and fulfilled.
14. I am willing to go to any length for sobriety.

"Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!" — p. 100

Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book), pp. xiii, xxviii, 23–64, 76, 79, 97, 152 · assignments and visualizations from the AA 12-Step Packet · approach after Joe McF (Tim M corpus) and the PPG Foundation Meeting