

Subject: Alcoholics Anonymous Step One

This is what I've come up with for us to thoroughly work Step One. Please review and get to work! Thanks! And remember, Step One is constant, practiced in every situation in life. If you work the Program, Step One becomes part of you.

Step One: "We admitted we were powerless over our addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable."

Step One is the first step to freedom. Admitting and accepting powerlessness is absolutely essential to breaking the addiction cycle, which is made up of five key points:

- 1.** Pain.
- 2.** Reaching out to any type of addictive agent (Work, food, sex, alcohol, drugs, people), to salve our pain.
- 3.** Temporary anesthesia.
- 4.** Negative consequences.
- 5.** Shame and guilt, which result in more pain or low self-esteem.

When we admit and accept our powerlessness and the inability to manage our own lives, we open the door to recovery. **No one** could convince us that we were addicts. It is an admission that we had to make for ourselves. When some of us have doubts, we ask ourselves this question: "Can I control my use of any form of mind or mood altering chemicals, or other destructive behavior that I know is wrong?"

This can include anything we obsess over, i.e. sex, money, food, work, relationship(s), gambling, etc...

Most will see that control is impossible the moment it is suggested. Whatever the outcome, we find that we cannot control our using for any length of time. This would clearly suggest that an addict has no control over drugs or the other examples listed above.

Powerlessness means using these things against our will. If we can't stop, how can we tell ourselves we are in control? The inability to stop using or doing these destructive things, even with the greatest willpower and the most sincere desire, is what we mean when we say, "We have absolutely no choice".

The Spiritual Principles encompassing Step One:

- Surrender (Admission of the beating alcohol has inflicted upon our lives).
- Honesty (We must get honest with ourselves & remain honest).
- Acceptance/Tolerance (We first must accept that we cannot continue with the destructive behavior we have been living, then learn to accept every situation we find ourselves in, and to accept other human beings, even if we were wronged).
- Powerlessness (We must realize that we are powerless over these destructive behaviors and people/places/things).
- Patience (We must incorporate patience into our every waking moment, especially when it comes to other people).
- Manageability vs. Unmanageability (We must learn how to manage every aspect of our lives).

How do we begin to practice the Spiritual Principles?

1. We stop lying to ourselves and others... This helps us learn to become honest in all our affairs.

2. We take a "Time-Out" when we feel ourselves getting angry, intolerant, anxious, impatient or unwilling, and analyze why we are feeling this way instead of reacting negatively... This helps us incorporate patience, tolerance, acceptance, kindness, love and willingness into our everyday lives. Do not react to life's ups and downs. Have a plan and be proactive.

3. We practice becoming more organized in all aspects of our lives... This helps us with manageability, stress and our ability to focus on what is important.

Assignment #1 for Step One:

Read from the beginning (Roman numeral "V"), to the end of Chapter 2 (page 29) in the book titled "Alcoholics Anonymous."

1. As you are reading, pay special attention to the Doctor's Opinion (especially what it says on page xxviii).

2. As you are reading, underline everything that you identify with in the text.

3. When completed, call your sponsor and share what you underlined and identified with. Discuss the powerlessness in detail.

4. Share what you are struggling with & what you have learned at the beginning of 5 different AA meetings, 5 separate times.

5. Get the phone numbers from people you relate in that share in a meeting. Call at least 5 sober alcoholics **EVERY DAY.**

Assignment #2 for Step One:

1. First begin by taking these "Time-Outs" mentioned above when you feel yourself getting mad, anxious, impatient or unwilling, and analyze why you are feeling that way. Stop reacting negatively to others, instead practice being kind to everyone.

2. I want you to begin journaling every night before going to bed. I want you to write down every time you had to take a "Time-Out" and what was going on at that time, plus what you did about it... I would also like you to write about anything you feel was a success during your day, what meeting you had gone to and the message/share that struck you the most. Also please include the other addict/alcoholics you called or talked to that day and write about what you had gotten out of the connection. You can never write too much. Don't take this assignment for granted and do the work. This will pay off huge down the road! 10-15 minutes of your day could potentially add 10-15 years (or more) to your life.

3. Start organizing your life, i.e. your home clean and organized, same with your car, your clothes, your bills, your files, your computer, your phone, your time, your money, your work life, etc. De-clutter your "stuff". Less is more! Focus on what is necessary to sustain your everyday life and what truly is important to you and those in your life. Remember, if you can't take it with you when you leave this world, it really doesn't mean much.

4. Live in the solution, not the problem! Read page 416 in the Big Book where it starts, "At last, acceptance proved to be the key...", to the end of that chapter every day. Remember: You don't have to see the whole staircase to take the first step!

Assignment #3 for Step One:

Read Step One (pgs 21-24) in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and talk about its meaning with someone.

The Phenomenon of Craving

The Big Book on page xxiv (The Doctor's Opinion) says that an alcoholic has an "allergy to alcohol". An allergy is an abnormal reaction to any food, liquid or substance. If nine out of ten people have one reaction and one out of ten people have a different reaction, then the reaction of the one out of ten crew is abnormal. It also says on page xxvi that "the action of alcohol on an alcoholic is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is LIMITED to this class and NEVER occurs in the average temperate drinker." (A phenomenon is something that you can see but can't explain). "These allergic types can NEVER safely use alcohol in ANY FORM AT ALL". Then on page 22, "We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink, as he may do for months or years, he reacts much like other men. We are equally positive that once he takes ANY ALCOHOL WHATEVER into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop." This includes substances that contain alcohol like mouthwash, cold remedies, some chocolates, food prepared with alcohol, etc.). Your body doesn't know if you are having a drink or taking Nyquil for a cold, it only senses alcohol and begins to process it. It also says on page xxviii that, "all the different classifications of alcoholics have ONE symptom in common: they CANNOT start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity." Dr. William D. Silkworth, M.D. who at that time had nine years experience specializing in the treatment of alcoholics and drug addicts, wrote this in the late 1930's. He called it a "phenomenon of craving" because at that time there was no way to study metabolism. Since then, science has proven his theory as correct.

The following is an explanation of what happens when alcoholics put alcohol into their bodies, and how it is a completely different experience compared to non-alcoholics. No wonder why non-alcoholics can't relate, and make statements like, "Can't you just stop after one or two drinks?" It shows why alcoholics can use their willpower against everything EXCEPT alcohol.

Alcoholics make up about 12% of the population. The body of the alcoholic is physically different than the body of someone who is not an alcoholic. The liver and pancreas of the alcoholic process alcohol at one-third to one-tenth the rate of a normal pancreas and liver. As alcohol enters the body, it breaks down into its various components, one of which is acetate. We know now that acetate triggers a craving for more acetate. In a normal drinker, the acetate moves quickly through the system and exits. But that doesn't happen in an alcoholic. In alcoholics, the acetate of the first drink is barely processed out, so by staying in their body, it triggers a craving for more acetate. The alcoholic then has a second drink, now adding to most of the acetate of the first drink, and that makes them want a drink twice as much as the normal drinker. So they have another. Then, having almost three times the craving as a normal drinker, they have another. You can see from that point how alcoholics have no control over how much they drink. The craving cycle has begun and they have no choice but to keep drinking. Once the acetate accumulates in their body, and that begins to happen with only ONE drink, they will crave another. And how many times does an alcoholic think it would be nice to have JUST ONE drink to relax, but has many more? Now you see why. AND THIS CAN NEVER CHANGE!

On top of THAT (like it's not bad enough already), alcohol is a poison because it destroys human tissue. The two organs that alcohol damages the most are the liver and the pancreas. So the more the alcoholic drinks as time passes (or doesn't drink, because the liver and pancreas also deteriorate naturally as we age), the less their body is able to process the acetate. THAT is why alcoholism is a progressive, fatal illness. Bill W. says on page 30, "We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, NEVER better." Pretty revealing, huh. It explains many things I never before understood.

But if you think about it, we never have to deal with ANY of this if we DON'T put alcohol into our bodies in the first place. So the MAIN problem of the alcoholic centers in their mind and in their spiritual condition. My mind tells me that it's okay to TAKE the first drink and doesn't see that what I'm about to do is harmful (otherwise known as the alcoholic's mental obsession or our powerlessness), and if I'm NOT spiritually fit I can't STAND being sober because my thinking and emotions are too uncomfortable (otherwise known as the spiritual malady or our unmanageability). So whether they're drinking or not an alcoholic is powerless over alcohol, because of the mind and the body; and their life is unmanageable, especially their INNER life, because of their spiritual condition. Coincidentally, the Steps deal DIRECTLY and EFFECTIVELY with both our spiritual condition and with the mental obsession. BUT, the way the alcoholic's body handles alcohol will ONLY get worse as time passes, so there is NOTHING we can do about the physical feature of alcoholism except staying away from the first drink.

So that's the simple definition of what it means to be an alcoholic - we can't handle DRINKING (because of the mental obsession and the physical allergy) and we can't handle NOT drinking (because of the spiritual malady).