

Big Book Sponsorship

STEP ONE

How to share an effective "WAR" story



*This Twelve Step Workbook Guide substitutes terms and phrases related to alcoholism to include ANY acting-out or obsessive-compulsive addiction patterns such as, drugs and all mind altering substances, sugar/food/overeating, nicotine, gambling, sex / love / pornography, electronic media, self-harm / mutilation, anorexia, bulimia, over-spending / debting, cluttering / hoarding, emotions, codependency—and anyone can certainly increase this list and all are welcome. Our format quotes from the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, our basic recovery text. Our notes, commentary, and gender-inclusive changes are formatted in italics. For further study, it is suggested that you get a copy of the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous.*

Our job (as Sponsors) is to explain our approach and win their (newcomers) confidence.

But the ex-problem drinker (*addict*) who has found this solution (*our recipe for recovery*), who is properly armed with facts about them self, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic (*addict*) in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished. That the *person* who is making the approach has had the same difficulty (*lack of control*), that *they* obviously know what *they are* talking about, that *their* whole deportment shouts at the new prospect that *they are a person* with a real answer...(AA p. 18-19)

We hope no one will consider these self-revealing accounts in bad taste. Our hope is that many alcoholic (*addict*) men and women, desperately in need, will see these pages, and we believe that it is only by fully disclosing ourselves and our problems that they will be persuaded to say, "Yes, I am one of them too; I must have this thing." (*A recipe for permanent recovery.*) (AA p. 29)

Step 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol (*drugs, acting-out behaviour*), that our lives had become unmanageable. (A.A. p. 59)

Identification—"How share an effective 'war' story.

The message which can interest and hold these alcoholic (*addicted*) people must have depth and weight (AA p. xxviii).

Tell *them (newcomers)* enough about your drinking (*using, acting-out*) habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage *them* to speak of themselves. (AA p. 91) Tell *them* how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give *them* an account of the struggles (*failed strategies*) you made to stop. Show *them (newcomers)* how the mental twist (*how my mind lies to me*) which leads to the first drink (*use, act or thought*) of the spree. (AA p. 92).

Men and women drink (*use or act-out*) essentially because they like the effect (*body allergy*) produced by alcohol (*drugs, obsessive-compulsive acts*) (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*). The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious (*yes-no?*), they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false (*my mind lies to me*). To them, their alcoholic (*addict*) life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented (*bored, depressed, anxious*), unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort (*body allergy*) which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks (*hits, puffs, bites, bets, acts, cuts, thoughts, etc.*) which they see others taking (*doing*) with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*), and the phenomenon of craving (*body allergy*) develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink (*use or act-out*) again (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*) This is repeated over and over (*Is this your experience - yes-no?*), and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of their recovery. (AA. p. xxviii 4th ed.)

Analogy: Addicts are like drowning men and women. If we don't find some way of keeping our heads above water, we are going to drown. So we look for some kind of power to keep us afloat. We notice there are "logs" floating on the surface. These logs look like they're capable of keeping our heads above water, but when we reach for one of these logs we find that we can only hold on for maybe a day, a week, a month, a year, maybe longer, but at some point, the logs fails us as a power and we slip and drown. "Logs" are best described as "easier softer ways," "middle of the road solutions," half measures" and "human aids.

"My Log List: Step One: Admitting powerlessness: Check those strategies that failed to keep you permanently abstinent.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> will power | <input type="checkbox"/> church, prayer (faith without works) | <input type="checkbox"/> good days/bad days |
| <input type="checkbox"/> resolutions, oaths, promises, contracts | <input type="checkbox"/> having a sponsor | <input type="checkbox"/> keeping busy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> controlled using, drinking | <input type="checkbox"/> going to meetings, 90 meetings in 90 days, "meeting makers make it" | <input type="checkbox"/> money / no money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> harm reduction, substitution strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> yesterday's spiritual experience | <input type="checkbox"/> memory strategies "remember when," "think, think, think," "play the tape all the way through" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ill health, sickness | <input type="checkbox"/> self-help books, personal development courses | <input type="checkbox"/> jail, incarceration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ominous warnings from a doctor, judge, lawyer, employer | <input type="checkbox"/> recovery knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> good reasons to stop, sufficiently strong reasons to stop, consequences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> change of environment, trigger lists, avoiding people, places, things | <input type="checkbox"/> "Big Book" reading / studying | <input type="checkbox"/> moral & philosophical convictions, reputation, behavioural modification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> counselling, therapy, group therapy | <input type="checkbox"/> intelligence / education | <input type="checkbox"/> suffering, humiliation, pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> detox, treatment centres, spas, spiritual retreats | <input type="checkbox"/> frothy emotional appeals, interventions, threats, ultimatums | <input type="checkbox"/> sobriety time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> war stories, fear, horror | <input type="checkbox"/> positive thinking, affirmations, self-talk | <input type="checkbox"/> exercise, fasts, holistic medicine, acupuncture, hypnosis, vitamins, healthy diet, cleansings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> relationships, friends, spouse, children, family, sex, pregnancy | <input type="checkbox"/> poetry: "Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow," "The Man In the Glass" | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> getting a pet (dog, cat) | <input type="checkbox"/> guilt, shame, remorse | |

My Loser List: Step One: Admitting life is unmanageable. Check what you've lost as a result of your inability to stay stopped.

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> time | <input type="checkbox"/> careers, jobs, employment | <input type="checkbox"/> respect from others | <input type="checkbox"/> responsibility to others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> family | <input type="checkbox"/> licence (vehicle, professional) | <input type="checkbox"/> self-esteem | <input type="checkbox"/> volition & agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> self-confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> reputation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> children | <input type="checkbox"/> quality of life | <input type="checkbox"/> self-improvement | <input type="checkbox"/> freedom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> friends | <input type="checkbox"/> hope | <input type="checkbox"/> self-control | <input type="checkbox"/> morality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> money | <input type="checkbox"/> intelligence | <input type="checkbox"/> emotional security | <input type="checkbox"/> spirituality / God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> home / residence | <input type="checkbox"/> mental acuity | <input type="checkbox"/> responsibility for myself | <input type="checkbox"/> peace of mind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> health | <input type="checkbox"/> self-respect | | <input type="checkbox"/> sanity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> safety | | | <input type="checkbox"/> faith |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hygiene | | | <input type="checkbox"/> humanity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> opportunities | | | |

If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely (*Do you honestly want to stop drinking, using or acting out - yes-no? and, based on your "log list", have you been able to stay stopped - yes-no?*), or if when drinking (*using or acting out*), you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic (*addict*). (*Do you exhibit little control, when drinking, using or acting out - yes-no? See your loser list.*) If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.

(AA p. 44) This is by no means a comprehensive picture of the true alcoholic (*addict*), as our behavior patterns vary. But this description should identify *them* roughly (*yes-no?*). (AA p. 22).

Step One Instruction (*self-diagnosis*): We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics (*addicts*). (*Do you concede the fact that you're an addict - yes-no?*) This is the first step in recovery. The delusion (*lie*) that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed. (*Are you convinced you're an addict- yes-no?*) (AA p. 30).

The Bad News: We are without defense against the first drink (*drug, obsessive-compulsive act*) (*Based on your "log" list, is this your experience - yes-no?*) (AA p. 24) The idea (*lie*) that somehow, someday *they* will control and enjoy *their* drinking (*using, acting out behavior*) is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker (*user, obsessive-compulsive*). Over any considerable period we get worse, never better. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death (AA p. 30). (*Based on your "loser" list is this your experience - yes-no?*)

Now, you are now properly armed with the facts about yourself.

The Good News: There is a solution...(A.A. p. 25). If you are as seriously alcoholic (*addicted*) as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible (*Is life becoming impossible? yes-no? See your loser list.*), and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid (*Are you beyond human aid? yes-no? See your log list.*), 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 . This we did because we honestly wanted to, and were willing to make the effort (AA p. 25-26). (*Are you ready and willing to accept spiritual help - yes-no?*)

...and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems *they* despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds *themselves* easily able to control *their* desire for alcohol (*drugs, acting-out behaviour*), the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules. (AA. p. xxix 4th ed.)

When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us, but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. (A.A. p 25)