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**THE PIONEERS SERIES:**

The pioneers — and principles — of the  
All Addicts Anonymous Way of Life

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## PART ONE:

# GRESHAM'S LAW AND ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

by Tom P. Jr.

*Gresham's Law — that bad currency drives out  
good — has been operative in the life of the Twelve  
Step Programs. Weak practice of the Program is  
tending to drive out strong practice of the Program.*

**T**here are three ways to work the Twelve Step Program.  
(1) the strong, original, way — clearly epitomized in  
chapter five of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which  
has proved powerfully and reliably effective for more than  
three quarters of a century. (2) a medium way — not so strong,  
not so safe, not so sure, not so good, but still effective. And (3)  
a weak way, which turns out to be really no way at all but  
literally a heresy, a false teaching, a twisting and corruption  
of what the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous clearly stated  
the Program to be.

As an AA old-timer, I am still awed by the combination of  
simplicity, practicality, and profundity built into the Twelve  
Steps, the AA recovery plan. An AA friend of mine recently  
summarized the Steps in a way that gives a good, quick  
overview of the spiritual principles embodied in them:

1. Admission of powerlessness.
2. Reliance on a Higher Power.

3. Total surrender to God.
4. Moral inventory.
5. Admission of the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Commitment to total change.
7. Prayer for total wholeness.
8. Total willingness to amend.
9. Making amends where possible.
10. Continuing inventory.
11. Prayer and meditation, leading to improved conscious contact with God.
12. Spiritual awakening, carrying the message, and practicing the principles in all our affairs.

When the Steps are epitomized like this, you can clearly see that they aim, not at normalcy, but at full spiritual regeneration — at a life lived one day at a time in conscious contact with God. This audacious blueprint for life change was drawn up in 1939 by a former dead-end drunk serving as spokesman for an unknown, unproven society of 100 reformed problem drinkers, many of whom were still in the relatively early stages of recovery from alcohol addiction.

Yet the Twelve Steps, even though they are clearly aiming at the mountaintop, are so plainly worded, and so well-explained in chapter five of the AA Big Book, that they can be done by *anyone*. And therein lies their great genius. There is no prior requirement of purity of life or advancement of learning. Just a willingness to admit personal defeat and a sincere desire to change.

The Twelve Steps sharply contradict the secular psychological axiom that where the level of performance is low, you must set a low level of aspiration in order to gain a positive result

in life. According to the secular psychological view, the only practical approach for the early AAs to have taken would have been as follows: to put together a program which aimed certainly no higher than alcohol abstinence and a return to life as it had been in pre-alcoholic days, to life as ordinary men and women of the world. However, these wild and woolly early AAs, these psychologically illiterate off-scouring and rubbish of the world, these newly sobered-up drunks, set out to become totally committed men and women of God.

The authors of the Big Book knew that their God-centered, psychologically heretical, radical recovery plan was liable to jar many of the newcomers they were trying to reach with their message. Therefore, they made two moves to sugarcoat the pill. First, they put the following disclaimer immediately after listing the Twelve Steps in chapter five:

**Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.**

That short paragraph was a stroke of inspiration, especially the phrase, “we are not saints.” It has eased thousands of new, half-convinced AA members (myself included) past the fact that we were headed, under the guidance of the Steps, in the completely unfamiliar direction of spiritual perfection.

Most of us began practicing the Steps without realizing their full implications. Experience quickly taught us that they worked. They got us sober and enabled us to stay sober.

From our deadly-serious pragmatic standpoint, that was what mattered; we were content to enjoy our sobriety, and leave all debates as to why the Steps worked to non-alcoholic theorizers — whose lives did not hang in the balance if they got themselves confused and came to some wrong conclusions.

Bill and Dr. Bob made a second move to keep the spiritual rigor and power of the Twelve Steps from frightening new prospects (sugarcoating number two). They put the Steps forth as *suggestions* rather than as *directives*. The sentence which introduces the Steps in chapter five of the Big Book says: “Here are the steps we took, which are *suggested* [our italics] as a program of recovery.” This idea was greatly appreciated throughout the AA movement from the time the Big Book was first published. We drunks hate to be told to do *anything*. This second sugarcoating gave us the freedom to take the Steps at our own pace and in our own way. This freedom quickly grew to be deeply cherished among AA members.

Before we explore the results of this sugarcoated approach to the Steps, there is one oddity worth noting. AA existed for four full years before the Steps were put in their final written form. During that time there was a Program, and it was sobering up alcoholics. It consisted of two parts: a six-step word-of-mouth Program, and the Four Absolutes — absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love — taken over from the Oxford Group, the evangelical Christian movement out of which AA was born. The six steps of the word-of-mouth Program from the early pioneering years of Alcoholics Anonymous as given in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* are: 1. We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol. 2. We made a moral inventory of our defects or sins. 3. We confessed or shared our shortcomings with another person in confidence. 4. We made restitution to all those

we had harmed by our drinking. 5. We tried to help other alcoholics with no thought of reward in money or prestige. 6. We prayed to whatever God we thought there was for power to practice these precepts.

In those early days of AA (1935-1939) there was no talk of suggestions. The basic points of the Program were regarded by all the older members as directives, as indispensable essentials, and were passed on to newcomers as such.

When Bill first formulated the Twelve Steps, he conceived of them, too, as instructions, not as suggestions. When the idea of presenting the Steps as suggestions came up, Bill for a long time flatly opposed it. Finally — and reluctantly — Bill agreed to the “suggestions” approach. In *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* he related how this concession enabled countless AAs to approach the Fellowship who would otherwise have been turned off AA — and back to active alcoholism.

Nevertheless, Bill was a man whose watchword was *prudence* and who went out of his way to steer clear of *destructive controversy*. One cannot help wondering if his feelings on the decision to present the Twelve Steps in the form of suggestions were not a bit more ambiguous than he was willing to discuss in public, once the compromise had been reached. Certainly the paragraphs of chapter five of the Big Book which introduce the Twelve Steps are full of language that would be utterly appropriate as a preamble to a set of *action directions*, but is not nearly as fitting as an introduction to a group of *suggestions*. Here is the beginning of chapter five, with the no-compromise key words and phrases in (our) italics:

**Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not *completely give themselves***

*to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.*

*Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to take certain steps.*

*At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.*

*Remember that we deal with alcohol — cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power — that One is God. May you find Him now!*

*Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon. Here are the steps we took ...*

Even though Bill did end up fully reconciled to the compromise approach, his initial misgivings, in the long run, may turn out

to have been prophetic. At that time, however, there were no indications that the permissive, suggestions-only approach was anything but a boon to the Movement.

In 1938 and 1939, when the Big Book was being written, there were 100 sober members in the Fellowship. By 1945 active AA membership was up to 13,000. The primary reason for this explosive increase was that the Program — the Steps — were a winning formula; they worked, and there was a big need for them out there in the population. America was boozy and was spawning a great many alcoholics. Highly favorable press coverage of the AA story was also a major factor in the spectacular growth pattern. A series of enthusiastic articles on AA appeared in the fall of 1939 in the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*. These pieces produced a flood of new AA members in the Cleveland area. This sudden expansion was the first tangible evidence that AA had the potential to grow into a movement of major proportions. The sequence of events during this period is significant. The Big Book was published in April of 1939, and in it the suggestions-only approach to the Steps was disseminated for the first time. A few months later the *Plain Dealer* articles ran, and Cleveland AAs found themselves relating to new prospects on an unprecedented scale. It suddenly became attractive, in a way it had not been before when the Fellowship was smaller and more intimate, to ease up a bit on the idea that all the principles should be practiced *all* the time by *all* the members. More and more emphasis began to be placed on the fact that the Steps were to be considered as suggestions only. At this time, and through this set of circumstances, the “cafeteria-style” — take-what-you-like-and-leave-the-rest-out — approach to the Twelve Steps came into practice.

And it seemed to work. It turned out that many newcomers could get sober and stay sober without anything like the full

and intensive practice of the whole Program that had been considered a life-or-death necessity in the early years. In fact, alcoholics in significant numbers began to demonstrate that they could stay off booze on no more than an admission of powerlessness, some work with other alcoholics, and regular attendance at AA meetings.

This is not to say that all AAs began to take this super-permissive approach to the Twelve Steps. A great many continued to opt for the original, full-Program approach. But now for the first time the workability of other, less rigorous approaches was established, and a tendency had emerged which was to become more pronounced as time went on.

At first this seemed like an unmixed blessing. After all, those who chose actively to practice all of the Twelve Steps were as free as ever to do so. Those who preferred working with some, or just a couple, of the Steps were staying sober, too. And AA was attracting more and more new members and more and more favorable recognition. In 1941, Jack Alexander's article on Alcoholics Anonymous was published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. AA membership at the time stood at 2,000. In the next nine months it jumped 400 percent!

By 1941 (which was the year my father, Tom P., Sr., came into the Fellowship) it was possible to distinguish three variant practices of the AA Program, which we have labeled the strong-cup-of-tea, medium-cup-of-tea, and weak-cup-of-tea approaches. *Strong* AA was the original, undiluted dosage of the spiritual principles. Strong AAs took all twelve of the Steps — and kept on taking them. They did not stop with the admission of powerlessness over alcohol, but went on right away to turn their wills and lives over to God's care. They began to practice rigorous honesty in all their affairs. In short order they proceeded to take a moral inventory; admit all their wrongs to at least one other person; take positive and

forceful action in making such restitution as was possible for those wrongs; continue taking inventory, admitting their faults, and making restitution on a regular basis; pray and meditate every day; go to two or more AA meetings weekly; and actively work the Twelfth Step, carrying the AA message to others in trouble.

The *medium* AAs started off with a bang, pretty much like the strong AAs, except they hedged or procrastinated a bit on parts of the Program that they feared or did not like — maybe the God Steps, maybe the inventory Steps, depending on their particular nervousness or dislikes. But after they had stayed sober for a while, the medium AAs eased up and settled into a practice of the Program that went something like this: an AA meeting a week; occasional Twelfth Step work (leaving more and more of that to the “newer fellows” as time went on); some work with the Steps (but not like before); less and less inventory (as they became more and more “respectable”); some prayer and meditation still, but not on a daily basis any more (“not enough time,” due to the encroachment of business engagements, social activities, and other baggage that went along with the return to normal life in the workaday world).

The *weak* AAs were a varied lot. Common to the weak approach everywhere was that it left out big chunks of the Program totally and permanently. Sometimes it was the God Steps, sometimes the inventory Steps, often both. Weak AAs tended to talk like this: “All you need to do to stay sober is go to meetings and stay away from the first drink.” Most of the weak AAs who were successful in staying sober were pretty faithful meeting-goers. Since they were doing so little with the principles, their sobriety and their survival depended more exclusively than did those of the strong and medium AAs on constant exposure to the people of AA.

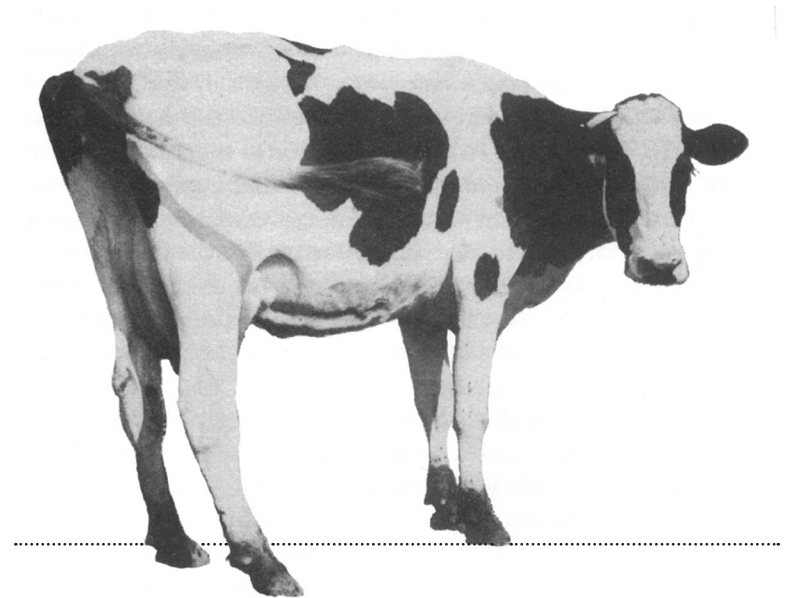
The fact is that only the strong-cup-of-tea members were practicing the Program as it had been laid out in the Big Book. Granting that the medium and weak AAs had every right as AA members to practice the principles any way they wanted (including hardly any at all), since the Steps were “suggestions only” — still, the way the first members had done it, and the way the Big Book had recorded it, was the strong-cup-of-tea way.

The medium approach had — and still has — a real, constructive place in the AA recovery scheme, in that it can be used as a temporary platform for reluctant beginners. The medium-cup-of-tea option enables many who initially are not up to the strong approach to gain a foothold in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

*But medium AA can — and often does — become a trap.*

Medium AA is no place for an AA member to try to settle out permanently. People who remain too long in medium AA easily pass the point where they might be encouraged to step up to strong AA, and they end up sliding back into weak AA.

*Weak AA has none of the redeeming features of medium AA.* Weak AA is clearly at odds with the Program as outlined in the Big Book. Weak AA bases itself on a flat and unnegotiable refusal to work with vital recovery principles. Weak AA *cops out* and stays copped out on most of the Twelve Steps. Weak AA *waters down* the Program to the point where there really is no Program. A more inclusive, more accurate, and more descriptive term than “weak AA” for this practice is “copped-out and watered-down AA,” or COWD AA for short.



With the passage of time, a development has taken place in AA in the respective popularity and acceptability of the strong approach *versus* the weak, COWD approach. In their earlier years, the weak, COWD AAs tended to feel obliged to defend and sing the praises of their heterodox approach, and even to chide the strong AAs a bit for being rigid and holier-than-thou. The strong AAs, for their part, tended to be more relaxed and tolerant, less strident, less defensive. After all, their method was obviously safer, since it involved taking more of the medicine. And it was obviously the original and genuine article — as the Big Book attested.

However, this juxtaposition of attitudes came to have a peculiar effect in a movement which prided itself on its good-natured inclination to let all kinds of maverick opinions and practices have their say and their way. The loudest voices in the movement came to be the voices of weak AAs, and these voices, in time, came to have the greatest impact on



newcomers. Copped-out and watered-down AA came to be the “in” thing, the wave of the future; strong AA came to be regarded — not universally, but widely — as a bit stodgy and a bit passé.

The COWD AAs had, in a sense, proven Bill and the first hundred AAs wrong. In the introduction to the Twelve Steps, the statement “we thought we could find an easier, softer way, but we could not” was an unequivocal assertion that it was necessary to practice all the Steps. But the COWD AAs *did not practice all the Steps*, and they were staying sober. They *had* found an easier, softer way. Human nature being what it is, it was inevitable that the less demanding, weak approach would grow in popularity while the older, more rigorous approach would decline. Who wants to do things the hard way when they don’t have to? Who wants to drive a car with standard shift when the model with automatic is a hundred dollars cheaper?

There is still some lip service in the movement to the importance of working all the Steps and practicing rigorous honesty in all one’s affairs. But as a matter of fact, precious few AAs continue to attempt seriously and consistently to do these things on a daily basis — not after their first months of sobriety in the Fellowship.

Reversion to a lower, more “normal” level of aspiration is the order of the day. Those who do continue to practice strong AA have to be careful how they talk about what they are doing in AA meetings. In many places, too much or too serious talk about God is considered bad form. The same is true about talk on the subjects of confession, restitution, and rigorous honesty — especially where they affect such difficult and sensitive life areas as job applications, tax returns, business dealings, and sex relations.

But if weak AA works — if it produces recovery — what fault is there to find with it? Maybe this is a case where heterodoxy turns out to be superior to orthodoxy. Why should anyone go to the trouble of practicing strong AA?

For one good reason: weak AA, in very many cases, really doesn’t work. Weak AA brings about a far less profound life alteration than strong AA does. In many cases the change which weak AA produces is *not enough to crack the alcoholic pattern*, and results in an *apparent* recovery which *does not last* but sooner or later eventuates in a relapse into drinking. And in many cases where weak AA does succeed in producing lasting sobriety, these weakly sober AAs peter out into lives of depression, anxiety, bitter resentment, and real despair, just like nearly all the other merely dried-out drunks in history.

What the original AAs were shooting for — and what they aimed their Program at — was not mere sobriety. Aiming for mere sobriety would have been the commonsense approach, the way of worldly wisdom, the reasonable-level-of-aspiration approach. However, the founders of AA were men moved by uncommon sense, by inspiration, by spiritual guidance. They knew that the commonsense approach had already been tried by the world for 150 years, and it was failing everywhere, utterly, in their time. They knew that when a drunk’s level of aspiration was set at mere abstinence — “Why don’t you be a good fellow, use your will power, and give the stuff up?” — it simply did not work. The poor candidate for recovery was back drinking again in short order.

The great discovery that launched AA in the first place was this: the alcoholic must somehow be rocketed into a state way beyond abstinence — he must achieve a real spiritual conversion — he must achieve an utterly new relationship with God — *then* permanent abstinence will automatically



occur as a blessed and life-saving byproduct. That was how it happened with Bill. That was how it happened with Dr. Bob. That was how it happened with the first hundred members. That was how the authors of the Big Book saw that it would *have to happen* with everyone.

Originally, the Twelfth Step read: “Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” Two key phrases were “spiritual experience” and “as the result of these Steps.” The assumption was: no spiritual experience — no recovery. It was also assumed that there were not a number of different results from working the Steps; there was one result — *the* result — and that was spiritual experience. To the first members, spiritual experience meant that God had touched your life — directly, tangibly — and turned it around.

Sometime between 1939, when the *Plain Dealer* articles were published, and 1941, when the Alexander piece ran in the *Post*, a major shift in philosophy occurred. No one in AA was much aware that it was taking place at the time, and to this day the process that went on remains almost totally unacknowledged throughout the Fellowship. What changed was the importance of the roles assigned respectively to the recovery *principles* and the recovery *fellowship* in AA.

Up until 1939, AA was a small, unknown organization whose success record, though excellent, applied only over a tiny group of cases, and had not yet stood the test of time. Recovering alcoholics in the young movement relied upon each other and worked closely with one another. But the principles were the primary life transformers. The movement as such was not large enough or well enough established that it could be depended upon primarily instead of faithful work with the Steps.

However, after AA became a big operation, after it gained national recognition as a success, a new relationship became possible with it, one which had not previously been an option, and which the founders could not have foreseen. It now became possible for an alcoholic to come to meetings and get sober *without undergoing a real spiritual conversion*, simply by the process of imitation — by the practice of something no more spiritual than the principle of monkey-see-monkey-do.

Here is how recovery-by-imitation worked: In joining AA, the newcomer joined a big, successful organization, like the Elks or the Kiwanis. One of the customs of this particular club was that you did not drink; so if the newcomer liked the people he had met in AA and wanted to stay associated with them, he gave up drinking. He made AA meetings and AA people the focus of his social life and his leisure-time activities, and he stayed sober, largely off the power of the pack.

The true nature of this quite other, and quite non-spiritual, recovery option was never fully recognized throughout the movement. Instead, the founders of the fellowship made an attempt to broaden the meaning of the term “spiritual” to include two kinds of alcoholics: (1) the *sober-by-conversion* alcoholics — those who, as the result of working the Steps, had a spiritual experience and became transformed human beings, seriously involved with regenerative life and ideas, and (2) the *sober-by-imitation* alcoholics — those who remained essentially the same type of people they were before coming into AA, except that they joined a new organization, made a new set of friends, and gave up drinking in conformity to their new social setup.

There is only one term in the Twelve Steps that has been changed since the Big Book was first published in 1939. That term is “spiritual experience” in the Twelfth Step. A member of my home AA group, who first came into the Fellowship

in 1941, tells it this way: "When I first came in, they were still talking about 'spiritual experience.' A year or two later they started calling it 'spiritual awakening.'" It was at this time that the official version of the Twelfth Step was changed to read: "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps..." The term spiritual experience, which had been perfectly acceptable in the early years when the Fellowship was small and explicitly conversion-oriented, came to be viewed as too narrow and prejudicial against the less-profound life changes resulting from imitation-oriented AA, which were coming to be the majority recovery pattern in AA.

An explanatory note was added to the Big Book, as follows:

**The terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening" are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.**

Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous.

In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming "God-consciousness" followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook.

Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics, such transformations, though frequent, are by

no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the "educational variety" because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.

Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it "God-consciousness." Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

**We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty, and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.***

When you compare the above statement to that which introduced the Twelve Steps in chapter five of the Big Book (see pp. 7-8), the difference in tone is astonishing. Chapter five rings with a series of booming affirmations that the goal of the Program is a life given to God and the way is an uncompromisingly spiritual one. In the later-added explanatory note there is virtually a full retreat from the

earlier vigor and joy in God-commitment. The stated purpose of the explanatory note is to reassure people that the spiritual change accompanying an AA recovery need not be in the form of a sudden upheaval. That point needed making and was well made.

However, a further point was made: the point that spirituality was not an essential of the Program but that willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness were all that was needed. This point was made not directly, but by clear, strong, and unmistakable implication — by the indirect, defensive, almost apologetic treatment of the whole subject of religious and spiritual experience. The founders of the movement were responding to the spiritual problem by lowering the spiritual level of aspiration of the society, a move they would not have dared to make in the early days, but could make, and even felt they *must* make, now that the society had become large and gained a reputation for respectability and reasonableness.

The facts of the situation in AA which prompted the rewording of the Twelfth Step and the adding of the explanatory note to the Big Book, could have been summarized this way:

“It is now possible to recover in one of two ways in AA. Option number one is the original, spiritual-experience way which follows from working all of the Steps. Option number two is the way of partial practice of the Steps and primary dependence on the social, fellowship-related aspects of life in AA. This second approach does not produce a strong spiritual experience. It also does not follow our tradition that we should always place principles before personalities. But in its favor, it requires less commitment and less work; it involves less in the way of life rearrangement; and it has proven itself sufficient in many cases to produce lasting abstinence from drinking.” No such clarifying statement was made, however,

and the switch in terms from spiritual experience to spiritual awakening had the net effect of clouding in everyone’s mind the real nature of the change which had come about.

It was not a matter of conscious deception. The mistake was simply a failure to see a dividing into two camps when the division had occurred. This was an understandable failure to see a trend developing, comparable to a mother’s inability to notice growth changes in her own child. But in a movement now committed to the avoidance of controversy, blindness to the split in the movement was inevitable.

The drawback to the original, rigorous, strong-cup-of-tea approach to the AA program was that it required new members to plunge into a drastic Program of spiritual transformation, a course which has never in history had appeal with large masses of people. Had the original approach remained the only approach, it is doubtful that AA would have reached anything like its present size.

But the weak-cup-of-tea practice had even more serious flaws built into it. The relatively superficial life change which it produces is sufficient to get some alcoholics sober. *It is not adequate — it is not effective — it simply doesn’t work — for a very large number of others.* This situation is particularly evident with the “hard” cases, that is, those alcoholics who have been very badly beat up physically and mentally before they arrive at their first AA meeting, or those whose alcoholism is complicated with drug abuse, crazy sex, criminal or psychotic tendencies, or a streak of psychopathology.

Also, weak AA *simply doesn’t work* with the very large population of AAs who are known everywhere as “slippers”— those alcoholics who have developed a pattern of hanging around AA, staying sober for periods, but relapsing repeatedly

into drinking. Generally, the slippers are alcoholics who are unwilling or unable to work with root principles, notably rigorous honesty. Weak AA does not touch most of these people. They cannot stay sober that way.

Yet if these “hard” cases manage to find their way into a group where strong AA, and nothing but strong AA, is being practiced, many of them are able to achieve lasting sobriety. There is another, more insidious, danger built into weak AA. In many cases the “recovery” produced by watered-down approaches to the Twelve Steps fails to hold up over the long haul. What looked in the beginning like an easier, softer way to maintain happy sobriety yields progressively less and less serenity and real happiness, finally ending in a complete reversal of momentum and a relapse into serious personal misery. The end result may be a return to active alcoholism; or it may be a sinking-out into a life of discontented abstinence, marred by some combination of tension, resentment, depression, compulsive sick sex, and an overall sense of meaninglessness. Either way, it is a final failure to reap the benefits of the AA Program; it is, in the last analysis, a failure to recover.

Two disturbing trends are noticeable in contemporary AA. One trend is toward a lower recovery rate overall. For the first twenty years, the standard AA recovery estimate was seventy-five percent. AA experience was that fifty percent of the alcoholics who came to AA got sober right away and stayed sober. Another twenty-five percent had trouble for a while but eventually got sober for good, and the remaining twenty-five percent never made a recovery.

Then there was a period of some years when AA headquarters stopped making the seventy-five percent recovery claim in their official literature. In 1968 AA's General Service Board published a survey indicating an overall recovery rate of

about sixty-seven percent. The net of all this seems to be that as AA got bigger and older, its effectiveness dropped from about three in four to about two in three.

The second disturbing trend in the movement is not indicated by statistics, but it is clear enough to any careful observer of the AA scene. As the Fellowship grows older, its class of old-timers (alcoholics sober ten years and longer) grows. And the question of the *staying power* of an AA recovery looms ever larger. It is an unhappy fact that growing numbers of these old-timers find the joy going out of their sobriety. Many of them search around frantically for ways to recapture the old zest for alcohol-free living, and many of them end up in such blind alleys as lunatic religions, pop psychological fads, or chemical alternatives like psychedelics, pot, tranquilizers, and mood elevators. And far too many end up either back drinking or sunk in despondency, hostility, bizarre acting-out patterns of one sort or another, or just plain, devastating boredom.

All of this is unnecessary. The gradually shrinking recovery rate and the old-timer blues do not require a complex or an innovative solution. The answer lies in a return to original, strong AA. It turns out those who wrote the Big Book were right after all. There really *is* no easier, softer way. The extra work and commitment demanded by the full-Program approach pay out enormous dividends. They make sobriety fun, because they do not make sobriety an end in itself.

The majority of those who become addicted are people with a mystical streak, an appetite for inexhaustible bliss. We sought in bottles what can only be found in spiritual experience. AA worked in the first place because its Twelve Steps were a workable set of guidelines to real spiritual experience. The growth of the movement made possible *for a time* a kind of parasitism in which partial practitioners and nonpractitioners

of the spiritual principles were able to feed off the strength of those who had undergone real spiritual experiences.

But now, the parasites have already drained the host organism of a considerable portion of its life force, with no benefit to themselves.

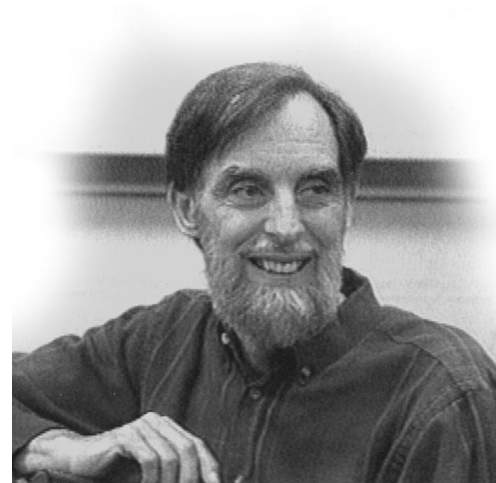
It is late in the day to be sounding a call for a return to the original way, to faithful practice of the full Program. However, a great deal of life is left in the Fellowship, and a major revival is possible, if enough of us see our dangerous situation, personally and as a Fellowship. What we need to do is clear enough. It is spelled out in the first seven chapters of the Big Book. What it all boils down to — especially for us old-timers — is a willingness to continue practicing *all* the principles in *all* our affairs today, rather than resting on our laurels, taking our stand on what we did way back when, in our first weeks and months of sobriety.

But we must not fail to face squarely the need for change, the need for rededication. Complacency, smugness in our record of success, is our greatest enemy. If we as a recovered-addict society are unwilling to reverse our present course, the outlook is clear enough. We stand to recapitulate in less than a century what the Christian church has spent the last two thousand years demonstrating: that even the very best and highest of human institutions tend to deteriorate in time; and that size in spiritual organizations is all too often achieved at the expense of compromise of basic principles and the progressive abandonment of original goals and practices.

I owe my life to AA. I hope we have the vision and the humility to change. I know we can if we will. This much is certain: the Twelve Steps are as inspired, as effective, as uncompromised, and as practical now as they were when they were first put in writing. Whatever else may have gone downhill, they haven't.

“Tom P., Jr., is — in some ways — a young carbon-copy of his father. He is demonstrative, vociferous, and lively. Both seem at peace with their world; both men love to laugh.”

- **Milton Schwartz**, publisher and journalist



## THOMAS ROBERTS POWERS, JR.

(1939-2013)

*The AAA co-founder that  
spent nearly a half century  
spreading the message  
of recovery to addicts of  
all kinds*

**T**om Powers Jr. — “Dooley” to his innumerable friends — began attending meetings at the age of thirteen in the Chappaqua, New York, AA group in the early 1950s. It was Bill Wilson who gave his approval for young Tom to attend, noting that thirteen was an appropriate age to be exposed to the Steps and the meetings discussing their application. At that time, the Chappaqua group was the home group of Bill Wilson and Tom Jr.’s father.

In the 1950s, the culture of AA was still very broad, often including the wives, children, and other family members in its way of life. As Tom Jr. once noted: “Early AA was very much a family affair, with Bill and Lois Wilson and Dr. Bob and Anne Smith meeting together, working together to formulate the guidelines that became the Twelve Steps, carrying the message together to newcomers.”

Tom Jr. described his own childhood experience inside the fellowship of AA as follows:

“Growing up as a boy, I regularly spent Sunday mornings with my parents at Bill and Lois’

home in Bedford Village, New York, listening to Bill talk about AA, God, and a whole range of fascinating subjects with my father and other AA old-timers. Bill’s personal presence made a tremendous impression on me then. At age nine, I did not analyze such things. Bill simply felt and sounded like a giant of a man. Those discussions struck me as high occasions. I can still recall the Wilsons’ dimly lit living room with its beamed ceiling, the grownups in the middle of the room — Bill often standing by the huge floor radiator which gave off a great blast of hot air in cold weather — and us kids off to one side in the corner. Fragments of those conversations have remained with me all through the intervening years.”

Growing up in and around AA doesn’t necessarily ensure immunity from addiction and, by his early 20s, Tom was hung up in booze, depression, and sex in a bad way. In August of 1964, Tom Jr. got sober in AA and, fortunately for him, had his father — a man with personal experience applying the AA program to other addictions — for a sponsor. Over the next few years, as Tom Jr.’s recovery included his secondary

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*Tom Powers Jr. was born in October 1939. He was a writer, educator, musician, and avid outdoorsman. He attended Yale University and the State University of New York, receiving his B.A. in English literature and education. His postgraduate studies were done at Summit College in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He served in the U.S. Army from 1961-1963.*

*Tom was co-founder of the East Ridge Recovery Community where*

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*(continued from p. 26)*

*he served in the following positions: President, East Ridge Community; Administrator, Supervisor, and Director of Curriculum, East Ridge School; Executive Editor, 24 Magazine; Publisher, 24 Newsletter; Treasurer and General Manager, East Ridge Corporation.*

*Throughout his writing career, Tom published more than one hun-*



addictions, a group developed around the two of them. For the next forty years, both men worked tirelessly, living and carrying the AAA message to countless addicts.

Speaking to those new to AAA and to the entire AAA fellowship, Tom Jr. had this message:

“The surest way to hang onto the Program and maintain a contented sobriety and abstinence from any addiction whatsoever is to spend your life giving the Program away. Join an AAA group. If one doesn’t exist in your area, start one. Get a sponsor — that is, an experienced friend in the Program to help you in working the Steps. Go to meetings regularly, at least two a week, and more if you are shaky. And carry the Twelve Step message to others, especially addicts, and especially newcomers. Do these things, and your chances of success on the Program are very high — pushing 100 percent. Based on over a half a century’s experience and thousands of closely observed recoveries, we guarantee it!”

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*(continued from p. 27)*

*dred articles on addiction recovery featured in 24 Magazine, 24 Newsletter, Ridge Review, and The AA Grapevine. He co-authored the book The Answer to Addiction (Harper, 1975 and Crossroad, 1990). Among Tom Jr.’s many literary contributions, his most widely read and circulated is Gresham’s Law and Alcoholics Anonymous.*

## PART TWO:

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### “STRONG AA”

**by Tom P. Sr.**

**A transcript of an Upstate Group meeting  
of AAA held on June 19, 1986**

In All Addicts Anonymous, we use strong Program practice, with some room for medium Program practice, and no room for weak Program practice.

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**A**ll Addicts Anonymous is simply the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous extended to any and all addictions. The way of life is identical as lived by an alcoholic or a drug addict or a depression addict or a food addict. Really, the addictive substance or condition doesn’t make a different life, and in brief, that’s what All Addicts Anonymous is about.

There are quite a few different ways, however, in which to live this way of life. In the Anonymous groups, starting with the major groups — Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous — from the beginning, the greatest liberty was not only permitted but encouraged — you may indeed practice the Program in the way you wish.

Along with this liberty there also existed a requirement for membership. Originally, the requirement was an “honest” desire to stop drinking, later changed to merely a desire to stop drinking, and really, that’s about all there was.



That was not *a requirement for success* on the Program — please note that. There are quite a few requirements for success on the Program, and they are all spelled out in chapter five of the AA Big Book. This is what our group calls the Ten Points. And if you add the Four Absolutes, you have the full requirements for success on the Program.

This great liberty as to how you could work the Program, though, had advantages in letting almost anybody get in if they were capable of civilized behavior. At the same time, it left a great big gap for the individual to decide, “How should I work this Program in order to succeed?”

In my own case, I had a hell of a time, and I stumbled all over because I took this liberty and used it to declare myself in disagreement with large sections of the Program. I came in and bumped right into the God thing, and I thought, “This is impossible for me.” Other AA members said, “Don’t get excited. Just take it easy. Keep an open mind and go your way.”

So I took it easy and went my way, but I didn’t keep an open mind. And I decided that, if there was any way to side-step this God stuff, I was going to do it. The result was that I went flying on my butt after a year, to the huzzahs and cheers of all the other members. I took advantage of the no-argument, do-it-your-own-way approach, which, in 1941 when I got into AA, was called the “cafeteria-style.”

The level of commitment to the Program isn’t something you can predict — some people decide they are going to do half the Program, or a third of the Program, or almost none of the Program.

I’m not saying that the permissive approach is unwise. The brothers that put this Program together had great compas-

sion for addicts. They didn’t want to lay any rules on them, so the whole thing was presented as a bunch of suggestions.

Although, if you didn’t take the Program in the right way and the suggestions as binding on you — as a matter of actual practice — you could kill yourself. It really threw the matter of discipline over to the individual — with old John B. Corn there with a great big stick ready to break your back if you didn’t choose the right brand for you.

In the early days, when the Fellowship was getting off the ground in 1935, the whole Program was the Four Absolutes of the Oxford Group. That was it — that was *the* Program — and that’s what everybody got sober on. That’s what everybody preached and what everybody practiced. And at the end of 1938, they had sobered up 100 people, and that wasn’t much, and they knew it.

Now, all of a sudden in 1938, an editorial writer in Cleveland began to write daily editorials in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* about Alcoholics Anonymous. The whole town went nuts. Everybody was hollering about this and getting on the phone: “How can we get in touch with it?” There were only about forty-five or fifty AA members in Cleveland at the time. So they put in a big holler for AA’s headquarters in New York off that. The thing really spread like wildfire — it went national.

Then they wrote a book that greatly pulled the Fellowship together — the Big Book. The book is where the Twelve Steps came in, because they were written for the book, and they were a summary of their experience to date of working the Four Absolutes.

Up to that time, they had no description of what you do if you get on this Program. It was all word of mouth, and they told

you about the Four Absolutes, getting honest with yourself, making restitution, praying to whatever God there is, etc. But when the book came out and the Twelve Steps came out, you had a complete description, more or less, of what to do.

Well, with the explosion in Cleveland, they went from 100 to about 700 or 800 members. Then the famous *Saturday Evening Post* article by Jack Alexander hit the scene and overnight they were international. That was 1941, the year I came in. That year, the Fellowship grew from 2,000 to 9,000.

In the midst of that explosion, it went from a place where they gave you very specific instructions as to what to do (and they weren't even talking too much about suggestions) to this "do-it-your-own-way" approach. I hit AA right as the extreme permissiveness was coming in. Really, there was nothing like permissiveness before that — it was quite the opposite.

In 1976, we wrote an article in *24 Magazine* describing all of this, and what happened to the Fellowship, and about the three brands of AA. The article was called "Gresham's Law and Alcoholics Anonymous: Bad Currency Drives Out Good." I still think that is a fair representation of the situation, and I recommend the article to you.

There are roughly three kinds of AA. Strong AA is where you take the Program seriously, and you take it to mean what it says, and you take the Steps as suggestions, but you don't kid yourself as to how seriously the Steps are meant because it says so in the fifth chapter: "...with all the earnestness at our command."

Those people were not writing or talking carelessly. So these suggestions are offered to you the way you would offer a suggestion to a dying child that you dare not rough up, but you

just say, "*Please* take this medicine." That results in strong AA — where you take the Program seriously, which is a crashing thing for any human being to do. You're going to admit that you are actually licked; you're at the end of your resources in this world as a human being. Any fool can admit this in conversation, but this is not that kind of country.

To make that kind of admission you would need something like the life beaten almost out of you. When these suggestions come on that way and are taken that way, that's strong AA, and there was nothing but that right up to about 1941. Nothing! Anybody else who did it any other way just drifted away or got drunk. Everybody in AA was practicing strong AA, and stronger than anything you could get together now because they didn't know there was an alternative.

Naturally, there developed a thing called medium AA — meaning just not so strong — and that developed off this permissive thing. They saw, well, you didn't have to beat your brains out, and you didn't have to go down on your knees to God or whatever. There were places you didn't have to be that aggressive, or that serious, or that strong, and that you would recover.

As a matter of experience, they found that you could take people who hadn't been whipped that bad, who were still unmistakably alcoholic, and they could get in with the medium dose and then grow into strong AA after they got their spiritual footing.

Now, I don't know what the years were, but gradually, medium AA began to come up and be about half the scene. At the same time, there was a thing that developed that we call weak AA, which says, "Go to meetings if you feel like it, for God's sake knock off the booze, don't get in too much trouble,

and don't tell any more lies than you have to, but otherwise have a good time. Get to a meeting once a week. Don't upset yourself on the subject of God unless it comes easy. And, don't bother too much with the Steps — they'll just confuse you."? That's weak AA.

The reason that weak AA grew and prevailed is it works in some cases. There are real honest-to-God drunks who can get sober and stay sober on weak AA, and as time went on, there were more and more of them. And really who was going to take exception to that? If they can do it, why not?

The truth is, however, that the idea that you can get relief from the addiction by a weaker approach is really an illusion. *All you get is relief from the addictive substance — the killing spiritual faults behind it are not relieved by weak AA.* You just get into a kind of a compromise with it, and the bill comes due in later years. And the people who quietly fade out of these Fellowships — no problem, no complaint, just fade out — is large. And that's unfortunate.

In my own case, I tried the medium stuff, which wasn't being advocated, although it was permitted. I simply picked up the First Step and the Twelfth Step and went to meetings, and what is that but medium AA? It certainly is not *completely giving yourself to this simple Program*.

So I came in and, without ever knowing or hearing about medium AA, I tried it — and went right on my butt. Then for the next four years, I tried weak AA, strong AA, medium AA, and nothing worked. Then I finally came back and tried reformed strong AA. In Parcheesi, you would say I went back to the home base. I started to work again, and my recovery started. Zoom — 1946, forty years now — total, complete, all

the way. I had learned my lesson. For some people, it's got to be strong AA.

That roughly is what All Addicts Anonymous is all about. I think you could call it strong AA for all addicts and that would be quite correct. It isn't AA for everybody or AA for all addicts. First of all, AA membership is for alcoholics only, and everybody has always understood that. We were trying to say that the Program is for all addicts, but I think you'd have to say what we're talking about is strong Program — strong AA for all addicts. That's the peculiar contribution AAA is going to have.

Now, one final word of warning: I think it's a mistake to take anybody and tell them to try strong AA. Try the AA that you get in the group you're in, read the Big Book, and make up your mind how you want to work it — it's God as *you* understand him. If that doesn't work for you, dig yourself up a few strong AA's somewhere and find out from them what strong AA is like, and that's the way to work it.

“I have known few men who have tried harder to live according to their lights than he.”

- AA co-founder, Bill W., speaking of Tom P.



## THOMAS EDWARD POWERS, SR.

(1911-2005)

*The early AA member and former advertising executive who realized the full spiritual potential of original AA and its ability to heal any and all addictions.*

Tom Powers Sr. co-founded — with his son, Tom Jr. — the fellowship of All Addicts Anonymous. Their group efforts to help addicts of all kinds began in Chappaqua, NY, in the late 1950s, meeting once per week under the simple name of “The Nut Club.” Perhaps more than anyone else, Tom understood the potential of the Twelve Steps to work for non-alcoholics with other addictions, and for alcoholics who were hung up in other ways. He, himself, was the latter and — by the time his group efforts reflected the understanding of addiction as a moving target — was recovered from alcohol, drugs, nicotine, food, sex, and anxiety.

His recovery from multiple addictions led not only to the founding of AAA, but also to the East Ridge Recovery Community in 1964 — another joint venture with his son. East Ridge was a spiritual laboratory for addicts of all kinds. It was there that the AAA Program further developed to include the Four Absolutes and the Ten Points — key principles necessary if one’s aim is spiritual awakening and not mere sobriety.

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*Tom Powers Sr. was born in Chadron, Nebraska in June 1911. He was a professional advertising executive and writer, editor, author, and publisher.*

*Between the late 1930s till the early 1950s, Tom worked in New York, Cleveland, and Chicago at such advertising firms as McCann-Erickson, Leo Burnett, and Kenyon and Eckert. He was also creative copy man and visualizer and a Special Assistant to the future Chairman of the Board at*

Over almost six decades, Tom had sponsored countless addicts of all kinds; working directly with over 5,000 at East Ridge; influencing hundreds of thousands through his recovery talks, books, and other writings; and impacting millions upon millions through his literary contributions to the AA fellowship. One such addict who began his recovery in AAA many years ago described his first encounter with Tom as follows:

“Meeting Tom was the single most influential turning point of my life. I had never met anyone before who *really* believed in God — that is, who fully applied their belief to their daily life and weren’t just paying lip-service to it. Many profess their faith in God, but this was different. It wasn’t just what he had to say. You could literally feel a spiritual electricity in and around his presence. ‘This man has got something’, I thought! The level of intensity and authenticity of that first

meeting has left a permanent impression on my soul. I’d like to say that the experience was that of intense joy — and this would be quite true. But it was a joy born out of tension: for something deep within me sensed a danger. I’ve consequently learned that not everything that is dangerous is harmful. At that encounter, I knew clearer than ever before that it was time for my old self to die. From that day to this, even in spite of my regresses, I’ve never been able to successfully lie to myself about the futility of the ego-centered life. I owe my life to Tom. It was as though I had fallen through the ice and had been shouting for help for sometime. Somehow, he could hear my plea for help — better than I could myself — even though I said very little at our first encounter. Don’t get me wrong: it was obviously the power of God that was the agent of rescue. But it was Tom’s hand that was there to finally help pull me out.”

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(continued from p. 37)

*Young and Rubicam. In the early 1950s, Tom began freelancing, taking such positions as religious book editor at Harper & Brothers.*

*During that same decade, Tom worked as the main editorial consultant for Alcoholics Anonymous, contributing extensively to the books Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA Comes of Age, and the second edition of the AA Big Book.*

*Among his published titles are First Questions on the Life of the Spirit (Harper, 1959) which was later retitled Invitation to a Great Experiment (Doubleday, 1979 and Crossroad, 1990), Search for Meaning (Pendle Hill,*

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(continued from p. 38)

*1959), and The Answer to Addiction (Harper & Row, 1975 and Crossroad, 1990).*

*Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Tom was publisher for 24 Magazine, a monthly publication on living the way to God — 24 hours at a time. Originally distributed on the national newsstands, 24 was a general-interest magazine, and a project of the East Ridge Community and Recovery Center. Readership was wide-ranging, consisting of addicts of all kinds, as well as “normapaths” — people who didn’t have much wrong with them, but were searching, all the same.*

## APPENDIX A

### *The AAA Way of Life*

#### + BRIEF FACTS ABOUT ALL ADDICTS ANONYMOUS

All Addicts Anonymous is a non-professional, self-supporting, God-centered, and truth-centered Fellowship that has found a way to extend the original Program of Alcoholics Anonymous effectively to any and all addicts.

We welcome all working members of any of the Anonymous Fellowships — that is, all persons who have admitted to being addicts and have adopted all or part of the AAA way of life.

In AAA, we understand the spiritual disease of addiction as a moving target — that applying the principles of recovery to our primary addiction alone is hardly more than a beginning. Our experience proves that the same healing power necessary to achieve freedom from our primary addiction can be applied and extended to other areas of our lives — and more particularly, to the underlying character defects that flourish under the cover of our primary addiction.

The All Addicts Anonymous Program is a thoroughly tested and proven answer to addiction, but its healing power extends far beyond that sphere. AAA experience proves that any addict, with any and all combinations of addictions, can attain spiritual awakening, self-control, sanity, peace, and joy if he or she will go to sufficient lengths in adopting the Four Absolutes, the Twelve Steps, and the Ten Points as a way of life.

#### + THE FOUR ABSOLUTES

The Four Absolutes are the time-tested moral and ethical code of the All Addicts Anonymous Program. Used in the Oxford Group and in the pioneering years of Alcoholics Anonymous, these life-saving principles, in one form or another,

have actually been the foundation of the moral and spiritual life of humankind in all ages and in all civilizations. The Absolutes give you the wisdom, the spiritual know-how, and skill to live and work, to relate sanely and joyfully to people, to other creatures, and to God. They can teach you to recognize and obey that which is real and right and good and true above and beyond the sick and insufficient wants and dreams compatible with addictive living. The Absolutes, of course, are not claims of attainment. They are aims for daily conduct. When they are maintained faithfully as goals, they become powerful transformers of conduct, character, and consciousness.

1. **Absolute honesty** — non-lying to oneself or others; unbending faithfulness to the truth in thought, word, and action.
2. **Absolute purity** — purity of mind, purity of body, purity of the emotions, purity of heart, sexual purity.
3. **Absolute unselfishness** — seeking what is right and true in every situation, above what I want.
4. **Absolute love** — loving God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.

#### + THE TWELVE STEPS

The Twelve Steps are a unique phenomenon in our age — a set of spiritual action directions, things to do for the actual attainment of spiritual awakening, a way that leads to conscious contact with God. Their peculiar genius is that they do not require special skill or learning; they work for people in all degrees of mental, emotional, and spiritual disability. If an addict who is sincerely seeking a way out had no other tool than a working knowledge of the Steps, he or she would have a very good chance of recovery. Do not let the simple language in which they are stated fool you. They are a spiritual powerhouse to which millions of addicts now walking the streets as free men and women owe their lives and their liberty.

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addictions, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

#### **+ THE TEN POINTS**

The Ten Points represent the spiritual inspiration and guidance for how to work the Twelve Steps as given by the first

one hundred AA members. These original commitments are the spiritual legacy and heritage of the first men and women whose sacrifice, wisdom, and trial-and-error experience became solidified in the “How it Works” chapter of the AA Big Book. For many addicts, lesser commitments to the Program do not offer the crucial momentum necessary to reach the level of spiritual awakening required to attain true freedom. Make no mistake about it, every person who adopts the rigor and intensity of the Ten Points will be rocketed into a new dimension of existence.

We commit ourselves to work toward recovery and spiritual awakening through sincerely and responsibly trying to do what the AA Big Book suggests by:

1. *Completely giving ourselves* to this simple Program;
2. *Practicing rigorous honesty*;
3. Being *willing to go to any lengths* to recover;
4. Realizing that there is *no easier, softer way*;
5. Being *fearless and thorough* in our practice of the principles;
6. *Letting go of our old ideas absolutely*;
7. Recognizing that *half measures will not work*;
8. Asking God's *protection and care* with complete abandon;
9. Being *willing to grow* along spiritual lines;
10. Accepting the following pertinent ideas as proved by All Addicts Anonymous experience:
  - (a) that *you cannot manage your own life*;
  - (b) that probably *no human power can restore you to sanity*;
  - (c) that God *can and will* if sought.



## NOTES

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