

ASTRID on Steps 1, 2 and 3

Hello my name is Astrid and I am an alcoholic. What I want to do today is to go more in-depth in Step One because I feel it is not talked about enough in Alcoholics Anonymous. So Step One states that "I admit that I am powerless over alcohol" then there's a dash – "that my life has become unmanageable." So the first part of Step One, admitting that I am powerless over alcohol, in the big book it states that I have an allergy of the body, but the main part of the disease centers in my mind. So the allergy of the body is this phenomenon of craving. The minute I have a drink, I want another drink and another drink, I can't stop. The plug must be put in the jug before I can go on any further into Step One. This is a very small aspect of a very big disease. It's not just the allergy of the body, it's not just quieting the phenomenon of craving, we must go past this dash in Step One into "that my life has become unmanageable." And what's not discussed enough in alcoholics anonymous is the magnitude of unmanageability. People get up on the podium and they say things like I flipped somebody off on the freeway today, I smacked my wife, I kicked the dog, but I've got 10 years of sobriety, I'm a winner today! This has nothing to do with treating the disease of alcoholism which lives in my mind. So they say the main part of the disease centers in my mind rather than my body, how am I going to detect it? There's no x-ray, there's no blood test, what lives in my mind is a completely unmanageable thought life by me. My thoughts and my instincts have been warped thru destructive drinking and through years of destructive thinking, and I don't even know the magnitude of what I'm up against. I'm up against so much, that if I knew how much I was up against, I would never choose to gravitate towards a negative thought again. But this, unfortunately, has to be shown to me in alcoholics anonymous because myself can't reveal myself to myself. I can't see it. The interesting part is I can walk into alcoholics anonymous and I can look at other people, and I can see so clearly their unmanageability and I have no idea what I look like, me, of myself, I'm still in unmanageability, and I'm only scratching the surface with being able to detect it. This unmanageability can be detected fairly easily once we get down to what is stated later on in the 12 and 12, there are ominous signs: worry, anger, self-pity, and depression. In the 12 and 12 in Step Four it also talks about the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth. The big book also talks about 100 forms of fear that we are run by, and there are two basic fears: one is I'm not going to get something that I want, and the second one is that I'm going to lose something that I already have. Then in Step Four we also go deeper into these instincts – we have these three basic instincts which are the desire for sex, which can be the most barbaric aspect which is to mate and procreate, and also, how to I look to the opposite sex, my family life, my parents, my extended family. The next instinct is the instinct for security, my home, my car, my wallet, my belongings, I don't feel safe, I always want more. The last one is I want to be someone in society – is anyone listening to me, does anyone even like my opinions, am I somebody's boss, am I somebody's mother, I want people to recognize me, does anybody even notice me, and all of these can become very out of control in a split second. So in these areas we are just scratching the surface now, these areas are where the disease can hide and crop up in the day I'm in, five, ten, fifteen years sober. It doesn't matter, and it awaits at every man's earlobe or elbow to resume its destruction, so it's there all of the time. But once I start detecting it, then I can start treating it with a power greater than myself, and start getting some restoration towards sanity.

This is where the need for a sponsor is so important. You've got to start exposing your mind to somebody else, and you've got to get to the point where it's not charged with emotion of shame and guilt. You almost want to look at it like it's a separate entity and it's not really you anymore, it's just a dialogue that goes on and on while you're trying to do something else, while you are trying to align your will with God's will. It's still telling you: you're too fat, you're too thin, you're not good enough, she's not doing it right, he's not doing it right, nobody's behaving the way they should, you don't have enough money, you should be driving THAT car and not your car, you should be the boss, and so on and so on. So what we begin to do next is to take honest appraisal of our thoughts. There are several great practices you can do. One is when you sit in a meeting of alcoholics anonymous, look at the clock, the meeting starts at 7:00 or 7:30, and look at the clock a half hour later, and notice how many times did you leave the room in your mind, how many times did you go somewhere else, did you go to what you need to do later, to the grocery store, to something that angered you that day, to something you think you are going to be doing tomorrow. This is where the unmanageability lives, and why is this so important to detect? Because in the beginning of the forward of the 12 and 12 it states on page 15 "AA steps are a group of principles spiritual in their nature which practices a way of life can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole."

The first promise in AA's 12 and 12 is that we are to become happily and usefully whole. I don't want to be in a program of recovery if one of my goals isn't to be happily and usefully whole. And if it isn't accessible in the day I'm in, what's the point? I want to go for the good life and it's got to be accessible now. This has to be as accessible to the newcomer or somebody with one day or one week as it is for somebody with 20 years. Again, this is not a time factor. This is not about how much time you have, this is about how accurate you are about your self-appraisal and how willing you are to treat your disease in the minute you're in, in the day you're in.

This sentence that people throw all over the place of "all I have is a daily reprieve contingent on the basis of my spiritual condition." This sentence should be etched in the hearts and the minds of every alcoholic because there is so much truth to it and for me, my program is contingent on the basis of my spiritual condition IN THE MOMENT THAT I AM IN because for me alcoholism can crop up at any time throughout the day. Now mind you, once it's being treated and it's been treated for a period of time, you can have whole minutes, whole hours, whole days, whole weeks, whole months, and even whole years where you do not slip into untreated alcoholism.

In the beginning though, it gets a little tricky. It's like throwing with your left hand. It's uncomfortable, but what you are going to start doing is talking to a Power greater than yourself. If this disease lives in my mind, and I'm talking to my mind and I have a self-talking disease, and it is powered by my thoughts, then what's going on up there? I'm talking to me all day long which means I'm talking to the disease all day long, which means I'm still in untreated alcoholism, sober!

So, this rockets me into Step Two. Once I really realize the magnitude of this, and what happens in Step Two is that I come to believe that a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity. What is sanity? It is soundness of mind. So – the practice is this – I am either talking to myself or I'm talking to God. In the beginning, I have systematic prayers, very gentle sweet ones that were given to me by others who

have traveled this road. One of them is: God can you help me see my alcoholism? Can you show it to me so that I know how to treat it? Another one is: God, can you protect me from my own mind? For me, my mind is killing me, it was killing me all the time. I would go to memories of the past which is where the alcoholism loves to live and I would think of the most horrific things I have done or said, and the pain I have caused myself or others. I could just sit, and it felt like battery acid being poured on me in the day that I am in. The sun could be shining, my space could be clean, good things could be going on in my life and I could not produce a good thought by myself. I am so miserable inside, I think maybe I need a therapist, maybe I need antidepressants, maybe I need a new car, maybe I need him, maybe I need her, maybe I need something outside of me, and what I'm not realizing is if I could just treat my mind with a Power greater than myself, then I'm going to have all the promises that Alcoholics Anonymous has promised me. But I have to put this into application. Here is where the work has to be done. Here is where my will comes into play. The use of my will is to align it with God's will every single day.

It is not to take my own will and run riot all over the place—cussing, screaming, yelling, speeding on the freeway, using my mind as a weapon to implode upon myself or explode upon my fellows. I have to learn to align my will with God's will in my mind and stay centered with God. Again, here I can admit I'm a problem drinker, but I cannot endure the fact that in fact I am mentally ill.

This has to be brought to the surface. This has to become a part of my life. If I can admit unmanageability and the fact that I am mentally ill, then this is where the relief is. Now I get to change. I have so much that I can turn over to a Power greater than myself and I get a true psychic change. What is a psychic change? It's that I begin to think, act, feel and react towards my fellows and myself in a way that I was never capable of before.

Now we go into page 21 of the 12 and 12. Step One states "who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one of course. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit that with glass in hand we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only an act of Providence can remove it from us."

I was taught in the 12 and 12 I can trade the word "drinking" for "thinking" at any time and be able to detect what my alcoholism is doing. So who cares to "admit" complete defeat? Admit is still not accepting. The word acceptance doesn't come into play until the end of page 21. When I am still doing something under reluctance, I am not totally accepting it. It's like the "compliance" versus "surrender". I'll comply—alright—I'll admit it! But have I completely wholeheartedly accepted complete defeat? No. I don't even know what I'm up against--yet. Who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness.

I just briefly touched on every natural instinct a few minutes ago. These are my God-given, self-preserving, animal nature, deep in my soul, that I use to protect myself, to defend myself, to get what I need in life to survive, to keep me alive. All of my natural instincts cry out against the idea of personal powerlessness. This is so hard to admit, that a soul sickness level, that of myself I am nothing; that I have warped and warped myself so deeply that I am really a destroyed and broken woman or man. It is truly awful to admit that with glass in hand, I have warped my mind.

What is this “warped”? This warped comes up many times and it’s a word that should go into everybody’s vocabulary in alcoholics anonymous. If you can take a piece of wood and you warp it with water, there is no way you can unwarped it. It shows me that my mind, with the drink in it and without the drink, is warped. That means it is permanently bent, it permanently doesn’t work right, and there’s only one thing that’s going to fix it. And that is a Power greater than myself.

When I go to myself, and I go to my mind for information from the past or in the future for opinions, I am going to get in trouble unless my mind is occupied with a power greater than myself.

In the third paragraph of page 21 in the 12 and 12, where it says “our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turned out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.” So our admissions are ongoing, there are many admissions. I’m not just admitting the alcohol here. Here is where people get confused, they think it’s just about the drinking, no, they forget the second part of step one. My admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built. Then we go down and we finally find this word “accept” in the fourth paragraph. We know that little good or no good can come to any alcoholic who has joined AA unless he has first *accepted* his devastating weakness and all its consequences.

What is my devastating weakness? My devastating weakness is my mind because that’s where the disease lives. If you can get this concept, you have got so much to work with. You have got the chance of just turning your entire life around and having something so new, so much better, than you could ever imagine, but this HAS to be ACCEPTED. It cannot be intellectualized, it’s got to be downloaded into my feeling realm. Acceptance comes with a feeling of surrender, that I am open to it, that I have swallowed and digested this unpalatable truth. This has to be done.

The next sentence is “until he so humbles himself, his sobriety, if any, will be precarious.” The opposite of humility is pride. So what this is saying to me is until I get rid of my pride, my sobriety, if any, is going to be precarious. What is precarious? It means unstable. Of real happiness, I will find none at all. Proof beyond doubt, by an immense experience. This is one of the facts of AA life. The principal that I shall find no enduring strength until I first admit complete defeat is the main taproot from which our whole society has sprung and flowered.

Now I am going to go down to the bottom of page 22 of the 12 and 12. The bottom paragraph states: “In AA’s pioneering times, none but the most desperate cases could swallow and digest this unpalatable truth. Even these last gaspers often had difficulty in realizing how hopeless they actually were. What has been shown to me here is this last gasper, this hopelessness is with the plug in the jug, with the phenomenon of craving, with the allergy of the body already have been treated, so there’s no alcohol in my system now, and I’m still a last gasper, and this is an unpalatable truth. I don’t want to admit the magnitude of defeat, and I’m gasping for air, I’m practically dying and I don’t even know it. Then it goes down to say that “few did and when these laid hold of AA principals with all the fervor in which the drowning seize life preservers, they all most invariably got well.” What’s a drowning person look like when he’s seizing a life preserver? He’s going for that life preserver because he’s just about to die, he’s on his last leg, his last breath, and he knows there’s only a few moments left, and he’s got this fervor to

get to that life preserver. This has to be every single day for the rest of my life, a lifelong practice that I lay hold of AA principals with fervor every single day. The more fervor I have, the more recovery I have in the day that I am in. When there's a lack of fervor, guess what I have? I have me and I have untreated alcoholism and it doesn't matter how much time you have in this program, that is an absolute myth that if you have 20 years you're more of a winner than somebody with one year or six months that's treating their alcoholism with a Power great than themselves.

Now we go over to the top of page 23 on Step One, second line down. "Many less desperate alcoholics tried AA but did not succeed because they could not make the admission of hopelessness." Here again, it's not just the allergy, not just the phenomenon of craving, it's the main part of the disease that centers in my mind, and it's this hopeless thought life.

Moving down into the next paragraph, three lines from the bottom, "These people were spared that last 10 to 15 years of literal hell that the rest of us had gone through. Since Step One requires an admission that our lives had become unmanageable, how could people such as these take this step?

Now let's go down to the last paragraph on page 23 and six lines up from the bottom it says "It was then discovered that when one alcoholic had planted in the mind of another the true nature of this malady, that person could never be the same again." What is my true malady? It's my sickness, it's my disease. So when one alcoholic planted in my mind the true nature of the sickness of my mind, I could never be the same again and hopefully, I get to pass the AA baton and give this information to somebody else to help them save their life, to help them have a better and happily usefully whole life, to help them treat a disease that lives in their mind, centers in their mind rather than body.

This is such big stuff, this is so important, this is really AA, uncut, this is pure stuff, it's worth its weight in gold. I don't take this lightly. What I'm talking about here is so serious, it has absolutely transformed my life. It has changed me so much for the better. Today is it perfect? No. Is it a lot better? You bet, I have whole good days and whole good weeks where I don't slip into alcoholism in my mind.

Now let's turn the page to page 24. Why all this insistence that every AA must hit bottom? The answer is that few people will sincerely try to practice the AA program unless they have hit bottom. This bottom for me is my mind. The practicing AA's remaining 11 steps means the adoption of attitudes and actions that almost no alcoholic who is still drinking or even who is still thinking can dream of taking. Who wishes to be rigorously honest and tolerant? Who wants to confess his faults to another and make restitution of harm done? Who cares anything about a Higher Power, let alone meditation and prayer? Who wants to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry AA's message to the next sufferer? No, the average alcoholic, self-centered in the extreme, doesn't care for this prospect unless he has to do these things in order to stay alive. Under the lash of alcoholism we are driven to AA and there we discover the fatal nature of our situation. Then and only then do we become as open minded to conviction and as willing to listen as the dying can be. This open mind to conviction, my mind must be open to the concepts that I've just related to you that were given to me by others who have traveled this road before me.

This self-centeredness, these things must be lucid. I have a fatal nature that's telling me that I'm going to die, and it can be sober unless I'm as willing to listen as a dying man can be, that I stand ready to do anything which will lift this merciless obsession.

What does a warped mind do? What are my ominous signs? What does it look like when I'm off track? What does a bottom look like? These are very important questions. When I can begin to answer them, I can begin to get and grasp a much clearer concept of Step One, of what I'm up against, and how the disease operates, and what I am going to be treating. When I go into Step Two, I start coming to believe that a Power great than myself can restore me to sanity. Now I've got some meat, now I've got some potatoes, now I've got some kind of substance to work with because I'm gaining an awareness of my disease and gaining awareness of how much trouble it causes me in the day that I'm in. I'm gaining an awareness of how I still have the total inability to form a true partnership with another human being. Relationships come and go, but this doesn't have to be the case anymore. Once I go into Step Two, and then into Step Three and I start turning things over, it's going to get really good. Things are going to start healing and I'm going to start finding a new and a better way of life.

Before I go into Step Two, I want to touch quickly upon the Tiebout papers. Harry Tiebout was Bill Wilson's psychiatrist and he talked about these king/baby characteristics, or the ego factor, and how this plays in with alcohol or the alcoholic mind, or alcoholism. I need to ask myself these questions:

Do I often become angry?

Am I afraid of authority figures?

Do I attempt to work them against each other in order to get my own way?

Do I seek approval and frequently lose my identity in the process?

Am I able to make a first good impression but fail to follow through?

Do I have difficulty accepting personal criticism and become threatened and angry when I'm criticized?

Do I have an addictive personality?

Am I driven to extremes?

Am I self-rejecting or self-alienating?

Am I often immobilized by anger and frustration? Am I rarely satisfied?

Am I usually lonely, even when surrounded by people?

Do I feel a hopeless sense of isolation in a roomful of people?

Am I a chronic complainer who blames others for what's wrong with my life?

Do I feel unappreciated and think that I don't fit in?

Do I see the world as a jungle, filled with selfish people who aren't there for me?

Do I see everything as a catastrophe, a life and death situation?

Do I judge life in absolutes? Black or white, right or wrong? Are there no gray areas?

Do I live in the past while fearing the future?

Do I have strong feelings of dependence and exaggerated fears of abandonment?

Do I fear failure or rejection and don't try new things that I might not do well in?

Am I obsessed with money and material things?

Do I dream big plans and big schemes but have little or no ability to make them happen?

I am unable to tolerate illness in myself or others.

Do I prefer to charm superiors and intimidate subordinates?

Do I believe rules and laws are for other people and not for me?

Do I become addicted to excitement? Do I live in the fast lane?

Do I hold emotional pain within and lose touch with my feelings?

This is another area of unmanageability. This is another area where the disease can operate and take over my life and steal my soul without my consent, and again, we are scratching the surface but once we can examine these things for what they are, and start to identify with them and see how they operate in our own lives, again, I have something to offer this Power greater than myself that I am now going to build a relationship with.

Step 2 of the 12 and 12. "Came to believe that a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity." When I first came to this program, I did have a bare start on what a higher power was. That there was a God out there, that I was not just a spearhead of some primordial ooze, but the God that I had was a God that I feared, and a God that lived way, way out in the stratosphere somewhere, and my sponsor made it clear to me that I had to find a God that could drive in the passenger seat of my car, that could sit next to me when I'm alone in a restaurant, that laid in my bed at night and listened to me expose my mind. A God that was accessible to me every minute of every day because I carry a disease that lives in my mind and it awaits at my elbow to resume its destruction. I can have a perfectly good morning, and then one or two thoughts pop up and I go into untreated alcoholism and I need something that's going to treat it now, it might be on the freeway, I might be having a good time with my daughter, we're having a conversation and all of a sudden I just go sour and my mind leaves the room and goes into some dark place. So I need to find a Power that's accessible for me now.

My sponsor had me go and ask four or five people, I had even asked more, probably a good 10 people who have very good relationships with God and good recover, who is this God, what kind of God do you

have, what can your God do for you? These people told me that their God could quiet their disturbance, that their God could neutralize anger, that their God could help them be hopeful for the future, and that their God could open up their hearts and help them to be more loving, that if they asked their God to help them read before they started reading a book or a certain paragraph that might be difficult for them to read or an interesting piece of material that might be hard to grasp, that God would help them focus, that God would help them grasp the concept better. They told me that God could help their hearts open up so that they could love people that they were never capable of loving before. People told me that their God could help them see things, see things in the world, see things about themselves, see things about other people that they have never seen before.

These are the concepts that became desirable to me. I wanted this kind of God. We come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Greater than myself means it can't be a sock, it can't be a fire hydrant, it can't be a doorknob, it's got to be something much bigger than me, and what I don't realize is I'm a power, all by myself, and I have a mind powered disease, which is much more powerful than I want to give it credit for, so I need something that's much more powerful than my mind. My ego is very big, I have a lot of opinions about you and a lot of opinions about me, a lot of opinions about how things should be done, but all of those things need to be neutralized, and how are they going to be neutralized? I need something really, really big.

So Step Two cannot be intellectualized, it has got to be lived. Do you get this Power great than yourself all at once? No. The best way is to keep working with it, practicing, talking to a Power greater than yourself, asking God to help you see things differently. You must get an open mind, and keep an open mind as often as possible. Just try to stay open to something new. The more open you can get, the more you will have a God that is going to work for you.

If I don't get a relationship with a Power greater than myself, then what am I going to turn anything over to in Step Three? That is why in Step Two, we have to get something real going here, we have to get a real Power, something that really works because if I go into Step Three and I start turning things over, turn over what? Turn over where? What am I turning over? Turn it over like a pancake and there it is in front of me. I need a God who's going to take my worries, my broken heart, the pit in my stomach when I'm in fear, the anger and the hostility I have, the warped instincts that I have, the warped mind that I have, the total inability to form a true partnership that I have, I need a God who is going to take those things and do for me what I cannot do for myself.

If we go into page 25, Step Two, the beginning states that "the moment that we reach Step Two, most AA newcomers are confronted with a dilemma; sometimes a serious one. How often have we heard them cry out 'Look what you people have done to us! You have convinced us that we are alcoholics and that our lives are unmanageable. Having reduced me to a state of absolute helplessness, we now declare that none but a Higher Power can remove my obsession.' Some of us won't believe in God, others can't, and still others, who do believe that God exists, had no faith whatever that He would perform this miracle. Yes, you've got us over the barrel alright, but where do we go from here?"

So now we have a state of absolute helplessness, this means surrender, this means a good bottom. This is where the mind can be open and something new can come in. We have the can not's and the will not's. "Can not's" are some people who are so mentally ill that they are incapable. I was a will not for a very long time because I had way too much grandiosity and I still thought I could do it on my own power, and I couldn't. When I finally let go and found a Power greater than myself, that's when I started to get real recovery.

Now we go down to the second paragraph. Let's look at the case of the one who says he won't believe, the belligerent one, this is the aggressive one. He has this savage mind, his whole philosophy in which he so gloriously threatened. So it was bad enough to admit that alcohol has him down for the keep, but now still smarting from that admission he is faced with something that is really impossible. How he does cherish the thought that man so majestically from a single cell in the primordial ooze and is the spearhead of evolution and therefore, only God in his universe knows. Though many, many people really go to themselves and they really do think, believe and act like they are the power for their life, and they can't grasp the concept of a Power greater than themselves. Well, I feel badly for them and I also can tell them that if it happened for me and I found a God, so can they.

Now we get into page 26, turn the page. "This newcomer thinks that this is just about the last straw, this is the beginning of the end of my old life and the beginning of my emergence into a new one.

Then the sponsor cries out "take it easy" the hoop you have to jump through is a lot wider than you think. Don't over-intellectualize God. That is the hoop. The hoop is how happy can I be in the day I'm in, and stay with God. The hoop is very, very big. Begin to laugh at the old character. Start building this new relationship and just jump off the cliff. You know and trust that there is a God down there, you don't need a parachute. You've got to take a leap of faith. Again, this is something that can't be intellectualized, it's got to be practiced. When? Every single minute of every single day. You don't just do this thing once, you do it over and over and over.

Now we are going to go down into the paragraph that says "that agrees with sponsor" and we're going to go to where it says "all of its 12 steps are but suggestions, and second to get sober and to stay sober, you don't have to swallow all of Step 2 right now. Looking back, I found that I took it piecemeal. Third, all you need is a truly open mind, and again, I had to take this God concept piecemeal, and I have to resign myself of which came first, the hen or the egg. Stop debating! Is there a God or isn't there a God? I, for me, had to take this leap of faith and decide.

There IS a power greater than myself, because I CAN'T go back because all that is left back there is alcohol and drugs, or a gun against my head. There's nothing good back here. I have GOT to take this leap of faith and open my mind up and stop debating. That is the only thing that will cure my spiritual malady. That is the only thing that will heal my obsessive mind; that is the only thing that is going to treat my alcoholism which lives in my mind every minute of every day. I have GOT to open my mind, I've GOT to take a leap of faith.

Now we're going to go to page 27 on Step 2 where it says in the first paragraph "then I woke up and had to admit that AA showed results – prodigious results. I saw that my attitude regarding these had been anything but scientific. It wasn't AA that had the closed mind, it was me. The minute I stopped arguing, I could begin to see and feel right there Step 2 gently and very gradually it began to infiltrate my life.

This isn't all in one day, that the sky just didn't open up and the trumpets started to blow. I had 44 years of warping and morphing my mind into all kinds of sick terminology and dialogue that goes on in my head and practicing communing with a Power greater than myself and believing in a Power greater than myself was not something I was doing on a daily basis. So I'm gradually coming to know this Power. And it says, "I certainly have that belief now, to acquire it, I simply had to stop fighting and practice the rest of AA's program as enthusiastically as I could."

This is a really important sentence: I practice the rest of AA's program as enthusiastically every single day as I can. This is how you keep this message fresh. This is how you keep Alcoholics Anonymous alive. It doesn't matter if it's one year or twenty years. You keep it fresh by practicing this program enthusiastically and taking and working these steps and incorporating them into your life, living them as enthusiastically as you can in the moment that you are in.

We go down to the next paragraph at the bottom of page 27. If you don't care for the path I've suggested you will be sure to discover one that suits if you will only look and listen. Many a man, like you, have begun to solve the problem by the method of substitution. You can, if you wish, make AA itself your higher power. Now, AA as an entity, as a whole, worldwide, not just several people in AA, that's not going to work, and this is a principle that we are going to practice until we get a Higher Power of our own into play.

Now look on page 28 which tells us about five different types of people that walk into AA. The one who had faith, the one who drifted into indifference, the one with self-sufficiency, the one who became prejudice against religion, and the one who is downright defiant, so any shoe you want to put on go ahead, but don't wear it too long you have to take it off and go someplace else.

So what Bill is trying to do is speak to everybody, but humility is needed here, we've got to go for something else, something that will open our minds and find a real, user-friendly Power greater than ourselves. Now we go down over into page 29. The intellectually self-sufficient man or woman. Yes we were far too smart for our own good, we loved to have people call us precocious, we loved our education, we would blow ourselves up into prideful balloons. Since we were brighter than most folks so we thought, the spoils of victory would be ours for the thinking. The god of intellect displaced the God of our fathers. This is a very dangerous place and I see the spiritual pride. The biggest stumbling block to people in Alcoholics Anonymous is that they still can run on their own will, they still think they have all the answers, they are still going to a warped mind, they are still going to memories of yesterday and rummaging around in a closet full of crap that doesn't work anymore trying to get the proper answers, and they don't know what humility is.

Turn the page to page 30 "It may help us to get down to the right size." This right size thing is humility, to humble myself. True humility brings into your life everything that the ego has always wanted. It

brings people to love you and respect you and desire to be your friend and have a relationship with you and listen to you. But you don't know that until you start practicing humility.

So the last sentence at the top there from the bottom of that first paragraph "when we began to do that we receive the gift of faith, a faith which works. This faith is for you too." We have got to take a leap of faith, you have to just try, even a bare start is scratching the surface and start believing. If it can happen for other people, and I can see their lives are becoming happily and usefully whole, then it can happen for me. I've got to get a relationship with a Power greater than myself. This program can't be practiced without this. You can't have a bush league pinch hitter where every once in a while I get in a jam and I get on my knees and I beg and beg for this God to help me. I need one that is accessible and is accessible all of the time.

Now go up to the top of page 31 where they say " . . . as psychiatrists have often observed, defiance is often a characteristic of many an alcoholic. " Gee whiz! Does that sing anything to your soul? So it's not strange that lots of us have had our day at defying God himself sometimes it's because God has not delivered us the good things of life that we specified as a greedy child makes an impossible list for Santa Clause. Sometimes we think because we have begged and pleaded, that God should fix this certain issue, just bring him or her back, or have somebody forgive me, it doesn't work that way. I have to have a God of my understanding and in my understanding my God is going to do things on His time and not mine. When I offer my problems to this Power greater than myself, they get solved and resolved and put to rest in God's time. I'm just going to trust, though, that He's going to take them and that He is working on them so that I can be free in the day that I'm in, to go about my business without my mind completely aberrated.

Go down to the last paragraph on page 31 "When we encounter AA, the fallacy of our defiance was revealed, at no time have we asked God what his will was for me. Instead, we had been telling him what it ought to be. No man, we saw, could believe in God and defy Him too. Belief meant reliance, not defiance. Stop resisting this God, you have to go for it. This has got to be something that you are going to get into action and you are going to start making happen. In AA we saw the fruits of this belief. Men and women were spared from alcohol's final catastrophe. We saw them meet and transcend their other pains and trials. We saw them calmly accept impossible situations seeking neither to run nor recriminate. This was not only faith, it was faith that worked under all conditions. We soon concluded that whatever price in humility we must pay, we would pay."

Turn the page to 32. And you read the paragraph to clergymen and friends and family. "The alcoholic who means well and tries hard is a heartbreaking riddle. There are too many of us who have been just like him and have found the riddles answered. This answer has to do with the quality of faith rather than its quantity. This has been our blind spot." Another really important line here: it's the quality of my faith not than the quantity. So I have to find a God, a God that works as many aspects that I can examine and start believing in about this God who is going to restore me to sanity, the more a relationship of quality begins to happen for me.

We supposed we had humility when really we hadn't. We supposed we had been serious about religious practices when upon honest appraisal, we had found we had only superficial, or going to the other extreme, we had wallowed in emotionalism and had mistaken it for spiritual healing. In both cases, we had been asking something for nothing. The fact was, we really hadn't cleaned house so that the grace of God could enter us and expel the obsession.

In no deep or meaningful sense had we ever taken stock of ourselves, made amends to those we had harmed, or really given to any other human being without any demand for reward. We had not even prayed rightly, we had always said "grant me my wishes" instead of "Thy will be done." The love of God and man, we understand not at all.

So Bill Wilson is telling us that when we walk in here, we have very little or no understanding of the love of God and our fellow man. This is a life-long practice. Therefore, we remain self-deceived and so incapable of receiving enough grace to restore us to sanity. Again, a life-long practice. We could read these sentences over and over every day to let them grow as seedlings in our soul. Therefore, we remain self-deceived and so incapable of receiving enough grace to restore us to sanity. I need humility; I need to humble myself before a Power greater than myself. I need to open my mind to this Power and I need to start practicing a communing relationship with this Power greater than myself.

Side Two Step Two: The last line on page 32 which begins the second to last paragraph in Step 2 says something very important. "Few indeed, are the practicing alcoholics who have any idea how irrational they are, or seeing their irrationality can bear to face it. Some will be willing to term themselves problem drinkers but cannot endure the suggestion that they are in fact mentally ill."

Mentally ill doesn't mean we are so crazy that we are walking down the street talking to ourselves again, although it can, I've seen that too. What it means is I have a disease that centers in my mind and it tells me a whole lot of BS about me, about you, about the world, it tells me how I should operate, it tells me how I should act, it tells me what I think I need to make me happy and it's a lie. I need to start occupying my mind and my thoughts with a Power great than myself to restore me to sanity. So these alcoholics are embedded in this blindness of a world which does not understand the difference between sane drinking and alcoholism. Sanity is defined as soundness of mind, yet, no alcoholics, soberly analyzing his destructive behavior, whether destruction fell on the dining room furniture, or his own moral fiber, can claim soundness of mind for himself. Therefore, Step Two is the rallying point for all of us, whether agnostic, atheist or former believer, we can stand together on this step: true humility and an open mind can lead us to faith.

In every AA meeting is an assurance the God will restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to him. Somebody gave me a really sweet little paragraph that was on Bill Wilson's desk for many years and it says "Humility is a perpetual quietness of heart, it is to have no trouble, it is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me, it is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I'm blamed or despised, it is to have a blessed home in

myself where I can go in and shut the door, and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble.

Step three, page 34: This step has to do with willingness, willingness, and more willingness. It also has to do with faith. "Practicing Step three is like the opening of a door, which to all appearances is closed and locked. All we need is a key and the decision to swing the door open. There is only one key, and it's called willingness."

What is willingness for us? It is something done without reluctance. I have to be so open to try something new. I have to be as willing to do this as a dying man. My life is depending on it and my life better become important to me or I'm not going to get this thing down, and I'm going to have a very poor quality of recovery or no recovery at all. Once unlocked by willingness, the door opens almost of itself. In looking through it, we shall see a pathway inside with an inscription that reads "This is a way to a faith that works."

We have to start practicing faith, even a bare minimum is what we need. In the second paragraph on page 34 "like all the remaining steps Step Three calls for affirmative action. It is only by action that we can cut away the self-will which has always blocked the entry of God, or if you like, a Higher Power. Faith, to be sure, is necessary, but faith alone can avail nothing. We can have faith, and yet keep God out of our lives." This sentence again, sure I can believe in God, I can look at nature I can look at the planets and the solar system, and yes, there has to be something out there bigger than me but I have to get this God a whole lot closer. I need to put this God in my life, not keep this God out of my life. I have to build a relationship with this God that is right here with me. Therefore, a problem now becomes just how and by what specific means shall we be able to let him in.

Step Three represents our first attempt to do this. In fact, the effectiveness of the whole AA program will rest upon how well and earnestly we have tried to come to a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him. So many people just bypass this sentence like it was nothing. That's pretty big Bill Wilson! AA's program will rest upon how well and honestly you have tried to come to a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him. It's telling me that my program is not going to be on my firm foundation, I have to show real willingness. I have to suit up and show up, I have to make a big decision: when?--do I make it once a year? NO! Again, this has to be lived every minute of every day.

First paragraph up on page 35: "To every worldly and practically-minded beginner, this step looks hard, even impossible, no matter how much one wishes to try, exactly how can he turn his will and his life over to the care of whatever God he thinks there is? Fortunately, we who have tried it, and with equal misgivings, can testify that anyone, anyone at all, can begin to do this! We can further add that a beginning, even the smallest, is all that is needed. Once we have placed the key of willingness (doing something without reluctance) in the lock, we have the door ever so slightly open, we find that we can always open it some more. Though self-will may slam it shut again, as it frequently does, it will always respond the moment we pick up again the key of willingness.

So from my own personal experience, what happened especially in the beginning, I would get up in the morning and I would do a prayer, and I would say "God, I'm going to turn my will and my life over to you and I would be fine, maybe even an hour or two. Then I would get a phone call from somebody, and they would say something that would irritate me or a problem would crop up and I would take my will back and I wouldn't give it to God, and then I would have to remind myself "oh yeah, right, I'm in a program of recovery. I have to offer this to this God again." Whatever it is in the day that I'm in and I offer as much as I've got in the day I'm in, to his Power greater than myself, I am going to have a much easier day. If I can offer everything from what I'm going to wear, to what I'm going to say, to is financial security coming in or going out? Does he like me? Does she like me? Whatever the problem is, there are millions of problems, we went over those in Step one, it doesn't even matter what they are. I need to begin to have the willingness to turn all of these problems over to a Power greater than myself.

Let's go down to the bottom of page 35 – "But suppose the instinct cries out – as it certainly will – 'yes, respecting alcohol, I guess I have to be dependent upon AA, but in all other matters, I must still maintain my independence. Nothing is going to turn me into a non-entity. If I keep on turning my life and my will over to the care of something or somebody else, what will become of me? I'll look like the hole in the donut'."

So what happens is that my ego is afraid that I will turn into nothingness if I keep giving all my problems over to a Power greater than myself. My ego and my alcoholism are so used to running the show and orchestrating everything, telling you what to do, telling me what to do, that this is very uncomfortable or can be in the beginning. Maybe uncomfortable isn't the right word, it is so different, and feels so peculiar in the beginning, to offer something to a Power greater than myself and stop orchestrating.

The paragraph goes on to say "This is the process by which instinct and logic seem to bolster egotism, and so frustrates spiritual development." The trouble is that this kind of thinking takes no real account of the facts and the facts seem to be these: the more we become willing to depend on a Higher Power, the more independent we actually are! That's huge! Anyone who has done this knows what I'm talking about. It is so beautiful when it begins to happen. You receive a peace that surpasses all understanding. You get a life you've never thought possible. Agitation, restlessness, irritable, discontentedness, the warped instincts, one hundred forms of fear begin to dissipate. God takes them, God takes care of them, God soothes my soul, and my mind isn't walking around in untreated alcoholism all day long.

Here is where the relief is, and what it gives you is a life where drinking isn't necessary ever again, one day at a time. There is this formula that they talk about out there where my best day out there has no comparison to my worst day in here. I don't know who made up this formula but for a long time alcohol and drugs treated my mind because I couldn't quiet the disturbance of my mind and my thoughts. My emotions were so noisy they just ran and ran and ran, and I was trying to treat my mind with drugs and alcohol. What happens when you get a foundation in steps 1, 2, and 3, you begin to live in a world where drinking is not necessary. Now that sounds very desirable and very attractive to me.

The second paragraph on page 36 talks about the dependence of power, and they compare God to electricity. I definitely have power outages during the day, and then when I conform my will with God's will, and I commune with Him, the power goes back on.

On the top of page 37, this is a classic example of flip-flopping into alcoholism and then back into a program of recovery treated with a Power greater than myself. We will just call it flip-flopping. "The moment our emotional or mental independence is in question, how differently we behave. How persistently we claim the right to decide all by ourselves just what we shall think and just how we shall act. Oh yes, we will weigh the pros and cons of every problem, we will listen politely to those who would advise us, but all the decisions are to be ours and ours alone." So the moment that my emotional and mental independence is in question, how differently I behave. This is when I need to go to God even more. And in the beginning, what can happen as you are starting to build this foundation, let's say, you are about to get fired or you've gotten an eviction notice, something really big, something that is really rattling an instinct and rocking your foundation, this is when you need to give it to God more than ever, and this is when my emotional and mental independence is in question. This is when I find myself going back into my mind, taking back the power, and going into untreated alcoholism. This is often below the level of consciousness. I don't even know I'm doing it. I don't even know I've done it because I go back to automatic pilot. I don't even know I've done it until I'm wallowing around in, but as I practice these principles, and I practice going to God more and more, it gets easier to start staying with God.

Go down a little further in the flip-flop paragraph on page 37 and it says "Besides that we think that there is no one we can truly trust, we are certain that our intelligence, backed by willpower, can rightly control our inner lives and guarantee us success in the world we live in." This great philosophy where each man plays God sounds good in speaking, but it still has to meet the acid test. How well does it actually work? One good look in the mirror ought to be answer enough or one good look at your track record when you've operated from self and from whatever you could pull out of your mind to solve a problem, that ought to be answer enough that you need a Power greater than yourself. We didn't get here because we were good people, we got here through the circumstances and they weren't good, it tells us that when we turn the page.

Page 38, three lines down it says "So it by circumstances rather than by any virtue that we have been driven to AA and have admitted defeat, have acquired the rudiments to faith (which is just the start to faith), and now want to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to a Higher Power.

Let's hop over to page 39, the first paragraph says "So how exactly can the willing person continue to turn his will and his life over to a Higher Power? He has made a beginning as we can see when he begins to rely on AA for his solution to his alcohol problem. But now though, the chances are that he has become convinced that he has more problems than alcohol." And you see once again, the more problems you can admit you have other than alcohol, the more God can restore you to sanity. If you are not willing to admit and accept and look into what your mind is doing and how you are operating in your character defects and your sins and instincts, you aren't going to get very far. You're going to walk around with untreated alcoholism.

So it says "He has more problems than alcohol. Some of these refuse to be solved by all of the sheer personal determination and courage he can muster. They simply will not budge. They make him desperately unhappy and threaten his new found sobriety. Our friend is still victimized by remorse and guilt when he thinks of yesterday. That can happen after 20 years of recovery. Bitterness still overpowers him when he broods upon those he still envies or hates. That can happen with somebody with one day or with somebody with 20 years. His financial insecurity worries him sick, and panic takes over when he thinks of all the bridges to safety that alcohol has burned behind him or alcoholism burned behind him because it doesn't just take drinking to create destructive behavior. And how shall he ever straighten out that awful jam that cost him the affection of his family and separated him from them. His own courage and his unaided will cannot do it. Surely he must now depend upon something or somebody else.

Next paragraph says "At first, that somebody is likely to be his closest AA friend. He realizes from the assurance that his many troubles, now made more acute, because he cannot use alcohol to kill the pain, can be solved too. Of course, the sponsor points out that our friend's life is still unmanageable even though he is sober. That after all, only a bare start on AA's program has been made." More sobriety brought about the admission of alcoholism and by the attendance at a few meetings is very good indeed. It is bound to be a far cry from permanent sobriety and a contented and useful life. That is where the remaining steps of the AA program come in. Here is a big sentence: Nothing short of continuous action as a way of life can bring the much-desired end result.

Here is a really important statement that Bill Wilson makes: Then it is explained that the other steps of the AA program can be practiced with success ONLY when Step Three is given a determined and persistent trial. Again, ONLY when Step Three is given a determined and persistent trial.

This statement may surprise newcomers who have experienced nothing but constant deflation and a growing conviction that human will is of no value whatsoever. They have become persuaded and rightly so, that MANY problems besides alcohol will not yield to a head-long assault, powered by the individual alone.

What he is saying is: we have lots and lots of problems and by our own power, but our own self, we can't do it. Our past becomes our future, we try over and over and over, we promise it's going to be different next time, and it isn't. Lack of power is our dilemma. We must take spiritual principles, we must apply a program of recovery and find a Power greater than ourselves to start turning this over to.

I'm going to end this with two simple prayers. If this is all too much for somebody to take in at once because it's an awful lot of information, keep asking God for the willingness, ask God to help you hear this, and ask God for the desire to keep wanting this. This message and this God is accessible to everybody, you just have to petition the Power greater than yourself, and back it with the performance that you know God is there.

Thank you for letting me share. Have a lovely day!