

Let's Do It The Way Our Founders Did!

"I took my leave of Dr. Bob, knowing that he was to undergo a serious operation. The old, broad smile was on his face as he said almost jokingly, **'Remember Bill, let's not louse this thing up. Let's keep it simple!'** I turned away, unable to say a word. That was the last time I ever saw him."
"A.A Comes of Age", pg. 214

Over the past few months, there has been a growing concern expressed by some of our BBS Members regarding Step One being presented as a "Three Fold" disease; "Body, Mind and Spirit." While that has become a popular concept in our Fellowship, it is wrong, confusing and a deterrent to alcoholics who are agnostic or atheistic and seeking help from us for their drinking problem. **Some of us are not keeping it simple.**

Before there were so many meetings, most of which are devoid of our Program of Recovery, our Founders, and for the 30 -35 years following, experienced a 75 – 90% success rate with long term sobriety. They knew what they were doing. As one of my dear friends who has been around longer than I have and is a devout practitioner of our Basic Text said, "The way we are treating newcomers borders on slaughter." Let's not be a part of that tragedy.

Bill stated that the only Step we must get 100% right is Step One. We are told Step One states the Problem, alcoholism. There are only two parts of Step One; the Physical and the Mental. There is no third part.

The first part, "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol" states the physical problem of the alcoholic. The allergy which produces the craving that deprives an alcoholic of the ability to control the amount we drink, once we start drinking. There are people who have this problem and know if they drink, they will wind up drunk so they don't drink. Are they Powerless over alcohol? Yes. Is their life unmanageable? No! Certainly not when it comes to "managing" their decision to not drink. Read the story of the man age thirty on page 32 of our Basic Text. If we could manage our decision to not drink, why would we come to Alcoholics Anonymous?

From that stage, we progress into Chronic Alcoholism where we no longer have the power to manage our most sincere desire to never drink again. Our life has now become "unmanageable." Alcoholism has now taken complete control of our lives. Our disease has now developed to where it is patient, permanent, progressive, and fatal

At the present time, there is no solution for the "Powerlessness of the Body." Unless medical science discovers a cure for our "allergy," we will take that allergy to our grave.

There is, however, a Solution for the "Mental Powerlessness." It is a Complete Psychic Change which is "Spiritual" in nature. It occurs when an alcoholic can learn to live selflessly by Spiritual Principles. The Program of Alcoholics Anonymous is not the only manner in which an alcoholic can find that Solution. The Salvation Army, for example, has been helping alcoholics learn to live sober through Christianity since 1865. **But remember, many if not most alcoholics are agnostics. Some are atheistic.** They have had an abundance of being told they need to find God, accept religious views or teachings, etc. Our Steps, in the order they are stated, are the Spiritual Principles we should freely discuss with our new prospect. In Chapter Seven, we are given an effective way to stress our Spiritual Principles without creating a resistance to our Program of Action. None of us came to Alcoholics Anonymous to put life in our Spiritual Being. In fact, most of us are not aware that such exists. We know of our physical, intellectual and emotional being but the Spiritual is an unknown.

We come to Alcoholics Anonymous in hopes of finding a way out of the bottle; **to avoid death by drinking or wet brain insanity. If we have the willingness to go to any length to live sober and a knowledgeable Sponsor who will keep us focused on following the clear-cut directions in our Basic Text, we will come to know the God of our understanding in a very personal and intimate way. That is a Promise!**

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The God of our "understanding?" Our understanding can be (1.) there is a loving God (a person who has faith), or (2) there is a God but he is too busy looking after the Universe to be interested in me (an agnostic) or (3) there is no God (atheist). Dr. Bob was a believer, he had faith. Bill Wilson was an agnostic and was so the night he decided to follow Ebby's suggestions. Bill knelt by his hospital bed and said, IF there is a God, let Him show Himself now." Jim Burwell was an atheist and the motivation for "God, as we understand Him." That statement opens the door very wide, thank God.

So, when we are given the opportunity to share our Experience and Knowledge of our Program of Recovery, let's present it as our Founders saw it, not as others see it. We have a "Two-fold" disease with a Solution for only the Mental Part of our Alcoholism; the **Insidious Insanity**. Step One is a statement of our Problem; we are powerless physically and mentally over alcohol Step Two is a statement of the hope for a Solution to our "**Alcoholic Insanity**." Let's not further confuse the newcomer.

In "Bill's Story," he tells of his desperation on learning from Dr. Silkworth that his drinking problem had him condemned to an alcoholic death or wet brain insanity. "He wished for the end." After he had reached the point where he was drinking to find oblivion, his old drinking buddy, Ebby called on him. Bill was astonished to learn that the man whose drinking problem had been worse than his own was two months sober and happy in his sobriety. Bill was more than a little eager to learn what Ebby was doing to live without the bottle. He was beginning to get some hope when Ebby said "I've got religion." Bill was a self described agnostic so was disappointed but invited Ebby to go ahead and talk while he went to work on the two quarts of "Bathtub gin."

A few days later, Bill realized he was going into delirium tremens. He remembered Dr. Silkworth predicted he would die of a heart attack during DT's so he headed to Town's Hospital hoping to escape death by drinking. He had the desperation of a drowning man. On the third day of his sobriety, he called Ebby and asked him to come to the Hospital and tell him one more time what it was he was doing to live sober. Ebby did. Bill had already surrendered to the problem. That night, he surrendered to the Solution asking His protection and care with complete abandon. Bill lived the rest of his 36 years of life sober and committed to doing all he could to assure that we too could live a sober and purposeful life.

The first four months out of the Hospital, he went in search of a serious drinker every day. He failed to remember what had turned him off when Ebby first called on him. He loved to tell the story of his life saving "Hot Flash." After his total failure to find an alcoholic who was interested in joining him in sobriety, he went to Dr. Silkworth for guidance. Dr. Silkworth told him he was getting the cart before the horse. He instructed Bill to bear down on the scientific facts. Render the prospect helpless and hopeless with the powerlessness of the body and mind where alcohol is concerned. "Once you have achieved that, then maybe they would be interested in hearing about your miraculous recovery." The first time Bill tried that approach was on Mother's Day, May 12, 1935. We have the opportunity to survive alcoholism because Bill stressed the problem without exposing the Solution. So let's not get the cart before or along side the horse.

Dr. Bob had been reading everything he could find, talking to everyone who might be able to help him and trying everything he could think of to find a way to stop drinking. He continued to drink in spite of his determination to stay away from alcohol. He was attending meetings of the Akron Oxford Group for 2 ½ years to please his wife, Ann. He said, "I sensed they had something I did not have, from which I might readily profit. I learned it was something of a spiritual nature, which did not appeal to me very much, but I thought it could do me no harm." Bill followed Dr. Silkworth's advice. In a 15 minute period, Bill's conversation with Dr. Bob focused on the Problem and how, from his drinking experience, he knew what he was talking about. Dr. Bob realized his drinking problem was not a matter of just having a bad habit or self-control. He learned he was totally hopeless.

Fred's Story, pages 39 - 43, is a classic example of how to approach a newcomer. On their first visit with Fred, "We told him what we knew about alcoholism." There was **NO** mention of a Solution. After hearing their drunk-a-log, he didn't believe he really had a drinking problem and told them so. They agreed that maybe he didn't but if he had an alcoholic mind, the time and place would come when he would drink again.

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"I went to my hotel and leisurely dressed for dinner. *As I crossed the threshold of the dining room, the thought came to mind that it would be nice to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. That was all. Nothing more.* (The Insidious Insanity – the Unmanageability) I ordered a cocktail and my meal. Then I ordered another cocktail. After dinner I decided to take a walk. When I returned to the hotel it struck me a highball would be fine before going to bed, so I stepped into the bar and had one. I remember having several more that night and plenty next morning. (The Allergy – the Physical Powerlessness) .

"As soon as I regained my ability to think, I went carefully over that evening in Washington. *Not only had I been off guard, I had made no fight whatever against the first drink. This time I had not thought of the consequences at all.* I had commenced to drink as carelessly as though the cocktails were ginger ale. *I now remembered what my alcoholic friends had told me, how they prophesied that if I had an alcoholic mind, the time and place would come - I would drink again.* They had said that though I did raise a defense, it would one day give way before some trivial reason for having a drink. Well, just that did happen and more, for what I had learned of alcoholism did not occur to me at all. *I knew from that moment that I had an alcoholic mind.* I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in *those strange mental blank spots.* I had never been able to understand people who said that a problem had them hopelessly defeated. I knew then. It was a crushing blow."

"Two of the members of Alcoholics Anonymous came to see me. (Obviously, he now had a desire to stop drinking. He had called them for help.) They grinned, which I didn't like so much, (we'll do it every time.) and then asked me if I thought myself alcoholic and if I were really licked this time. I had to concede both propositions. They piled on me heaps of evidence to the effect that an alcoholic mentality, such as I had exhibited in Washington, was a hopeless condition. They cited cases out of their own experience by the dozen. This process snuffed out the last flicker of conviction that I could do the job myself. (Still no mention of our Solution)

(Now for the big secret) "Then they outlined the spiritual answer and program of action which a hundred of them had followed successfully. Though I had been only a nominal churchman, their proposals were not, intellectually, hard to swallow. But the program of action, though entirely sensible, was pretty drastic. *It meant I would have to throw several lifelong conceptions out of the window.* That was not easy. But the moment I made up my mind to go through with the process, I had the curious feeling that my alcoholic condition was relieved, as in fact it proved to be.

"Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems."

Chapter Seven

If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady. Show him, *from your own experience, how the queer mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will power.*

Don't, at this stage, refer to this book, unless he has seen it and wishes to discuss it.

And be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion.

Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal malady. Talk about the conditions of *body and mind* which accompany it. Keep his attention *focused mainly on your personal experience.* Explain that many are doomed who never realize their predicament.

But you may talk to him about the hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a solution. You will soon have your friend admitting he has many, if not all, of the traits of the alcoholic.

Even though your protégé may not have entirely admitted his condition, he has become very curious to know how you got well. *Let him ask you that question, if he will.*

THEN, IF HE ASKS!

Tell him exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely. If the man be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that he does not have to agree with your conception of God. He can choose any conception he likes, provided it makes sense to him.

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The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles. (He has accepted that alcohol is a power greater than himself and believes (hopes) the Power we demonstrate by our quality of sobriety will be there for him, if we will show him how to find that Power. Ebby demonstrated that Power to Bill. Because Bill had become totally desperate, even though he had doubts, he was willing to take a risk to humiliate himself by praying to a Power he didn't believe in.) He then was willing to follow Ebby's suggestions.

(To be most effective with one who might be of agnostic or atheistic temperament, this is the suggested way we should "Stress" the spiritual features.) Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, (Step Four) how you straightened out your past (Step Nine) and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to him (Step Twelve). It is important for him to realize that your attempt to pass this on to him plays a vital part in your own recovery. Actually, he may be helping you more than you are helping him.

So let's remember that until we have our prospect helpless and hopeless (Step One), we do not let them in on our secret. As one of my protégés said, "If they understand how desperate their situation is, you can't beat them away with a baseball bat but if they don't, you can't give it to them with an enema." So once they have surrendered, we help them carry out the Decision to see if "Selfishness-self-centeredness! - the Spiritual Malady" is, in fact, the root of their troubles. There are only two "wills" in this world of ours. Self-will and God's will. **Self-will, when used selfishly is a Spiritual Malady.** Living our life selfishly is the Spiritual Malady which is manifested in our Character Defects which in turn manifest themselves in the "Bedevilments." So, if we follow the clear-cut directions in our Basic Text, we learn how to live our life based on being selfless, honest, caring, with faith and considerate of others. By fitting ourselves to be of service to God and the people about us, the Spiritual Malady will be placed in **remission; recovered but not cured** Our Character Defects are then replaced by Character Assets which eliminate the Bedevilments.

All humans have a Spiritual Malady to some extent. For alcoholics, it can be deadly. The last one who was free of Selfishness left on a Cross so for alcoholics, Progress, not Perfection is our game plan. Otherwise, an alcoholic death or wet brain insanity will be our destiny.

'Remember Bill, let's not louse this thing up. Let's keep it simple!'

It makes no sense to be students of our Basic Text and then ignore its teachings.

Bill once described our Program as, **"It is a complete mystery shrouded in utter simplicity."**
It is just too simple for us smart folks.
