

## Chapter 6

### INTO ACTION

HAVING MADE our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path. We have admitted certain defects; we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is;

(See BB 71)

we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects.

(See BB 13:3)

This brings us to the *Fifth Step* in the program of recovery mentioned in the preceding chapter.

This is perhaps difficult-especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further.

Because we were still bothered by fear, self-pity, and hurt feelings, it was probable we couldn't appraise ourselves fairly at all. Too much guilt and remorse might cause us to dramatize and exaggerate our shortcomings. Or anger and hurt pride might be the smoke screen under which we were hiding some of our defects while we blamed others for them. Possibly, too, we were still handicapped by many liabilities, great and small, we never knew we had.

Hence it was most evident that a solitary self-appraisal, and the admission of our defects based upon that alone, wouldn't be nearly enough. We'd have to have outside help if we were surely to know and admit the truth about ourselves- the help of God and another human being. Only by discussing ourselves, holding back nothing, only by being willing to take advice and accept direction could we set foot on the road to straight thinking, solid honesty, and genuine humility.

be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods.

(See BB 58:3)

So intense, though, is our fear and reluctance to do this, that many A.A.'s at first try to bypass Step Five. We search for an easier way- which usually consists of the general and fairly painless admission that when drinking we were sometimes bad actors. Then, for good measure, we add dramatic descriptions of that part of our drinking behavior which our friends probably know about anyhow.

**T&T 59 Step Five**

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invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only *thought* they had lost their egoism and fear; they only *thought* they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else *all* their life story.

But of the things which really bother and burn us, we say nothing. Certain distressing or humiliating memories, we tell ourselves, ought not be shared with anyone. These will remain our secret. Not a soul must ever know. We hope they'll go to the grave with us.

Yet if A.A.'s experience means anything at all, this is not only unwise, but is actually a perilous resolve. Few muddled attitudes have caused us more trouble than holding back on Step Five. Some people are unable to stay sober at all; others will relapse periodically until they really clean house.

**T&T 59 Step Five**

More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He is very much the actor. To the outer world he presents his stage character. This is the one he likes

his fellows to see. He wants to enjoy a certain reputation, but knows in his heart he doesn't deserve it.

What are we likely to receive from Step Five? For one thing, we shall get rid of that terrible sense of isolation we've always had. Almost without exception, alcoholics are tortured by loneliness. Even before our drinking got bad and people began to cut us off, nearly all of us suffered the feeling that we didn't quite belong. Either we were shy, and dared not draw near others, or we were apt to be noisy good fellows craving attention and companionship, but never getting it- at least to our way of thinking. There was always that mysterious barrier we could neither surmount nor understand. It was as if we were actors on a stage, suddenly realizing that we did not know a single line of our parts. That's one reason we loved alcohol too well. It did let us act extemporaneously. But even Bacchus boomeranged on us; we were finally struck down and left in terrified loneliness.

**T&T 57 Step Five**

The inconsistency is made worse by the things he does on his sprees. Coming to his senses, he is revolted at certain episodes he vaguely remembers. These memories are a nightmare. He trembles to think someone might have observed him. As fast as he can, he pushes these memories far inside himself. He hopes they will never see the light of day. He is under constant fear and tension-that makes for more drinking.

**(See BB xxviii Bottom - xix)**

Psychologists are inclined to agree with us. We have spent thousands of dollars for examinations. We know but few instances where we have given these doctors a fair break. We have seldom told them the whole truth nor have we followed their advice. Unwilling to be honest with these sympathetic men, we were honest with no one else. Small wonder many in the medical profession have a low opinion of alcoholics and their chance for recovery!

Psychiatrists and psychologists point out the deep need every human being has for practical insight and knowledge of his own personality flaws and for a discussion of them with an understanding and trustworthy person. So far as alcoholics are concerned, A.A. would go even further. Most of us would declare that without a fearless admission of our defects to another human being we could not stay sober. It seems plain that the grace of God will not enter to expel our destructive obsessions until we are willing to try this.

**T&T 56-57 Step Five**

We must be entirely honest with somebody if we

expect to live long or happily in this world.

Until we actually sit down and talk aloud about what we have so long hidden, our willingness to clean house is still largely theoretical. When we are honest with another person, it confirms that we have been honest with ourselves and with God.

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Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion.

(See BB 131:2)

We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem. Of course, we sometimes encounter people who do not understand alcoholics. (See BB 63:3)

If we cannot or would rather not do this, we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend. Perhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person. It may be one of our own family, but we cannot disclose anything to our wives or our parents which will hurt them and make them unhappy. We have no right to save our own skin at another person's expense. Such parts of our story we tell to someone who will understand, yet be unaffected. The rule is we must be hard on ourself, but always considerate of others.

Our next problem will be to discover the person in whom we are to confide. Here we ought to take much care, remembering that prudence is a virtue which carries a high rating. Perhaps we shall need to share with this person facts about ourselves which no others ought to know. We shall want to speak with someone who is experienced, who not only has stayed dry but has been able to surmount other serious difficulties. Difficulties, perhaps, like our own. This person may turn out to be one's sponsor, but not necessarily so. If you have developed a high confidence in him, and his temperament and problems are close to your own, then such a choice will be good. Besides, your sponsor already has the advantage of knowing something about your case.

Perhaps, though, your relation to him is such that you would care to reveal only a part of your story. If this is the situation, by all means do so, for you ought to make a beginning as soon as you can. It may turn out, however, that you'll choose someone else for the more difficult and deeper revelations. This individual may be entirely outside of A.A.- for example, your clergyman or your doctor. For some of us, a complete stranger may prove the best bet.

**T&T 60-61 Step Five**

Notwithstanding the great necessity for discussing ourselves with someone, it may be one is so situated that there is no suitable person available. If that is so, this step may be postponed, only, however, if we hold ourselves in complete readiness to go through with it at the first opportunity.

**(See BB 83:3)**

We say this because we are very anxious that we talk to the right person. It is important that he be able to keep a confidence; that he fully understand and approve what we are driving at;

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that he will not try to change our plan. But we must not use this as a mere excuse to postpone.

When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.

When your mission is carefully explained, and it is seen by the recipient of your confidence how helpful he can really be, the conversation will start easily and will soon become eager. Before long, your listener may well tell a story or two about himself which will place you even more at ease.

**T&T 61-62 Step Five**

We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that

the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly.

**(See BB 84 Bottom)**

We feel we are on the Broad Highway,  
walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

Provided you hold back nothing, your sense of relief will mount from minute to minute. The dammed-up emotions of years break out of their confinement, and miraculously vanish as soon as they are exposed. As the pain subsides, a healing tranquility takes its place. And when humility and serenity are so combined, something else of great moment is apt to occur. Many an A.A., once agnostic or atheistic, tells us that it was during this stage of Step Five that he first actually felt the presence of God. And even those who had faith already often become conscious of God as they never were before.

**T&T 62 Step Five**

Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

This feeling of being at one with God and man, this emerging from isolation through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of guilt, brings us to a resting place where we may prepare ourselves for the following Steps toward a full and meaningful sobriety.

**T&T 62 Step Five**

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If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at *Step Six*. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all-every one?

**(See BB 13:2)**

If we still cling to something we will not let go,

What we must recognize now is that we exult in some of our defects. We really love them. Who, for example,

doesn't like to feel just a little superior to the next fellow, or even quite a lot superior? Isn't it true that we like to let greed masquerade as ambition? To think of liking lust seems impossible...

Self-righteous anger also can be very enjoyable. In a perverse way we can actually take satisfaction from the fact that many people annoy us, for it brings a comfortable feeling of superiority. Gossip barbed with our anger, a polite form of murder by character assassination, has its satisfactions for us, too...

When gluttony is less than ruinous, we have a milder word for that, too; we call it "taking our comfort." We live in a world riddled with envy. To a greater or less degree, everybody is infected with it. From this defect we must surely get a warped yet definite satisfaction.

**T&T 66-67 Step Six**

we ask God to help us be willing.

If we ask, God will certainly forgive our derelictions. But in no case does He render us white as snow and keep us that way without our cooperation. That is something we are supposed to be willing to work toward ourselves. He asks only that we try as best we know how to make progress in the building of character.

So Step Six- "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character"- is A.A.'s way of stating the best possible attitude one can take in order to make a beginning on this lifetime job. This does not mean that we expect all our character defects to be lifted out of us as the drive to drink was. A few of them may be, but with most of them we shall have to be content with patient improvement. The key words "entirely ready" underline the fact that we want to aim at the very best we know or can learn.

**T&T 65 Step Six**

We will want to be rid of some of these defects, but in some instances this will appear to be an impossible job from which we recoil. And we cling with a passionate persistence to others which are just as disturbing to our equilibrium, because we still enjoy them too much. How can we possibly summon the resolution and the willingness to get rid of such overwhelming compulsions and desires?

**T&T 73 Step Seven**

As we approach the actual taking of Step Seven, it might be well if we A.A.'s inquire once more just what our deeper objectives are. Each of us would like to live at peace with himself and with his fellows. We would like to be as-

sure that the grace of God can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We have seen that character defects based upon shortsighted or unworthy desires are the obstacles that block our path toward these objectives. We now clearly see that we have been making unreasonable demands upon ourselves, upon others, and upon God.

**T&T 75-76 Step Seven**

When ready, we say something like this: "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen." We have then completed *Step Seven*. (See BB 63:2)

The whole emphasis of Step Seven is on humility. It is really saying to us that we now ought to be willing to try humility in seeking the removal of our other shortcomings just as we did when we admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, and came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. If that degree of humility could enable us to find the grace by which such a deadly obsession could be banished, then there must be hope of the same result respecting any other problem we could possibly have.

**T&T 76 Step Seven**

Now we need more action, without which we find that "Faith without works is dead."

(See BB 14:6, 88:3, 93:2)

Faith, to be sure, is necessary, but faith alone can avail nothing.

**T&T 34 Step Three**

Let's look at *Steps Eight and Nine*. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory.

(See BB 13:3)

Every A.A. has found that he can make little headway in this new adventure of living until he first backtracks and really makes an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage he has left in his wake. To a degree, he has already done this when taking moral inventory, but now the time has come when he ought to redouble his efforts to see how many people he has hurt, and in what ways.

**T&T 77 Step Eight**



We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves.

In Step Eight, we continued our housecleaning, for we saw that we were not only in conflict with ourselves, but also with people and situations in the world in which we lived. We had to begin to make our peace, and so we listed the people we had harmed and became willing to set things right.

**T&T 108 Step Twelve**

If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning *we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.*

Whenever our pencil falters, we can fortify and cheer ourselves by remembering what A.A. experience in this Step has meant to others. It is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God.

**T&T 82 Step Eight**

Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of business acquaintances and friends we have hurt,

We might next ask ourselves what we mean when we say that we have "harmed" other people. What kinds of "harm" do people do one another, anyway? To define the word "harm" in a practical way, we might call it the result of instincts in collision, which cause physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual damage to people...

Having carefully surveyed this whole area of human relations, and having decided exactly what personality traits in us injured and disturbed others, we can now commence to ransack memory for the people to whom we have given offense. To put a finger on the nearby and most deeply damaged ones shouldn't be hard to do. Then, as year by year we walk back through our lives as far as memory will reach, we shall be bound to construct a long list of people who have, to some extent or other, been affected.

**T&T 80-81 Step Eight**

we may feel diffident about going to some of them on a spiritual basis. Let us be reassured. To some people we need not, and probably should not

emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach.

**(See BB 83:2)**

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We might prejudice them. At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.

**(See BB 102:2)**

While the purpose of making restitution to others is paramount, it is equally necessary that we extricate from an examination of our personal relations every bit of information about ourselves and our fundamental difficulties that we can. Since defective relations with other human beings have nearly always been the immediate cause of our woes, including our alcoholism, no field of investigation could yield more satisfying and valuable rewards than this one.

**T&T 80 Step Eight**

It is seldom wise to approach an individual, who still smarts from our injustice to him, and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But our man is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. He is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.

**(See BB 83:2)**

We may not want to say anything for several weeks, or longer. First we will wish to be reasonably certain that we are on the A.A. beam...

As soon as we begin to feel confident in our new way of life and have begun, by our behavior and example, to convince those about us that we are indeed changing for the better, it is usually safe to talk in complete frankness with those who have been seriously affected, even those who may be only a little or not at all aware of what we have done to them.

**T&T 84, 85 Step Nine**

We don't use this as an excuse for shying away from the subject of God. When it will serve any good purpose, we are willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense. The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. It may be he has

done us more harm than we have done him and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit,

With those we dislike we can begin to practice justice and courtesy, perhaps going out of our way to understand and help them.

**T&T 93 Step Ten**

confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.

Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply we tell him that we will never get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past.

Then we are ready to go to these people, to tell them what A.A. is, and what we are trying to do. Against this background we can freely admit the damage we have done and make our apologies. We can pay, or promise to pay, what ever obligations, financial or otherwise, we owe.

**T&T Page 84 Step Nine**

We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worth while

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can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell him what he should do. His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own.

**(See BB 13:3)**

If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.

In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens. Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own fault, so feuds of years' standing melt away in an hour. Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well. Occasionally, they will offer assistance.

**(See BB 156:1)**

The generous response of most people to such quiet sincerity will often astonish us. Even our severest and most justified critics will frequently meet us more than halfway on the first trial.

**T&T 84-85 Step Nine**

It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam.

[W]e may be tipped over in the other direction when, in rare cases, we get a cool and skeptical reception. This will tempt us to argue, or to press our point insistently. Or maybe it will tempt us to discouragement and pessimism. But if we have prepared ourselves well in advance, such reactions will not deflect us from our steady and even purpose.

**T&T 85 Step Nine**

Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our drinking; they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our alcoholism on the theory it may cause financial harm.

**(See BB 155:2)**

Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can we let these people know we are sorry. Our drinking has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them.

Above all, we should try to be absolutely sure that we are not delaying because we are afraid. For the readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step Nine.

**T&T 87 Step Nine**

Perhaps we have committed a criminal offense which might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities. We may be short in our accounts and unable to make good. We have already admitted this in confidence to another person, but we are sure we would be imprisoned or lose our job if it were known. Maybe it's only a petty offense such as padding the expense account. Most of us have done that sort of thing.

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Maybe we are divorced, and have remarried but haven't kept up the alimony to number one. She is indignant about it, and has a warrant out for our arrest. That's a common form of trouble too.

Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.

Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit.

Do we instantly confess our irregularities to the firm, in the practical certainty that we will be fired and become unemployed? Are we going to be so rigidly righteous about making amends that we don't care what happens to the family and home?

**T&T 86 Step Nine**

A man we know had remarried. Because of resentment and drinking, he had not paid alimony to his first wife. She was furious. She went to court and got an order for his arrest. He had commenced our way of life, had secured a position, and was getting his head above water. It would have been impressive heroics if he had walked up to the Judge and said, "Here I am."

We thought he ought to be willing to do that if necessary, but if he were in jail he could provide nothing for either family. We suggested he write his first wife admitting his faults and asking forgiveness. He did, and also sent a small amount of money. He told her what he would try to do in the future. He said he was perfectly willing to go to jail if she insisted. Of course she did not, and the whole situation has long since been adjusted.

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Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink.

[D]o we first consult those who are to be gravely affected? Do we lay the matter before our sponsor or spiritual adviser, earnestly asking God's help and guidance- meanwhile resolving to do the right thing when it becomes clear, cost what it may? Of course, there is no pat answer which can fit

all such dilemmas. But all of them do require a complete willingness to make amends as fast and as far as may be possible in a given set of conditions.

**T&T 86-87 Step Nine**

This brings to mind a story about one of our friends. While drinking, he accepted a sum of money from a bitterly-hated business rival, giving him no receipt for it. He subsequently denied having received the money and used the incident as a basis for discrediting the man. He thus used his own wrong-doing as a means of destroying the reputation of another. In fact, his rival was ruined.

He felt that he had done a wrong he could not possibly make right. If he opened that old affair, he was afraid it would destroy the reputation of his partner, disgrace his family and take away his means of livelihood. What right had he to involve those dependent upon him? How could he possibly make a public statement exonerating his rival?

After consulting with his wife and partner he came to the conclusion that it was better to take those risks than to stand before his Creator guilty of such ruinous slander. He saw that he had to place the outcome in God's hands or he would soon start drinking again, and all would be lost anyhow. He attended church for the first time in many years. After the sermon, he quietly got up and made an explanation. His action met widespread approval, and today he is one of the most trusted citizens of his town. This all happened years ago.

The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we

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wouldn't care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, alcoholics are fundamentally much worse than other people. But drinking does complicate sex relations in the home. After a few years with an alcoholic, a wife gets worn out, resentful and uncommunicative. How could she be anything else? The husband begins to feel lonely, sorry for himself. He commences to look around in the night clubs, or their equivalent, for something besides liquor. Perhaps he is having a secret and exciting affair with "the girl who understands."

**(See BB 106:1, 151:3)**

In fairness we must say that she may understand, but what are we going to do about a thing like that? A man so involved often feels very remorseful

at times, especially if he is married to a loyal and courageous girl who has literally gone through hell for him.

Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. If we are sure our wife does not know, should we tell her? Not always, we think. If she knows in a general way that we have been wild, should we tell her in detail? Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. She may insist on knowing all the particulars. She will want to know who the woman is and where she is. We feel we ought to say to her that we have no right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated. More than that we cannot do; we have no right to go further. Though there may be justifiable exceptions, and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found this the best course to take.

Our design for living is not a one-way street. It is as good for the wife as for the husband. If we can

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forget, so can she. It is better, however, that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom she can vent jealousy. (See BB 124:3)

There can only be one consideration which should qualify our desire for a complete disclosure of the damage we have done. That will arise in the occasional situation where to make a full revelation would seriously harm the one to whom we are making amends. Or- quite as important- other people. We cannot, for example, unload a detailed account of extramarital adventuring upon the shoulders of our unsuspecting wife or husband. And even in those cases where such a matter must be discussed, let's try to avoid harming third parties, whoever they may be. It does not lighten our burden when we recklessly make the crosses of others heavier.

**T&T 86**

**Step Nine**

Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let by-gones be by-gones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind. Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion-jealousy. Good generalship may decide that the problem be attacked on the flank rather than risk a face-to-face combat.

If we have no such complication, there is plenty we should do at home. Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing he needs to do is to keep sober. Certainly he must keep sober, for there will be no home if he doesn't.

Some of us, though, tripped over a very different snag. We clung to the claim that when drinking we never hurt anybody but ourselves. Our families didn't suffer, because we always paid the bills and seldom drank at home. Our business associates didn't suffer, because we were usually on the job. Our reputations hadn't suffered, because we were certain few knew of our drinking. Those who did would sometimes assure us that, after all, a lively bender was only a good man's fault. What real harm, therefore, had we done? No more, surely, than we could easily mend with a few casual apologies.

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**Step Eight**

But he is yet a long way from making good to the wife or parents whom for years he has so shockingly treated. Passing all understanding is the patience mothers and wives have had with alcoholics. Had this not been so, many of us would have no homes today, would perhaps be dead.

**(See BB 178:2)**

The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil.

**(See BB 123:2-3, 127:1)**

We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough.

**(See BB 118:2)**

He is like the farmer who came up out of his cyclone cellar to find his home ruined. To his wife, he remarked, "Don't see anything the matter here, Ma. Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowin'?"

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Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in medita-



tion that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. (See BB 86:2 - 87:2, 134:3)

The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.* Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we think we ought not to urge them. We should not talk incessantly to them about spiritual matters. They will change in time.

(See BB 76 Bottom)

Our behavior will convince them more than our words. We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone.

(See BB 77 Middle)

As soon as we begin to feel confident in our new way of life and have begun, by our behavior and example, to convince those about us that we are indeed changing for the better, it is usually safe to talk in complete frankness with those who have been seriously affected, even those who may be only a little or not at all aware of what we have done to them. The only exceptions we will make will be cases where our disclosure would cause actual harm.

**T&T 85 Step Nine**

There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen-we send them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided.

(See BB 74:2)

We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone.

We needn't wallow in excessive remorse before those we have harmed, but amends at this level should always be forthright and generous.

**T&T 86 Step Nine**

[1] If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. [2] We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

(See BB 52:2 [7])

[3] We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

(See BB 123 Bottom)

[4] We will comprehend the

word serenity and we will know peace.

(See BB 52:2 [2])

[5] No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

(See BB 52:2 [8], 124:2)

[6] That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

(See BB 52:2 [3], [5])

[7] We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. [8] Self-seeking will slip away.

(See BB 63:1)

[9] Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

(See BB 25:2, 50:4, 567:4)

[10] Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.

(See BB 52:2 [1], [4], [6], 68:3)

It did not matter too much what our material condition was, but it did matter what our spiritual condition was. Money gradually became our servant and not our master... We found that freedom from fear was more important than freedom from want.

**T&T 122**

**Step Twelve**

[11] We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

(See BB 86:3)

[12] We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

(See BB 11:3, 25:2)

We would like to be assured that the grace of God can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

**T&T 76**

**Step Seven**

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us-sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

Maybe there are as many definitions of spiritual awakening as there are people who have had them. But certainly each genuine one has something in common with all the

others. And these things which they have in common are not too hard to understand. When a man or a woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being. He has been set on a path which tells him he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered. In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself. He finds himself in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love of which he had thought himself quite incapable. What he has received is a free gift, and yet usually, at least in some small part, he has made himself ready to receive it.

**T&T 107 Step Twelve**

This thought brings us to *Step Ten*, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime.

AS we work the first nine Steps, we prepare ourselves for the adventure of a new life. But when we approach Step Ten we commence to put our A.A. way of living to practical use, day by day, in fair weather or foul. Then comes the acid test: can we stay sober, keep in emotional balance, and live to good purpose under all conditions?

**T&T 88 Step 10**

Learning daily to spot, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek.

**T&T 94-95 Step Ten**

Continue to watch  
for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear.

**(See BB 13:4)**

Although all inventories are alike in principle, the time factor does distinguish one from another. There's the spot check inventory, taken at any time of the day, whenever we

find ourselves getting tangled up.

**T&T 89 Step Ten**

When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.

We discuss them with someone immediately

Then there are those occasions when alone, or in the company of our sponsor or spiritual adviser, we make a careful review of our progress since the last time.

**T&T 89 Step Ten**

and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.

**(See BB 119:1)**

Love and tolerance of others is our code.

**(See BB 66 Bottom - 67:1, 70:3, 83:1, 118:2)**

And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned.

**(See BB 57 Top, 154 Bottom)**

We will seldom be interested in liquor.

**(See BB 75:2)**

If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame.

**(See BB 24:2)**

We

**INTO ACTION 85**

react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation.

**(See BB 101:2, 120:3, 147 Top)**

We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels.

After taking this preliminary trial at making amends,

we may enjoy such a sense of relief that we conclude our task is finished. We will want to rest on our laurels. The temptation to skip the more humiliating and dreaded meetings that still remain may be great.

**T&T 85 Step Nine**

Of course all A.A.'s, even the best, fall far short of such achievements as a consistent thing. Without necessarily taking that first drink, we often get quite far off the beam. Our troubles sometimes begin with indifference. We are sober and happy in our A.A. work. Things go well at home and office. We naturally congratulate ourselves on what later proves to be a far too easy and superficial point of view. We temporarily cease to grow because we feel satisfied that there is no need for all of A.A.'s Twelve Steps for us. We are doing fine on a few of them. Maybe we are doing fine on only two of them, the First Step and that part of the Twelfth where we "carry the message." In A.A. slang, that blissful state is known as "two-stepping." And it can go on for years.

The best-intentioned of us can fall for the "two-step" illusion. Sooner or later the pink cloud stage wears off and things go disappointingly dull. We begin to think that A.A. doesn't pay off after all. We become puzzled and discouraged.

**T&T 112-113 Step Twelve**

We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.

Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. "How can I best serve Thee-Thy will (not mine) be done." These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.

It is when we try to make our will conform with God's that we begin to use it rightly. To all of us, this was a most wonderful revelation. *Our whole trouble had been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us.* To make this increasingly possible is the purpose of A.A.'s Twelve Steps, and Step Three opens the door.

**T&T 40 Step Three**

Much has already been said about receiving

strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense.

**(See BB 567:3)**

But we must go further and that means more action.

We discover that we do receive guidance for our lives to just about the extent that we stop making demands upon God to give it to us on order and on our terms. Almost any experienced A.A. will tell how his affairs have taken remarkable and unexpected turns for the better as he tried to improve his conscious contact with God. He will also report that out of every season of grief or suffering, when the hand of God seemed heavy or even unjust, new lessons for living were learned, new resources of courage were uncovered, and that finally, inescapably, the conviction came that God does "move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

**T&T 104-105 Step Eleven**

*Step Eleven* suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men

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than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it. It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?

**(See BB 120 Top)**

When evening comes, perhaps just before going to sleep, many of us draw up a balance sheet for the day. This is a good place to remember that inventory-taking is not always done in red ink. It's a poor day indeed when we haven't done something right. As a matter of fact, the waking hours are usually well filled with things that are constructive. Good intentions, good thoughts, and good acts are there for us to see. Even when we have tried hard and

failed, we may chalk that up as one of the greatest credits of all. Under these conditions, the pains of failure are converted into assets. Out of them we receive the stimulation we need to go forward. Someone who knew what he was talking about once remarked that pain was the touchstone of all spiritual progress. How heartily we A.A.'s can agree with him, for we know that the pains of drinking had to come before sobriety, and emotional turmoil before serenity.

As we glance down the debit side of the day's ledger, we should carefully examine our motives in each thought or act that appears to be wrong. In most cases our motives won't be hard to see and understand. When prideful, angry, jealous, anxious, or fearful, we acted accordingly, and that was that. Here we need only recognize that we did act or think badly, try to visualize how we might have done better, and resolve with God's help to carry these lessons over into tomorrow, making, of course, any amends still neglected...

Having so considered our day, not omitting to take due note of things well done, and having searched our hearts with neither fear nor favor, we can truly thank God for the blessings we have received and sleep in good conscience.

**T&T 93-94, 95**

**Step Ten**

But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others.

If temperamentally we are on the depressive side, we are apt to be swamped with guilt and self-loathing. We wallow in this messy bog, often getting a misshapen and painful pleasure out of it. As we morbidly pursue this melancholy activity, we may sink to such a point of despair that nothing but oblivion looks possible as a solution. Here, of course, we have lost all perspective, and therefore all genuine humility. For this is pride in reverse. This is not a moral inventory at all; it is the very process by which the depressive has so often been led to the bottle and extinction.

**T&T 45**

**Step Four**

After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.

Although all inventories are alike in principle, the time factor does distinguish one from another...There's the one we take at day's end, when we review the happenings of the hours just past. Here we cast up a balance sheet, crediting ourselves with things well done, and chalking up

debits where due...

As we glance down the debit side of the day's ledger, we should carefully examine our motives in each thought or act that appears to be wrong. In most cases our motives won't be hard to see and understand. When prideful, angry, jealous, anxious, or fearful, we acted accordingly, and that was that. Here we need only recognize that we did act or think badly, try to visualize how we might have done better, and resolve with God's help to carry these lessons over into tomorrow, making, of course, any amends still neglected.

But in other instances only the closest scrutiny will reveal what our true motives were.

**T&T 89, 94 Step Ten**

On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.

**(See BB 83:1)**

Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.

In the morning we think of the hours to come. Perhaps we think of our day's work and the chances it may afford us to be useful and helpful, or of some special problem that it may bring. Possibly today will see a continuation of a serious and as yet unresolved problem left over from yesterday. Our immediate temptation will be to ask for specific solutions to specific problems, and for the ability to help other people as we have already thought they should be helped. In that case, we are asking God to do it our way. Therefore, we ought to consider each request carefully to see what its real merit is. Even so, when making specific requests, it will be well to add to each one of them this qualification: "... if it be Thy will." We ask simply that throughout the day God place in us the best understanding of His will that we can have for that day, and that we be given the grace by which we may carry it out.

**T&T 102 Step Eleven**

In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right



answers come after we have tried this for a while.

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What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind.

(See BB 84 Top [11])

Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas.

Quite often, however, the thoughts that seem to come from God are not answers at all. They prove to be well-intentioned unconscious rationalizations. The A.A., or indeed any man, who tries to run his life rigidly by this kind of prayer, by this self-serving demand of God for replies, is a particularly disconcerting individual. To any questioning or criticism of his actions he instantly proffers his reliance upon prayer for guidance in all matters great or small. He may have forgotten the possibility that his own wishful thinking and the human tendency to rationalize have distorted his so-called guidance. With the best of intentions, he tends to force his own will into all sorts of situations and problems with the comfortable assurance that he is acting under God's specific direction. Under such an illusion, he can of course create great havoc without in the least intending it.

T&T 103-104

Step Eleven

Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.

The persistent use of meditation and prayer, we found, did open the channel so that where there had been a trickle, there now was a river which led to sure power and safe guidance from God as we were increasingly better able to understand Him.

T&T 109

Step Twelve

We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't

work. You can easily see why.

**(See BB 13:4)**

“As psychiatrists have often observed, defiance is the outstanding characteristic of many an alcoholic. 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 which we specified, as a greedy child makes an impossible list for Santa Claus.”...

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 freely 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 understood not at all. Therefore we remained self-deceived, and so incapable of receiving enough grace to restore us to sanity.

**T&T 31, 32 Step Two**

If circumstances warrant, we ask our wives or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also. If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minister, or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.

**(See BB 83:1, 134:3)**

The actual experience of meditation and prayer across the centuries is, of course, immense. The world's libraries and places of worship are a treasure trove for all seekers...

Well, we might start like this. First let's look at a really good prayer. We won't have far to seek; the great men and women of all religions have left us a wonderful supply. Here let us consider one that is a classic...

“Lord, make me a channel of thy peace- that where there is hatred, I may bring love- that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness- that where there is discord, I may bring harmony- that where there is error, I may bring truth- that where there is doubt, I may bring faith- that where there is despair, I may bring hope - that where there are shadows, I may bring light- that

where there is sadness, I may bring joy. Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted- to understand, than to be understood- to love, than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen.”

**T&T 98-99 Step Eleven**

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action.

**(See BB 13:4, 119 top)**

We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer

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running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day “Thy will be done.”

In all times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in the stillness simply say: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine, be done.”

**T&T 40-41 Step Three**

When we are tempted by the [emotional] bait, we should train ourselves to step back and think. For we can neither think nor act to good purpose until the habit of self-restraint has become automatic.

**T&T 91 Step Ten**

When in doubt we can always pause, saying, “Not my will, but Thine, be done.” And we can often ask ourselves, “Am I doing to others as I would have them do to me- today?”

**T&T 93 Step Ten**

As the day goes on, we can pause where situations must be met and decisions made, and renew the simple request: “Thy will, not mine, be done.” If at these points our emotional disturbance happens to be great, we will more surely keep our balance, provided we remember, and repeat to ourselves, a particular prayer or phrase that has appealed to us in our reading or meditation.

**T&T 102-103 Step Eleven**

We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions.

And let's always remember that meditation is in reality intensely

practical. One of its first fruits is emotional balance. With it we can broaden and deepen the channel between ourselves and God as we understand Him

**T&T 101-102**

**Step Eleven**

We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.

It works-it really does.

We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.

But this is not all. There is action and more action. "Faith without works is dead."

**(See BB 14:6, 76:3, 93:2)**

The next chapter is entirely devoted to *Step Twelve*.

**(See BB 14 bottom)**