

**THE BIG BOOK**  
**A RESTATEMENT FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

## THE DOCTOR'S OPINION

We of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the reader will be interested in the medical estimate of the plan of recovery described in this book. Convincing testimony has come from physicians who have had experience with the sufferings of our members and have witnessed our return to health. A well-known doctor, chief physician at a nationally prominent hospital specializing in alcohol and drug addiction, sent Alcoholics Anonymous this letter:

To Whom It May Concern:

I have specialized in the treatment of alcoholism for many years.

In late 1934 I attended a patient who, having been competent in the world of business and who had a good income, was an alcoholic of a type I had come to regard as hopeless.

In the course of treatments this person acquired certain ideas concerning a possible means of recovery, and as part of rehabilitation, presented these ideas to other alcoholics, impressing on them that they must share these concepts. This has become the basis of a rapidly growing community of these people and their families. This person and over one hundred others appear to have recovered.

I am aware of scores of cases who were of the type with whom other methods had failed completely.

These facts appear to be of extreme medical importance. Because of the extraordinary possibilities of rapid growth inherent in this group they may mark a new epoch in the annals of alcoholism. These people may well have a remedy for thousands of such situations.

You may rely absolutely on anything they say about themselves.

Very truly yours,  
William D. Silkworth, M.D.

The physician who, at our request, gave us this letter, has been kind enough to enlarge on these views in another statement which follows. This statement confirms what we who have suffered alcoholic torture must believe -- that the body of the alcoholic is just as abnormal as the mind. It did not satisfy us to be told that we could not control our drinking just because we were maladjusted to life, that we were in full flight from reality, or were mentally ill. These things were true to some extent, and in fact, to a considerable extent with some of us. But we are sure that our bodies were addicted as well. In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.

The doctor's theory that we have an allergy to alcohol interests us. As nonprofessionals, our opinion as to its soundness may, of course, mean little. But as ex-problem drinkers, we can say that the explanation makes good sense. It explains many things for which we cannot otherwise account.

Though we also work out our solutions on the spiritual and altruistic levels, we favor treatment for alcoholics who are heavily addicted. More often than not, it is imperative that people's brains be cleared before being approached, as they have a better chance of understanding and accepting what we have to offer.

The doctor writes:

The subject presented in this book seems to me to be of paramount importance to those afflicted with alcoholism.

I say this after many years' experience as Medical Director of one of the oldest hospitals in the country treating alcoholic and drug addiction.

There was, therefore, a sense of real satisfaction when I was asked to contribute a few words on a subject which is covered in such masterly detail in these pages.

We doctors have realized for a long time that some form of moral psychology was of urgent importance to alcoholics, but its application presented difficulties beyond our conception. With our scientific approach to everything, we are perhaps not well equipped to apply the powers of good that lie outside our synthetic knowledge.

Many years ago, one of the leading contributors to this book came under our care in this hospital and while here, acquired some ideas which were put into practical application at once.

Later, this person requested the privilege of being allowed to tell this story to other patients here and with some misgiving, we consented. The cases we have followed have been most interesting: in fact, many of them are amazing. The unselfishness of these people as we have come to know them, the entire absence of profit motive and their community spirit, is inspiring to one who has labored long and hard in this alcoholic field. They believe in themselves, and still more in the Power which pulls chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death.

Of course, an alcoholic ought to be freed from physical cravings for alcohol, and this often requires a definite treatment procedure before psychological measures can be of maximum benefit.

We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average moderate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence and their reliance on things human, their problems are compounded and become astonishingly difficult to solve.

Emotional appeal seldom suffices. The message which can interest and hold these alcoholic people must have depth and weight. In nearly all cases, their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves if they are to re-create their lives.

If any feel that as psychiatrists directing a treatment center for alcoholics we appear somewhat sentimental, let them stand with us a while on the firing line and see the tragedies, the despairing partners, and their children; let the solving of these problems become a part of their daily work, and even of their sleeping moments, and the most cynical will not wonder why we have accepted and encouraged this movement. We feel, after many years of experience, that we have found nothing which has contributed more to the rehabilitation of these people than the altruistic movement now growing up among them.

People drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is harmful, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable, and discontented unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks -- drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known cycle of drinking, emerging remorseful and with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless these people can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of recovery.

On the other hand -- and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand -- once a psychic change has occurred, the very same people who seemed doomed, who had so many problems they despaired of ever solving them, suddenly find themselves easily able to control their desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that which is required to follow a few simple rules.

Many have cried out to me in sincere and despairing appeal: "Doctor, I cannot go on like this! I have everything to live for! I must stop, but I cannot! You must help me!"

Faced with this problem, a doctor who is honest must sometimes feel inadequate. Although giving everything possible, it is often not enough. One feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change. Though the aggregate of recoveries resulting from psychiatric effort is considerable, we physicians must admit that we have made little impression on the problem as a whole. Many types of people do not respond to the ordinary psychological approach.

I do not agree with those who believe that alcoholism is entirely a problem of mental control. I have had many who had, for example, worked a period of months on some project which was to be completed on a certain date. They drank a day or so prior to the date, and then the phenomenon of craving at once dominated all other interests so that the important appointment was not met. These people were not drinking to escape; they were drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control.

There are many situations which arise out of the phenomenon of craving which cause people to make the supreme sacrifice rather than continue to fight.

The classification of alcoholics seems most difficult, and in much detail is outside the scope of

this book. There are, of course, the psychopaths who are emotionally unstable. We are all familiar with this kind of person. They are always "going on the wagon for keeps." They are over-remorseful and make many resolutions, but never a decision.

There are those who are unwilling to admit that they are addicted. They plan various ways of drinking. They change what they drink or their environment. There are those who always believe that after being entirely free from alcohol for a period of time they can take a drink without danger. There are the manic-depressive types, who are, perhaps, the least understood by their friends, and about whom a whole chapter could be written.

Then there are those who are entirely normal in every respect except for the effect alcohol has on them. They are often able, intelligent, friendly people.

All these, and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people and sets them apart as a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence.

This immediately sends us into a seething caldron of debate. Much has been written pro and con, but among physicians the general opinion seems to be that most chronic alcoholics are doomed. What is the solution? Perhaps I can best answer this by relating one of my experiences.

About one year prior to this experience a person was brought in to be treated for chronic alcoholism, having partially recovered from a gastric hemorrhage and seeming to be a case of pathological mental deterioration. This person had lost everything worthwhile in life and was only living, one might say, to drink, frankly admitting and believing that there was no hope. Following the elimination of alcohol there was found to be no permanent brain injury. This patient accepted the plan outlined in this book. One year later the same individual came to see me, and I experienced a very strange sensation. I knew the person by name and partly recognized their features, but at that point all resemblance ended. From a trembling, despairing, nervous wreck had emerged someone brimming over with self-reliance and contentment. We talked for some time, but I was not able to bring myself to feel that this was someone I had known before. To me this was a stranger. Since then a long time has passed with their not returning to alcohol.

When I need a mental uplift, I often think of another case brought in by a prominent physician in New York. The patient had made a diagnosis of alcoholism, had decided the situation was hopeless, and had hidden in a deserted barn determined to die. Rescued by a search party and in desperate condition, this patient was brought to me. Following physical rehabilitation, the patient expressed the belief that treatment was a waste of time unless I could provide assurances, which no one ever had, that in the future it would be possible to have the "will power" to resist the impulse to drink.

This alcoholic problem was so complex, and the accompanying depression so great, that we felt the only hope would be through what we then called "moral psychology," and we doubted if even

that would have any effect. However, the patient did become "sold" on the ideas contained in this book and has not had a drink for many years. We see each other now and then and this once hopeless alcoholic is in full recovery.

I earnestly advise every alcoholic to read this book through.

William D. Silkworth, M.D.

## Chapter 1

### BILL'S STORY

(At the request of many A.A. members, the editors have left Bill's Story intact)

WAR FEVER ran high in the New England town to which we new, young officers from Plattsburg were assigned, and we were flattered when the first citizens took us to their homes, making us feel heroic. Here was love, applause, war; moments sublime with intervals hilarious. I was part of life at last, and in the midst of the excitement I discovered liquor. I forgot the strong warnings and the prejudices of my people concerning drink. In time we sailed for "Over There." I was very lonely and again turned to alcohol.

We landed in England. I visited Winchester Cathedral. Much moved, I wandered outside. My attention was caught by a doggerel on an old tombstone:

"Here lies a Hampshire Grenadier  
Who caught his death  
Drinking cold small beer.  
A good soldier is ne'er forgot  
Whether he dieth by musket  
Or by pot."

Ominous warning-which I failed to heed.

Twenty-two, and a veteran of foreign wars, I went home at last. I fancied myself a leader, for had not the men of my battery given me a special token of appreciation? My talent for leadership, I imagined, would place me at the head of vast enterprises which I would manage with the utmost assurance.

I took a night law course, and obtained employment as investigator for a surety company. The drive for success was on. I'd prove to the world I was important. My work took me about Wall Street and little by little I became interested in the market. Many people lost money-but some became very rich. Why not I? I studied economics and business as well as law. Potential alcoholic that I was, I nearly failed my law course. At one of the finals I was too drunk to think or write. Though my drinking was not yet continuous, it disturbed my wife. We had long talks when I would still her forebodings by telling her that men of genius conceived their best projects when drunk; that the most majestic constructions of philosophic thought were so derived.

By the time I had completed the course, I knew the law was not for me. The inviting maelstrom of Wall Street had me in its grip. Business and financial leaders were my heroes. Out of this alloy of drink and speculation, I commenced to forge the weapon that one day would turn in its flight like a boomerang and all but cut me to ribbons. Living modestly, my wife and I saved \$1,000. It went into certain securities, then cheap and rather unpopular. I rightly imagined that they would some day have a great rise. I failed to persuade my broker friends to send me out looking over factories and managements, but my wife and I decided to go anyway. I had developed a theory that most people lost money in stocks through ignorance of markets. I discovered many more reasons later on.

We gave up our positions and off we roared on a motorcycle, the sidecar stuffed with tent, blankets, a change of clothes, and three huge volumes of a financial commission should be appointed. Perhaps they were right. I had had some success at speculation, so we had a little

money, but we once worked on a farm for a month to avoid drawing on our small capital. That was the last honest manual labor on my part for many a day. We covered the whole eastern United States in a year. At the end of it, my reports to Wall Street procured me a position there and the use of a large expense account. The exercise of an option brought in more money, leaving us with a profit of several thousand dollars for that year.

For the next few years fortune threw money and applause my way. I had arrived. My judgment and ideas were followed by many to the tune of paper millions. The great boom of the late twenties was seething and swelling. Drink was taking an important and exhilarating part in my life. There was loud talk in the jazz places uptown. Everyone spent in thousands and chattered in millions. Scoffers could scoff and be damned. I made a host of fair-weather friends.

My drinking assumed more serious proportions, continuing all day and almost every night. The remonstrances of my friends terminated in a row and I became a lone wolf. There were many unhappy scenes in our sumptuous apartment. There had been no real infidelity, for loyalty to my wife, helped at times by extreme drunkenness, kept me out of those scrapes.

In 1929 I contracted golf fever. We went at once to the country, my wife to applaud while I started out to overtake Walter Hagen. Liquor caught up with me much faster than I came up behind Walter. I began to be jittery in the morning. Golf permitted drinking every day and every night. It was fun to carom around the exclusive course which had inspired such awe in me as a lad. I acquired the impeccable coat of tan one sees upon the well-to-do. The local banker watched me whirl fat checks in and out of his till with amused skepticism.

Abruptly in October 1929 hell broke loose on the New York stock exchange. After one of those days of inferno, I wobbled from a hotel bar to a brokerage office. It was eight o'clock-five hours after the market closed. The ticker still clattered. I was staring at an inch of the tape which bore the inscription XYZ-32. It had been 52 that morning. I was finished and so were many friends. The papers reported men jumping to death from the towers of High Finance. That disgusted me. I would not jump. I went back to the bar. My friends had dropped several million since ten o'clock-so what? Tomorrow was another day. As I drank, the old fierce determination to win came back.

Next morning I telephoned a friend in Montreal. He had plenty of money left and thought I had better go to Canada. By the following spring we were living in our accustomed style. I felt like Napoleon returning from Elba. No St. Helena for me! But drinking caught up with me again and my generous friend had to let me go. This time we stayed broke.

We went to live with my wife's parents. I found a job; then lost it as the result of a brawl with a taxi driver. Mercifully, no one could guess that I was to have no real employment for five years, or hardly draw a sober breath. My wife began to work in a department store, coming home exhausted to find me drunk.

I became an unwelcome hanger-on at brokerage places.

Liquor ceased to be a luxury; it became a necessity. "Bathtub" gin, two bottles a day, and often three, got to be routine. Sometimes a small deal would net a few hundred dollars, and I would pay my bills at the bars and delicatessens. This went on endlessly, and I began to waken very early in the morning shaking violently. A tumbler full of gin followed by half a dozen bottles of beer would be required if I were to eat any breakfast. Nevertheless, I still thought I could control the situation, and there were periods of sobriety which renewed my wife's hope.

Gradually things got worse. The house was taken over by the mortgage holder, my mother-in-law died, my wife and father-in-law became ill.



Then I got a promising business opportunity. Stocks were at the low point of 1932, and I had somehow formed a group to buy. I was to share generously in the profits. Then I went on a prodigious bender, and that chance vanished.

I woke up. This had to be stopped. I saw I could not take so much as one drink. I was through forever. Before then, I had written lots of sweet promises, but my wife happily observed that this time I meant business. And so I did.

Shortly afterward I came home drunk. There had been no fight. Where had been my high resolve? I simply didn't know. It hadn't even come to mind. Someone had pushed a drink my way, and I had taken it. Was I crazy? I began to wonder, for such an appalling lack of perspective seemed near being just that.

Renewing my resolve, I tried again. Some time passed, and confidence began to be replaced by cock-sureness. I could laugh at the gin mills. Now I had what it takes! One day I walked into a cafe to telephone. In no time I was beating on the bar asking myself how it happened. As the whisky rose to my head I told myself I would manage better next time, but I might as well get good and drunk then. And I did.

The remorse, horror and hopelessness of the next morning are unforgettable. The courage to do battle was not there. My brain raced uncontrollably and there was a terrible sense of impending calamity. I hardly dared cross the street, lest I collapse and be run down by an early morning truck, for it was scarcely daylight. An all night place supplied me with a dozen glasses of ale. My writhing nerves were stilled at last. A morning paper told me the market had gone to hell again. Well, so had I. The market would recover, but I wouldn't. That was a hard thought. Should I kill myself? No-not now. Then a mental fog settled down. Gin would fix that. So two bottles, and-oblivion.

The mind and body are marvelous mechanisms, for mine endured this agony two more years. Sometimes I stole from my wife's slender purse when the morning terror and madness were on me. Again I swayed dizzily before an open window, or the medicine cabinet where there was poison, cursing myself for a weakling. There were flights from city to country and back, as my wife and I sought escape. Then came the night when the physical and mental torture was so hellish I feared I would burst through my window, sash and all. Somehow I managed to drag my mattress to a lower floor, lest I suddenly leap. A doctor came with a heavy sedative. Next day found me landed me on the rocks. People feared for my sanity. So did I. I could eat little or nothing when drinking, and I was forty pounds under weight.

My brother-in-law is a physician, and through his kindness and that of my mother I was placed in a nationally-known hospital for the mental and physical rehabilitation of alcoholics. Under the so-called belladonna treatment my brain cleared. Hydrotherapy and mild exercise helped much. Best of all, I met a kind doctor who explained that though certainly selfish and foolish, I had been seriously ill, bodily and mentally.

It relieved me somewhat to learn that in alcoholics the will is amazingly weakened when it comes to combating liquor, though it often remains strong in other respects. My incredible behavior in the face of a desperate desire to stop was explained. Understanding myself now, I fared forth in high hope. For three or four months the goose hung high. I went to town regularly and even made a little money. Surely this was the answer-self-knowledge.

But it was not, for the frightful day came when I drank once more. The curve of my declining moral and bodily health fell off like a ski-jump. After a time I returned to the hospital. This was the finish, the curtain, it seemed to me. My weary and despairing wife was informed that it would all end with heart failure during delirium tremens, or I would develop a wet brain, perhaps

within a year. She would soon have to give me over to the undertaker or the asylum.

They did not need to tell me. I knew, and almost welcomed the idea. It was a devastating blow to my pride. I, who had thought so well of myself and my abilities, of my capacity to surmount obstacles, was cornered at last. Now I was to plunge into the dark, joining that endless procession of sots who had gone on before. I thought of my poor wife. There had been much happiness after all. What would I not give to make amends. But that was over now.

No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master.

Trembling, I stepped from the hospital a broken man. Fear sobered me for a bit. Then came the insidious insanity of that first drink, and on Armistice Day 1934, I was off again. Everyone became resigned to the certainty that I would have to be shut up somewhere, or would stumble along to a miserable end. How dark it is before the dawn! In reality that was the beginning of my last debauch. I was soon to be catapulted into what I like to call the fourth dimension of existence. I was to know happiness, peace, and usefulness, in a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes.

Near the end of that bleak November, I sat drinking in my kitchen. With a certain satisfaction I reflected there was enough gin concealed about the house to carry me through that night and the next day. My wife was at work. I wondered whether I dared hide a full bottle of gin near the head of our bed. I would need it before daylight.

My musing was interrupted by the telephone. The cheery voice of an old school friend asked if he might come over. He was sober. It was years since I could remember his coming to New York in that condition. I was amazed. Rumor had it that he had been committed for alcoholic insanity. I wondered how he had escaped. Of course he would have dinner, and then I could drink openly with him. Unmindful of his welfare, I thought only of recapturing the spirit of other days. There was that time we had chartered an airplane to complete a jag! His coming was an oasis in this dreary desert of futility. The very thing-an oasis! Drinkers are like that.

The door opened and he stood there, fresh-skinned and glowing. There was something about his eyes. He was inexplicably different. What had happened? I pushed a drink across the table. He refused it. Disappointed but curious, I wondered what had got into the fellow. He wasn't himself.

"Come, what's this all about?" I queried.

He looked straight at me. Simply, but smilingly, he said, "I've got religion." I was aghast. So that was it-last summer an alcoholic crackpot; now, I suspected, a little cracked about religion. He had that starry-eyed look. Yes, the old boy was on fire all right. But bless his heart, let him rant! Besides, my gin would last longer than his preaching.

But he did no ranting. In a matter of fact way he told how two men had appeared in court, persuading the judge to suspend his commitment. They had told of a simple religious idea and a practical program of action. That was two months ago and the result was self-evident. It worked! He had come to pass his experience along to me-if I cared to have it. I was shocked, but interested. Certainly I was interested. I had to be, for I was hopeless.

He talked for hours. Childhood memories rose before me. I could almost hear the sound of the preacher's voice as I sat, on still Sundays, way over there on the hillside; there was that proffered temperance pledge I never signed; my grandfather's good natured contempt of some church folk and their doings; his insistence that the spheres really had their music; but his denial of the preacher's right to tell him how he must listen; his fearlessness as he spoke of these things just

before he died; these recollections welled up from the past. They made me swallow hard. That war-time day in old Winchester Cathedral came back again.

I had always believed in a Power greater than myself. I had often pondered these things. I was not an atheist. Few people really are, for that means blind faith in the strange proposition that this universe originated in a cipher and aimlessly rushes nowhere. My intellectual heroes, the chemists, the astronomers, even the evolutionists, suggested vast laws and forces at work. Despite contrary indications, I had little doubt that a mighty purpose and rhythm underlay all. How could there be so much of precise and immutable law, and no intelligence? I simply had to believe in a Spirit of the Universe, who knew neither time nor limitation. But that was as far as I had gone.

With ministers, and the world's religions, I parted right there. When they talked of a God personal to me, who was love, superhuman strength and direction, I became irritated and my mind snapped shut against such a theory.

To Christ I conceded the certainty of a great man, not too closely followed by those who claimed Him. His moral teaching-most excellent. For myself, I had adopted those parts which seemed convenient and not too difficult; the rest I disregarded.

The wars which had been fought, the burnings and chicanery that religious dispute had facilitated, made me sick. I honestly doubted whether, on balance, the religions of mankind had done any good. Judging from what I had seen in Europe and since, the power of God in human affairs was negligible, the Brotherhood of Man a grim jest. If there was a Devil, he seemed the Boss Universal, and he certainly had me.

But my friend sat before me, and he made the point-blank declaration that God had done for him what he could not do for himself. His human will had failed. Doctors had pronounced him incurable. Society was about to lock him up. Like myself, he had admitted complete defeat. Then he had, in effect, been raised from the dead, suddenly taken from the scrap heap to a level of life better than the best he had ever known!

Had this power originated in him? Obviously it had not. There had been no more power in him than there was in me at the minute; and this was none at all.

That floored me. It began to look as though religious people were right after all. Here was something at work in a human heart which had done the impossible. My ideas about miracles were drastically revised right then. Never mind the musty past; here sat a miracle directly across the kitchen table. He shouted great tidings.

I saw that my friend was much more than inwardly reorganized. He was on a different footing. His roots grasped a new soil.

Despite the living example of my friend there remained in me the vestiges of my old prejudice. The word God still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed that there might be a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn't like the idea. I could go for such conceptions as Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit of Nature but I resisted the thought of a Czar of the Heavens, however loving His sway might be. I have since talked with scores of men who felt the same way.

My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, "Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"

That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last. It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete

willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!

Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want Him enough. At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

The real significance of my experience in the Cathedral burst upon me. For a brief moment, I had needed and wanted God. There had been a humble willingness to have Him with me-and He came. But soon the sense of His presence had been blotted out by worldly clamors, mostly those within myself. And so it had been ever since. How blind I had been.

At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for the last time. Treatment seemed wise, for I showed signs of delirium tremens.

There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since.

My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.

I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure.

My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems. Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things, were the essential requirements.

Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It meant destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all.

These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound.

For a moment I was alarmed, and called my friend, the doctor, to ask if I were still sane. He listened in wonder as I talked. Finally he shook his head saying, "Something has happened to you I don't understand. But you had better hang on to it. Anything is better than the way you were." The good doctor now sees many men who have such experiences. He knows that they are real.

While I lay in the hospital the thought came that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what had been so freely given me. Perhaps I could help some of them. They in turn might work with others.

My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could

not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that.

My wife and I abandoned ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of helping other alcoholics to a solution of their problems. It was fortunate, for my old business associates remained skeptical for a year and a half, during which I found little work. I was not too well at the time, and was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me back to drink, but I soon found that when all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day. Many times I have gone to my old hospital in despair. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. It is a design for living that works in rough going.

We commenced to make many fast friends and a fellowship has grown up among us of which it is a wonderful thing to feel a part. The joy of living we really have, even under pressure and difficulty. I have seen hundreds of families set their feet in the path that really goes somewhere; have seen the most impossible domestic situations righted; feuds and bitterness of all sorts wiped out. I have seen men come out of asylums and resume a vital place in the lives of their families and communities. Business and professional men have regained their standing. There is scarcely any form of trouble and misery which has not been overcome among us. In one western city and its environs there are one thousand of us and our families. We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek. At these informal gatherings one may often see from 50 to 200 persons. We are growing in numbers and power.

An alcoholic in his cups is an unlovely creature. Our struggles with them are variously strenuous, comic, and tragic. One poor chap committed suicide in my home. He could not, or would not, see our way of life.

There is, however a vast amount of fun about it all. I suppose some would be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity. But just underneath there is deadly earnestness. Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish.

Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia. We have it with us right here and now. Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men.

## Chapter 2

### THERE IS A SOLUTION

We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, know thousands of people who were once just as hopeless as Bill. Nearly all have recovered. They have solved the drink problem.

We are everyone. All sections of this world and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social, and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a community, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great ship the moment after rescue from shipwreck, when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however,

our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined.

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and on which we can join in harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism.

An illness of this sort, and we have come to believe it is an illness, involves those around us in a way that no other human sickness can. If someone has cancer, all are sorry for them and no one is angry or hurt. But not so with the alcoholic illness, for with it goes annihilation of all the things worthwhile in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferer's. It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad partners and parents -- anyone can increase the list.

We hope this volume will inform and comfort those who are or who may be affected. There are many.

Highly competent psychiatrists who have dealt with us have sometimes found it impossible to persuade an alcoholic to discuss the situation without reserve. Strangely enough, partners, parents, and intimate friends usually find us even more unapproachable than the psychiatrist and the doctor do.

But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with the facts, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished.

That the person who is making the approach has had the same difficulty and obviously knows what they are talking about, that their whole demeanor shouts that they are a person with a real answer, that they have no attitude of Holier Than Thou, nothing whatever except the sincere desire to be helpful, that there are no fees to pay, no axes to grind, no people to please, no lectures to be endured -- these are the conditions we have found most effective. After such an approach many are cured.

None of us makes a sole vocation of this work, nor do we think its effectiveness would be increased if we did. We feel that elimination of our drinking is only a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations, and our lives. All of us spend much of our spare time in the sort of effort which we are going to describe. A few are fortunate enough to be so situated that they can give nearly all their time to the work.

If we keep on the way we are going, there is little doubt that much good will result, but the surface of the problem would hardly be scratched. Those of us who live in large cities are overcome by the realization that close by, hundreds are dropping into oblivion every day. Many could recover if they had the opportunity we have enjoyed. How should we present that which has been so freely given us?

We have decided to publish an anonymous volume setting forth the problem as we see it. We will use our combined experience and knowledge. This should suggest a useful program for

anyone concerned with a drinking problem.

Of necessity there will have to be discussion of matters medical, psychiatric, social, and religious. We are aware that these matters are, from their very nature, controversial. Nothing would please us so much as to write a book which would contain no basis for contention or argument. We will do our best to achieve that ideal. Most of us sense that real tolerance of other people's shortcomings and viewpoints, and a respect for their opinions, are attitudes which make us more useful to others. Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend on our constant concern for others and how we can help meet their needs.

You may already have asked yourself why it is that all of us became so very ill from drinking. Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. If you are an alcoholic who wants to get over it, you may already be asking, "What do I have to do?"

It is the purpose of this book to answer such questions specifically. We will tell you what we have done. Before going into a detailed discussion, it may be well to summarize some points as we see them.

How many times have people said to us: "I can take it or leave it alone -- why can't they?" "Why don't you drink like a normal person or quit?" "That person can't handle alcohol." "Why don't you try beer and wine?" "Lay off the hard stuff." "Their will power must be weak." "They could stop if they wanted to." "The doctor told them that if they ever drank again it would kill them, but there they are, drunk again."

Now these are commonplace observations about drinkers which we hear all the time. Behind them is a world of ignorance and misunderstanding. We see that these expressions refer to people whose reactions are very different from ours.

Moderate drinkers have little trouble in giving up alcohol entirely if they have good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone.

Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. They may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair them physically and mentally. It may cause them to die a few years before their time. If a sufficiently strong reason -- ill health, falling in love, a change of environment, or the warning of a doctor -- becomes operative, they can also stop or moderate, although they may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention.

But what about the real alcoholic who may start off as a moderate drinker, who may or may not become a continuous hard drinker, but at some stage of their drinking career begins to lose all control of their alcohol consumption once they start to drink.

Here is someone who has been puzzling you, especially in their lack of control. They do absurd, incredible, tragic things while drinking. They are a real Jekyll and Hyde. They are seldom mildly intoxicated and are always more or less insanely drunk. Their disposition while drinking little resembles their normal nature. They may be one of the finest people in the world, yet let them drink for a day and they frequently become disgustingly, and even dangerously, anti-social. They have a genius for getting drunk at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision must be made or appointment kept. They are often perfectly sensible

and well-balanced concerning everything except alcohol, but in that respect they are incredibly dishonest and selfish. They often possess special abilities, skills, and aptitudes, and have a promising career ahead of them. They use their gifts to build up a bright outlook for their family and themselves, and then pull the structure down by a senseless series of binges. They are the ones who go to bed so intoxicated that they oversleep, yet early the next morning they search madly for the bottle they misplaced the night before. If they can afford it, they may have alcohol concealed all over the house to be certain no one gets the entire supply away from them to throw down the drain. As matters grow worse, they begin to use a combination of high-powered sedatives and alcohol to quiet their nerves so they can go to work. Then comes the day when they simply cannot make it and get drunk all over again. Perhaps they go to a doctor who gives them morphine or some sedative with which to taper off. Then they begin to appear at hospitals and treatment centers.

This is by no means a comprehensive picture of true alcoholics, as their behavior patterns vary. But this description should identify them roughly.

Why do they behave like this? If hundreds of experiences have shown them that one drink means another disaster with all its attendant suffering and humiliation, why is it that they take that one drink? Why can't they stay sober? What has become of the common sense and will power that they still sometimes display with respect to other matters?

Perhaps there never will be a full answer to these questions. Opinions vary considerably as to why alcoholics react differently from normal people. We are not sure why, once a certain point is reached, little can be done for them. We cannot answer the riddle.

We know that when alcoholics keep away from drinking, as they may do for months or years, they react much like other people. We are equally positive that once they take any alcohol whatever into their system, something happens, both in the physical and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for them to stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this.

These observations would be academic and pointless if they never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of alcoholics centers in their mind, rather than in their body. If you ask them why they took that last drink, the chances are they will offer you any one of a hundred alibis. Sometimes these excuses have a certain plausibility, but none of them really makes sense in the light of the havoc an alcoholic's drinking creates. They sound like the philosophy of the people who, having a headache, beat themselves on the head with a hammer so they can't feel the ache. If you draw this fallacious reasoning to the attention of an alcoholic, they will laugh it off or become irritated and refuse to talk.

Once in a while they may tell the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is usually that they have no more idea why they took that first drink than you have. Some drinkers have excuses with which they are satisfied part of the time. But in their hearts they really do not know why they do it. Once this malady has a real hold, they are baffled. There is the obsession that somehow, someday, they will be able to drink normally. But they often suspect that they will never be able to drink like a normal person.



Few realize how true this is. In a vague way their families and friends sense that these drinkers are abnormal, but everybody hopefully awaits the day when they will emerge from their lethargy and assert their power of will.

The tragic truth is that if the person is a real alcoholic, the happy day may not arrive. They have lost control. At a certain point in the drinking of every alcoholic, they pass into a state where the most powerful desire to stop drinking is of absolutely no use. This tragic situation has already arrived in practically every case long before it is suspected.

The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drinking. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.

The almost certain consequences that follow taking even a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind to deter us. If these thoughts occur, they are hazy and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we will handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps us from putting our hand on a hot stove.

The alcoholic may say in the most casual way, "It won't burn me this time!" or perhaps doesn't think at all. How often have some of us begun to drink in this nonchalant way, and after the third or fourth, pounded on the bar and said to ourselves, "How did I ever get started again?" only to have that thought supplanted by "Well, I'll stop with the sixth drink." Or "What's the use anyhow?"

When this sort of thinking is fully established in individuals with alcoholic tendencies, they have probably placed themselves beyond human aid, and unless locked up, may die or go permanently insane. These stark and ugly facts have been confirmed by legions of alcoholics throughout history, and there could have been thousands more convincing demonstrations. So many want to stop but cannot.

There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, and the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation, but we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those for whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us to do but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much relief and have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.

The great fact is just this and nothing less; that we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward others, and toward the universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is miraculous, commencing to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.

If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had only two alternatives: One was to go

on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could, and the other, to accept spiritual help. This we did because we honestly wanted to, and were willing to make the effort.

A certain American business person had ability, good sense, and high character, and for years had floundered from one treatment center to another. This person had seen many psychiatrists and then had gone to Europe, entering the care of a renowned physician (the psychiatrist, Dr. Jung) who prescribed treatment. In spite of an initial skepticism the treatment was completed with confidence, with the resulting physical and mental condition being unusually good. It produced such a profound knowledge of the inner workings of the mind that relapse was unthinkable. Nevertheless, there was a return to drinking in a short time. More baffling still, there was no satisfactory explanation for the slip.

While they wished above all things to regain self-control, and seemed quite rational and well-balanced with respect to other problems, there was no control whatever over alcohol. Why was this?

Returning to the admired doctor, the person asked point-blank why it was not possible to recover, and begged the doctor to tell the whole truth. In the doctor's judgment it was utterly hopeless. It would never be possible to regain the former position in society and it would be necessary to be placed under lock and key or hire a bodyguard in order to continue to live. That was a great physician's opinion.

But this person still lives and is free, not needing a bodyguard or confinement, going anywhere on this earth where others go without disaster, if willing to maintain a certain simple attitude.

Some of our alcoholic readers may think they can do without spiritual help. Let us tell you the rest of the conversation with the doctor.

The doctor said: "You have the mind of a chronic alcoholic. I have never seen one single person recover where that state of mind existed to the extent that it does in you." The patient felt as though the gates of hell had closed with a clang, and said to the doctor, "Is there no exception?"

"Yes," replied the doctor, "there is." "Exceptions to cases such as yours have been occurring since early times. Here and there, once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences. To me these occurrences appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these people are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them. In fact, I have been trying to produce some such emotional rearrangement within you. With many individuals the methods which I employed were successful, but I have never been successful with an alcoholic of your type."

On hearing this the patient was somewhat relieved, reflecting on being, after all, a regular participant in religious services. This hope, however, was destroyed by the doctor's saying that while these religious convictions were very good, there was a vital spiritual experience missing.

Here was the terrible dilemma in which this person was caught until having the extraordinary experience, which as we have already told you, resulted in freedom.

We, in our turn, have sought the same escape with all the desperation of someone who was drowning. What seemed at first a faint hope has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of the Creator. A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, "a design for living" that really works.

The distinguished American psychologist, William James, in the book *Varieties of Religious Experience*, indicates a multitude of ways in which people have discovered Spirit. We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned, felt, and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color, are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship on simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. Those having religious affiliations will find nothing here that is disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies.

There is no friction among us over such matters.

We think it no concern of ours what religious bodies our members identify themselves with as individuals. This should be an entirely personal affair which each one decides in the light of past associations or present choices. Not all of us join religious communities, but many of us favor such memberships.

In the following chapter there appears an explanation of alcoholism as we understand it, and then a chapter addressed to the agnostic. Many who were once agnostic are now among our members. Surprisingly enough, we find such convictions to be no great obstacle to a spiritual experience.

Our hope is that many alcoholic people desperately in need will read this book, and we believe that it is only by fully disclosing ourselves and our problems that they will be persuaded to say, "Yes, I am one of those too; I want what you have."

## Chapter 3

### MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM

Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No one likes to think they are bodily and mentally different from any one else. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday, we will control and enjoy our drinking is the great obsession of all abnormal drinkers. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be shattered.

We alcoholics are those who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever regains control. All of us felt at times that we did, but such intervals -- usually

brief -- were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better.

We are like people who have lost their legs -- they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics like others. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, always followed by a still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree that there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.

Despite all we can say, many who are real alcoholics are not going to believe they are in that class. By every form of self-deception and experimentation, they will try to prove themselves exceptions to the rule, therefore nonalcoholic. For anyone who is showing inability to control their drinking and who thinks they can do an about-face and drink normally, our hats are off to them. We have certainly tried hard enough and long enough to drink like other people!

Here are some of the methods we have tried: Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having alcohol in the house, never drinking during working hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), doing more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and spas, accepting voluntary commitment to treatment centers -- we could increase the list ad infinitum.

We do not like to label any individual as an alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest bar and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of withdrawal if you get full knowledge of your condition.

Though there is no way of proving it, we believe that early in our drinking careers most of us could have stopped drinking. But the difficulty is that few alcoholics have enough desire to stop while there is yet time. We have heard of a few instances where people who showed definite signs of alcoholism were able to stop for a long period because of an overpowering desire to do so. Here is one.

A thirty-year-old person was doing a great deal of binge drinking. They were very anxious in the morning and alcohol was calming. It was clear that once the drinking started, things were completely out of control. They decided that, in order to be financially successful, not another drop of alcohol could be touched. This exceptional person remained bone dry for twenty-five years and retired at the age of fifty-five after a successful and happy career, but then fell victim to a belief which practically every alcoholic has -- that the long period of sobriety and self-discipline had made it possible to drink as other people did. Out came the bottle. Two months later, after being hospitalized, another attempt to regulate and then to stop drinking altogether was made, but was unsuccessful. Every means of solving this problem which money could buy was tried, but every attempt failed. Though healthy at retirement, this person went to pieces

quickly and was dead within four years.

This case contains a powerful lesson. Most of us have believed that if we remained sober for a long period we could then drink normally. But here is someone who at fifty-five years of age was just where they had left off at thirty. We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic." Commencing to drink after a period of sobriety, we are in a short time as bad as ever. If we are planning to stop drinking there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol.

Young people may be encouraged to think that they can stop on their own will power. We doubt if many of them can do it, because none will really want to stop, and hardly any of them, because of the peculiar mental twist already acquired, will find that they can. Several of our members, people of thirty or less, had been drinking for only a few years, but they found themselves as helpless as those who had been drinking for much longer.

To be gravely affected, one does not necessarily have to drink for a long time nor take the quantities some of us have. Certain drinkers, who would be greatly insulted if called alcoholics, are astonished at their inability to stop. We, who are familiar with the symptoms, see large numbers of potential alcoholics among young people everywhere. But try to get them to see it!

As we look back, we feel that we had gone on drinking for many years beyond the point where we could quit on our own will power. If anyone questions whether they have entered this dangerous area, let them try leaving alcohol alone for one year. If they are a real alcoholic and very far advanced, there is scant chance of success. In the early days of our drinking we occasionally remained sober for a year or more, becoming serious drinkers again later on. Though you may be able to stop for a considerable period, you may yet be a potential alcoholic. We think few to whom this book will appeal can stay dry for anything like a year. Some will be drunk the day after making their resolutions; most of them within a few weeks.

For those who are unable to drink moderately the question is how to stop altogether. We are assuming, of course, that those who are reading this book desire to stop. Whether such people can quit on a nonspiritual basis depends on the extent to which they have already lost the power to choose whether they will drink or not. Many of us felt that we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to stop drinking forever, yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it, this utter inability to leave it alone no matter how great the necessity or the desire.

How then should we help our readers determine, to their own satisfaction, whether they are one of us? The experiment of quitting for a period of time will be helpful, but we think we can render an even greater service to alcoholic sufferers and perhaps to the medical community, so we will describe some of the mental states that precede a relapse into drinking, for obviously this is the crux of the problem.

What sort of thinking dominates alcoholics who repeat time after time the desperate experiment of the first drink? Those who have reasoned with them after a binge that has brought them to the point of divorce or bankruptcy, are mystified when they walk directly into a bar. Why do they? What are they thinking?

Our first example is a friend who has a charming partner and close family. This friend had inherited a lucrative automobile agency, was good at sales, and had a commendable military service record. Everybody likes our friend, who is intelligent and normal so far as we can see, except for a nervous disposition. This individual did no drinking until the age of thirty-five, but in a few years became violent when intoxicated, lost the business, went to jail, and on being released came into contact with us.

We explained what we knew of alcoholism and the answer we had found. Sobriety began with the reassembly of the family and a new job as a sales person for the same business that had been lost through drinking. All went well for a time, but spiritual life had not become a factor. This resulted in returning to drink half a dozen times in rapid succession. On each of these occasions we reviewed together what had happened. Our friend admitted to being a real alcoholic and in serious condition. Another trip to jail was inevitable if this continued. Moreover, a deeply loved family would be lost.

Yet this individual got drunk again. We asked exactly how it happened. This is the story: "I came to work on Tuesday morning. I remember I felt irritated that I had to be a salesperson for a business I once owned. I had a few words with the boss but nothing serious. Then I decided to drive into the country and see one of my prospects for buying a car. On the way I felt hungry so I stopped at a roadside place where they have a bar. I had no intention of drinking. I just thought I would get a sandwich. I also had the idea that I might find a customer for a car at this place, which was familiar since I had been going to it for years. I had eaten there many times during the months I was sober. I sat down at a table and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk. Still no thought of drinking. I ordered another sandwich and decided to have another glass of milk.

"Suddenly the thought crossed my mind that if I were to put an ounce of whiskey in my milk it couldn't hurt me on a full stomach. I ordered a whiskey and poured it into the milk. I vaguely sensed I was not being too smart, but felt reassured as I was taking the whiskey on a full stomach. The experiment went so well that I ordered another whiskey and poured it into more milk. That didn't seem to bother me so I tried another."

Thus started one more journey to the hospital. Here was the threat of commitment, the loss of family and position, to say nothing of that intense mental and physical suffering which drinking always caused. There was no question about what it meant to be an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the foolish idea that it was okay to mix whiskey and milk!

Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this insanity. How can such a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight, be called anything else?

You may think this is an extreme case. To us it is not unbelievable, for this kind of thinking has been characteristic of every single one of us. We have sometimes reflected more than this individual did on the consequences, but there was always the curious mental phenomenon that, parallel with our sound reasoning, there inevitably ran some insanely trivial excuse for taking the first drink. Our sound reasoning failed to hold us in check. The insane idea won out. The next day we would ask ourselves in all earnestness and sincerity how it could have happened.

In some circumstances we have gone out deliberately to get drunk, feeling ourselves justified by anxiety, anger, worry, depression, jealousy, or the like. But even with this reasoning we are obliged to admit that our justification for drinking was insanely insufficient in light of what always happened. We now see that when we began to drink deliberately instead of casually, there was little serious or effective thought about what the terrific consequences might be.

Our behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of individuals with a passion, say, for jay-walking. They get a thrill out of walking in front of fast-moving vehicles. They enjoy themselves for a few years in spite of warnings.

Up to this point you would label them as foolish people having strange ideas of fun. Luck then deserts them and they are slightly injured several times in succession. You would expect them, if they were normal, to stop. Presently one of these individuals is hit again and this time has a fractured skull. Within a week after leaving the hospital a fast-moving car breaks their arm. They tell you they have decided to stop jay-walking for good, but in a few weeks they break both legs.

On through the years this conduct continues, accompanied by continual promises to be careful or to keep off the streets altogether. Finally, they can no longer work, their partner gets a divorce and they are held up to ridicule. They try every known means to get the jay-walking idea out of their head. They commit themselves, hoping to mend their ways. But the day they come out they race in front of a fire engine, which breaks their back. Such a person would be crazy, wouldn't they?

You may think our illustration is too ridiculous, but is it? We, who have been through the insanity of drinking and slipping, have to admit that if we substituted alcoholism for jay-walking the illustration would fit us exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved we have been strangely insane. It's strong language, but isn't it true?

Some of you are thinking: "Yes, what you tell us is true, but it doesn't fully apply. We admit that we have some of these symptoms, but we have not gone to the extremes you did, nor are we likely to, for we understand ourselves so well after what you have told us that such things cannot happen again. We have not lost everything in life through drinking and we certainly do not intend to. Thanks for the information."

That may be true of certain nonalcoholic people who, though drinking foolishly and heavily at the present time, are able to stop or moderate because their brains and bodies have not been damaged as ours were. But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge. This is a point we wish to emphasize and re-emphasize, to strongly convey to our alcoholic readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience. Let us take another illustration.

A partner in a well-known accounting firm has a good income, a beautiful home, and is happily married with children of college age. This person has an attractive personality and makes friends with everyone. To all appearances this is a stable, well balanced individual, yet is an alcoholic. Our first encounter was about a year ago in a hospital where this individual had gone to recover from a bad case of withdrawal. Since this was the first experience of its kind, there was much

shame attached to it. Far from admitting being an alcoholic, the excuse given for coming to the hospital was to recover from anxiety. The doctor intimated strongly that this might be worse than anyone realized. Depression set in for a few days, but then the decision was made to quit drinking altogether. It was never clear that this would not be possible in spite of a strong character and will power. Accepting a spiritual remedy for this problem was out of the question. We explained what we knew about alcoholism. It was clear that some of the symptoms existed, but it was a long way to admitting that nothing could be done about it. This person was positive that such a humiliating experience, plus the knowledge that had been acquired, would assure sobriety permanently. Self-knowledge would fix it.

We heard no more for a while. Then one day we were told that this same individual was back in the hospital. This time it was worse. We were called to visit and the story we heard is most instructive. Here was someone who was absolutely convinced that they had to stop drinking, who had no excuse for drinking, who exhibited sound judgment and determination in all other concerns, yet had started drinking again.

Here is the story we heard: "I was impressed with what you said about alcoholism, and I did not believe it would be possible for me to drink again. I appreciated your ideas about the subtle insanity which precedes the first drink, but I was confident it could not happen to me after what I had learned. I reasoned that I was not as far gone as most of you, that I had been usually successful in solving my other personal problems, and that I would be successful where you failed. I felt that I had every right to be self-confident, that it would be only a matter of exercising my will power and keeping on guard.

"In this frame of mind I went about my business and for a time all was well. I had no trouble refusing drinks, and began to wonder if I had not been making too much of a simple matter. One day I went to Washington to present some accounting evidence to a government bureau. I had been out of town before during this particular dry spell, so there was nothing new about that. Physically, I felt fine. Neither did I have any pressing problems or worries. My business went well. It was the end of a perfect day, not a cloud on the horizon.

"I went to my hotel and dressed for dinner. As I went into the dining room, the thought came to me that it would be nice to have a couple of drinks with dinner. That was all, nothing more. I ordered a drink and my meal. Then I ordered another drink. After dinner I decided to take a walk. When I returned to the hotel I thought a bourbon would be fine before going to bed, so I stepped into the bar and had one. I remember having several more that night and again the next morning. I have a shadowy memory of being in an airplane headed for New York and of finding a friendly taxicab driver at the landing field. The driver drove me around for several days. I don't remember much of where I went or what I said and did. Then came the hospital with unbearable mental and physical pain.

"As soon as I regained my ability to think, I went carefully over that evening in Washington. Not only had I been off guard, but 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 alcohol was 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 when I would drink again. They had said that though I did raise a defense, it wouldn't be enough to overcome some trivial reason for having a drink. Well, that's exactly what happened 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. They grinned, which I didn't like so much, and then asked me if I thought I was an alcoholic and if I had finally hit bottom. I had to concede both propositions. They gave me lots 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.

"Then they outlined the spiritual answer and program of action which a hundred of them had followed successfully. Though I had been only nominally religious, their proposals were not intellectually hard to accept. But the program of action, though entirely sensible, was pretty drastic. It meant that 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. I have since been brought into a way of living infinitely more satisfying and, I hope, more useful than the life I lived before. My old way of life was by no means a bad one, but I would not exchange its best moments for the worst I have now. I would not go back to it even if I could."

This story speaks for itself. We hope it strikes home to thousands of people in similar situations. Most alcoholics have to be pretty badly mangled before they really commence to solve their problems.

Many doctors and psychiatrists agree with our conclusions. One of these, a staff member of a world-renowned hospital, recently made this statement to some of us: "What you say about the general hopelessness of the average alcoholic's plight is, in my opinion, correct. As to two of you whose stories I have heard, there is no doubt in my mind that you were 100% hopeless without divine help. Had you offered yourselves as patients at this hospital, I would not have taken you if I had been able to avoid it. People like you are too heartbreaking. Though not a religious person, I have profound respect for the spiritual approach in such cases as yours. For most cases, there is virtually no other solution."

Once more, the alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither they nor any other human being can provide such a defense. It must come from a Higher Power.

## Chapter 4

### WE AGNOSTICS

In the preceding chapters you have learned something about alcoholism. We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the nonalcoholic. If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. If that is the case you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.

To those who feel they are atheists or agnostics such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as they are means disaster, especially if they are alcoholics of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.

But it isn't so difficult. At first some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true alcoholics. But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis for life, or else. Perhaps it is going to be that way with you. But cheer up, something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics. Our experience shows that you need not be discouraged.

If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago. But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us, no matter how much we tried. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn't there. Our human resources, as marshalled by the will, were not sufficient – they failed utterly.

Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?

Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main objective is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself in order to solve your problem. That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about a Higher Power. Here difficulty arises with agnostics. Many times we talk to a new person and watch hope rise as we discuss their alcoholic problems and explain our community. But their face falls when we speak of spiritual matters, especially when we mention a Higher Power, for we have re-opened a subject which they thought they had neatly evaded or entirely ignored.

We know the feeling. We have shared those honest doubts and prejudices. Some of us have been violently anti-religious. To others, the word "God" brought up a particular idea with which someone had tried to impress them during childhood. Perhaps we rejected this particular conception because it seemed inadequate. With that rejection we imagined we had abandoned the spiritual idea entirely. We were bothered with the thought that faith and dependence on a Power

beyond ourselves was somewhat weak, even cowardly. We looked at this world of warring individuals, warring theological systems, and inexplicable calamity with deep skepticism. We looked critically at many individuals who claimed to be spiritual. How could a Supreme Being have anything to do with it all? And who could comprehend a Supreme Being anyhow? Yet, in other moments, we found ourselves thinking, when enchanted by a starlit night, "Who, then, made all this?" There was a feeling of awe and wonder, but it was fleeting and soon lost.

Yes, we of agnostic temperament have had these thoughts and experiences. We want to reassure you. We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power.

Much to our relief, we discovered that we did not need to consider another's conception of a Deity. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Spirit. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction provided we took other simple steps. We found that this Higher Power is not too hard on us. To us, the realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, and all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek it. It is open, we believe, to all people.

When, therefore, we speak to you of a Higher Power, we mean your own conception of it. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with Spirit as we understood it. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wanted to grow we had to begin somewhere. So we used our own conception, however limited it was.

We needed to ask ourselves one question. "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as people can say that they do believe, or are willing to believe, we emphatically assure them that they are on their way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that on this simple foundation a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.

That was great news to us, because we had assumed we could not make use of spiritual principles unless we accepted many things on faith which seemed difficult to believe. When people presented us with spiritual approaches, how frequently did we all say, "I wish I had what they have. I'm sure it would work if I could only believe as they believe. But I cannot accept a faith that is so plain to them." So it was comforting to learn that we could begin at a simpler level.

Besides a seeming inability to accept much on faith, we often found ourselves handicapped by obstinacy, sensitiveness, and unreasoning prejudice. Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things made us bristle with antagonism. This sort of thinking had to be abandoned. Though some of us resisted, we found no great difficulty in setting aside such feelings. Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters

as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect alcohol was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process; we hope no one else will be prejudiced for as long as some of us were.

Readers may still ask why they should believe in a Power greater than themselves. We think there are good reasons. Let us have a look at some of them.

The practical individual of today is a stickler for facts and results. Nevertheless, our present culture readily accepts theories of all kinds, provided they are firmly grounded in fact. We have numerous theories, for example, about electricity. Everybody believes them without a doubt. Why this easy acceptance? Simply because it is impossible to explain what we see, feel, direct, and use, without a reasonable assumption as a starting point.

Everybody believes in scores of assumptions for which there is good evidence but no proof. It is being constantly revealed, as humanity studies the material world, that outward appearances are not inward reality at all. To illustrate:

The ordinary steel girder is a mass of electrons whirling around each other at incredible speed. These tiny bodies are governed by precise laws, and these laws hold true throughout the material world. Science tells us so. We have no reason to doubt it. When, however, the perfectly logical assumption is suggested that underneath the material world and life as we see it, there is an All Powerful, Guiding, Creative Intelligence, right there our perverse streak comes to the surface and we laboriously set out to convince ourselves that it isn't so. We read wordy books and indulge in windy arguments, thinking we believe this universe needs no Deity to explain it. If our contentions were true, it would follow that life originated out of nothing, means nothing, and proceeds nowhere.

Instead of regarding ourselves as intelligent agents, spearheads of an ever-advancing Creation, we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and end of all. Rather vain of us, wasn't it?

We, who have traveled this dubious path, beg you to lay aside prejudice, even against institutional religion. We have learned that whatever the human frailties of various faiths may be, those faiths have given purpose and direction to millions. People of faith have a logical idea of what life is all about. Actually, we used to have no reasonable conception whatever. We used to amuse ourselves by cynically dissecting spiritual beliefs and practices when we might have observed that many spiritually-minded persons of all kinds were demonstrating a degree of stability, happiness, and usefulness which we should have sought for ourselves.

Instead, we looked at the human defects of these people, and sometimes used their shortcomings as a basis of wholesale condemnation. We criticized intolerance while we were intolerant ourselves. We missed the reality and the beauty of the forest because we were diverted by the ugliness of some of its trees. We never gave the spiritual side of life a chance.

In our personal stories you will find a wide variation in the way each teller approaches and conceives of the Power which is greater than we are. Whether we agree with a particular approach or conception seems to make little difference. Experience has taught us that these are matters about which, for our purpose, we do not need to be worried. They are questions for every

individual to settle for themselves.

On one proposition, however, these people are strikingly agreed. Every one of them has gained access to, and believes in, a Power greater than we are. This Power has in each case accomplished the miraculous, the humanly impossible. As a renowned diplomat put it, "Let's look at the record."

Here are thousands of worldly people. They flatly declare that since they have come to believe in a Power greater than themselves, to take a certain attitude toward that Power and to do certain simple things, there has been a radical change in their way of living and thinking. In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of the total failure of their human resources, they found that a new power, peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them. This happened soon after they honestly met a few simple requirements. Once confused and baffled by the seeming futility of existence, they show the underlying reasons, in spite of the drinking problem, why life was so difficult for them. They show how the change came over them. When many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of a Higher Presence is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith.

This world of ours has made more material progress in the last century than in all the millenniums which went before. Students of ancient history tell us that the intellect of people in those days was equal to the best of today, yet in ancient times material progress was painfully slow. The spirit of modern scientific inquiry, research, and invention was almost unknown. In the realm of the material, people's minds were bound by superstition, tradition, and all sorts of fixed ideas. Some of the contemporaries of Columbus thought a round earth preposterous. Others came near putting Galileo to death for astronomical heresies.

We asked ourselves this: Are not some of us just as ignorant about the realm of the spirit as the ancients were about the realm of the material? In the last century, American newspapers were afraid to print an account of the Wright brothers' first successful flight at Kitty Hawk. Had not all efforts at flight failed before? Did not Professor Langley's flying machine go to the bottom of the Potomac River? Was it not true that the best mathematical minds had proved we could never fly? Had not people said this privilege was reserved for the birds? Only thirty years later the conquest of the air was almost an old story and air travel was in full swing.

But in most fields our generation has witnessed complete liberation of our thinking. Is not our age characterized by the ease with which we discard old ideas for new, by the complete readiness with which we throw away the theory or gadget which does not work for something which does?

We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn't apply to our human problems this same readiness to change our point of view. We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were prey to misery and depression, we couldn't make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, and we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people.

When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance on the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting this power. Our ideas did not work, but the spiritual idea did.

The Wright brothers' almost childish faith that they could build a machine which would fly was

the mainspring of their accomplishment. Without that, nothing could have happened. We agnostics and atheists were sticking to the idea that self-sufficiency would solve our problems. When others showed us that "Creator-sufficiency" worked with them, we began to feel like those who had insisted the Wrights would never fly.

Logic is great stuff. We liked it. We still like it. It is not by chance we were given the power to reason, to examine the evidence of our senses, and to draw conclusions. That is one of our magnificent attributes. Those of us who are agnostically inclined would not feel satisfied with a proposal which does not lend itself to reasonable approach and interpretation. Hence we are at pains to tell why we think our present faith is reasonable, why we think it more sane and logical to believe than not to believe, why we say our former thinking was soft and mushy when we threw up our hands in doubt and said, "We don't know."

When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either Spirit is everything or else is nothing. A Creator either is, or isn't. What was our choice to be?

Having arrived at this point, we were squarely confronted with the question of faith. We couldn't avoid the issue. Some of us had already walked far over the bridge of reason toward the desired shore of faith. The outlines and the promises of sobriety had brought energy and courage to flagging spirits. Friendly hands had stretched out in welcome. We were grateful that reason had brought us so far. But somehow, we couldn't quite step ashore. Perhaps we had been leaning too heavily on reason that last mile and we did not like to lose our support.

That was natural, but let us think a little more closely. Without knowing it, had we not been brought to where we stood by a certain kind of faith? Did we not believe in our own reasoning? Did we not have confidence in our ability to think? What was that but a sort of faith? Yes, we had been faithful, faithful to reason. So, in one way or another, we discovered that faith had been involved all the time!

We found, too, that we had been worshippers. Had we not variously worshipped people, sentiment, things, money, and ourselves? And then, with a better motive, had we not worshipfully observed the sunset, the sea, or a flower? Who of us had not loved something or somebody? How much did these feelings, these loves, these worships, have to do with pure reason? Little or nothing, we saw at last. Were not these things the fabric out of which our lives were constructed? Did not these feelings, after all, determine the course of our existence? It was impossible to say we had no capacity for faith, or love, or worship. In one form or another we had been living by faith and little else.

Imagine life without faith! Were nothing left but pure reason, it wouldn't be life. But we believed in life. We could not prove life in the sense that you can prove a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, yet there it was. Could we still say the whole thing was nothing but a mass of electrons, created out of nothing, meaning nothing, whirling on to a destiny of nothingness? Of course we couldn't. The electrons themselves seemed more intelligent than that. At least, so the scientist said.

Hence, we saw that reason isn't everything. Neither is reason, as most of us use it, entirely

dependable, though it emanates from our best minds. What about people who thought that we could never fly?

Yet we had been seeing another kind of flight, a spiritual liberation from this world, people who rose above their problems. They said that a Creator made these things possible, and we only smiled. We had seen spiritual release, but liked to tell ourselves it wasn't true.

Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in everyone is the fundamental idea of a Higher Power. It may be obscured by disaster or by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there. For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as humanity itself.

We finally saw that faith in some kind of Higher Power was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but the Creator was always there and was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that a Higher Power may be found. It was so with us.

We can only clear the ground a bit. If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, and encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway. With this attitude you cannot fail. The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you.

Here is the experience of a friend who identified as an atheist. This story is so interesting that some of it should be told now. The change of heart was dramatic, convincing, and moving.

This person was the child of a minister who attended church school, there becoming rebellious at what seemed to be an overdose of religious education. The next few years produced trouble and frustration. Failure, insanity, fatal illness, suicide -- these tragedies in the family created bitterness and depression. Post-war disillusionment, ever more serious alcoholism, and impending mental and physical breakdown brought things to the point of self-destruction.

Approached one night while in the hospital by an alcoholic who had known a spiritual experience, our friend bitterly cried out, "If there is a Higher Power, it certainly hasn't done anything for me!" But later, while alone in the hospital room, this question arose: "Is it possible that all the religious people I have known are wrong?" Pondering the answer felt like living in hell. Then, like a thunderbolt, a great thought came. It crowded out all else.

"Who are you to say there is no Creator?"

Our friend fell on the bed and then kneeled on the floor, and there came an overwhelming sense of the Presence of Spirit that poured over and through with the certainty and power of a great flood. The barriers that had been built through the years were swept away. Being in the Presence of Infinite Power and Love was like stepping from a bridge to the shore. For the first time, this agnostic lived in conscious companionship with the Creator.

Thus was our friend's cornerstone fixed in place. No later challenges have shaken it. The alcoholic problem was taken away. That very night, years ago, it disappeared. Except for a few brief moments of temptation, the thought of drink has never returned, and at such times a great revulsion has risen up. Seemingly it was not possible to drink even if the desire was there. Sanity

had been restored.

What is this but a miracle of healing? Yet its elements are simple. Circumstances made it possible to believe. This person humbly offered everything to the Creator – and was forever changed.

Even so, our Higher Power has restored us all to our right minds. To this person, the revelation was sudden. Some of us grow into it more slowly. But the Creator comes to all who honestly seek.

When we draw near, Spirit reveals itself to us!

## Chapter 5

### HOW IT WORKS

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually people who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

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

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

Remember that we deal with alcohol -- cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power -- that One is the Creator. May you find that Source of strength now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked the Creator's protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery. We:

1. Admitted we were powerless over alcohol -- that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a Higher Power as we understood It.



4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to our Creator, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have our Creator remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power as we understood It, praying only for knowledge of the Creator's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- c) That our Higher Power could and would if It were sought.

Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to our Higher Power as we understood It. Just what do we mean by that, and just what do we do?

The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life which is run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. People are like the actors who want to run the whole show, forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery, and the rest of the players in their own way. If their arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as they wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including themselves, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful. In trying to make these arrangements our actors may sometimes be quite virtuous. They may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self-sacrificing. On the other hand, they may be mean, egotistical, selfish, and dishonest. But, as with most humans, they are more likely to have varied traits.

What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. They begin to think that life doesn't treat them right. They decide to exert themselves more. They become, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit them. Admitting they may be somewhat at fault, they are sure that other people are more to blame. They become angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is their basic problem? Are they not really self-seekers even when trying to be kind? Are they not victims of the delusion that they can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if they only manage it well? Is it not evident to all the rest of the players that these are the things they want? And do not their actions make each of them wish to take all they can get out of the show? Are they not, even in their best moments, producers of confusion rather than harmony?

Our actors are self-centered and ego-centric. They are like the retired person who lounges in the Florida sunshine in the winter complaining of the sad state of the nation; the minister who sighs over the sins of the world; politicians and reformers who are sure that all would be Utopia if the rest of the world would only behave; the criminal who thinks society is at fault; and the alcoholic who has lost all and is locked up. Whatever our protestations, are not most of us concerned with ourselves, our resentments, or our self-pity?

Selfishness and self-centeredness! That is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our friends and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and we alcoholics are an extreme example of self-will run riot, though we usually don't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! Our Higher Power makes that possible. And there often seems to be no way of entirely getting rid of self without spiritual help. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying to on our own power. We had to have spiritual help.

This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing god. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, our Creator was going to be our Director, the Principal, and we are the agents. Our Creator is our Parent, and we are the children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer who was all powerful and provided what we needed if we kept close and performed the work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves and our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of the presence of our Higher Power, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.

We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood the Creator: "I offer myself to You to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your Love, and Your Way of life. May I do Your will always!" We thought well before taking this step, making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to our Creator.

We found it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as our partner, best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet our Creator alone than with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional as long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once.

Next we set out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless followed immediately by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our alcohol was only a symptom, so we had to get down to causes and conditions.

Therefore we started on a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. In order to be successful it's important to be realistic about values.

We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.

Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have not only been mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions, or principles with which we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our finances, our ambitions, or our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were angry.

On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, or our personal or sex relations that had been interfered with?

We were usually as definite as this example:

<i>I'm resentful at:</i>	<i>The Cause:</i>	<i>Affects my:</i>
Brown	Paid attention to my partner	Sex relations
	Told my partner of my infidelity	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear)
	May get my job at the office	Self-esteem (fear) Security
Jones	Is a nut and snubbed me	Self-esteem (fear)
	Committed spouse for drinking	Self-esteem (fear)
	Is a gossip	Personal relationship
My employer	Unreasonable - Unjust - Overbearing	Self-esteem (fear) Security
	Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account	Security
My partner	Misunderstands and nags	Pride - Personal
	Likes Brown	Sex relations
	Wants title to the house	Security (fear)

We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully. The first thing that became apparent was that this world and its people were often quite wrong. To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed angry. Sometimes it was remorse and then we were angry at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse things got. Our moments of triumph were short-lived.

It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the extent that we permit this, we squander the hours that might have been worthwhile. But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, resentment is infinitely dangerous. We found that it is fatal, for when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die.

If we wanted to live we had to be free of anger. Anger and ego were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of normal people, but for alcoholics these things are poison.

We turned back to the list, which held the key to the future. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrong-doing of others, imagined or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than we could with alcohol.

This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually

sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked our Creator to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would happily grant to a sick friend. When someone offended us we said to ourselves, "This is a sick person. How can I be helpful? My Higher Power, save me from being angry. Your will be done."

We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least the Spirit will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every person.

Referring to our list again and putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person who was involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other person's. When we saw our faults we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to correct them.

Notice that the word "fear" is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Brown, Jones, the employer, and the partner. This short word somehow touches just about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune that we felt we didn't deserve. But did we not, ourselves, set the ball rolling? Sometimes we think fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble.

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem or any other. When it made us arrogant, it was worse.

Perhaps there is a better way. We think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying on our Higher Power. We trust infinite Spirit rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play assigned roles. Just to the extent that we do as we think our Creator would have us do, and humbly rely on our spiritual relationship, are we able to match calamity with serenity.

We never apologize to anyone for depending on our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality is the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All people of faith have courage. They trust their Higher Power. We never apologize for faith. Instead we let our Creator demonstrate, through us, what is possible. We ask that fear be removed and direct our attention to what our Higher Power would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.

Now about sex -- many of us needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes -- absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation. Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex;

who bewail the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind. They see its significance everywhere. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?

We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness? Where were we at fault, and what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test -- was it selfish or not? We asked our Creator to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were natural and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.

Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come if we want it.

Our Creator alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let our Higher Power be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice.

Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so, but this is only a half-truth. It depends on us and on our motives. If we are sorry for what we have done and have the honest desire to let our Creator take us to better things, we believe we can forgive ourselves and will have learned our lesson. If we are not regretful, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience.

To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge when to give in would mean heartache.

If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience, and good will toward all, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves. We hope you are convinced now that the Creator can remove whatever self-will has blocked you from the Spirit. If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big

chunks of truth about yourself.

## Chapter 6

### INTO ACTION

Having made our personal inventory, what should 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; 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 our Higher Power, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects. 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. We will 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. Almost invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they failed. 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 of their life story.

More than most people, alcoholics lead a double life. They are very much the actor. To the outer world they present their stage character. This is the one they like others to see. They want to enjoy a certain reputation but know in their heart they don't deserve it.

The inconsistency is made worse by the things they do on their binges. Coming to their senses, they are revolted at certain episodes they vaguely remember. These memories are a nightmare. They tremble to think that someone might have observed them. As fast as they can, they push these memories far inside themselves. They hope these memories will never see the light of day. They are under constant fear and tension -- that makes for more drinking.

Psychologists are inclined to agree with us. We have spent thousands of dollars on counseling. We know of only a few instances where we have given these doctors the truth. We have seldom told them the whole truth nor have we followed their advice. Unwilling to be honest with these sympathetic doctors, 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!

We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Though we may have no religious connection, we might still do well to talk with someone associated with an established religion. We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem. Of course, we sometimes encounter people who do not understand alcoholics.

If we cannot or would rather not do this, we search 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 partner or our parents which will hurt them and make them unhappy. We have no right to save ourselves at another person's expense. Such parts of our story we tell to someone who will understand, yet be unaffected. The rule is that we must be hard on ourselves, but always considerate of others.

Notwithstanding the great necessity for discussing ourselves with someone, it may be that one is situated where there is no suitable person available. If that is so, this step may be postponed only if we hold ourselves in complete readiness to go through with it at the first opportunity. We say this because we are very anxious that we talk to the right person. It is important that they be able to keep a confidence; that they fully understand and approve what we are doing; that they 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 the person what we are about to do and why we have to do it. They should realize that we are engaged in a life-and-death mission. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.

We swallow our pride and go for it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are relieved. 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. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank our Higher Power from the bottom of our heart for this experience. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five steps we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we will walk to freedom. 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?

If we can answer these questions to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let our Creator remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can our Higher Power now take them all -- every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask the Creator to



help us be willing.

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 others. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen." We have then completed Step Seven.

Now we need more action, without which we find that "Faith without works is dead." 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 the list when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to them 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. If we don't have the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning that we would go to any lengths to stay sober.

Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of colleagues and friends we have hurt, 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. 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 prepare ourselves to be of maximum service to our Creator and to other people. It is seldom wise to approach an individual who still hurts from our injustice and announce that we have become spiritual. In the boxing ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But that person is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. They are going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.

We don't use this as an excuse for shying away from the subject of spirituality. 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 people we hated will arise. It may be that they have done us more harm than we have done them and, though we may have acquired a better attitude towards them, we are still not too eager to admit our faults. Nevertheless, with people we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to enemies than to friends, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to them in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former feelings and expressing our regret.

Under no condition do we criticize such people or argue with them. We simply say we will never get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell them what they should do. Their faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. 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 those we call on admit their 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. It should not matter, however, if they do not listen to us.

We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam.

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 that it may cause financial harm. 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 remorseful. 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.

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. Maybe we are divorced and have remarried but haven't kept up the alimony to number one, who 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 job or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shy away from anything.

Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be foolish martyrs who would needlessly sacrifice others to save themselves from the alcoholic pit. Someone we know had remarried, but because of resentment and drinking had not paid alimony to the first partner, who was furious and went to court, getting an order for an arrest. This alcoholic had commenced our way of life, had secured a position, and was getting life back together. It would have been impressive heroics to have walked up to the Judge and said, "Here I am."

Doing that might have been the best thing, but being in jail would mean that nothing could be provided for either family. We suggested a letter asking for forgiveness. This was sent along with a small amount of money, the letter indicating a promise to try to do more in the future. This alcoholic was perfectly willing to go to jail if the offended ex-partner insisted. Of course that did not happen, and the whole situation has long since been adjusted.

Before taking drastic action which might involve other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked our Higher Power to help, and the drastic step is indicated, we must do what it takes.

This brings to mind a story about one of our friends, who while drinking accepted a sum of money from a bitterly-hated business rival without giving a receipt for it. Subsequently, after having received the money and denying it, the incident was used as a basis for discrediting the rival. This wrong-doing was thus used as a means of destroying the reputation of another. In fact, the rival was ruined.

Our friend felt this wrong could not possibly be made right. If the incident were reopened, it

could destroy the reputation of a current business partner, disgrace the family, and take away any means of livelihood. What right was there to involve and risk others who were innocent? How could a public statement be made exonerating the rival?

After consulting with those who could be affected, it became clear that it was better to take those risks than to stand before the Creator while guilty of such ruinous slander. It was clear that the outcome needed to be dependent on faith in a Higher Power or drinking again would be inevitable, and all would be lost anyhow. Our friend attended a religious service for the first time in many years and at the end, quietly got up and explained what happened. This action met widespread approval, and today this is one of the most trusted people of the town. This all happened years ago.

The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are having affairs. 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 partner gets worn out, resentful, and uncommunicative. How could they be anything else? The alcoholic begins to feel lonely and depressed, commencing to look around in bars, or their equivalent, for something besides alcohol. Perhaps this leads to a secret and exciting affair with "the one who understands." In fairness we must say that they may understand, but what are we going to do about a thing like that? Someone so involved often feels very remorseful at times, especially if married to a loyal and courageous partner who has literally gone through hell with the alcoholic.

Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. If we are sure our partner does not know, should we confess? Not always, we think. If our partner knows in a general way, should we admit our wrongs in detail? Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. We may be asked for all the details, including who and where the other person is. We feel we ought to say that we have no right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and it will 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 to be the best course to take.

Our design for living is not a one-way street. It is as good for both partners. If we can forget, so can they. It is better, however, that one does not needlessly name a person on whom jealousy can be vented.

Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost honesty is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both parties 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 sense may indicate that the problem be approached indirectly rather than by direct confrontation.

If we have no such complication, there is plenty we should do at home. Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing needed to be done is to keep sober. Certainly that is true, because there will be no home otherwise. But this is yet a long way from making amends to the partner or parents who for years were so shockingly treated. Passing all understanding is the

patience parents and partners have had with alcoholics. Had this not been so, many of us would have no homes today and would perhaps be dead.

The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring 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. We feel that someone is unthinking when they say that sobriety is enough. They are like the person who came up out of the storm cellar to find the home ruined and saying, "Don't see anything the matter here. Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowin'?"

Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't work 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 chances are our own actions are partly responsible. So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness, and love.

The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it. Unless our family expresses a desire to live on spiritual principles, we do not push them. We should not talk incessantly to them about spiritual matters. They will change in time. 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.

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 honest communication and there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases, but we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble without being servile or begging. As children of our Higher Power we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone.

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in others. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that our Creator is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

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

This 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. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these

appear, we ask our Higher Power at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.

We have ceased fighting anything or anyone -- even alcohol. By this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in alcohol. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward alcohol has been given to 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. 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. 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 our Creator's will into all of our activities. "How can I best serve You -- Your 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.

Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from the One who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of Spirit into us. To some extent we have become Spirit-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action.

Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better people 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? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse, or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask for forgiveness and pray to know what corrective measures should be taken.

On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask our Higher Power to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonesty, or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all our Creator gave us brains to use. Our inner life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.

In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised by how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with a Higher Power, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption by all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely on it.

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 pray for ourselves only 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.

If circumstances warrant, we ask our partner or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious tradition which requires a definite morning practice, we attend to that also. If we are not members of a religious group, 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 a trusted friend or sponsor. Be quick to see where faith motivated people are right. Make use of what they offer.

As we go through the day we pause when agitated or doubtful and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves that we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Your will be done." We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. 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 our Creator discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.

But this is not all. There is action and more action. Faith without service is dead. The next chapter is entirely devoted to Step Twelve.

## Chapter 7

### WORKING WITH OTHERS

Practical experience shows that nothing will ensure immunity from drinking as much as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when everything else fails. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can

secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a community grow up about you, to have a host of friends -- this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

Perhaps you don't know any drinkers who want to recover. You can easily find them in jails, prisons, and treatment centers. Don't start out as an evangelist or reformer, just be yourself. Because of your own drinking experience you can be uniquely useful to other alcoholics.

So cooperate; never criticize. To be helpful is our only goal. When you discover someone who may be ready for Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about them. If they do not want to stop drinking, don't waste time trying to persuade them. You may spoil a later opportunity. This advice is given for their family also, who should be patient, realizing that this is a sick person.

If there is any indication that they want to stop, have a good talk with the person most interested in their welfare -- usually their partner. Get an idea of their behavior, their problems, their background, the seriousness of their condition, and their religious leanings. You need this information to put yourself in their place, to see how you would like them to approach you if the tables were turned.

Sometimes it is wise to wait until they go on a binge. The family may object to this, but unless they are in a dangerous physical condition, it is better to risk it. Don't deal with them when they are very drunk, unless they are violent and the family needs your help. Wait for the end of the binge, or at least for a lucid interval. Then let their family or a friend ask them if they are ready to quit and if they would go to any extreme to do so. If they say yes, then their attention should be drawn to you as a person who has recovered. You should be described to them as one of a community who, as part of their own recovery, try to help others and who will be glad to talk to them if they care to see you.

If they do not want to see you, never force yourself on them. Neither should the family hysterically plead with them to do anything, nor should they tell them much about you.

They should wait for the end of the next drinking bout. You might place this book where they can see it in the interval. Here no specific rule can be given. The family must decide these things. But urge them not to be over-anxious, for that might spoil matters.

Usually the family should not try to tell your story. When possible, avoid meeting someone through their family. An approach through a doctor or treatment center is a better bet. If the person needs treatment, they should have it, but not forcibly unless they are violent. Let the doctor tell them that there is something in the way of a solution.

When the person is better, the doctor might suggest a visit from you. Though you have spoken with the family, leave them out of the first discussion. Under these conditions the person will see they are under no pressure. They will feel they can deal with you without being nagged by their family. Call on them while they are still unstable. They may be more receptive when depressed.

See the person alone, if possible. At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell them enough about your drinking habits, symptoms, and

experiences to encourage them to speak of themselves. If they wish to talk, let them. You will thus get a better idea of how you ought to proceed. If they are not communicative, give them a description of your drinking career up to the time you quit, but say nothing, for the moment, of how that was accomplished. If they are in a serious mood, dwell on the trouble alcohol has caused you, being careful not to moralize or lecture. If their mood is light, tell them humorous stories of your experiences. Get them to tell some of theirs.

When they see that you know all about the drinking game, commence to describe yourself as an alcoholic. Tell them how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give them an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show them the mental twist which leads to the first drink of a binge. We suggest you do this as we have done it in the chapter on alcoholism. If they are an alcoholic, they will understand you at once. They will match your mental inconsistencies with some of their own.

If you are satisfied that they are a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the disease. Show them, from your own experience, how the alcoholic mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will power. Don't, at this stage, refer to this book, unless they have seen it and wish to discuss it. And be careful not to brand them as an alcoholic. Let them draw their own conclusion. If they stick to the idea that they can still control their drinking, tell them that possibly they can -- if they are not really an alcoholic. But insist that if they are severely afflicted, there may be little chance they can recover by themselves.

Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal disease. Talk about the conditions of body and mind which accompany it. Keep their attention focused mainly on your personal experience. Explain that many are doomed who never realize their predicament. Doctors are hesitant to tell alcoholic patients the whole story unless it will serve some good purpose, but you may talk to them about the hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a solution. You will soon have them admitting they have many, if not all, of the traits of the alcoholic. If a doctor is willing to tell them that they are alcoholic, so much the better. Even though this person may not have entirely admitted their condition, they have become very curious to know how you got well. Let them ask you that question if they will. Tell them exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely. If the person is an agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that they do not have to agree with your conception of a Higher Power. They can choose any conception they like, provided it makes sense to them. The main thing is that they be willing to believe in a Power greater than they are and that they live by spiritual principles.

When dealing with such a person, you had better use everyday language to describe spiritual principles. There is no use arousing any prejudice they may have against certain theological terms and conceptions about which they may already be confused. Don't raise such issues, no matter what your own convictions are.

This person may belong to a religious community. Their religious education and training may be far superior to yours. In that case they are going to wonder how you can add anything to what they already know, but they will be curious to learn why their own convictions have not worked and why yours seem to work so well. They may be an example of the truth that faith alone is



insufficient. To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action. Let them see that you are not there to instruct them in religion. Admit that they probably know more about it than you do, but call to their attention the fact that however deep their faith and knowledge are, they could not have applied it or they would not drink. Perhaps your story will help them see where they have failed to practice the very precepts they know so well. We represent no particular religion. We are dealing only with general principles common to most traditions.

Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past, and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful. It is important for them to realize that your attempt to pass this on plays a vital part in your own recovery. Actually, they may be helping you more than you are helping them. Make it plain they are under no obligation to you, that you only hope they will try to help other alcoholics when they escape their own difficulties. Suggest how important it is that they place the welfare of other people ahead of their own. Make it clear that they are not under pressure, that they do not need to see you again if they don't want to. You should not be offended if they refuse you, for they have helped you more than you have helped them. If your talk has been sane, quiet, and full of human understanding, you have perhaps made a friend. Maybe you have disturbed them about the question of alcoholism. This is good. The more hopeless they feel, the better. They will be more likely to follow your suggestions.

The person may give reasons why they do not need to follow all of the program. They may rebel at the thought of a drastic housecleaning which requires discussion with other people. Do not contradict such views. Tell them you once felt as they do, but you doubt whether you would have made much progress had you not taken action. On your first visit tell them about the community of Alcoholics Anonymous. If they show interest, lend them your copy of this book.

Unless they want to talk further about themselves, do not wear out your welcome. Give them a chance to think it over. If you do stay, let them steer the conversation in any direction they like. Sometimes a new person is anxious to begin at once and you may be tempted to let them do so. This is sometimes a mistake. If they have trouble later, they are likely to say you rushed them. You will be most successful with alcoholics if you do not become too passionate for reform. Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual authority; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for their inspection. Show them how these tools worked for you. Offer them friendship and community. Tell them that if they want to get well you will do anything you can to help.

If they are not interested in your solution, if they expect you to act only as a banker for their financial difficulties or a nurse for their binges, you may have to drop them until they change their mind. They may do just that after they get hurt some more.

If they are sincerely interested and want to see you again, ask them to read this book in the interval. After doing that, they must decide for themselves whether they want to go on. They should not be pushed or prodded by you, their partner, or their friends. If they are to find a Higher Power, the desire must come from within.

If they think they can do the job in some other way, or prefer some other spiritual approach, encourage them to follow their own conscience. We have no monopoly on a Creator; we merely have an approach that worked with us. But point out that we alcoholics have much in common and that you would like, in any case, to be friendly. Let it go at that.

Do not be discouraged if this person does not respond at once. Make yourself available to another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept what you have. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing someone who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, they may soon become convinced that they cannot recover by themselves. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy. One of our members failed entirely with the first half dozen contacts, often saying that if working with them had continued, many others who have since recovered might have been deprived of their chance for recovery.

Suppose now you are making your second visit to someone who has read this book and says they are prepared to go through with the Twelve Steps of the program of recovery. Having had the experience yourself, you can give them much practical advice. Let them know you are available if they wish to make a decision and tell their story, but do not insist on it if they prefer to consult someone else.

They may be broke and homeless. If they are, you might try to help them get a job or give them a little financial assistance, but you should not deprive your own family or neglect to pay your bills. Perhaps you will want to take this person into your home for a few days, but be sure you use discretion. Be certain they will be welcomed by your family, and that they are not trying to impose on you for money, connections, or housing. Permit that and you only harm them. You will be making it possible for them to be insincere. You may be enabling them in ways that lead to their destruction rather than their recovery.

Never avoid these responsibilities, but be sure you are doing the right thing if you assume them. Helping others is the foundation of your recovery. A kind act once in a while isn't enough. You have to be kind every day. It may mean the loss of sleep, great interference with your entertainment, or interruptions to your work. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling a concerned partner and relatives, innumerable trips to courts, hospitals, jails, and treatment centers. Your phone may ring at any time of the day or night. Your partner may sometimes feel neglected. A drunk may smash the furniture in your home or burn a mattress. You may have to fight with them if they are violent. Sometimes you will have to take them to a hospital. Another time you may have to send for the police or an ambulance. Occasionally you will have to experience these situations.

We seldom allow an alcoholic to live in our homes for a long period of time. It is not good for them, and it sometimes creates serious complications in a family.

If an alcoholic does not respond, there is no reason why you should neglect their family. You should continue to be friendly to them. The family should be offered your way of life. Should they accept and practice spiritual principles, there is a much better chance that the alcoholic will recover. And even if they continue to drink, the family will find life more bearable.

For the type of alcoholic who is able and willing to get well, little assistance, in the ordinary sense of the word, is needed or wanted. Those who cry for money and housing before conquering alcohol are on the wrong track. Yet we do go to great extremes to provide each other with these very things when such action is warranted. This may seem inconsistent, but we think it is not.

It is not the matter of giving that is in question, but when and how to give. That often makes the difference between failure and success. The minute we become enablers, the alcoholic begins to rely on our assistance rather than on their Higher Power. They demand this or that, claiming they cannot master alcohol until their material needs are cared for. Some of us have learned this truth the hard way: Job or no job, partner or no partner, we simply do not stop drinking as long as we place dependence on other people ahead of dependence on a loving Creator.

Burn the idea into the consciousness of every alcoholic that they can get sober regardless of anyone. The only condition is that they trust in a Power greater than themselves and follow the steps to clean house.

Now, the domestic problem: There may be divorce, separation, or just a strained relationship. When the alcoholic has made such amends as are possible to their family, and has thoroughly explained the new principles by which they are living, they should proceed to put those principles into action at home, that is, if they are lucky enough to have a home. Though the family may be at fault in many respects, the alcoholic should not be concerned about that. They should concentrate on their own spiritual growth and example. Argument and fault-finding are to be avoided like the plague. In many homes this is a difficult thing to do, but it must be done if any results are to be expected. If persisted in for a few months, the effect on an alcoholic's family is sure to be great. The most incompatible people discover they have a basis on which they can meet. Little by little the family may see their own defects and admit them. These can then be discussed in an atmosphere of helpfulness and friendliness.

After they have seen tangible results, the family will perhaps want to participate in recovery. These things will come to pass naturally and in good time, provided, however, that the alcoholic continues to demonstrate that they can be sober, considerate, and helpful, regardless of what anyone says or does. Of course, many times we all fall much below this level of behavior, but we must try to repair the damage immediately or else we pay the penalty by drinking again.

If there is a divorce or separation, there should be no hurry for the couple to get back together. The alcoholic should be sure of their recovery. The partner should fully understand this new way of life. If their old relationship is to be resumed it must be on a better basis, since the former did not work. This means a new attitude and spirit all around. Sometimes it is in the best interest of all concerned that a couple remain apart. Obviously, no rule can be laid down. Let the alcoholic continue their program day by day. When the time for living together has come, it will be apparent to both parties.

Let no alcoholic say they cannot recover unless they have their family back. This just isn't so. In some cases the partner will never come back for one reason or another. Remind the person that their recovery is not dependent on other people. It is dependent on their relationship with their Creator. We have seen people get well whose families have not returned at all. We have

seen others slip when the family came back too soon.

Both you and the alcoholic must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we relied on our Creator were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!

When working with an alcoholic and their family, you should take care not to participate in their disagreements. You may spoil your chance of being helpful if you do. But stress to an alcoholic's family that this has been a very sick person and should be treated accordingly. You should warn against arousing resentment or jealousy. You should point out that the alcoholic's defects of character are not going to disappear overnight. Show the family that they have entered on a period of growth. Ask them to remember, when they are impatient, that the goal is sobriety.

If you have been successful in solving your own domestic problems, tell the newcomer's family how that was accomplished. In this way you can set them on the right track without becoming critical of them. The story of how you and your partner settled your difficulties is worth any amount of criticism.

Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where alcohol is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must avoid friends who drink; we must not watch movies that show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so.

We encounter these experiences every day. An alcoholic who cannot handle them still has an alcoholic mind; there is something the matter with their spiritual status. Their only chance for sobriety would be someplace completely isolated, and even there someone might turn up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything! Ask any person who has sent their partner to distant places on the hope that they would escape alcohol.

In our belief, any plan for combating alcoholism which proposes to shield the sick person from temptation is doomed to failure. If the alcoholic tries to shield themselves they may succeed for a time, but they usually wind up with an even bigger problem. We have tried these methods.

These attempts to do the impossible have always failed, so our rule is not to avoid a place where there is drinking if we have a legitimate reason for being there. That includes bars, parties, receptions, weddings -- even innocent dinner gatherings. To a person who has had experience with an alcoholic, this may seem like tempting fate, but it isn't.

You will note that we made an important qualification. Therefore, ask yourself on each occasion, "Do I have a good social, professional, or personal reason for going to this place? Or am I expecting to steal a little vicarious pleasure from the atmosphere of such places?" If you answer these questions satisfactorily, you don't need to have any apprehension. Go or stay, whichever seems best. But be sure that you are on solid spiritual ground before you start, and that your motive in going is thoroughly valid. Do not think of what you will get out of the occasion. Think of what you can bring to it, but if you are unsure, you had better work with

another alcoholic instead!

Why be unhappy in places where there is drinking, remembering when you could drink? If it is a happy occasion, try to increase the pleasure of those there; if a work occasion, attend to it enthusiastically. If you are with a person who wants to eat in a bar, by all means go along. Let your friends know they are not to change their habits on your account. At a proper time and place explain to all your friends why alcohol disagrees with you. If you do this thoroughly, few people will ask you to drink. While you were drinking, you were withdrawing from life little by little. Now you are getting back into the social life of this world. Don't start to withdraw again just because your friends drink alcohol.

Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth to carry the message. Serve others, partner with your Creator, and you will stay sober.

Many of us keep alcohol in our homes. We often need it to carry the newly sober through a severe hangover. Some of us still serve it to our friends provided they are not alcoholic. But some of us think we should not serve alcohol to anyone. We never argue this question. We feel that each family, in the light of their own circumstances, ought to decide for themselves.

We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking. Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every new alcoholic looks for this judgement among us and is immensely relieved when they find we are accepting. A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of moderate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it.

Some day we hope that Alcoholics Anonymous will help the public to reach a better realization of the gravity of the alcoholic problem, but we will be of little use if our attitude is one of bitterness or hostility. Drinkers will not stand for it.

After all, our problems were of our own making. Drinking was only a symptom. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We have to!

## Chapter 8

### TO PARTNERS

For everyone who drinks, others are involved. Among us are partners, colleagues, relatives, and friends whose problem has been solved, as well as some who have not yet found a happy solution. We want the partners of the members of Alcoholics Anonymous to address the partners of those who drink too much. What they say will apply to nearly everyone bound by ties of blood or affection to an alcoholic.

As a partner of Alcoholics Anonymous, we would like you to feel that we understand as

perhaps few can. We want to analyze mistakes we have made. We want to leave you with the feeling that no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome.

We have traveled a difficult path, there is no mistake about that. We have deep experience with hurt pride, frustration, self-pity, misunderstanding, and fear. These are not pleasant companions. We have been driven from deep sympathies to bitter resentment. Some of us veered from extreme to extreme, always hoping that one day the people we love would be themselves once more.

Our loyalty and the desire that our partners would hold up their heads and be like others have led to all sorts of difficulties. We have been unselfish and self-sacrificing. We have told innumerable lies to protect our pride and our partners' reputations. We have prayed, we have begged, we have been patient. We have struck out viciously. We have run away. We have been emotional. We have been terror stricken. We have sought sympathy. We have had retaliatory love affairs with others.

Our homes have been battle-grounds many times. In the morning we have kissed and made up. Our friends have counseled us to leave and we have done so with finality, only to be back in a little while hoping, always hoping. Our partners have sworn great solemn oaths that they were through drinking forever. We have believed them when no one else could or would. Then, in days, weeks, or months, they drink again.

We seldom had friends at our homes, never knowing how or when the alcoholic of the house would appear. We could make few social engagements. We came to live almost alone. When we were invited out, our partners sneaked so many drinks that they spoiled the occasion. If, on the other hand, they took nothing, their self-pity made them pathetic.

There was never financial security. Jobs were always in jeopardy or gone. The bank account melted like snow in June.

Sometimes there were affairs with other people. How heartbreaking was this discovery; how cruel to be told those people understood as we did not!

The bill collectors, the sheriffs, the police, the friends, and even the sex partners they sometimes brought home -- our partners thought we were so inhospitable. The next day they would be themselves again and we would forgive and try to forget.

We have tried to hold the love of our children for our partner. We have told our children that our loved one was sick, which was much nearer the truth than we realized. They struck the children, kicked out doors, smashed furniture, and broke dishes and pottery. In the midst of such pandemonium they may have rushed out threatening to leave forever. In desperation, we have even gotten drunk ourselves -- the drunk to end all drunks. The unexpected result was that our partners seemed to like it.

Perhaps at this point we got a divorce and took the children home to our parents. Then we were severely criticized by our in-laws for desertion. Usually we did not leave. We stayed on and on.

We began to ask medical advice as the binges got closer together. The alarming physical and mental symptoms, the deepening sense of remorse, depression, and inferiority that settled down on our loved ones -- these things terrified and distracted us. Like animals on a treadmill, we have

patiently and wearily climbed, falling back in exhaustion after each futile effort to reach solid ground. Most of us have entered the final stage with its commitment to health spas, treatment centers, hospitals, and jails. Sometimes there were screaming blackouts and insanity. Death was often near.

Under these conditions we naturally made mistakes. Some of them rose out of ignorance of alcoholism. Sometimes we sensed dimly that we were dealing with a sick person. If we had fully understood the nature of the alcoholic illness, we might have behaved differently.

How could someone who loved their partner and children be so unthinking, so callous, and so cruel? There could be no love in such persons, we thought. And just as we were being convinced of their heartlessness, they would surprise us with fresh resolves and new attentions. For a while they would be their old sweet selves, only to break the new semblance of affection once more. Asked why they started to drink again, they would reply with some silly excuse, or none. It was so confusing and so heartbreaking. Could we have been so mistaken about the person we married? When drinking, they were strangers. Sometimes they were so inaccessible that it seemed as though a great wall had been built around them.

And even if they did not love their families, how could they be so blind about themselves? What had become of their judgment, their common sense, and their will power? Why could they not see that alcohol would ruin them? Why was it, when these facts were pointed out, that they agreed and then got drunk again immediately?

These are some of the questions which race through the mind of every person who has an alcoholic partner. We hope this book has answered some of them. Perhaps your partner has been living in that strange world of alcoholism where everything is distorted and exaggerated. You can see that they really do love you with their better self. Of course, there is such a thing as incompatibility, but in nearly every instance the alcoholic only seems to be unloving and inconsiderate; it is usually because they are warped and sickened that they say and do terrible things. Today most of our recovered partners are better parents than ever before.

Try not to condemn your alcoholic partner no matter what they say or do. They are just another very sick, unreasonable person. Treat them, when you can, as though they had pneumonia. When they anger you, remember that they are very ill.

There is an important exception to the foregoing. We realize that some alcoholics are thoroughly bad-intentioned, that no amount of patience will make any difference. An alcoholic of this type may be quick to use this chapter as a club over your head. Don't let them get away with it. If you are positive they are one of this type you may feel it is best to leave. Is it right to let them ruin your life and the lives of your children? Especially when they have before them a way to stop drinking and abuse if they really want to do the work.

The problem with which you struggle usually falls within one of four categories:

One: Your partner may be only a heavy drinker. Their drinking may be constant or it may be heavy only on certain occasions. Perhaps they spend too much money for alcohol. It may be slowing them up mentally and physically, but they do not recognize that. Sometimes they are a source of embarrassment to you and your friends. They are positive they can handle their

alcohol, that it does them no harm, that drinking is necessary in their job. They would probably be insulted if they were called an alcoholic. This world is full of people like them. Some will moderate or stop altogether, and some will not. Of those who keep on, a good number will become true alcoholics after a while.

Two: Your partner is showing lack of control, for they are unable to stay on the wagon even when they want to. They often get entirely out of control when drinking. They admit this is true, but are positive that they will do better. They have begun to try, with or without your cooperation, various means of moderating or staying dry. Maybe they are beginning to lose friends. Their job may suffer somewhat. They are worried at times and are becoming aware that they cannot drink like other people. They sometimes drink in the morning and also throughout the day to hold themselves together. They are remorseful after serious drinking binges and tell you they want to stop. But when they get over the drunk, they begin to think once more that they can control their drinking next time. We think this person is in danger. These are the earmarks of a real alcoholic. Perhaps they can still tend to their jobs fairly well. They have by no means ruined everything yet.

Three: This person has gone much further than partner number two. Though once like number two, they became worse. Their friends have slipped away, their home is a wreck, and they cannot hold a job. Maybe the doctor has been called in, and the weary round of treatment centers and hospitals has begun. They admit they cannot drink like other people but do not see why. They cling to the idea that they will somehow find a way to do so. They may have come to the point where they desperately want to stop but cannot. This case presents additional questions which we will try to answer for you. You can be quite hopeful about a situation like this.

Four: You may have a partner who you feel is completely hopeless. They have been placed in one treatment center after another. They are violent or appear definitely insane when drunk. Sometimes they drink on the way home from the hospital. Perhaps they have had dangerous alcohol withdrawal. This picture may not be as dark as it looks. Many of our partners were just as far gone, yet they got sober.

Let's now go back to partner number one. Oddly enough, they are often difficult to deal with. They enjoy drinking. It stirs their imagination. Their friends feel closer over a drink. Perhaps you enjoy drinking together when they don't go too far. You have had happy evenings together, chatting and drinking in your home. Perhaps you both like parties which would be dull without alcohol. We have enjoyed such evenings ourselves; we had a good time. We know all about how alcohol relieves social inhibitions. Some, but not all of us, think it has its advantages when reasonably used.

The first principle of success is that you should never be angry. Even though your partner becomes unbearable and you have to leave them temporarily, you should, if you can, go without bitterness. Patience and a good outlook are most necessary.

Our next thought is that you should never tell them what they must do about their drinking. If they get the idea that you are trying to change them, your chance of accomplishing anything useful may be zero. They will use that as an excuse to drink more. They will tell you they are



misunderstood. This may lead to lonely evenings for you. They may seek someone else to console them.

Be determined that your partner's drinking is not going to spoil your relationship with your children or your friends. They need your companionship and your help. It is possible to have a full and useful life, even if your partner continues to drink. We know people who are unafraid, even happy under these conditions. Do not set your heart on reforming your partner. You may be unable to do so, no matter how hard you try.

We know these suggestions are sometimes difficult to follow, but you will avoid heartbreak if you can succeed in following them. Your partner may come to appreciate your reasonableness and patience. This may lay the groundwork for a talk about their alcoholism. Try to have them bring up the subject. Be sure you are not critical during the discussion. Instead, attempt to put yourself in their place. Let them see that you want to be helpful rather than critical.

When a discussion does arise, you might suggest they read this book or at least the chapter on alcoholism. Tell them you have been worried, though perhaps needlessly. You think they ought to know the subject better, as everyone should have a clear understanding of the risk they take if they drink too much. Show them you have confidence in their power to stop or moderate. Say you do not want to be a drag on them; that you only want them to take care of their health. In this way you may succeed in getting them to discuss their alcoholism.

They probably have several alcoholics among their own friends. You might suggest that you both take an interest in these friends. Drinkers like to help other drinkers. Your partner may be willing to talk to one of them.

If this kind of approach does not arouse the interest of your partner it may be best to drop the subject, but after a talk they will usually revive the topic at some point. This may take patient waiting but it will be worth it. Meanwhile you might try to help the spouse of another serious drinker. If you act on these principles, your partner may stop or moderate.

Suppose, however, that your partner fits the description of number two. The same principles which apply to case number one should be practiced. But after their next binge, ask if they are ready to stop drinking. Do not ask that they do it for you or anyone else. Just would they like to?

The chances are they would. Show them your copy of this book and tell them what you have found out about alcoholism. Show them that as alcoholics, the writers of the book understand. Tell them some of the interesting stories you have read. If you think they will reject the spiritual aspect of the program, ask them to look at the chapter on alcoholism. Then perhaps they will be interested enough to continue.

If they are willing, your cooperation will mean a great deal. If they are lukewarm or think they are not an alcoholic, we suggest you leave them alone. Avoid urging them to follow our program. The seed has been planted in their mind. They know that millions of people much like themselves have recovered. But don't remind them of this after they have been drinking, because they may get angry. Sooner or later, you are likely to find them reading this book once more. Wait until repeated slips convince them that they must act. The more you hurry them the longer their recovery may be delayed.

If you have a number three partner, you may be in luck. Being certain they want to stop, you can go to them with this book with confidence. They may not share your enthusiasm, but they will probably read the book and they may go for the program. If they don't, you will probably not have to wait very long. Again, you should not push them. Let them decide for themselves. Be supportive if they slip. Talk about their condition or this book only when they raise the issue. In some cases it may be better to let someone outside the family present the book. That can promote action without arousing hostility. If your partner is otherwise a normal individual, your chances are good at this stage.

You would suppose that people in the fourth classification would be quite hopeless, but that is not so. Many members of Alcoholics Anonymous were like that. Everybody had given up on them. Defeat seemed certain. Yet often such people had spectacular and powerful recoveries.

There are exceptions. Some people have been so impaired by alcohol that they cannot stop. Sometimes there are cases where alcoholism is complicated by other disorders. A physician or psychiatrist can tell you whether these complications are serious. In any event, try to have your partner read this book. Their reaction may be one of hopefulness. If they are already committed to an institution but can convince you and your doctor that they are serious, give them a chance to try our program of action unless the doctor thinks their mental condition is too abnormal or dangerous. We make this recommendation with some confidence. For years we have been working with alcoholics committed to institutions. Since this book was first published, A.A. has released thousands of alcoholics from psych wards and hospitals. The majority have never returned. The power of Spirit goes deep!

You may have the reverse situation on your hands. Perhaps you have a partner who is not institutionalized but who should be committed when they are a danger to themselves or others. Some people cannot or will not get over alcoholism. The partner and children of such people suffer horribly, but not more than the alcoholics themselves.

But sometimes you must start a new life. We know people who have done it. If such people adopt a spiritual way of life their road will be smoother.

If your partner is a drinker, you probably worry over what other people are thinking and you hate to meet your friends. You withdraw more and more into yourself and you think everyone is talking about the condition of your life. You avoid the subject of drinking, even with your own parents. You do not know what to tell your children. When your partner is bad, you become a trembling recluse, wishing the phone had never been invented.

We find that most of this embarrassment is unnecessary. While you do not need to discuss your partner at length, you can quietly let your friends know the nature of their illness. But you must be on guard not to embarrass or harm them.

When you have carefully explained to your friends that your partner is sick, you will have created a new atmosphere. Barriers which have arisen between you and your friends will disappear with the growth of sympathetic understanding. You will no longer be self-conscious or feel that you must apologize as though your partner were a bad person. They may be anything but that. Your new courage, good nature and lack of self-consciousness will do wonders for you

socially.

The same principle applies in dealing with the children. Unless they actually need protection from your partner, it is best not to take sides in any argument between them while your partner is drinking. Use your energies to promote a better understanding all around. Then that terrible tension which grips the home of every problem drinker will be lessened.

Frequently, you have felt obliged to tell employers and friends that your partner was sick, when in fact they were drunk. Avoid doing this as much as you can. Whenever possible, let your partner explain. Your desire to protect them should not cause you to lie to people when they have a right to know where they are and what they are doing. Discuss this when your partner is sober and in a good mood. Ask what you should do if they place you in such a position again, but be careful not to be resentful about the last time they did so.

There is another paralyzing fear. You may be afraid your partner will lose their job; you are thinking of the financial difficulties which may follow. This experience may happen, or it may already have happened several times. Should it happen again, regard it in a different light. Maybe it will prove a blessing! It may convince your partner to stop drinking forever. And now you know that they can stop if they will! Time after time this apparent misfortune has been a benefit to us, for it opened up a path which led to the discovery of a Higher Power.

We have elsewhere remarked how much better life is when lived on a spiritual plane. Our Creator can solve the age-old riddle of alcoholism and can solve your problems too. We found that, like everybody else, we were afflicted with pride, self-pity, vanity, and all the things which go to make up the self-centered person; and we were not above selfishness or dishonesty. As our partners began to apply spiritual principles in their lives, we began to see the desirability of doing so too.

At first, some of us did not believe we needed this help. We thought that on the whole we were pretty good people, capable of being nicer if our partners stopped drinking. But it was a silly idea that we were too good to need a Higher Power. Now we try to put spiritual principles to work in every department of our lives. When we do that, we find it solves our problems too; the lack of fear, worry and hurt feelings is a wonderful thing. We urge you to try our program, for nothing will be so helpful to your partner as the radically changed attitude toward them which our Creator will show you. Join your partner in our program if you possibly can.

When you and your partner find the solution for the problem of alcoholism you are, of course, going to be very happy. But all problems will not be solved at once. The seed has started to sprout in a new soil, but growth has only begun. In spite of your new-found happiness, there will be ups and downs. Many of the old problems will still be with you. This is as it should be.

The faith and sincerity of both of you will be put to the test. These work-outs should be regarded as part of your education, for you will be learning to live. You will make mistakes, but if you are sincere they will not drag you down. Instead, you will capitalize on them. A better way of life will emerge when they are overcome.

Some of the challenges you will encounter are irritation, hurt feelings, and resentment. Your partner will sometimes be unreasonable and you will want to criticize. Starting from a speck on

the domestic horizon, great thunderclouds of dispute may gather. These family dissensions are very dangerous, especially to the alcoholic. Often you must carry the burden of avoiding them or keeping them under control. Never forget that resentment is a deadly hazard to an alcoholic. We do not mean that you have to agree with your partner whenever there is an honest difference of opinion. Just be careful not to disagree in a resentful or critical way.

You will both find that you can dispose of serious problems more easily than you can the trivial ones. Next time the two of you have an argument, no matter what the subject, it should be the privilege of either to smile and say, "This is getting serious. I'm sorry I got angry. Let's talk about it later." If your partner is trying to live on a spiritual basis, they will also be doing everything in their power to avoid disagreement or contention.

Your partner knows they owe you more than sobriety. They want to make amends. Yet you must not expect too much. Their ways of thinking and doing are the habits of years. Patience, tolerance, understanding, and love are the watchwords. Show them these things in yourself and they will be reflected back to you. Live and let live is the rule. If you both show a willingness to remedy your own defects, there will be little need to criticize each other.

We carry with us a picture of the ideal person, the sort of person we would like our partners to be. It is the most natural thing in the world, once the alcohol problem is solved, to feel that they will now measure up to that vision. The chances are they will not, for like yourself, they are just beginning their development. Be patient.

Another feeling we are very likely to have is resentment because love and loyalty could not cure our partners of alcoholism. We do not like the thought that the contents of a book or the work of another alcoholic has accomplished in a few weeks something with which we struggled for years. At such moments we forget that alcoholism is an illness over which we could not possibly have had any power.

Your partner will be the first to say that it was your devotion and care which brought them to the point where they could have a spiritual experience. Without you they would have fallen apart long ago. When resentful thoughts come, try to pause and count your blessings. After all, your family is reunited, alcohol is no longer a problem, and you and your partner are working together toward an undreamed-of future.

Still another difficulty is that you may become jealous of the attention your partner gives to other people, especially alcoholics. You have been starving for their companionship, yet they spend long hours helping others and their families. You feel they should now be yours. The fact is that they should work with other people to maintain their own sobriety. Sometimes they will be so interested in others that they become really neglectful. Your house is filled with strangers. You may not like some of them. Your partner gets involved in the problems of other alcoholics, but not at all in yours. It will do little good if you point that out and urge more attention for yourself. We find it a real mistake to dampen someone's enthusiasm for alcoholic work. You should join in their efforts as much as you possibly can. We suggest that you direct some of your energy to the partners of these new alcoholic friends. They need the counsel and love of someone who has gone through what you have.

It is probably true that you and your spouse have been living too much alone, for drinking many times isolates the partner of an alcoholic. Therefore, you probably need fresh interests and a great cause to live for as much as your partner. If you cooperate rather than complain, you will find that their excess enthusiasm will tone down over time. Both of you will awaken to a new sense of responsibility for others. You, as well as your partner, ought to think of what you can put into life instead of how much you can take out. Inevitably your lives will be fuller for doing so. You will lose the old life to find a much better one.

Perhaps your partner will make a fair start on the basis of your new relationship, but just as things are going beautifully, they may disappoint you by coming home drunk. If you are satisfied that they really want to quit drinking, you need not be alarmed. Though it is infinitely better that they have no relapse at all, as has been true with many alcoholics, it is by no means a bad thing in some cases. Your partner will see at once that they must redouble their spiritual program if they expect to survive. You need not remind them of their spiritual deficiency -- they will know it. Ask them how you can be even more helpful.

The slightest sign of fear or intolerance may lessen your partner's chance of recovery. In a weak moment they may take your dislike of their friends as one of those insanely trivial excuses to drink.

We never, never try to arrange someone's life to shield them from temptation. The slightest attempt on your part to guide their life so they will not be tempted will be noticed. Make them feel absolutely free to come and go as they like. This is important. If they get drunk, don't blame yourself. Our Creator has either removed your partner's alcohol problem or has not. If not, it is better to know right away. Then you and your partner can get down to fundamentals. If a repetition is to be prevented, give the problem, along with everything else, to the Creator.

We realize that we have been giving you much direction and advice. We may have seemed to lecture. If that is so we apologize, because we ourselves don't always care for people who lecture us. But what we have related is based on experience, some of it painful. We had to learn these things the hard way. That is why we are anxious that you understand, and that you avoid these unnecessary difficulties.

So to you out there -- who may soon be with us -- we say "Good luck and bless you!"

## Chapter 9

### THE FAMILY AFTERWARD

Certain attitudes are suggested that a partner may take with the alcoholic who is recovering. Perhaps the impression has been created that the recovering alcoholic should be put on a pedestal. Successful readjustment means the opposite. All members of the family should meet on the common ground of tolerance, understanding, and love. This involves a process of deflation. The alcoholic, the spouse, and the children are each likely to have fixed ideas about the family's

attitude towards themselves. Each is interested in having their wishes respected. We find that the more one member of the family demands concessions, the more resentful the others become. This makes for discord and unhappiness.

And why? Isn't it because each one wants to play the lead? Isn't each one trying to arrange the family attitude to their liking? Are they not unconsciously trying to see what they can take from the family life rather than give?

Cessation of drinking is but the first step away from a highly strained, abnormal condition. A doctor said to us, "Years of living with an alcoholic is almost sure to make any partner or child neurotic. The entire family is, to some extent, ill." Let families realize, as they start their journey, that all will not be easy -- each will struggle. There will be alluring shortcuts which they may choose and lose their way.

Suppose we tell you some of the obstacles a family will meet; suppose we suggest how they may be avoided -- even converted to good use for others. The family of an alcoholic longs for the return of happiness and security. They remember when the alcoholic was romantic, thoughtful, and successful. Today's life is measured against that of other years and, when it falls short, the family may be unhappy.

Family confidence is rising high. The good old days will soon be back, they think. Sometimes the family demands that the recovering alcoholic bring them back instantly! A Higher Power, they believe, almost owes this recompense on a long overdue account. But the afflicted person has spent years pulling down the structures of work, romance, friendship, health -- these things are now ruined or damaged. It will take time to clear away the wreckage. Though old buildings will eventually be replaced by finer ones, the new structures will take years to complete.

The alcoholic knows they are to blame; it may take them many years of hard work to be restored financially, but they shouldn't be criticized. Perhaps they will never have much money again. But the wise family will admire them for what they are trying to be, rather than for what they are trying to get.

Now and then the family will be plagued by ghosts from the past, for the drinking career of almost every alcoholic has been marked by escapades -- funny, humiliating, shameful or tragic. The first impulse will be to bury these skeletons in a dark closet and lock the door. The family may be possessed by the idea that future happiness can be based only on forgetfulness of the past. We think that such a view is self-centered and in direct conflict with the new way of living.

Henry Ford once made a wise remark to the effect that experience is the thing of supreme value in life. That is true only if one is willing to use the past for good purposes. We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into assets. The alcoholic's past thus becomes the principal asset of the family and frequently it is almost the only one!

This painful past may be of infinite value to other families still struggling with their problem. We think each family which has been relieved owes something to those families that have not. When the occasion requires, each member of the family should be willing to bring former mistakes, no matter how grievous, out of their hiding places. Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worthwhile to us now. Cling to the

thought that the dark past is one of the greatest possessions you have -- and is a key to life and happiness for others. With it you can avert death and misery.

It is possible to dig up past offenses so they become a blight, a veritable plague. For example, we know of situations in which one of the partners has had a love affair. In the first flush of spiritual experience they forgave each other and drew closer together. The miracle of reconciliation was at hand. Then, under one provocation or another, the aggrieved one would remind their partner of the old affair. A few of us have had these growing pains and they have hurt a great deal. Couples have sometimes been obliged to separate for a time until a new perspective, a new victory over hurt pride could be re-won. In most cases, the alcoholic survived this ordeal without relapse, but not always. So we think that unless some good and useful purpose is to be served, past occurrences should not be discussed.

We families of Alcoholics Anonymous keep few skeletons in the closet. Everyone knows about the others' alcoholic problems. This is a condition which, in ordinary life, would produce untold grief; there might be hurtful gossip, laughter at the expense of other people, and a tendency to take advantage of intimate information. Among us, these are rare occurrences. We do talk about each other a great deal, but we almost invariably temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance.

Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not talk about the intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure they would approve. We find it better, when possible, to stick to our own stories. A person may criticize or laugh at themselves and it will affect others favorably, but criticism or ridicule coming from another often produces the opposite effect. Members of a family should watch such matters carefully, for one careless, inconsiderate remark has been known to do a great deal of harm. We alcoholics can be overly sensitive people. It takes some of us a long time to outgrow that serious handicap.

Many alcoholics are enthusiasts. They run to extremes. At the beginning of recovery a person will take, as a rule, one of two directions. They may either plunge into a frantic attempt to get on their feet professionally, or they may be so enthralled by their new life that they talk or think of little else. In either case certain family problems will arise. With these we have had lots of experience.

We think it's dangerous if the alcoholic rushes headlong to resolve their economic problem. The family will be affected also, pleasantly at first, as they feel their money troubles are about to be solved, then not so pleasantly as they find themselves neglected. The alcoholic may be tired at night and preoccupied by day. They may take small interest in the children and may show irritation when criticized for their delinquencies. If not irritable, they may seem dull and boring, not happy and affectionate as the family would like them to be. The family may complain of inattention. They are all disappointed, and often let the alcoholic feel it. Beginning with such complaints, a barrier arises. The recovering person is straining every nerve to make up for lost time. They are striving to recover financially and socially and feel they are doing very well.

Sometimes the family doesn't think so. Having been neglected and misused in the past, they think they are owed more than they are getting. They want love and attention. They expect to

have the nice times they used to have before drinking got so bad, and to have the alcoholic show contrition for what the family suffered. But the recovering alcoholic doesn't give freely of themselves. Resentment grows. They become still less communicative. Sometimes they explode over nothing. The family is mystified. They criticize, pointing out how the one they love is falling down on their spiritual program.

This sort of thing can be avoided. Both the alcoholic and the family are mistaken, though each side may have some justification. It is of little use to argue and only makes the impasse worse. The family must realize that, though marvelously improved, this person is still convalescing. They should be thankful the alcoholic is sober and able to function in this world once more. Let them praise this progress. Let them remember that drinking brought all kinds of damage that may take a long time to repair. If they sense these things, they will not take so seriously the periods of irritability, depression, or apathy, which will disappear when there is tolerance, love, and spiritual understanding.

The alcoholic ought to remember that they are mainly to blame for what happened in the home. They can scarcely make amends in their lifetime. But they must see the danger of over-concentration on financial success. Although financial recovery is on the way for many of us, we found we could not place money first. For us, material well-being always followed spiritual progress; it never preceded.

Since the home has suffered more than anything else, it is well that a person exert themselves there. They are not likely to get far in any direction if they fail to show unselfishness and love under their own roof. We know there are difficult partners and families, but the person who is getting over alcoholism must remember they did much to make them so.

As each member of a resentful family begins to see their shortcomings and admits these to the others, they lay a basis for helpful discussion. These family talks will be constructive if they can be carried on without heated argument, self-pity, self-justification, or resentful criticism. Little by little, the family will see that they ask too much, and the alcoholic will see that they give too little. Giving, rather than getting, will become the guiding principle.

Assume on the other hand that the alcoholic has, at the outset, a stirring spiritual experience. Overnight, as it were, they are a different person. They become a religious enthusiast. They are unable to focus on anything else. As soon as their sobriety begins to be taken as a matter of course, the family may look at the strange new parent with apprehension, then with irritation. There is talk about spiritual matters morning, noon, and night. The alcoholic may demand that the family find religion in a hurry, or exhibit amazing indifference and claim to be above worldly considerations. The alcoholic may tell their partner, who has always been religious, that they don't know what spirituality is all about, and that they had better adopt this new brand of spirituality while there is still time.

When this tack is taken, the family may react negatively. They may be jealous of a religion that has stolen the parent's affections. While grateful that drinking is no longer a problem, they may not like the idea that a Higher Power has accomplished the miracle where they failed. They often forget that the parent was beyond human aid. They may not see why their love and devotion did



not succeed. This parent is not so spiritual after all, they say. If the object is to right past wrongs, why all this concern for everyone in the world but the family? What about this talk that a Creator will take care of them? They suspect that the parent is a bit crazy!

But this person is not so unbalanced as they might think. Many of us have experienced the same kind of elation. We have indulged in spiritual intoxication. Like a gaunt prospector, belt drawn in over the last ounce of food, our pick had struck gold. Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knew no bounds. The alcoholic feels they have struck something better than gold. For a time they may try to hug the new treasure to themselves. They may not see at once that they have barely scratched a limitless lode which will pay dividends only if they mine it for the rest of their life, and may insist on giving away the entire lode.

If the family cooperates, the parent will soon see that they are suffering from a distortion of values. They will perceive that their spiritual growth is lopsided, that for an average person, a spiritual life which does not include family obligations may not be so perfect. If the family will appreciate that this current behavior is just a phase of development, all will be well. In the midst of an understanding and sympathetic family, these fluctuations of spiritual infancy will quickly disappear.

The opposite may happen should the family condemn and criticize. The parent may feel that for years drinking has placed them on the wrong side of every argument, but that now they have become a superior person with a Higher Power on their side. If the family persists in criticism, that fallacy may take a still greater hold on this person. Instead of treating the family as they should, they may retreat further into themselves and feel they have spiritual justification for so doing.

Though the family does not fully agree with these spiritual activities, the recovering person should be allowed to have their way. Even if they display a certain amount of neglect and irresponsibility towards the family, let them go as far as they like in helping other alcoholics. During those first days of recovery, this will do more to insure sobriety than anything else. Though some of these manifestations are alarming and disagreeable, we think this parent will be on a firmer foundation than the person who is placing professional success ahead of spiritual development. They will be less likely to drink again, and anything is preferable to that.

Those of us who have spent much time in the world of spiritual make-believe have eventually seen the childishness of it. This dream world has been replaced by a great sense of purpose, accompanied by a growing consciousness of a Higher Power in our lives. We have come to believe that our Creator would like us to keep our heads in the clouds, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth. That is where our community of travelers are, and that is where our work must be done. These are the realities for us. We have found nothing incompatible between a powerful spiritual experience and a life of sane and happy usefulness.

One more suggestion: Whether the family has spiritual convictions or not, they may do well to examine the principles by which the alcoholic member is trying to live. They can hardly fail to approve these simple principles, though the recovering person still fails somewhat in practicing them. Nothing will help someone who is off on a spiritual tangent so much as the partner who

adopts a sane spiritual program, making a better practical use of it.

There will be other profound changes in the home. Alcohol incapacitated the person for so many years that the partner became responsible for the family. They met these responsibilities. By force of circumstances, they were often obliged to treat the alcoholic as a sick or wayward child. Even when this alcoholic wanted to be assertive, they could not, because drinking placed them constantly in the wrong. Their partner made all the plans and gave the directions. When sober, the alcoholic usually obeyed. Thus the partner, through no fault of their own, became accustomed to taking control. The alcoholic, coming suddenly to life again, often begins to assert themselves. This means trouble unless the family watches for these tendencies in each other and comes to a friendly agreement about them.

Drinking isolates most homes from the outside world. The alcoholic may have abandoned all normal activities for years. When they renew interest in such things, a feeling of jealousy may arise. The family may feel possessive, so much so that nothing should be left for outsiders. Instead of developing new channels of activity for themselves, the family demands that the recovering member stay home and make up the deficiency.

At the very beginning, the couple ought to frankly face the fact that each will have to yield here and there if the family is going to play an effective part in their new life. The alcoholic will necessarily spend much time with other alcoholics, but this activity should be balanced. New acquaintances who know nothing of alcoholism might be made and thoughtful consideration given to their needs. The problems of the community might engage attention. Though the family has no religious connections, they may wish to make contact with or take membership in a religious community.

Alcoholics who have derided religious people will be helped by such contacts. Being possessed of a spiritual experience, the alcoholic will find they have much in common with these people, though they may differ with them on many matters. If they do not argue about religion, they will make new friends and are sure to find new avenues of usefulness and pleasure. They and their family can be a bright spot in such communities. They may bring new hope and new courage to many a clergy person, who gives everything to minister to our troubled world. We intend the foregoing as a helpful suggestion only. So far as we are concerned, there is nothing obligatory about it. As spiritual people, we cannot make up others' minds for them. Each individual should consult their own conscience.

We have been speaking to you of serious, sometimes tragic things. We have been dealing with alcohol in its worst aspects. But we aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life. We try not to indulge in cynicism over the state of the nations, nor do we carry the world's troubles on our shoulders. When we see someone sinking into the mire that is alcoholism, we give them first aid and place what we have at their disposal. For their sake, we recount and almost relive the horrors of our past. But those of us who have tried to shoulder the entire burden and trouble of others find we are soon overcome by them.

So we think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness. Outsiders are sometimes shocked

when we burst into laughter over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past. But why shouldn't we laugh? We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others.

Everybody knows that those in bad health and those who seldom play do not laugh much. So let each family play together or separately, as much as their circumstances allow. We are sure that our Creator wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. Our Creator didn't do it. Avoid then, the deliberate manufacture of misery, but if trouble comes, cheerfully capitalize on it as an opportunity to demonstrate the omnipotence of our Higher Power.

Now about health: A body badly burned by alcohol does not often recover overnight nor do twisted thinking and depression vanish quickly. We are convinced that a spiritual mode of living is a most powerful health restorative. We, who have recovered from serious drinking, are miracles of mental health. But we have seen remarkable transformations in our bodies. Hardly one of our community now shows any mark of physical problems.

But this does not mean that we disregard human health measures. This world has been abundantly supplied with doctors, psychologists, and practitioners of various kinds. Do not hesitate to take your health problems to them. Most of them give freely of themselves so that others may enjoy sound minds and bodies. Try to remember that though our Creator has wrought miracles among us, we should never belittle a good doctor or psychiatrist. Their services are often indispensable in treating a newcomer and in following the case afterward.

One of the many doctors who had the opportunity of reading this book in manuscript form told us that the use of sweets was often helpful, of course depending on a doctor's advice. This doctor thought all alcoholics should constantly have chocolate available for its quick energy value at times of fatigue, adding that occasionally in the night a vague craving arose which would be satisfied by candy. Many of us have noticed a tendency to eat sweets and have found this practice beneficial.

A word about sex relations. Alcohol is so sexually stimulating to some people that they have over-indulged in sex. Couples are occasionally dismayed to find that when drinking is stopped there tends to be sexual dysfunction. Unless the reason is understood, there may be an emotional upset. Some of us had this experience, only to enjoy, in a few months, a greater intimacy than ever. There should be no hesitancy in consulting a doctor or psychologist if the condition persists. We do not know of many cases where this difficulty lasted long.

The alcoholic may find it hard to re-establish friendly relationships with their children. These young minds were impressionable while drinking was a problem. Without saying so, the children may hate the alcoholic for what was done to the family. The children are sometimes dominated by a pathetic hardness and cynicism. They cannot seem to forgive and forget. This may last for months.

In time they will see that the alcoholic is a new person and in their own way will make that known. When this happens, they can be invited to join in morning meditation and then they can take part in the daily discussion without anger or bias. From that point on, progress will be rapid.

Meaningful results often follow such a reunion.

Whether the family lives on a spiritual basis or not, the alcoholic member has to if they will recover. The others must be convinced of this new status beyond the shadow of a doubt. Seeing is believing to most families who have lived with a drinker.

Here is a case in point: One of our recovering friends is a heavy smoker and coffee drinker. There was no doubt they over-indulged. Seeing this, and meaning to be helpful, their partner began to admonish them about it. The friend admitted they were overdoing these things, but frankly said that they were not ready to stop. The partner is one of those people who really feels there is something rather sinful about these habits, and intolerance finally threw the recovering alcoholic into a fit of anger which resulted in drinking.

Of course our friend was wrong -- dead wrong and had to painfully admit it and mend spiritual fences. Though they are now a most effective member of Alcoholics Anonymous, they still smoke and drink coffee, but neither the partner nor anyone else stands in judgment. The partner sees they were wrong to make an issue out of such a matter when a more serious illness was being rapidly cured.

We have three little mottoes which are apropos. Here they are:

*First Things First*  
*Live and Let Live*  
*Easy Does It.*

## Chapter 10

### TO EMPLOYERS

Among many employers nowadays, I think of one member who has spent much time in the world of big business, having hired and fired hundreds of people and knowing about alcoholism as an employer. Their present views ought to prove exceptionally useful to business people everywhere.

But let them tell you the story. "I was at one time assistant manager of a corporate department employing sixty-six hundred people. One day my assistant came in, saying that an employee insisted on speaking with me. I said that I was not interested. I had warned that person several times that they had one more chance. Not long afterward they had called me from Hartford on two successive days, so drunk they could hardly speak. I told them they were through -- finally and forever.

"My assistant returned to say that it was not the employee on the phone; it was the employee's family member and they wished to give me a message. I still expected a plea for clemency, but these words came through the receiver, 'I just wanted to tell you Paul jumped from a hotel window in Hartford last Saturday, leaving us a note saying you were the best boss they ever had,

and that you were not to blame in any way.’

“Another time, as I opened a letter which lay on my desk a newspaper clipping fell out. It was the obituary of one of the best salespeople I ever had. After two weeks of drinking, they had placed their toe on the trigger of a loaded shotgun -- the barrel was in their mouth. I had fired them for drinking six weeks before.

“Still another experience: A voice came faintly over the phone from Virginia, wanting to know if their partner’s company insurance was still in force. Four days before that the partner had committed suicide. I had been forced to fire that person for drinking, though they were brilliant, alert, and one of the best organizers I have ever known.

“Here were three exceptional people lost to this world because I did not understand alcoholism as I do now. What irony -- I became an alcoholic myself! And but for the intervention of an understanding person, I might have followed in their footsteps. My downfall cost the business community unknown amounts of money because it takes real money to train someone for an executive position. This kind of waste goes on unabated. We think that businesses are shot through with a situation which might be helped by better understanding all around.”

Nearly every employer feels a moral responsibility for the well-being of their staff, and tries to meet these responsibilities. That they have not always done so for the alcoholic is easily understood. To them the alcoholic has often seemed a fool of the first magnitude. Because of the employee’s special ability, or of the employer’s strong personal attachment to them, the employer has sometimes kept such a person at work long beyond a reasonable period. Some employers have tried every known remedy. In only a few instances has there been a lack of patience and tolerance. And we, who have imposed on the best of employers, can scarcely blame them if they have been short with us.

Here, for instance, is a typical example: An officer of one of the largest banking institutions in America knows I no longer drink, and one day told me about an executive of the same bank who, from their description, was undoubtedly an alcoholic. This seemed to me like an opportunity to be helpful, so I spent two hours talking about alcoholism, the illness, and describing the symptoms and results as well as I could. Their comment was, “Very interesting. But I’m sure this person won’t drink again. They just returned from a three-month leave of absence, was in treatment, looked fine, and to clinch the matter, the board of directors told them this was their last chance.”

The only answer I could make was that if the alcoholic followed the usual pattern, they would drink again. I felt this was inevitable and wondered if the bank was doing the person an injustice. Why not bring them into contact with some of our alcoholic people? Then they might have a chance. I pointed out that I had had nothing to drink whatever for three years, and in the face of difficulties that would have made nine out of ten people drink their heads off. Why not at least afford them an opportunity to hear my story? “Oh no,” said my friend, “this person is either through with alcohol or is without a job. If they have your will power and guts, they will stay sober.”

I wanted to throw up my hands in discouragement, for I saw that I had failed to help my friend

understand. They simply could not believe that this person suffered from a serious illness. There was nothing to do but wait.

Presently the person did slip and was fired. Following the termination, we contacted them. Without much resistance, they accepted the principles and procedure that had helped us. They are undoubtedly on the road to recovery. To me, this incident illustrates lack of understanding as to what really ails the alcoholic, and lack of knowledge as to what part employers might profitably take in salvaging their sick employees.

If you desire to help it might be a good idea to disregard your own drinking, or lack of it. Whether you are a hard drinker, a moderate drinker, or a non-drinker, you may have some pretty strong opinions -- perhaps prejudices. Those who drink moderately may be more annoyed with an alcoholic than a total abstainer would be. Drinking occasionally and understanding your own reactions, it is possible for you to become quite sure of many things which, so far as the alcoholic is concerned, are not always so. As a moderate drinker, you can take your alcohol or leave it alone. Whenever you want to you control your drinking. You can get a little tipsy in the evening, get up in the morning, shake your head and go to work. To you, alcohol is no real problem. You cannot see why it should be to anyone else, except the spineless and stupid.

When dealing with an alcoholic, there may be a natural annoyance that a person could be so weak, stupid, and irresponsible. Even when you understand the malady better, you may find this feeling rising.

A look at the alcoholic in your organization is many times illuminating. Are they not usually brilliant, fast-thinking, imaginative and likeable? When sober, do they not work hard and have a knack for getting things done? If they had these qualities and did not drink would they be worth retaining? Should they have the same consideration as other ailing employees? Are they worth salvaging? If your decision is yes, whether the reason is humanitarian or work-related or both, then the following suggestions may be helpful.

Can you discard the feeling that you are dealing only with habit, with stubbornness, or a weak will? If this presents difficulty, re-reading chapters two and three where the alcoholic sickness is discussed at length might be worth while. You, as an employer, want to know the necessities before considering the result. If you concede that your employee is ill, can they be forgiven for what they have done in the past? Can their past absurdities be forgotten? Can it be appreciated that they have been a victim of warped thinking, directly caused by the action of alcohol on their brain?

I remember the shock I received when a prominent doctor in Chicago told me of cases where pressure of the spinal fluid actually ruptured the brain. No wonder an alcoholic is strangely irrational. Who wouldn't be, with such an affected brain? Normal drinkers are not so affected, nor can they understand the aberrations of the alcoholic.

Your employee has probably been trying to conceal a number of problems, perhaps pretty messy ones. They may be disgusting. You may be at a loss to understand how such a seemingly normal person could be so involved. But these scrapes can generally be charged, no matter how bad, to the abnormal action of alcohol on the brain. When drinking or getting over a drunk, an

alcoholic, sometimes the model of honesty when normal, will do incredible things. Afterward, their revulsion will be terrible. Nearly always, these antics indicate nothing more than temporary conditions.

This is not to say that all alcoholics are honest when not drinking. Of course that isn't so, and such people often may impose on you. Seeing your attempt to understand and help, some alcoholics will try to take advantage of your kindness. If you are sure they do not want to stop, they may as well be fired, the sooner the better. You are not doing them a favor by keeping them on. Firing such an individual may prove a blessing to them. It may be just the jolt they need. I know, in my own particular case, that nothing my company could have done would have stopped me for, so long as I was able to keep my job, I could not possibly realize how serious my situation was. Had they fired me first, and had they then taken steps to see that I was presented with the solution contained in this book, I might have returned to them six months later, sober.

But there are many people who want to stop, and with them you can go far. Your understanding treatment of them will pay off.

Perhaps you have someone in mind. They want to quit drinking and you want to help them, even if it is only a matter of good management. You now know more about alcoholism. You can see that they are mentally and physically sick. You are willing to overlook past performances. Suppose an approach is made something like this: State that you know about their drinking and that it must stop. You might say you appreciate their abilities and would like to keep them, but cannot if they continue to drink. A firm attitude at this point has helped many of us.

Next they can be assured that you do not intend to lecture, moralize, or condemn; that if this had been done formerly it was because of misunderstanding. If possible, express a lack of hard feeling toward them. At this point, it might be well to explain alcoholism, the illness. Say that you believe they are a gravely ill person, with this qualification -- being perhaps fatally ill, do they want to get well? You ask because many alcoholics, being warped and drugged, do not want to quit. But do they? Will they take every necessary step, submit to anything to get well, to stop drinking forever?

If they say yes, do they really mean it, or deep down inside do they think they are fooling you, and that after rest and treatment they will be able to get away with a few drinks now and then? We believe a person should be thoroughly questioned on these points. Be satisfied that they are not deceiving themselves or you.

Whether you mention this book is a matter for your discretion. If they hesitate and still think they can drink again, even beer, they might as well be fired after the next drunk which, if an alcoholic, they are almost certain to have. They should understand that emphatically. Either you are dealing someone who can and will get well or you are not. If not, why waste time with them? This may seem severe, but it is usually the best course.

After satisfying yourself that they want to recover and that they will go to any lengths to do so, you may suggest a definite course of action. For most alcoholics who are drinking, or who are just getting over a binge, a certain amount of physical treatment is desirable, even imperative. The matter of physical treatment should, of course, be referred to your own doctor. Whatever the

method, its object is to thoroughly clear mind and body of the effects of alcohol. In competent hands, this seldom takes long. Your employee will fare better if placed in such physical condition that they can think straight and no longer crave alcohol. If you propose such a procedure to them, it may be necessary to help them find a way to cover the cost of treatment. However, it is better for them to be fully responsible for their own recovery.

If they accept your offer, it should be pointed out that physical treatment is just a small part of the picture. Though you are providing them with the best possible medical attention, they should understand that they must undergo a change of heart. To get over drinking will require a transformation of thought and attitude. We all had to place recovery above everything, for without recovery we would have lost both home and job.

Can you have every confidence in their ability to recover? While on the subject of confidence, can you adopt the attitude that so far as you are concerned this will be a strictly personal matter, that their alcoholic tendencies and the treatment about to be undertaken will never be discussed without their consent? It might be a good idea to have a long conversation with them on their return.

To return to the subject matter of this book: It contains full suggestions by which the employee may solve their problem. To you, some of the ideas which it contains are new. Perhaps you are not quite in sympathy with the approach we suggest. By no means do we offer it as the last word on this subject, but so far as we are concerned it has worked with us. After all, are you not looking for results rather than methods? Whether your employee likes it or not, they will learn the hard truth about alcoholism. That won't hurt them a bit, even if they do not go for this solution.

We suggest you draw the book to the attention of the physician who is to attend your employee during treatment. If the book is read the moment the person is able comprehend it, even while acutely depressed, realization of their condition may come to them.

We hope the doctor will tell them the truth about their condition, whatever that happens to be. When the person is presented with this book it is best that no one tell them they must follow its suggestions. People must decide for themselves.

You are betting, of course, that your changed attitude plus the contents of this book will be the solution. In some cases it will, and in others it may not. But we think that if you persevere, the percentage of successes will gratify you. As our work spreads and our numbers increase, we hope your employees may be put in personal contact with some of us. Meanwhile, we are sure a great deal can be accomplished by the use of the book alone.

When your employee returns, talk with them. Ask them if they think they have the answer. If they feel free to discuss their problems with you, if they know you understand and will not be upset by anything they say, they will probably open up to you.

In this connection, can you remain undisturbed if the person proceeds to tell you shocking things? They may, for example, reveal that they have stolen from you or that they have planned to take your best clients away from you. In fact, they may say almost anything if they have accepted our solution which, as you know, demands rigorous honesty. Can you charge this off as



you would a bad account and start fresh with them? If they owe you money you may wish to make terms.

If they speak of their home situation, you can undoubtedly make helpful suggestions. Can they speak frankly with you as long as they do not criticize their associates? With this kind of employee such an attitude will result in deep respect.

The greatest enemies of alcoholics are resentment, jealousy, envy, frustration, and fear. Wherever people are gathered together in a work situation there will be rivalries. Sometimes we alcoholics have an idea that people are trying to pull us down. Often this is not so at all, but sometimes our drinking will be used politically.

One instance comes to mind in which a malicious individual was always making friendly little jokes about an alcoholic's drinking exploits. In this way they were spitefully gossiping. In another case, an alcoholic was sent to treatment. Only a few knew of it at first, but within a short time it was known throughout the entire company. Naturally this sort of thing decreased the person's chance of recovery. The employer can many times protect the alcoholic from this kind of talk. The employer cannot play favorites, but can always defend someone from needless provocation and unfair criticism.

As a class, alcoholics are energetic people. They work hard and they play hard. Your employee should be determined to make amends. Being somewhat weakened, and faced with physical and mental readjustment to a life which knows no alcohol, they may overdo it. You may have to curb their desire to work sixteen hours a day. You may need to encourage them to play once in a while. They may wish to do a lot for other alcoholics and something of the sort may come up during the work day. A reasonable amount of latitude will be helpful. This work is necessary to maintain their sobriety.

After they have gone without drinking for a few months, you may be able to make use of their experiences with other employees who are experiencing alcoholic tendencies -- provided, of course, the suspected alcoholics are willing to have another person involved.

Your employee can be trusted. The employer's long experience with alcoholic excuses naturally arouses suspicion. If the employee's spouse calls saying that their partner sick, you might jump to the conclusion that they are drunk. If they are, and are still trying to recover, they will tell you about it even if it means the loss of their job, for they know they must be honest if they want to live. They will appreciate knowing that you are not suspicious nor trying to run their life so that they will be shielded from temptation to drink. If they are conscientiously following the program of recovery they can go anywhere work may send them.

In case they do stumble, even once, you will have to decide whether to let them go. If you are sure they aren't serious about getting sober, there is no doubt you should fire them. If, on the other hand, you are sure they are doing their best, you may wish to give them another chance. But you should feel under no obligation to keep them on.

There is another thing you might wish to do. If your organization is a large one, your management teams might be provided with this book. You might let them know you are supportive of the alcoholics wishing to get help in your organization. Managers are often in a

difficult position. People under them are frequently their friends. So, for one reason or another, they cover these people, hoping things will get better. They often jeopardize their own jobs by trying to help problem drinkers who should have been fired long ago. Giving managers this book provides them with an opportunity to help.

After reading this book, a manager can go to the problem drinker and say approximately this, "Do you want to stop drinking or not? You put me on the spot every time you get drunk. It isn't fair to me or the organization. I have been learning something about alcoholism. If you are an alcoholic, you are a sick person. You act like one. We want to help you get sober, and if you are interested, there is a way out. If you take it, your past will be forgotten and the fact that you went away for treatment will not be mentioned. But if you cannot or will not stop drinking, I think you ought to resign."

Your manager may not agree with the contents of our book. They don't need to, and often shouldn't show it to the alcoholic. But at least the supervisor will understand the problem and will no longer be misled by ordinary promises from the alcoholic. They will be able to take a position with such a person which is eminently fair. They will have no further reason for overlooking the behavior of an alcoholic employee.

It boils right down to this: No one should be fired just because they are alcoholic. If they want to stop, they should be given an opportunity to do so. If they cannot or do not want to stop, they should be fired. The exceptions are few.

We think this method of approach will accomplish several things. It will permit the rehabilitation of good people. At the same time you will feel no reluctance to rid yourself of those who cannot or will not stop. Alcoholism may be causing your organization considerable damage in its waste of time, people, and reputation. We hope our suggestions will help you plug up this sometimes serious leak. We think we are sensible when we urge that you stop this waste and give your worthwhile people a chance.

The other day an approach was made to the vice president of a large industrial firm. This person remarked: "I'm glad you got over your drinking. But the policy of this company is not to interfere with the habits of our employees. If someone drinks so much that their job suffers, we fire them. I don't see how you can be of any help to us for, as you see, we don't have any alcoholic problem." This same company spends millions for research every year. Their cost of production is figured to a fine decimal point. They have recreational facilities. There is company insurance. There is a real interest, both humanitarian and business, in the well-being of its employees. But alcoholism -- they just don't believe they have it.

Perhaps this is a typical attitude. We, who have collectively seen a great deal of business life, at least from the alcoholic angle, had to smile at this person's sincere opinion. They might be shocked if they knew how much alcoholism is costing their organization every year. That company may harbor many actual or potential alcoholics. We believe that managers of large enterprises often have little idea how prevalent this problem is. Even if you feel your organization has no alcoholic problem, it might pay to take another look. You may make some interesting discoveries.

Of course, this chapter refers to alcoholics -- sick people with deranged minds. What our friend the vice president had in mind was the habitual or party drinker. For them, the policy was undoubtedly sound, but they did not distinguish between such people and the alcoholic.

It is not to be expected that an alcoholic employee will receive a disproportionate amount of time and attention. They should not be made a favorite. The right kind of person, the kind who recovers, will not want this sort of thing. They will not impose. Far from it. They will work extremely hard and thank you to their dying day.

Today I own a little company. There are two recovered alcoholic employees who produce as much as five normal salespeople. But why not? They have a new attitude, and they have been saved from a living death. I have enjoyed every moment spent in helping them get straightened out.

## Chapter 11

### A VISION FOR YOU

For most normal people, drinking means conviviality, companionship, and colorful imagination. It means release from care, boredom, and worry. It is joyous intimacy with friends and a feeling that life is good. But not so with us in those last days of heavy drinking. The old pleasures were gone. They were but memories. Never could we recapture the great moments of the past. There was an insistent yearning to enjoy life as we once did and a heartbreaking obsession that some new miracle of control would enable us to do it. There was always one more attempt -- and one more failure.

The less people tolerated us, the more we withdrew from society, from life itself. As we became subjects of alcohol, shivering denizens of the mad realm, the chilling vapor that is loneliness settled down. It thickened, ever becoming blacker. Some of us sought out sordid places, hoping to find understanding companionship and approval. Momentarily we did -- then would come oblivion and the awful awakening to face the hideous nightmares -- Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair. Unhappy drinkers who read this page will understand!

Now and then a serious drinker, being dry at the moment says, "I don't miss it at all. I feel better. I work better. I'm having a better time." As ex-problem drinkers, we smile at such statements. We know they are like a child whistling in the dark to keep up their spirits. They fool themselves. Inwardly they would give anything to take half a dozen drinks and get away with it. They will presently try the old game again, for they aren't happy about their sobriety. They cannot picture life without alcohol. Some day they will be unable to imagine living either with alcohol or without it. Then they will know loneliness such as few do. They will be at the turning point. They will wish for the end.

We have shown how we got out from under this madness. You say, "Yes, I'm willing. But am I to be consigned to a life where I will be stupid, boring, and glum, like some righteous people I

see? I know I must get along without alcohol, but how can I? Have you a sufficient substitute?"

Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a community in Alcoholics Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom, and worry. Your imagination will be inspired. Life will mean something at last. The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead. We have found the community, and so will you.

"How is that to come about?" you ask. "Where am I to find these people?"

You are going to meet these new friends in your own community. Near you, alcoholics are dying helplessly like people in a sinking ship. If you live in a large place, there are thousands of them. These are future members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Among them you will make lifelong friends. You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties, for you will escape disaster together and you will commence shoulder to shoulder on your common journey. Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of "Love your neighbor as yourself."

It may seem incredible that these people are to become happy, respected, and useful again. How can they rise out of such misery and hopelessness? The practical answer is that since these things have happened among us, they can happen with you. Should you wish them above all else, and be willing to make use of our experience, we are sure they will come. The age of miracles is still with us. Our own recovery proves that!

Our hope is that defeated drinkers everywhere will seize on this book and follow its suggestions. Many, we are sure, will find a new way of life in sobriety. They will approach still other sick people.

In the chapter "Working with Others" you gathered an idea of how we approach others. Suppose now that through you several families have adopted this way of life. You will want to know more of how to proceed from that point. Perhaps the best way of treating you to a glimpse of your future will be to describe the growth of the community among us. Here is a brief account:

Years ago, in 1935, one of our number made a journey to a certain western city. From a business standpoint, the trip came off badly. Had they been successful in their enterprise, they would have been set on their feet financially which, at the time, seemed vitally important. But the venture wound up in a lawsuit and bogged down completely. The proceeding was filled with much hard feeling and controversy.

Bitterly discouraged, they found themselves in a strange place, discredited and almost broke. Still physically weak, and sober for only a few months, they saw that their predicament was dangerous. They wanted so much to talk with someone, but whom?

One dismal afternoon they paced a hotel lobby, wondering how their bill was to be paid. At one end of the room stood a glass-covered directory of local houses of worship. Down the lobby a door opened into an attractive bar. They could see the crowd inside. In there they would find companionship and release. Unless they took some drinks, they might not have the courage to meet an acquaintance and would have a lonely week-end.

Of course they couldn't drink, but why not sit hopefully at a table with a bottle of ginger ale?

After all, they had been sober six months. Perhaps they could handle, say, three drinks -- and no more! Fear gripped them. They were on thin ice. Again it was the old, insidious insanity -- that first drink. With a shiver, they turned away and walked down the lobby to the directory of houses of worship. Music and laughter still floated from the bar.

They thought about their responsibilities -- their family and the people who would die not knowing how to get well -- ah yes -- those other alcoholics. There must be many in this town. They would contact a clergy person. Their sanity returned and they thanked their Higher Power. Selecting a house of worship at random from the directory, they stepped into a booth and lifted the receiver to call a clergyperson in hopes of finding an alcoholic in need.

The call led them to a certain resident of the town, who, though formerly able and respected, was then nearing the bottom of alcoholic despair. It was the usual situation: home in jeopardy, partner ill, children distracted, bills in arrears, and reputation damaged. They had a desperate desire to stop, but saw no way out, because they had earnestly tried many avenues of escape. Painfully aware of being somehow abnormal, this person did not fully realize what it meant to be alcoholic.

When our friend related their own experience with alcohol, the person agreed that no amount of will power could stop their drinking for long. A spiritual experience, they conceded, was absolutely necessary, but the price seemed high on the basis suggested. They told how they lived in constant worry about those who might find out about their alcoholism. They had, of course, the familiar alcoholic obsession that few knew of their drinking. Why, they argued, should they lose the remainder of their business, only to bring still more suffering to their family by foolishly admitting their problem to people from whom they made their livelihood? They would do anything, they said, but that.

Being intrigued, however, they invited our friend to their home. Some time later, and just as they thought they were getting control of their alcohol situation, they went on a roaring drunk. For them, this was the binge that was their bottom. They saw that they would have to face their problems squarely so that the Creator might give them mastery.

One morning this alcoholic took the bull by the horns and set out to tell people what their trouble had been. They found themselves surprisingly well received, and learned that many already knew of their drinking. Stepping into the car, they made the rounds of people they had hurt. They were fearful as they did that, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in their line of business.

At midnight they came home exhausted but very happy. They have not had a drink since. As we will see, they now mean a great deal to the community, and the major liabilities of thirty years of hard drinking have been repaired in four years.

But life was not easy for these two alcoholics, now friends. Plenty of difficulties presented themselves. Both saw that they must keep spiritually active. One day they called up the head nurse of a local hospital. They explained their need and inquired if there was an alcoholic they could speak with.

The nurse replied, "Yes, we've got one who is a real challenge. This one has just beaten up a

couple of nurses and goes out of control completely when drinking. But they are great when sober, though they've been in here eight times in the last six months. Understand they were once a well-known lawyer in town, but now we've got to strap them down tight."

Here was a challenge all right but, by the description, none too promising. The use of spiritual principles in such cases was not so well understood as it is now. But one of the friends said, "Put them in a private room. We'll be down."

Two days later, a future member of Alcoholics Anonymous stared glassily at the strangers beside the bed. "Who are you, and why am I in this private room?"

Said one of the visitors, "We're giving you a treatment for alcoholism."

Hopelessness was written all over the patient's face as they replied, "Oh, it's no use. Nothing will help me. I'm too far gone. The last three times I was here, I got drunk on the way home. I'm afraid to go out the door. I can't understand it."

For an hour, the two friends spoke about their drinking experiences. Over and over, the alcoholic would say: "That's me. That's me. I drink like that."

The patient was told of the acute poisoning from which they suffered, how it deteriorates the body of an alcoholic and warps their mind. There was much talk about the mental state preceding the first drink.

"Yes, that's me," they said, "the very image. You know what you're doing, but I don't see what good it'll do me. You are somebody. I was once, but I'm a nobody now. From what you tell me, I now know more than ever that I can't stop." At this both the visitors burst into laughter. Said the future member of Alcoholics Anonymous: "Damn little to laugh about that I can see."

The two friends spoke of their spiritual experience and explained about the course of action they carried out.

The person interrupted: "I used to be strong for religion, but that won't fix it. I've prayed during a hangover and sworn that I'd never touch another drop, but by nine o'clock I'd be drunk."

Next day found the person more receptive, having thought over the conversation. "Maybe you're right," they said. "A Creator ought to be able to do anything." Then added, "But sure didn't do much for me when I was trying to get sober alone."

On the third day this former lawyer agreed to accept the care and direction of the Creator, and said they were perfectly willing to do anything necessary. Their partner came, afraid to be hopeful, but thought there was something different about their spouse already. They had begun to have a spiritual experience.

That afternoon this individual got dressed and walked from the hospital a free person. They entered a political campaign, making speeches, frequenting gatherings of all sorts, often staying up all night. They lost the race by a narrow margin, but they had found their Creator -- and in finding the Creator, had found themselves.

That was in June, 1935. They never drank again. They too, have become a respected and useful member of society. They have helped other people recover, and are a power in the religious community from which they were long absent.

So, you see, there were three alcoholics in that town who now felt they had to give to others

what they had found, or get drunk. After several failures to find others, a fourth turned up, coming through an acquaintance who had heard the good news. This proved to be a devil-may-care young person whose parents could not make out whether they wanted to stop drinking or not. The parents were deeply religious people and were shocked by their child's refusal to have anything to do with religion. The parents suffered horribly from their child's drinking, but it seemed as if nothing could be done. The alcoholic consented, however, to go to the hospital, where they occupied the very room recently vacated by the lawyer.

The three new friends visited. After a while, the young person said, "The way you people put this spiritual stuff makes sense. I'm ready to do it. I guess the old folks were right after all." So one more was added to the Community.

All this time our friend of the hotel lobby incident had remained in that town for three months but now returned home, leaving behind the first acquaintance, the lawyer, and the devil-may-care youth. These people had found something brand new in life. Though they knew they must help other alcoholics if they would remain sober, that motive became secondary. It was transcended by the happiness they found in giving themselves for others. They shared their homes, their resources, and gladly devoted their spare hours to other sufferers. They were willing, day or night, to place a new person in detox and visit them afterward. They grew in numbers. They experienced a few distressing failures, but in those cases they made an effort to bring the families into a spiritual way of living, thus relieving much worry and suffering.

A year and six months later these three had succeeded with seven more. Seeing much of each other, hardly an evening passed that someone's home did not shelter a little gathering of people, happy in their release, and constantly thinking about how they might present their discovery to some newcomer. In addition to these casual get-togethers, it became customary to set apart one night a week for a meeting to be attended by anyone or everyone interested in a spiritual way of life. Aside from community and sociability, the prime object was to provide a time and place where new people might bring their problems.

Outsiders became interested. One person and their partner placed their large home at the disposal of this strangely assorted crowd. This couple has since become so fascinated that they have dedicated their home to the work. Many a distracted partner has visited this house to find loving and understanding companionship among people who knew their problem, to hear from the lips of their spouses what had happened to them, and to be advised how their own wayward mate might be hospitalized and approached when they slipped.

Many an alcoholic, still dazed from their hospital experience, has stepped over the threshold of that home into freedom. Many an alcoholic who entered there came away with an answer, succumbing to that happy crowd inside, who laughed at their own misfortunes and understood those of the newcomers. Impressed by the people who visited them at the hospital, they capitulated entirely when, later, in an upper room of this house, they heard the story of someone whose experience closely related to their own. The expression on the faces of the spouses, that indefinable something in the eyes of their mates, the stimulating and electric atmosphere of the place, conspired to let them know that here was safety at last.

The very practical approach to their problems, the absence of intolerance of any kind, the informality, the genuine democracy, the uncanny understanding which these people had were irresistible. The alcoholic and their partner would leave elated by the thought of what they could now do for some stricken acquaintance and their family. They knew they had a host of new friends; it seemed they had always known these strangers. They had seen miracles, and one was still to come to them. They had envisioned the Great Reality -- their loving and All Powerful Creator.

Now, this house will hardly accommodate its weekly visitors, for they number sixty or eighty as a rule. Alcoholics are being attracted from far and near. From surrounding towns, families drive long distances to be present. A community thirty miles away has fifteen members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Being a large place, we think that someday its Community will number many hundreds.

But life among members of Alcoholics Anonymous is more than attending gatherings and visiting hospitals. Cleaning up old problems, helping to settle family differences, explaining the disinherited child to irate parents, lending money and securing jobs for each other when justified -- these are everyday occurrences. No one is too discredited or has sunk too low to be welcomed cordially -- if they are sincere. Social distinctions, petty rivalries, and jealousies -- these are left behind. Being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and united under one Creator, with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others, the things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to them. How could they?

Under only slightly different conditions, the same thing is taking place in many eastern cities. In one of these there is a well-known hospital for the treatment of alcoholic and drug addiction. Six years ago one of our members was a patient there. Many of us have felt, for the first time, the Presence and Power of the Creator within its walls. We are greatly indebted to the doctor in attendance there, for they, although it might prejudice their own work, has told us of their belief in ours.

Every few days this doctor suggests our approach to one of their patients. Understanding our work, they can do this with an eye to selecting those who are willing and able to recover on a spiritual basis. Many of us, former patients, go there to help. Then, in this eastern city, there are informal meetings such as we have described to you, where you may now see dozens of members. There are the same fast friendships, there is the same helpfulness to one another as you find among our western friends. There is a good bit of travel between East and West and we foresee a great increase in this helpful interchange.

Some day we hope that every alcoholic who journeys will find a community of Alcoholics Anonymous at their destination. To some extent this is already true. Some of us are salespeople and travel. Little clusters of twos and threes and fives of us have sprung up in other communities, through contact with our two larger centers. Those of us who travel drop in as often as we can. This practice enables us to lend a hand, at the same time avoiding certain alluring distractions of the road, about which any traveler can inform you.

Thus we grow, and so can you, though you are only one person with this book in your hand.



We believe and hope it contains all you will need to begin.

We know what you are thinking. You are saying to yourself: "I'm scared and alone. I couldn't do that." But you can. You forget that you have now tapped a source of power much greater than yourself. To duplicate, with such backing, what we have accomplished is only a matter of willingness, patience, and work.

We know of an A.A. member who was living in a large community. They had lived there just a few weeks when they found that the place probably contained more alcoholics per square mile than any city in the country. This was only a few days ago at this writing. (1939) The authorities were very concerned. They got in touch with a prominent psychiatrist who had certain responsibilities for the mental health of the community. The doctor proved to be able and exceedingly anxious to adopt any workable method of handling the situation. So the doctor inquired about what our friend had to offer.

Our friend proceeded to explain, and with such good effect that the doctor agreed to a test among patients and certain other alcoholics from a clinic they attend. Arrangements were also made with the chief psychiatrist of a large public hospital to select still others from the stream of misery which flows through that institution.

So our A.A. member will soon have many friends. Some of them may slip and perhaps never get up, but if our experience is a criterion, more than half of those approached will become members of Alcoholics Anonymous. When a few people in this city have found themselves, and have discovered the joy of helping others to face life again, there will be no stopping until everyone in that town has had the opportunity to recover -- if they can and will.

Still you may say: "But I will not have the benefit of contact with you who write this book." We cannot be sure. Our Creator will determine that, so you must remember that your real reliance is always on your Higher Power, who will show you how to create the community you crave.

Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. Our Creator will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the person who is still sick. The answers will come if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with your Higher Power is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.

Abandon yourself to the Creator as you understand the Creator. Admit your faults to your Higher Power and to others. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We will be with you in the community of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.