

FIRST STEP GUIDE

Step 1- We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable. (notice there are no directions in that statement)

Directions for step one: (pg 30) We **learned** that we had to concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholic

If the directions are that I must concede to my innermost self that I am an alcoholic, then that means I need to know what an alcoholic really is according to Alcoholics Anonymous- not my definition, opinion or idea.

What is an alcoholic: (pg 44)

(Qualification 1) “If when you **honestly** want to you find that you cannot quit **entirely**”

Honestly means- You want to quit yourself, not just because someone else wants you to

Entirely means- completely for good and forever, not just a few weeks or months or until my problems become less bothersome

To qualify, the question to self is this: Have I ever truly wanted and tried to quit for good and found I could not do so either on my own will power or with the help of others (treatment centers, counseling, religion, etc..)?

OR (this word indicates that you only have to answer yes to one of the 2 questions because it say OR not AND)

(Qualification 2) “if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take”

To qualify, the question to self is this: Have I ever set out to only have a few drinks and ended up drinking more than I intended to? Has this happened more than once?

If you answer yes to either question, the textbook states that “you are probably alcoholic”.

Notice that these are the **ONLY** qualifications in the book to determine if you are alcoholic or not. That means it does not matter how long you have been drinking, how much you drink, what you drink, how often you drink, how old you are, male or female, car or no car, job or no job, wife or no wife. Nothing matters in making your determination other than if you can (1) quit entirely when you honestly want to OR (2) if you have little control over the amount you take when you drink. That determines an alcoholic, period.

FIRST STEP GUIDE

What does step 1 mean that “we are powerless over alcohol”?

If an alcoholic cannot stop drinking for good when he wants to, that makes him “powerless over alcohol” AND if an alcoholic cannot control the amount he consumes, that also makes him “powerless over alcohol”. Only an alcoholic is powerless over alcohol.

Alcoholism is always described in the textbook as an illness, never a disease.

An illness is defined as “a condition that prevents the normal functioning of the mind and/or body”

Qualification 1, is due to a mental illness- described as insanity

Qualification 2 is due to an illness of the body- an allergy

Qualification 1 Explained:

Why can't an alcoholic quit entirely when he honestly wants to?

(pg24) “The fact is that for most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, **at certain times**, to bring forth 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.”

When we use our “will power” to try and quit for good, our will power is only backed by the consequences we know we will pay if we drink. Therefore, our mental defense (will power) is dependent on us always being able to reflect on or remember the consequences when we are tempted to drink. We are reliant entirely on our memory of the consequences. This statement says while we may be able to reflect on the consequences sometimes an stay sober for a period of time, there will come a time (at certain times) when we will not reflect at all on the consequences and the time and place will come when we will drink again.

This “mental blank spot” is a mental illness, a form of what is described as “insanity”. Insanity is not the same as crazy.

While sanity is defined as wholeness or soundness of mind, insanity is a mind that is not whole or sound. While our minds may be 99.9% sound and whole, when it comes to alcohol, this mental blank spot renders our minds as not completely sound or whole. Our “memory problem” therefore renders our “will power” useless.

FIRST STEP GUIDE

Qualification 2 explained:

Why does an alcoholic have little control over the amount he takes when drinking?

(pg xxviii) Our bodies have an allergy to alcohol. When alcohol (the allergen) is put into the body of an alcoholic, the allergic reaction is what Dr Silkworth describes as a “phenomenon of craving”. We have a physical (not mental) craving that is beyond our mental control which leads us to another drink and another until we have had far more than we intend to.

The alcoholic illness- A hopeless condition

The alcoholic illness is referred to as a seemingly hopeless condition of the mind and body. Hopeless is defined as “no possibility of a solution”. When we drink more than we intend to, we pay the consequences of our sprees, and then we decide we need to quit but find we can’t- That is a hopeless condition.

The “crux” of the 2-fold illness is the mind, rather than the body. If we do not put alcohol in our bodies, we will never drink more than intended and pay the certain consequences that follow. It all starts with the first drink and it’s our mind that continues to allow us to pick up that first drink.

Alcoholics do recover

What we recover from is the mental illness which again, is the crux of the problem. We will always have the physical allergy but, if we never pick up that first drink, we will never set off the allergic reaction. What we recover is our “sanity”. This is why the first drink is the only one that matters. If we have our sanity back, we will never pick up the first drink.

FIRST STEP GUIDE

THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION (pg xxviii-xix)

- 1- We are sober and become restless, irritable and discontent (alcoholics can not remain sober and happy, period)
- 2- We start to think about the ease and comfort that comes at once after a few drinks (this is the obsession of the mind)
- 3- We succumb to the desire and pick up the first drink (this may be soon or after a long period of time but if alcoholic, the time and place will come when the alcoholic will drink again)
- 4- The phenomenon of craving develops (that first drink we succumb to sets off the allergic reaction and we develop a “physical craving” beyond our “mental control”)
- 5- We pass through the well-known stages of a spree (a spree is defined as “unrestricted overindulgence”. Because of the allergic reaction we continue craving another and another until we consume far more than intended. Remember, we only intend to get a sense of ease and comfort from a “few” drinks We need that ease and comfort because we are restless, irritable and discontent)
- 6- We emerge remorseful (Our spree leads until to unintended consequence and leave us remorseful)
- 7- We have a firm resolution not to drink again (We are now using our will power to not drink ever again because of the consequences that will follow)

This is repeated over and over. The final stage of the cycle ends with our resolution. We are now sober (defined as simply “not drunk”) and then the cycle start over from the beginning. We are sober, and we start to get a little restless, irritable and discontent....and on and on and on.....

Stage 2 of the cycle states that we start thinking about the ease and comfort that comes at once from taking “a few drinks”. The alcoholics problem is NOT alcohol, it is ADDICTION. If you substitute “a few drinks” for anything addictive, any ADDICT will relate to this cycle. We all go through it as addicts of any sort. We are looking for ease and comfort-relief. It doesn't matter what we use for that relief. The fact is that alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, eating or whatever else- that is our SOLUTION, not our PROBLEM.

FIRST STEP GUIDE

Has your life become unmanageable?

The second part of step one states: “that our lives have become unmanageable”. (pg 52)

These are some of the symptoms of an unmanageable life. Ask yourself if you can relate to any of these symptoms as any ONE of them is representative of an unmanageable life:

- 1- We were having trouble with our personal relationships
- 2- We couldn't control our emotional natures
- 3- We were a prey to misery and depression
- 4- We couldn't make a living
- 5- We had a feeling of uselessness
- 6- We were full of fear
- 7- We were unhappy
- 8- We couldn't seem to be of real help to other people

If you have answered yes to either of the 2 questions, then you now know that you have a fatal condition that is preventing the normal functioning of your mind and/or body and that this condition places you beyond any type of human aid- Then the final question is this:

What are you now willing to do about it?

Most alcoholics have to be pretty badly mangled before they are “willing to go to any lengths” to overcome alcohol. Are you willing to go to ANY lengths to get over your addiction?