

## ALCOHOLISM - AN ILLNESS OF THE HOPELESS VARIETY

- P XXV an alcoholic of the type I had come to regard as **hopeless**
- P xiii recovered from a seemingly **hopeless** state of mind and body
- P xxx It has never been, by any **treatment** with which we are familiar **permanently eradicated**
- Pxxix One feel that something **more than human power** is needed....
- P24 he has probably placed himself **beyond human aid**, and unless locked up, may die or go permanently insane.

Hopeless is mentioned many times when describing alcoholism in this textbook, far more than outlined above. Hopeless is defined by Websters as “no possibility of a solution”. The addict cannot help himself nor can any other human help him- to include doctors, therapists, treatment centers, clergy, etc.. because as stated, he is beyond human aid. If he is to find aid, it has to come from a power great than human power.

## THERE IS A SOLUTION

- Pxiii- We of Alcoholics Anonymous are more than 100 men and woman who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.
- To show other alcoholics (addicts) **precisely** how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.
- Pxi- Because this book has become the **basic text** of our Society....
- Therefore, **the first portion** of this volume, describing the AA recovery program, has been left largely untouched.
- P29 Further on, **clear cut directions** are given showing how we recovered

These three statements make clear the following:

- A) The authors of this book are more than 100 people who flatly declare that they suffered what to them seemed to be a hopeless condition yet they have recovered (defined as being returned to a normal state of health) from that condition.
- B) This book is a textbook- Textbooks are to be studied (not read), learned from and then to take action based on what is learned.
- C) The primary subject of study (main purpose) is how to recover. This is done by telling us how they did it, it is not theory, opinion, or conjecture. The authors state that they will tell “precisely” providing “clear cut directions”
- D) The reader will learn how to recover in the first portion (first 196 pages) of the book which, by the way, has been left largely untouched in the course of three revisions since the original printing in 1939.

## DIRECTIONS MUST BE CAREFULLY FOLLOWED

P25 we believe there is **no middle of the road solution**

p58 Rarely has a person failed who has **thoroughly** followed our **path**. Those who do not recover are people who **cannot or will not completely** give themselves to this **program**.

We **thought** we could find an easier softer way, **but we could not**.

P59 **Half measures** availed us **nothing**

If you do what they did, thoroughly and completely it would be rare for you not to recover. Yet if you do not follow the clear-cut, precise directions (their path) and only incorporate what is convenient for you, then you will achieve absolutely nothing. This indicates if you do 80% of what they did, you will receive 0% of what they got.

## DRINKING IS NOT THE ROOT PROBLEM- THEREFORE SOBRIETY IS NOT THE SOLUTION

P19 We feel that **elimination of drinking** is but a beginning.

P122 **Cessation of drinking** is but **one step away** from a **highly strained, abnormal condition**

P82 We think a man is **unthinking** when he says that **sobriety** is enough.

Pxxviii They are **restless, irritable and discontent** unless they can once again experience the sense of **ease and comfort** that comes at once from taking a few drinks

This indicates that addicts are **miserable** (restless, irritable, discontent, highly strained, abnormal condition) when they are **sober** (cessation from drinking, elimination of drinking). Sober is defined simply as “not drunk.” In fact, the longer they are sober and have not recovered the more miserable they are-sometimes spending years and even decades being sober and still suffering from untreated addiction.

The only way out is to recover and as we have read there is one set of clear-cut, precise directions that they give us in the first portion of the book to recover. If we do not follow it “completely and thoroughly” we will achieve absolutely nothing in a way of a solution/relief from this miserable condition.

The drugs/alcohol/sex/gambling, etc. is not the problem. In fact, these things are used by us as a solution to our problem. Our real underlying problem is that we cannot be sober **and** have any degree of happiness, peace of mind or contentedness in life. No matter how smart we are, success we have had or material well-being we have, we will never be able to comfortable in our own skin. In that condition we are of absolutely no use and can offer no happiness to anyone in our lives. See below:

P152 He will presently try the old game again, for **he isn't happy about his sobriety**. He cannot picture life without alcohol. Some day he will be **unable to imagine life with alcohol or without it**. Then **he will know loneliness such as few do**. He will be at the **jumping-off place**. He will **wish for the end**.

### THE DIRECTIONS IN THE BOOK

This "unhappiness" is an incurable malady, a hopeless condition. Acting out by drinking, drugs, sex, gambling etc, provides temporary relief but is inevitably followed by remorse after a spree. However, the authors state that they had found a permanent solution which anyone can achieve and rarely do the fail if followed completely and thoroughly. Let's examine these clear-cut directions.

The first portion of the textbook is made up of 12 chapters, 11 of which are numbers and the Doctors Opinion, which precedes page 1. We have 12 chapters and 12 steps, but the attention to each step is not equal. The first 4 chapters deal with only giving a complete description of an alcoholic and the illness of alcoholism. The first step (p30) is simply that "we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics." In order to conceded to that one must know precisely what an alcoholic is. This is the sole purpose of the first 4 chapters, learn about alcoholism, that's it. We know that because the first two sentences of Chapter 4 reads, "In the proceeding chapters you have learned something of alcoholism. We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and non-alcoholic."

4 chapters to learn enough information to decide if you are or are not one of us. 4 of 12 chapters. Clearly the authors believe it critical and even vital to understand alcoholism by taking up 1/3 of the entire first portion of the book just so you can answer one question, which is only the first step in recovery.

The next entire chapter is devoted to gaining your own concept of God, which is step 2.

9 of the 12 steps (steps 3-11) are covered in the following 2 chapters. Only 2 chapters cover 75% of the recovery program.

This leaves 5 chapters, just short of half of the first portion of the textbook being dedicated solely to step 12- Working with Others. This fact in and of itself gives us clear indication of how vitally important this part of the program (clear cut directions) is for a recovered alcoholic.

### WORKING WITH OTHERS

P89 Practical experience shows that **nothing** will so much **ensure immunity** from drinking as **intensive** work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail.

If you want immunity from drinking including the misery that precedes drinking which can go on for years prior to drinking in some cases, then the authors experience (not theory) has proved that NO-THING that will guarantee that immunity as much as intensive (defined as highly concentrated) work with other alcoholics. The word intensively should not be overlooked.

Meeting with a newcomer every once in a while, and only when most convenient does not fit the description of “Intensive, highly concentrated work.” See the following:

P159 a little gathering of men and woman, **happy in their release** and **constantly thinking** how they might **present their discovery** to some newcomer.

P20 **Our very lives**, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our **constant thought** of others and how we may help **meet their needs**.

The first statement, in context is how the founders of AA described an AA meeting very early on, prior to even writing the book. Together with the second statement we see that our lives depend on going to these meetings for the singular purpose of meeting their needs by presenting them the discovery of a solution that is outlined in the textbook. If we want to live, we must do this, constantly. We think of meeting their needs, not our needs. We no longer think about our own needs. See the following

P63 **God provides** what we need **if we stick close to him and perform his work well**.

I no longer need to depend on myself or anyone else to provide what I need because God will provide “everything” that I need if I do 2 things. Stick close to him (prayer and meditation—seek his will for me) and perform his work well (work with others, intensively). Note the word “well”. To perform his work “well” is to work with others “in a highly concentrated, intensive manner” as we previously learned.

P15 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** trial and low spots ahead.

P158 ....they had to give others what they have found, or be sunk.

If we do not work with others in an intensive, self-sacrificing manner, we will not make through the hard times in life that are certain to come. Its not if they come, its when they come. If we want to survive (live) though those times, we must be working with others.

P58 If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to **ANY LENGTHS** to get it, then (and only then) you are ready to take certain steps.

P153 It may seem incredible that these men are to become **happy, respected, and useful** once more. How can they rise out of such **misery, bad repute 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.

We can go from having a condition suffering from unrelenting hopeless misery to having a life of happy usefulness (just like they did), IF we meet two criteria: (1) We want to be free from our misery more than ANYTHING and (2) are willingness to do ANYTHING to get it.

- P97 Helping others is the **foundation stone** of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to play the good Samaritan every day. **It may mean** the loss of many nights sleep, **great interference with your pleasures**, interruptions with your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, **counseling frantic wives and relatives**, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums (treatment centers), hospitals, jails and asylums. Your telephone may jangle **at any time of the day or night**. Your wife may sometimes say she is **neglected**....**Occasionally** you will **have to** meet such conditions.
- P19 **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** of their time to the work.
- P93 To be **vital** (defined as necessary for life), faith **must** be accompanied by self-sacrifice and unselfish, constructive **action**.
- P143 **We all** had to place recovery **above everything** for without recovery we would have lost home and business.

We start intensively working with others because we are told we must if we want to survive-sober with a reasonable degree of happiness. Remember, we must follow their path thoroughly if we are to expect ANY results at all. Its an all or nothing proposition. God provides what we need by filling that void of emptiness, depression and general misery within us- just as drugs and/or alcohol filled that void for us. However, this is not simply temporary relief- "the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us (p85)." Thus we become recovered and stay that way so long as we keep living this way of life.

And then, it gets infinitely better.....

- P159 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 to others.
- P129 He may not see at once that he has barely scratched a **limitless lode** which will pay dividends **only** if he mines it for **the rest of his life** and **insists** on giving away the **entire product**.
- P89 Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to **watch loneliness vanish**, to see a fellowship 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.
- P15 Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia. We have it with us right here and now.
- P25 We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.

## THE FAMILY - THOSE TIED BY BLOOD OR AFFECTION TO THE ALOCHOLIC

P119 You may become **jealous of the attention** he bestows on other people, especially alcoholics. You have been starving for his companionship, yet he spends long hours helping other men and their families. You feel he should now be yours. The **fact** is that he should work with other people to **maintain** his own sobriety. Sometimes he will be so interested that he becomes really neglectful.....He gets stirred up about their troubles, but not all about 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 his enthusiasm for alcoholic work. You should **join in his efforts** as much as you possibly can. We suggest you **direct some of your thought** to the wives of his new alcoholic friends. They need the **counsel and love** of a woman who has gone through what you have.

.....you probably **need fresh interests** and a **great cause to live** for as much as your husband. If you **cooperate rather than complain**, you will find that his excess enthusiasm will tone down. Both of you will awaken to a **new sense of responsibility** for others. You, as well as your husband, 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 one much better.**

These two paragraphs were written in the Chapter To Wives, which was authored by wives of the first one hundred AA members. This is again, based on their EXPERIENCE, not simply suggested based on what they think. It is based on what they did and what they got as a result.

Pxiii And besides, we are **sure** that our **way of living** has its advantages for **all**.

P117 We urge you to try our program, for nothing will be so helpful to your husband as the radically changed attitude toward him which God will show you how to have.

P122 A doctor once said to us, "Years of living with an alcoholic is almost **sure** to make any wife or child neurotic. The **entire family** is, to some extent, ill."

P130 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 head of the house still fails somewhat in practicing them. **Nothing** will help the man who is off on a spiritual tangent so much as the wife who adopts a **sane spiritual program**, making **better practical use of it**.

P124 We think each family which has been relieved **owes** something to those who have not, and when the occasion **requires**, should be only too **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 worth while to us now.**

AA was from the very beginning open to and meetings were attended by "anyone and everyone interested in a spiritual way of living." In fact, while most attendees were alcoholics and their families (most family members were involved) there were a large number of that had no affiliation at all with alcoholism.

## **LETHAL WARNING!!**

- P64 **Resentment is the number one offender. It kills more than alcoholics than anything else.**
- P66 It is plain that any life which includes **deep resentment** leads only **to futility and unhappiness.**
- P66 this business of **resentment is infinitely grave.** 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.**
- P98 **Argument and fault-finding** are to be **avoided like the plague.** In many homes this may be a difficult thing to do, but **it must be done** if any results are to be expected.
- P122 We find the more one member of the family **demand**s that the others **concede to him** the more **resentful** they become.
- P119 When **resentful thoughts** come, try to pause and count your blessings. After all your family is reunited, alcohol (addiction) is no longer a problem and you and your husband are **working together toward an un-dreamed-of future.**
- P117 Never forget that **resentment is a deadly hazard to an alcoholic.** We do not mean that you have to agree with our husband whenever there is an honest difference of opinion. Just be careful not to disagree in a **resentful or critical spirit.**
- P118 If your husband is trying to **live on a spiritual basis**, he will also be doing **everything** in his power to **avoid disagreement or contention.**
- P118 **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.**
- P127 Periods of crankiness, depression, or apathy, which **will disappear when** there is **tolerance, love, and spiritual understanding.**
- As each member of a **resentful** family begins to **see his shortcomings** and **admits them** to the others, he lays a **basis for helpful discussion.**
- P133 **Avoid** then, the **deliberate manufacture of misery.....**

Both **the alcoholic and the family must learn** from the very beginning that **anger must be avoided at all costs, if he should live.**