

BACK TO BASICS, "A Design for Living"
A Closed and Committed 12-Step Study and Media Sobriety Group

WEEK 2 – Steps 2 through 5

MONDAY MEETING

B qualifies on Step 2. Please ask a member to lead the group in the First Step Prayer. Remember to ask group members to prepare something for Fun Friday at the end of the meeting.

STEP 2

A

Opening Business

Welcome to the second week of “Back to Basics: A Design for Living” for media addicts. We encourage you to set aside all nonessential electronic media during these sessions. Focusing on the material without distractions is essential to fully harnessing the recovery power of this Back-to-Basics process.

Let us first introduce ourselves: *[All Groups Sponsors share their names]*. We are recovered but not cured members of Media Addicts Anonymous, and we are your Group Sponsors. Thank you for allowing us to serve you this week.

Just a few quick reminders:

1. If you haven't yet donated to MAA for the privilege of participating in B2B, please consider doing so today.
2. Reading Reminder: Group Sponsors will read sections A and B, while everyone else will focus on the bullet points. If you see a dash or number, that indicates a part for Group Sponsors to read. Given the volume of material, please stay attentive to your place in the reading order, which will be shared daily in the chat. We encourage you to enjoy the readings and extract valuable insights, even if you're familiar with the content.

We have asked *(name)* to lead us in the First Step Prayer.

Dear Higher Power, my name is (your name) and I am a real media addict, and I need your help today.

Thank you *(name)*.

B

Before we begin this session, we would like to thank the individual sponsors in our group for the time and attention you have been giving to your sponsees this past week. Thank you all for your service to us and to the group. We could not take the 12 Steps without you. We love and appreciate you very much!

A

Compliance VS Surrender

In our last session, we began the **SURRENDER** process by completing Step One: *We admitted we were powerless over media and that our lives had become unmanageable.* We commend you for

admitting you have a problem. As the Big Book says, “*This is the first step in recovery.*” Your admission is a major accomplishment. Many media addicts live in complete denial that they have a problem.

B

Remember that the principles of Step One are twofold: HONESTY leads to ACCEPTANCE. We must be honest before we can admit that we are indeed media addicts. When we can accept this truth, we are better able to take the remainder of the 12 Steps. We have only just begun the SURRENDER process, and acceptance is the key to success as we proceed with the other Steps.

A

In our Commitment Meeting, we talked about moving from COMPLIANCE to SURRENDER. At this moment, many of us have mustered the will to comply with this Back-to-Basics program in the hope that we will recover. Yet to receive the promises of this program, we must go beyond compliance and be willing to absolutely SURRENDER. If you have not been able to fully surrender yet, do not worry. It may take some time. Many of us did not completely understand SURRENDER until we took Step Seven.

B

This week we will continue the journey through the Twelve Steps by taking Steps Two and Three. We will also give you a method to connect with your Higher Power with Two Way Prayer. After that, we will provide you with the guidelines needed for taking Steps Four and Five. This begins the SHARING process of the Twelve Steps. This weekend you will share your Fourth Step Inventory with your sponsor.

A

Finding A Higher Power

In our session today, part of our objective is to find a Power greater than ourselves, who will relieve us from the hopeless and compulsive nature of media addiction. The second part is to become willing to turn our will and lives over to this Power. Now that we have admitted we are real media addicts, let's look at the next step we need to take to recover from media addiction.

B

Step 2 – Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Remember, in our last session, the Big Book authors told us that our problem with addiction stems from a spiritual disease:

- “For we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.”

A

We read from the *Doctor's Opinion* (by Dr. Silkworth), and it bears re-reading. Understanding this chapter is essential if we are to be serious about taking Step Two. Again, we will replace *drinking* with *media usage*:

- “[People use media] essentially because they like the effect produced by [media]. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their [media drunk] life seems the only normal one.

- They are restless, irritable, and discontented unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort that comes at once by [getting drunk on their media], [media] which they see others [using] 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 stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to [use] again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire **psychic change** there is little hope of [their] recovery.”

Here Dr. Silkworth goes on to say:

- “On the other hand[,] ... once a **psychic change** has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems [they] despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds [themselves] easily able to control [their] desire for [media], the only effort necessary being [they follow] a few simple rules.”

B

Meaning of Psychic Change

Dr. Silkworth's concept of "psychic change" refers to a profound transformation in the addict's mental and emotional state that enables recovery. It is a spiritual experience or awakening that fundamentally alters one's perspective on life. This change involves a dramatic shift in emotions, attitudes, and ideas that previously dominated the person's life. Essentially, it's an emotional rearrangement - a miracle that allows the addict to break free from their compulsive behavior and find a new way of living.

A

Something unconventional needs to happen within the media addict for them to be relieved of their obsession with addictive media. For some, the idea of seeking a miraculous event sounds silly or like magical thinking. However, we must recognize that moral codes and rationality alone have not been sufficient to achieve sobriety. The Big Book teaches us that moral codes or rational philosophies, despite being powerful intentions, do not necessarily help the true media addict overcome their compulsion.

- "If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome [media addiction] many of us would have recovered long ago. But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us.... We could wish to be philosophically comforted ... but the needed power wasn't there. Our human resources ... were not sufficient. They failed utterly."

B

Willingness, Honesty, Open-mindedness

As media addicts, we learn that our own willpower has failed us utterly. We need power if we are to overcome our media addiction, but what will it take for us to find this Power? The answer is in the back of the Big Book, in Appendix II.

- “Most emphatically we wish to say that any [media addict] capable of honestly facing [their] problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided [they do] not close [their minds] to all spiritual concepts. [They] can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial. We find that no one [should] have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. **Willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness** are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.”

A

What we need then are three things: **willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness**. The Big Book authors ask us to set aside everything we think we know about God and spirituality and keep an open mind. They also encourage us not to let denial keep us in the dark and block us from the “*sunlight of the Spirit*.”

B

Bill W. Comes to Believe

At the beginning of A.A., many members, even Bill W, the New York City cofounder, had great difficulty accepting a spiritual solution to the alcohol problem. In Bill's story, he describes how he “*came to believe*.” In late November 1934, Ebby T visited Bill at his Brooklyn, New York, home. It is during this visit that Bill first learns about the concept of “*God as you understand God*.”

A

Let's go back to the story we brought up last week. Remember Ebby was Bill's high school friend and a former drinking companion. In Bill's story, Ebby has been sober for several months. As they meet, he tells Bill that his life has been transformed because of practicing the Four Spiritual Activities of **SURRENDER, SHARING, RESTITUTION, and GUIDANCE**.

B

Bill had known Ebby for most of his life, so he was shocked when Ebby started talking about God. He felt compelled to listen because he realized something about Ebby had changed. His eyes were clear, his face fresh and healthy, and he was sober for the first time in many years. Still, religion had left such a bad taste in Bill's mouth as a youth that he resisted Ebby's solution.

- “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.”

A

We have Ebby T to thank for the solution to the “*God dilemma*.” It was at this moment that Ebby presented Bill with a revolutionary proposition:

- “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 [for] 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!”

B

How We Can Come to Believe

For those of you who do not believe in a Higher Power or have been hurt by religion and its followers, Step Two may seem like too big of a pill to swallow.

- “Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things made us bristle with antagonism.... Faced with [our addictive] destruction we soon became as open-minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect [media] was a great persuader.”

A

The rational and scientifically minded kept wondering why they should believe in a Power greater than themselves. The writers of the Big Book realized that “*The practical individual of today is a stickler for facts and results.*”

B

The early A.A. members assure us that there is good reason to contemplate intangible or mystical parts of reality, which even the best minds may not comprehend. In scientific exploration, scientists begin their research by proposing a hypothesis (or assumption) to explain a phenomenon. This focuses their research and enables them to test or disprove their theory.

- “[We] readily [accept] theories of all kinds, provided they are firmly grounded in fact. We have numerous theories; for example, about electricity. Everybody believes them without a murmur of doubt. Why this ready acceptance? Simply because it is impossible to explain what we see, feel, direct, and use without a reasonable assumption as a starting point.”

A

The Big Book authors ask us to keep an open mind or make a “*reasonable assumption,*” regarding spiritual matters. This is not irrational or a sign of weakness, for even in science there is no perfect proof.

- “Everybody, nowadays, believes in scores of assumptions for which there is good evidence, but no perfect visual proof. And does not science demonstrate that visual proof is the weakest proof? It is being constantly revealed, as [humankind] studies the material world, that outward appearances are not inward reality at all.”

B

In our personal stories and the stories shared in the second half of the Big Book, we all have various ways to approach a Higher Power, and we have all had to find our way to deal with resistance to a Power greater than ourselves.

- “Whether we agree with a particular approach or conception seems to make little difference... These are questions for each individual to settle for [themselves]. ... On one proposition, however, [...we] are strikingly agreed. Every one of [us] has gained access to and believes in, a Power greater than [themselves]. In each case, this Power has accomplished the miraculous, the humanly impossible. As a celebrated American statesman put it, ‘*Let’s look at the record.*’”

- "Here are thousands of [people who] ... 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 revolutionary change in their way of living and thinking.... When many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith."

The Big Book authors beg us to lay aside our prejudice—even towards organized religion.

- "We have learned that whatever the human frailties of various faiths may be, those faiths have given purpose and direction to millions. ...We used to amuse ourselves by cynically dissecting spiritual beliefs and practices when we might have observed that many spiritually-minded persons of all races, colors, and creeds were demonstrating a degree of stability, happiness, and usefulness, which we should have sought for ourselves. We missed the reality and the beauty of the forest because we were diverted by the ugliness of some of the trees. We never gave the spiritual side of life a fair hearing"

A

However fully we can define our Higher Power at this time, the Big Book authors ask us to set aside our contempt for spiritual principles and to open our minds to the possibility that a spiritual way of life is the answer to our media problem.

- "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."

B

The Big Book authors clearly state that it is impossible to define God. We must stop trying to comprehend this Power with our minds and start accepting this Power with our HEART.

- "When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own *conception* of God. 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[ship] with God as we understood [God]. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wished to grow, we had to begin somewhere. So, we used our own conception, however limited it was."

A

What is the Alternative?

What is the alternative? For those of us who bristle at even the slightest mention of God or spiritual matters, we are invited to see where we may have handicapped ourselves through obstinacy, hypersensitivity, and prejudice. The Big Book authors make a powerful case for the existence of a Higher Power.

- “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, we couldn’t seem to be of real help to other people—“
- “Was not a basic solution to these bedevils more important than whether we should see newsreels of lunar flight? Of course, it was. When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God [of our own understanding] idea did.”
- “Faced with [media addictive] destruction, we soon became as open-minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect, [the devastating effects of our alcoholic media] 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.”

B

Bill Wilson was A.A.'s first Athiest. His journey from skepticism to spiritual awakening is an unusual one. He had but to open his mind and heart. Despite seeing the positive changes in his friend Ebby, Bill was reluctant to embrace the spiritual aspect of recovery. In a talk he gave on the day Dr. Bob died, he goes into his experience in more detail than he relates in the Big Book. He says:

- “I said to Ebby, ‘Thank you, but No, thank you!’ We got up, and I walked him to the door and saw him off. This, to me, was ridiculous that anyone would suggest this idea of a personal deity that could solve your problems.”
- “Funny thing happened over the next couple of days. I couldn’t get the sight of Ebby, clean, fresh-faced, and sober, out of my mind. He became another obsession. All I could do was to think of him sober and me drunk. I kept saying there was something wrong with this picture!”
- “I should be sober because I was the # 1 Man. I should be talking to the likes of Ebby. The obsession grew until I realized that if I had cancer and Ebby showed up with a cure for cancer, I would have followed him on my hands and knees to whatever position that cure was located, I had a disease that was killing me. I realized I was insane, and I had to check this out.”

A

When Bill checked himself into the hospital to dry out, lying in a hospital bed, Bill reached his lowest point. He goes on to say:

- As I lay in the bed and the evening wore on, it got darker and darker, almost totally dark. And I lay in there, in that bed of pain, and I sank into the worst depression I have ever sunk into. I had been depressed before, but this was the worst. I kept going down and down until I felt I was at the bottom of a deep, dark pit”
- “And then for one brief moment, my proud obstinacy left me and I found myself crying out more in anger than in pain “If there is a God, let him show himself to me right now, I will do anything, anything! Let him show himself to me!”
- “Then the room lit up in an intense white light, and I was caught up in an ecstasy that words cannot describe, in my mind's eye, it was as if I was on a mountaintop and the wind or a spirit was flowing through my body. And it burst upon me that I was a free man.”

This spiritual awakening came at his lowest point. When he was most open and vulnerable. The obsession to drink left him, and he found himself filled with a sense of joy and connection to a loving, compassionate God.

- “The obsession to drink left me. That obsession that pervaded my total being left me. Eventually, the ecstasy subsided, and I found myself back in the hospital, but this time surrounded by the presence of pure joy. I realized that I was a tiny part of a universe ruled by justice and love by a loving, compassionate personal God, and all I could say is: So this is the God they have been talking about for all these years.”

This experience became the foundation of his recovery and the inspiration for the spiritual principles of A.A. As the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill's experience demonstrates that recovery is possible for everyone, regardless of their initial beliefs.

B

For those who may be struggling with the concept of God or a higher power, Bill's experience offers hope and encouragement. It shows that being open-minded and willing to explore spiritual ideas, even if initially uncomfortable, can lead to profound personal transformation and recovery.

A

Sanity Has Returned

This kind of healing is nothing short of miraculous. This is what the Big Book writers promise. By thoroughly trusting in this new Power, not only is sanity restored but also the temptation for media is abated.

- “And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even [alcoholic media]. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in [alcoholic media]. 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 [addictive media] has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes!
- That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. 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.”

B

The question is, are you willing to believe in a Power greater than human power, a Spirit of the Universe, a God of your understanding? Are you willing to believe in a power greater than yourself?

- “When we became [media addicts], crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else [God] is nothing. God either is or [God] isn't. What was our choice to be?”

A

Are You Willing to Believe?

We will begin to make this choice today. Are you willing to concede that there is a *Power greater than yourself*? If you are, you are ready to take the Second Step. Here are the directions from the Big Book:

- “We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. ‘*Do I now believe, or am I even **willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?***’ As soon as [any individual] 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 upon this simple cornerstone, a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.”

B

Being willing to believe is the cornerstone of our new spiritual way of life, and it is the first action we can take toward our media recovery. Here is a prayer that can help us take the Second Step. It's called the Set Aside Prayer:

“Dear Higher Power, please help me set aside everything I think I know about myself, my problems, and about you. I ask that I may have an open mind so I might learn to live my life on a spiritual basis. Please help me see the truth so I can be restored to sanity. AMEN.”

Let us say this prayer together.

A

Taking Step Two

Now it is time to answer the Second Step question: “*Do [you] now believe, or [are you] willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than [yourself]?*”

Because this is such an important and life-changing question, we will pause for one minute to meditate and listen for an answer. When we come back in one minute, I will ask the question again.

[Time for 1 minute]

It is now time to take Step Two.

“Do [you] now believe, or [are you] even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than [yourself]?”

If so, when your name is called, please say “yes.”

Thank you! According to the Big Book authors, if you answered “yes” to this question, **you have taken Step Two: “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”**

B

Principles of Step Two

Having taken Step 2, let's look at the principles associated with Step 2. If we can practice those principles, we will progress faster in our recovery. In Step 2, FAITH leads to BELIEF.

- FAITH is believing in something that you cannot see or that has not yet been manifested. It is essential for our journey of recovery. Even as we begin to see and accept that we are media addicts and that our mind, body, and spirit have been degraded by our disease, we still may not be able to imagine how we could find our way back to a sane life.
- We have been told that FAITH in a power greater than ourselves—greater than our addiction—could restore us to our true (sane) nature. We had been living a self-centered life, and we were trying to run the show. In Step 2, we came to see that we could begin to live a faith-centered life. This is a new way of thinking and being. First, we CAME, then we CAME TO, and then we CAME TO BELIEVE. Over time, as we witness ourselves being restored to sanity, FAITH becomes BELIEF, for we will serve as living proof that a Higher Power is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

A

Looking Ahead

Thank you all for reading. Tomorrow we will continue our journey by taking Step Three. Please make sure you attend MAA meetings and volunteer to serve and speak. You all now have abstinence from unnecessary media, so you have something hopeful to give others. People who are suffering need to hear your story. *[If time permists]* We will now listen to B qualify on Step 2 and then take questions.

*[B qualifies on Step 2. Please give group members a heads-up that you will ask them to plan activities for **Fun Friday** this week and that you will post a reminder in the WhatsApp group Chat. Then end with the serenity prayer.]*

END OF MONDAY MEETING

TUESDAY MEETING

B qualifies on Step 3. Please ask a member to lead the group in the Set Aside Prayer.

STEP THREE

A

Welcome to day two of the second week of Back to Basics, A Design for Living. Please put down all nonessential electronic media while participating in these sessions.

We have asked (name) to lead us in the Set Aside Prayer.

“Dear Higher Power, please help me set aside everything I think I know about myself, my problems, and about you. I ask that I may have an open mind so I might learn to live my life on a spiritual basis. Please help me see the truth so I can be restored to sanity. AMEN.”

Thank you (name).

Step Three-Making a Decision

Building on our progress from Step Two, where we opened ourselves to the possibility of a Higher Power restoring sanity to our relationship with media, we now face Step Three. The Big Book states, "Being convinced, we were at Step Three."

Step 3 – Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood [God].

B

This conviction transcends mere belief. While Step Two led us to believe a Higher Power could restore our sanity, Step Three dares us to take an even greater leap of faith and discover a new spiritual way of living. It's not enough to simply nod at this potential; we must embrace it wholeheartedly and take the next crucial step in our recovery journey.

A

Belief without action is as useful as a car without gas. "Faith without works is dead," as they say. To conquer our media addiction, we must DECIDE to actively incorporate this Power into our lives. But why should we consider what feels like jumping off a cliff and hoping our parachute opens? Well, that's the million-dollar question, isn't it?

B

Self-Will and Playing God

As media addicts, we've often found ourselves trapped in a cycle of unsuccessful attempts to control our lives and our addiction. Our best efforts, driven by self-will, have repeatedly fallen short, leaving us frustrated and discouraged. This is precisely why the Third Step becomes so crucial in our recovery journey. It invites us to consider a radical shift: turning our lives over to a Higher Power. The Big Book eloquently captures this need for change:

- “The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life 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. Each person is like an

actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery, and the rest of the players in [their] own way.”

A

Does this sound familiar? Haven't we all, at some point, tried to persuade those around us that their lives would be better if they just followed our lead? This urge to control every aspect of our lives is a hallmark of compulsive media addiction. While we seek safety and happiness, we often fall into the trap of believing that self-will and control are the solutions. In reality, this delusion only deepens our struggles. The passage continues:

- “What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. [They begin] to think life doesn't treat [them] right. [They decide] to exert [themselves] more. [They become] ... more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still, the play does not suit [them.] ... [They become] angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is [their] basic trouble? [Are they] not really a self-seeker? ... [Are they] not a victim of the delusion that [they] can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if [they] only [manage] well? ... [Are they] not, even in [their] best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony? Our actor is self-centered—ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays.”

B

The Big Book authors pinpoint the root of our troubles: self-centeredness. They argue that self-pity, delusional thinking, and self-centeredness are the primary sources of our misery:

- “Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, 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 fellows 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.”

They emphasize that addicts epitomize self-will run amok, which leads to our downfall:

- “So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the [media addict] is an extreme example of self-will, run riot, though [they] usually [don't] think so. Above everything, we [media addicts] must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without [God's] aid.”

The authors stress that to overcome this self-centered fear, we must stop trying to play God:

- “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, God was going to be our Director. [God] is the Principal; we are [God's] agents. [God] is the [Creator], and we are [God's] children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.”

A

A New Employer

When the authors genuinely surrendered their will to a Higher Power, relinquishing the grip of their egos, they experienced profound and positive changes in their lives. This fundamental shift in perspective led to what they described as miraculous transformations, both personally and professionally.

- “When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all-powerful, [God] provided what we needed, if we kept close to [God] and performed [God's] work well.”

B

As the authors have shared, we too can discern our place in God’s Universe. Contrary to what we may have thought, the whole world does not revolve around us. Realizing there is a “*Power greater than ourselves*” is the essence of God-consciousness. As we become aware of the “*realm of the Spirit*,” our lives begin to change.

- “Established on such a footing, we became less and less interested in ourselves, 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 [God's] presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow, or the hereafter. We were reborn.”

A

Some people may feel that it is a weakness to depend upon a Higher Power, but the writers of the Big Book tell us that:

- “We never apologize to anyone for depending upon 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 God.”

It is decision time once again. The Big Book authors tell us that we are now ready to take Step 3, and they provide us with the directions.

- “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 God alone than with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional so 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.”

We are here today to take this monumental Step together.

B

Unpacking the Third Step Prayer

Although they say the wording is optional, the authors provide us with a prayer we can use to take the Third Step. The prayer is on page 63 of the Big Book.

- “*God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness, to those I would help, of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will, always!*”

In this Third Step Prayer, we decide to do something that does not come naturally to most of us: We are making a contract, a promise, or a covenant with our Higher Power for the express purpose of being relieved of the bondage of our self-obsessed fears and addictive behaviors.

A

With Step 3, we ask our Higher Power to take our difficulties away so that, once victorious over them, we may show others, who are as lost as we were, that there is another way. We decide to use a Higher Power rather than self-power, to trust in our Higher Power's love for us and others, and to lead a spiritual life.

B

We commit here and now to allow a Power greater than ourselves to run the show. This is our second chance to stop mere compliance and replace it with ultimate **SURRENDER**. Here are the points this prayer makes:

- First, we make an offering. Many spiritual practices include the beautiful tradition of making symbolic offerings. For instance, you might place flowers, incense, food, or wine on an altar. In our case, the “*offering*” to our Higher Power is OURSELVES. We present our Higher Power with the most valuable thing we can give: We surrender ourselves to the God of our understanding.
- Second, by offering ourselves, we cede our talents and skills to our Higher Power so that we may build something good and useful. What to build is guided by the wisdom of our Higher Power. This means that, from now on, we ask for inspiration in all our life goals. We ask for God's direction.
- Third, we ask for relief from our human frailties and addictions, so we may be fortified and free to build a life of purpose, reflecting our Higher Power's mission for us.
- Fourth, we ask that our difficulties and obstacles be removed, so we may give others hope and be an example of how God can work miracles in our lives.
- Fifth, we are made aware that we help others through the Power of God—that this Power loves us unreservedly. By surrendering our cares to God and by adopting this new “*Way of Life*,” we serve as a testament to this Love and to the workings of this Power in our lives.
- Sixth, we commit to following the guidance of our Higher Power in every area of our lives.

A

Qualification on Step Three

Before we move on to Step Three, B will qualify for three minutes on the Step Three and the Third Step Prayer. [*B qualifies on Step 3. Time for 3 minutes.*]

Thank you (name) for qualifying.

Preparation for Step Three

In preparation for taking the Third Step and reading the *Third Step Prayer*, we will meditate for one minute to connect to our Higher Power before making this important commitment. *[Time for 1 minute.]*

Taking the Third Step Together

Now, we will each take the Third Step, one at a time, by reciting the *Third Step Prayer* or a similar prayer of your choice. We will copy the prayer into the Chat. You may read the prayer as is, or feel free to make it your own by using your own words and/or using the language of your choice.

We will take turns, and each person will say the prayer out loud so you may experience deeply the covenant you are making, and so we may all witness this trusting relationship you are developing with your Higher Power. *[Copy and paste the Third Step Prayer into the Chat.]*

I will start, and **B** will go next. When I call your name, please say the Third Step Prayer in the method you prefer. Whatever way you choose to say this prayer, the most important is to mean it with all your heart.

"God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness, to those I would help, of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will, always"

B

Thank you everyone! According to the Big Book authors, **we have all taken Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood [God.]** We are well on our way to a new life, a new freedom, and a new happiness.

Principles of Step Three

We will complete this session by introducing the principles of Step Three: FAITHFULNESS leads to GUIDANCE.

- In Step Three, we take the FAITH and BELIEF we sowed in Step Two and allow them to take root and blossom. FAITHFULNESS means being loyal, constant, unswerving, steadfast, dedicated, and committed. Our loyalty to something greater than ourselves begins to grow. As we come to BELIEVE, we become willing to make a deeper commitment. In Step Three, we make the life-changing resolution to make a contract with the One Who Has All Power. This is a pivotal point in our recovery.
- When we are FAITHFUL to our Higher Power, we are FAITHFUL to our true selves. This FAITH leads to GUIDANCE. Up to this point, we have been faithful only to our media addiction. Now we decide to abandon our loyalty to this fruitless addiction and become faithful to something with **purpose**. We decide to be faithful to the God of our understanding and to allow this Power to GUIDE and direct our lives. We now know that we cannot manage our life on our own, and we learn that God *can* and *will* if we seek God. GUIDANCE brings us the power we had been lacking. Spiritual GUIDANCE brings us strength and courage to take the remaining Steps.

A

Looking Ahead

Thank you all for reading. Tomorrow is a special session. We will present a method of practicing Two Way Prayer. Now that we have turned our will and lives over to the God of our understanding, we will learn to connect to this power without delay, since we will need our Higher Power's guidance as we take the rest of the Steps.

B

Tomorrow's session will run 10 minutes longer. Please plan accordingly. Also, please make sure you attend MAA meetings and that you volunteer to serve and speak at your meetings. You all have more than a week of abstinence from unnecessary media, so you have something to offer others. People who continue to suffer from media addiction need to hear your story. We will end this session with the Serenity Prayer.

END OF TUESDAY MEETING

WEDNESDAY MEETING

Instead of a qualification, B will guide the group in a meditation today. If time permits, end the session with Questions and Answers. Ask a member to lead the group in the Third Step Prayer.

TWO-WAY PRAYER MEDITATION

A

Welcome to day three of the second week of Back to Basics, A Design for Living. Please put down all nonessential electronic media while participating in these sessions.

We have asked (name) to lead us all in the “Third Step Prayer”:

“God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness, to those I would help, of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will, always!”

Thank you (name).

Review of Steps 1-3

Let's review what we have accomplished so far. We admitted that we were powerless over our compulsive media habits and that our media addiction had made our lives unmanageable.

B

We found within ourselves the willingness to believe in the possibility that a Higher Power could take away our compulsive desire for media and bring us back to a balanced and sane mind.

A

Then we took a huge leap and made the decision to be faithful to this spiritual Power. We made a contract or covenant to turn our will and lives over to our Higher Power and to be guided by this Power. We decided to allow this Power to love us, show us how to serve, give us victory over our hardships, and transform us into a beacon of hope for others, so they too may be relieved of the bondage of fear and addiction.

B

Taking these first three Steps is the start of experiencing the change required to not only recover from media addiction but also to be rocketed into a new spiritual dimension. By reciting the Third Step Prayer, we begin our conversation with God. Prayer is the act of talking to God, but how do we listen to God? How do we hear answers to our prayers? Now that you have taken the first three Steps, we invite you to take quiet time each day to connect with your Higher Power, and today we will show you how to listen to your Higher Power and expand your God-consciousness.

A

Normally this lesson would be presented as part of Step Eleven: *Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.* We have found that our Higher Power's guidance and help is a prerequisite to taking Steps 4 through 10 successfully. Therefore, we will dip into Step 11 (the meditation component of the 12 Steps) right after taking Step Three, so you may begin to practice stillness and hear the soft voice of your Higher Power.

B

How to Listen to God and Two-Way Prayer

In the late 1930s, John E. Batterson, a friend of A.A.'s founders, wrote the short essay, *How to Listen to God*. This pamphlet provides instructions on how to practice the *Two Way Prayer*. It contains universal spiritual principles that can be applied by "*anyone or everyone interested in a spiritual way of life.*" We invite you to use some of these suggestions as you establish your own daily quiet time.

A

Prayer is talking to God, and meditation is listening to God. In the opening paragraphs, Batterson states that "*Prayer and Meditation*" will change our lives:

- "These are a few simple suggestions for people who are willing to make an experiment. You can discover for yourself one of [the] most important and practical things any person can learn—how to be in touch with [a Power greater than yourself.] All that is needed is the willingness to try it honestly. People who have done this consistently and sincerely have found that it really works."

We too have found that practicing Two Way Prayer really "*works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.*" With time and practice, it will "*gradually become a working part of [our] mind.*"

B

Addressing Potential Concerns

Before we proceed, let's address a potential concern. Some of you may feel uncomfortable when we discuss "Talking to God" or refer to a Higher Power that communicates with you. It might seem as if we're defining your Higher Power for you, which could feel intrusive or reminiscent of being invited to join a religious cult. We want to acknowledge and respect these feelings of unease.

A

Perhaps your conception of a Higher Power may not include the possibility of receiving information or inspiration from a source beyond yourself. You might think that people who claim to communicate with God are delusional. Alternatively, you may believe that a Higher Power has more important matters to attend to than your personal concerns. Perhaps you feel unworthy of a close relationship with "the One who has all power," assuming that such a force wouldn't concern itself with what you perceive as trivial problems.

B

Some of you may have been deeply hurt by religious experiences or concepts of God, making the idea of connecting with any Higher Power feel like touching a raw wound. You might struggle to reconcile this pain with a new conception of God. Whatever your feelings or thoughts, remember that we're not asking you to believe anything specific.

A

We simply ask that you be open to trying something new—to experiment. While listening for the voice of a greater Power might seem like magical thinking, those of us who have persisted with this method have experienced genuine breakthroughs. Our Two-Way Prayers have brought us profound comfort, relief, and clarity in our lives.

B

One of our members struggled with her image of God, perceiving her Higher Power as judgmental and punitive. She found it difficult to entrust her problems to this Power. Her sponsor suggested, "Your conception of a Higher Power might be limiting what it can do for you. Would you be open to discovering a bigger, better Higher Power?" This insight helped her realize she deserved a Divine Power that would empower rather than shame her.

A

We aim to offer suggestions that help you discover a loving Higher Power—one that can assist you in all aspects of your life, providing comfort, knowledge, and the strength to fulfill your soul's purpose. Remember, we're discussing the God of your understanding. Take what resonates and leave the rest. We invite you to set aside preconceptions and explore the possibility of a Higher Power that is truly vital and fulfilling to you.

B

If "God" is not the right name for you, remember that you can call your Higher Power whatever feels right for you: *Spirit of the Universe*, *Divine Love*, *Higher Self*, *Great Mystery*, *Source*, or *Goddess*. One of our members calls her H.P. her "*Healing Power*." The important thing is that you feel and learn to know and trust this Higher Power.

A

Possible Ways of Seeing Your Higher Power

We will present some possibilities, based on our own experience, and we invite you to consider them when contemplating your own Higher Power. You don't have to agree with all of them. Please take home only those that resonate with you.

- Higher Power is alive, has been, and always will be.
- This Higher Power cares for you and loves you unconditionally, without limits.
- Higher Power has a plan for our lives and a solution for every problem we face.
- This Higher Power knows everything, can do anything, and can be everywhere at the same time.
- You may not be able to see or touch your Higher Power, but this Power can touch you, is with you, and is all around you.
- Your Higher Power is in you right now—in your body and your heart.

- Your Higher Power will tell you all you need to know but may not tell you all you want to know.
- Your Higher Power will help you carry out anything that They inspire you to do.

B

How to Listen to Your Higher Power

To hear the God of your own understanding, we suggest trying these five things:

1. Be quiet and still
2. Listen
3. Be honest about every thought that arises
4. Test the thoughts to be sure that they come from your Higher Power
5. Sincerely follow through with the guidance that shows up

With these basic ideas as a backdrop, here are specific suggestions on How to Listen to Your Higher Power: *Each reader please read one.*

1. Take Time

Find a place and time where you can be alone, quiet, and undisturbed. Most people have found that early morning is the best time. Have with you some paper and a pen or pencil. We are creating an intimate relationship with the God of our understanding, and all relationships need time and attention.

2. Relax

Sit in a comfortable position. Consciously relax all your muscles. Be loose. There is no hurry. There needs to be no strain during these moments. God cannot get through to us if we are tense, anxious, or anticipating later responsibilities.

3. Tune In

Open your heart to your Higher Power. Either silently or aloud, tell God, in a natural way, that you would like to find the plan for your life or that you want God's answer to the problem or situation you are facing now. Be specific in your request.

4. Listen

Be still, quiet, and open. Let your mind go "loose." Let God do the talking. Thoughts, ideas, and impressions will begin to come into your mind and heart. Be alert, aware and open to every thought.

5. Write!

Here is the important key to the whole process. Write down everything that comes to your mind. Everything. Writing is simply a means of recording so that you can remember later. Don't sort out or edit your thoughts at this point.

Don't say to yourself: This thought isn't important, this can't be guidance, this isn't nice, or this is just me thinking. Write down everything: good thoughts, bad thoughts, comfortable thoughts, uncomfortable thoughts, "holy" thoughts, "unholy" thoughts, sensible thoughts, or "crazy" thoughts.

Be honest. Write down everything! A thought comes quickly, and it escapes even more quickly, unless it is captured on paper.

6. Test

After a set time, or when the flow of thoughts slows down, stop writing and take a good look at what came through. Not every thought we have comes from our Higher Power, so we then ask ourselves some specific questions to verify the source of these thoughts:

- Are these thoughts completely honest, pure, unselfish, and loving?
- Are they in line with our duties to our family and to our community?
- Are these thoughts in line with our true values and principles?

7. Check

When in doubt and/or when you have an important decision to make, ask another person for support and share what you have written. More light comes through two windows than one. Many people share what guidance has come to them. This is the secret of unity.

8. Follow the Guidance

Take action. You will only be sure of guidance when you follow through. A rudder will not guide a boat until the boat moves. As you follow this guidance, very often the results will convince you that you are on the right track.

9. Blocks

God's guidance is as freely available as the air we breathe. If you feel you are not receiving clear inspiration, you need to be honest. Ask yourself, "*Is something wrong in my life? Is there a harmful habit or indulgence I will not give up, a wrong relationship I will not let go, a restitution I have yet to make, a person I will not forgive, a guidance from my Higher Power I ignored?*" You need to review these points honestly and then take the time to listen again.

10. Mistakes

We may feel guided to take a certain action and later find that we have made a mistake or hurt ourselves or others. This can be painful and confusing and may make us doubt either ourselves or our Higher Power.

Here we must accept that we are human and will make mistakes. However, our Higher Power will always honor our sincerity. They will work around and through every honest mistake we make. Our Higher Power will help us make it right. In some instances, others may not like our answers, but this does not mean we have made a mistake.

Suppose you fail to do something you've been told, and your opportunity to carry it out passes. There is only one thing to do. Make it right with your Higher Power. Ask for forgiveness, then try again. Your Higher Power is not impersonal and understands you far better than you do.

11. Results

We never know what swimming is like until we get into the water and try. We will never know what Two-Way Prayer is like until we sincerely try it. People who have tried this earnestly have received wisdom—not their own—into their hearts and minds. A Power greater than human power begins to operate in their lives. This can be an everlasting adventure!

A

There is a way for everyone, everywhere, to listen to God. Anyone can connect with their Higher Power if they follow the above guidelines. When you listen, your Higher Power speaks to you. When you follow the guidance, your Higher Power supports your actions. This is referred to as "*the law of prayer*." God's plan for this world unfolds through the lives of ordinary people, like us, who are willing to be directed by a Power greater than themselves.

B

We will now practice Two Way Prayer together. I will lead us in a guided meditation, followed by the Two Way Prayer.

GUIDED TWO WAY PRAYER MEDITATION

This meditation will last approximately 8 to 10 minutes. *[Stop screen sharing now. Please proceed slowly to allow participants the time to drop into the meditation.]*

- Please get comfortable in a sitting posture and close your eyes. *[Pause 5 seconds]*
- Pull your shoulders back and down in alignment with your hips.
- Feel the strength of your shoulder blades.
- Notice the strength in your lower back.
- Relax your neck and shoulder muscles as you breathe slowly and deeply. *[Pause]*
- Take three deep breaths. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. *[Pause 10 seconds]*
- Begin by calling your spirit home, to be here now in your body in the present moment.
- For these next few minutes, have no problems and no worries.
- There will be time for that later. They will always be there LATER.
- But just for this little while, while we practice our meditation today, have nothing to worry about.
- Notice how it feels to not have anything to worry about. *[Pause 5 seconds]*
- Now relax your facial muscles, forehead, eyes, and eyebrows.
- Relax your jaw and your tongue.
- Feel tingling relaxation soften your scalp and the back of your neck.
- Relax your belly and chest. Feel yourself take a sigh of relief. *[Pause 5 seconds]*
- Relax your arms, hands, and fingers.
- Relax your thighs, calves, and ankles. Your feet and toes.
- Feel your entire body now sink into deep relaxation and let go completely.
- Notice how it feels to have deep relaxation flowing through your body.
- If you still feel any tension anywhere in your body, it will flow right out. Let it go. Let it all go. *[Pause for 10 seconds]*
- Now, allow yourself to accept yourself just as you are right this minute.

- Allow yourself to get intimate with the real you.
- Allow yourself to accept your body just as it is right now.
- Allow yourself to accept your life just as it is right now.
- Allow yourself to accept other people in your life just as they are right now.
- Allow yourself to see that you are safe and protected right now. *[Pause 5 seconds]*
- Let go of everything you think you know about yourself and others.
- Let go of everything you think you know about your Higher Power.
- Open your heart and your mind to see yourself and your life more clearly.
- Neutrally see yourself, without judgment, open to all possibilities. *[Pause 10 seconds]*
- Now begin to invite the presence of a Higher Power to flow within you, to meet you deep within.
- Begin to sense your Higher Power's presence in your heart.
- Feel the love, understanding, gentleness, and joy of your Higher Power resting in and around you. Allow yourself to receive this love. *[Repeat, then Pause 15 seconds]*
- In this state, it is easy to access our Higher Power's wisdom for our life, for this day, for right now.
- With a calm mind and peaceful heart, ask your Higher Power:
 - "What insights do you have for me today?"*
 - "What message do you have for me about my life situation?"*
- You may ask for answers to any problems or life circumstances bothering you right now.
- Be specific in your request. *[Pause 10 seconds]*
- Let your heart be still, quiet, and open.
- Let your mind go loose.
- Let your Higher Power do the talking.
- Listen and breathe. Breathe and listen. *[Repeat, then pause 10 seconds]*
- Thoughts, ideas, and impressions will start to trickle into your heart and mind.
- Be alert, aware, and open to each one of them. *[Pause 45 seconds]*
- If your mind is wandering or having distracting thoughts, it's completely natural. When this happens, we return to a calm mind and peaceful heart and ask our Higher Power again:
 - "What insights do you have for me today?"*
 - "What message do you have for me about my life situation?"*
- Continue to reach out with your mind and heart to your Higher Power and let your mind go loose.
- Breathe and listen. *[Repeat and then pause for 60 seconds]*
- With your eyes still closed, embrace the feelings, images, or messages you just experienced.
- Hold this vision in your mind's eye. Hold your Higher Power's message in your heart. *[Pause*

30 seconds]

- Whatever you experienced in your meditation today is exactly right. Embrace it as a gift for your recovery. Avoid judging any meditation as good or bad.
- Accept this moment and thank yourself for nurturing your connection with your Higher Power.
- Rub your hands together and place them on your heart as a sign of self-love and self-acceptance.
- Take a deep breath and thank yourself for being willing to take the time to get intimate with yourself and your Higher Power today. *[Pause 5 seconds]*
- Please return to your surroundings now. Become aware of the room you are in. Become aware of the sounds and the people around you. Be here now. Open your eyes. Feel wide awake and better than before.
- You can gently revive your body by rolling your shoulders and stretching your arms, legs, and body. *[Pause 5 seconds]*

This concludes our Guided Meditation. *[Resume screen share.]*

A

We will now take three minutes to write down any thoughts, ideas, or images you received during your guided meditation. *[Time for 3 minutes]*

Now let's take some time to share what guidance you received. Who is willing to share what they have written? *[Time for one minute each or as time allows]*

B

Practice Two-Way Prayer and Go to Meetings

Please begin to practice Two-Way Prayer on your own. You may also practice Two-Way Prayer with your sponsor, other group members, or at MAA's Sunday Two-Way Prayer meeting (found on the website meeting page). Tomorrow we will focus on Step Four.

A

Please make sure you are attending MAA meetings and volunteering to serve and speak. You all have now learned the Two-Way Prayer, and you have even more to share with others. People who still suffer from media addiction need to hear your story. Let's end with the Serenity Prayer.

[If time allows, go on to answer any questions members may have. Then end the meeting with The Serenity Prayer.]

END OF WEDNESDAY MEETING

THURSDAY MEETING

B qualifies on Step 4. Ask a member to lead the group in the Third Step Prayer.

STEP FOUR

A

Welcome to day four of the second week of Back to Basics, A Design for Living. Please put down all nonessential electronic media while participating in these sessions.

We have asked (name) to lead us all in the “Third Step Prayer”:

“God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness, to those I would help, of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will, always!”

Thank you (name).

Quick Review

Thus far, we have taken the first three Steps and learned to speak and listen to the God of our understanding. In taking these first three Steps, we made potentially life-changing DECISIONS. Now it is time to take ACTION—actions that will result in the “*personality change sufficient to bring about recovery*” from media addiction. Remember, if we are to be free of the things that trigger our media use for relief, we need to look at the root cause of our compulsion. The Big Book authors tell us:

- “Selfishness [or] self-centeredness! That, we think, 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 fellows 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.”

B

Taking Inventory

We will now launch into ACTIONS, which will begin to transform our fears and self-centeredness into faith and God-centeredness. We are now about to move on to the SHARING process of our program.

Step 4 – Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

The Big Book authors tell us what we must do:

- “Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal house cleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face and be rid of the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our [media] was but a symptom. So we had to get down to **causes and conditions**.”

A

Please note the author's use of "*at once*." They instruct us to take the Fourth Step immediately after the Third Step Prayer. This enables us to see more clearly the "*causes and conditions*" that created our media problem. Once we identify the true causes, we must overcome them without delay, as those are the things that have prevented us from tapping into the spiritual solution to our problem.

B

By acknowledging and addressing those aspects of the self, that imprisoned us in the depths of loneliness and despair, we find ourselves in a more favorable place to maintain direct communication with our Higher Power. The Big Book authors disclose that liquor (or in our case, media addiction) is but a symptom. Yes, our media binges have cut us off from God, but even once we've stopped being media drunk, we still find ourselves separated from the "*One who has all power*," because we have not addressed our liabilities. Now, it is time to look at these "*causes and conditions*" by courageously taking a personal inventory of our own character traits.

The Big Book authors start by comparing a personal inventory to a business inventory.

- "Therefore we started upon a personal inventory. *This was Step Four*. A business that 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."

A

We will now conduct the equivalent of a commercial inventory of our lives. This means that we will look at our assets and our liabilities. This is what a commercial inventory is all about. It is an examination of what is working and what is not working in our lives. It allows us to accentuate our positives and eliminate the negatives.

- "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. We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully."

B

Liabilities List

In the *Back to Basics—Beginners' Meetings* booklet, the authors present us with a list of liabilities we need to eliminate and a list of assets we need to accentuate. We have added self-pity to this list since self-pity is often the number one excuse media addicts use to justify slipping back into their alcoholic media. We have found that excessive self-pity leads to slips and relapses, so we must do our utmost to avoid this liability.

Here is a list of the liabilities mentioned in the Big Book, each reader please read two:

- **Self-pity:** Excessive, self-absorbed unhappiness over one's own troubles
- **Resentment:** Consequence of being angry or bitter toward someone for an extended period
- **Fear:** Preoccupation with the possibility of losing something you own or have or with not getting what you want

- **Selfishness:** Concern only for ourselves and our own welfare or pleasure without regard for others
- **Self-centeredness:** Making ourselves the center of the universe and wanting to control and play God
- **Dishonesty:** Deception, cheating, lying, stealing, or withholding the truth
- **False Pride:** Feelings of being *better than* (grandiosity, superiority, know-it-all all) or *less than* (shame, unworthiness, low self-esteem)
- **Jealousy:** Characterized by the fear of losing a valued relationship to a perceived rival, often manifesting as possessiveness and attempts to control a partner's interactions with others.
- **Mistrust:** Involves suspicion and doubt regarding another person's motives or reliability, often leading to defensive behaviors such as snooping or questioning their actions to confirm suspicions.
- **Envy:** The desire to have a quality, possession, or other desirable attribute belonging to someone else
- **Procrastination:** Putting off work or not following through with the right actions

Next week we will give you the full list of assets, which are the antidote to our liabilities, but for today, let's take a closer look at the liability of self-pity.

A

Self-Pity VS Self-Compassion

Self-pity involves feeling sad and overwhelmed by our problems, often leading us to believe that life is unfair. It differs from grief, which is a healthy response to real loss and allows us to process emotions like anger and sadness. In self-pity, we tend to focus excessively on our own suffering, viewing ourselves as victims rather than recognizing that others also experience pain.

B

When we overindulge in self-pity, we put ourselves at risk of slipping back into our addictive behavior. When consumed with self-pity, we feel victimized, and the world becomes a terrifying place where we lose our sense of agency. This often paralyzes us and blinds us to the ways we could use to improve our situation.

A

In Alcoholics Anonymous there is a much-repeated saying: "*Poor me, poor me, pour me a drink.*" The Big Book refers to the alcoholic trait of self-pity often. Here are just a few examples, each reader read two:

- "No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of **self-pity.**"
- "Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and **self-pity**, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate."

- "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...."
- "When we were invited out, our husbands sneaked so many drinks that they spoiled the occasion. If, on the other hand, they took nothing, their **self-pity** made them killjoys."
- "Admitting [they] may be somewhat at fault, [they are] sure that other people are more to blame. [They become] angry, indignant, **self-pitying**."
- "Whatever our protestations, are not most of us concerned with ourselves, our resentments, or our self-pity?"

One author wrote:

- "Self-pity is when we refuse to see the little things that we can be grateful for, even in the midst of the pain."
- "Self-pity is dismissing the reality that others also face challenges and hurt deeply".
- "Self-pity is resisting the thought that one day God can bring something good of what is terrible."

Let's also look at what Bill W. wrote on page 238, *AS BILL SEES IT*:

- Self-pity is one of the most unhappy and consuming defects that we know. It is a bar to all spiritual progress and can cut off all effective communication with our fellows because of its inordinate demands for attention and sympathy. It is a maudlin form of martyrdom, which we can ill afford.

B

Understanding Pity and Compassion

We're encouraged to avoid self-pity at all costs. But how can we find an alternative when we're stuck in its grip? We are going to find a way to break free by first comparing pity with compassion, as there's a subtle but important difference between the two.

- The term pity sometimes implies a sense of superiority or condescension and may be expressed as looking down on someone rather than genuinely empathizing with their plight.
- Compassion is defined as a deep awareness of and sympathy for another's suffering, coupled with a strong desire to alleviate that suffering. It involves recognizing the pain of others and feeling motivated to help them.

A

We learn here that unlike pity, which can imply superiority or just feeling sorry for someone, compassion includes empathy and action to relieve distress. By replacing self-pity with self-compassion, we open doors to helping ourselves rather than wallowing.

B

The Antidote for Self-pity is Self-Compassion

So, **SELF-COMPASSION** becomes an antidote for self-pity. When we catch ourselves feeling sorry for ourselves, we can shift our focus to feeling compassion for ourselves instead. With self-compassion, we begin to look for ways to help ourselves rather than wallow in our misery. Two actions we can quickly take are to find gratitude in our situation and to reach out and help others.

- “We can hug our hurts and make a shrine out of our sorrows, or we can offer them to God as a sacrifice of praise. The choice is ours.”

A

Resentment VS Forgiveness

Self-pity often leads us to resentment, and the Big Book authors tell us that resentment is the number one offender when trying to live a spiritual way of life:

- “Resentment is the ‘number one’ offender. It destroys more [media addicts] than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease....”

The authors emphasize that our resentments separate us and keep us from being guided by our Higher Power. We must eliminate these resentments if we are to live happily and free.

- “It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worthwhile. But with the [media addict], whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, 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.”

B

Here the Big Book tells us that not only are these states of being a waste of a good life, but they are also fatal for the media addict. Anything that cuts us off from God has terrible repercussions, as it will certainly make us gravitate back to media binging for relief.

- “[When we harbor resentments] the insanity of [getting drunk on media] returns and we [binge] again.... If we were to live, we had to be free of anger.... [These resentments] may be the dubious luxury of normal [people], but for [media addicts] these things are poison.”

A

We have found that resentment is a poison that no media addict can afford, but what are we to do when these emotions surge, and we feel someone else is to blame? What we do is write those resentments down. We try to look at the whole picture. We ask ourselves, “*Is there something I am missing?*” To be rid of resentments, we must commit them to paper:

- “In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry.... Referring to our list again[, p]utting 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 the situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other [person’s].”

B

Let's look at the third sentence again. It reads, "*Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened?*" These four liabilities make up the opposite of the Four Standards of *Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, and Love*, which the Big Book uses as a test of our Higher Power's will for us.

A

Our Fourth Step Inventory is the method to become aware of the path we are on. Are we living in the solution and "*walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe*" or are we living in the problem and sinking deeper and deeper into "*that bitter morass of self-pity?*" What blocks us from the "*One who has all power*" and prevents us from finding the spiritual solution to our difficulties?

B

Concerning our resentments, the Big Book authors provide us with specific instructions on what to do. We must overcome them if we "*expect to live long or happily in this world.*" The Big Book authors explain that when we hold on to grudges, we are allowing others to control our lives, or as the saying goes, "*We allow them to live rent-free in our heads.*"

- "We turned back to the list, for it 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, **fancied or real**, had the 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 [our media addiction]. 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 set these matters straight."

A

If we don't manage our resentments, the future will just repeat the past. Every time we are reminded of an old hurt, the old pain returns, and we feel it again and again. In the past, we may have used media to numb this pain, but now we will take the necessary ACTIONS to free ourselves of this pain.

B

After we write down our resentments, we talk about them with our sponsor. Healing begins when **SHARING** our hurt, *but* this healing is not complete until we have forgiven those who have offended us. We overcome resentment with FORGIVENESS. Thus, FORGIVENESS is the asset that counteracts the liability of RESENTMENT.

A

But how can we find forgiveness? The Big Book offers a beautiful answer in the form of the "Sick Person's Prayer." This powerful tool for cultivating compassion and understanding towards those who have wronged us comes from page 67 of the Big Book and reads as follows:

- "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 God to help us show them the same tolerance, [compassion], and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended, we said to ourselves, '*This is a sick [person]. How can I be helpful to [them]? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.*'"

B

Through this prayer and the process it represents, we begin to change our attitude about our experiences. We start to see the source of our pain in a new light, viewing the person as a sick individual who needs our prayers rather than our anger. This approach applies universally, whether it's ourselves, someone still in our lives, a person who has passed on, or someone we may never see again. The Big Book emphasizes the importance of avoiding retaliation or argument, stating:

- “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 God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and everyone.”

A

Fear VS Fatih

Next, the authors ask us to look at our fears.

- “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.”

Fear can be seen as a form of faith in the negative, where we invest our energy and belief into outcomes we dread. It reflects a deep-seated conviction that the worst-case scenario is not only possible but likely, leading us to anticipate and prepare for what we hope to avoid. In this way, fear becomes an ironic testament to our capacity to believe in the power of our anxieties. Essentially fear is having faith in an outcome you don't want.

B

However, just as fear represents misplaced faith, true faith offers a path to overcoming these fears. If we have faith that God will keep us safe and protected, we will find the strength to overcome all our fears. We overcome fear with faith. Thus, according to the Big Book authors, faith is the asset that serves as an antidote to the liability of fear. Here's how they put it:

- “Perhaps there is a better way—we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role [God] assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think [God] would have us, and humbly rely on [God], does [God] enable us to match calamity with serenity.”
- “We can laugh at those who think spirituality 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 God. We never apologize for God. Instead, we let [God] demonstrate through us, what [God] can do. We ask [God] to remove our fear and direct our attention to what [God] would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.”

A

Make A List of People We Have Harmed

As we share our personal liabilities with our sponsor, we use this information to make a list of all those we have harmed. This is our **Amends List**—a list of people (present or deceased), living beings (ourselves or our pets), and other entities or places to whom or to which we owe restitution.

- “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? What should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.”

B

Assignments for This Weekend

Please complete your Fourth Step Inventory worksheets this weekend:

- **First-month** members: Write down all your resentments towards people, institutions, and principles by filling out the B2B Fourth Step Inventory Part 1 – Resentments.
- **Second-month** members: Complete the Fears Inventory worksheet by writing down your fears and answering the questions in each column.
- **Third-month** members: Fill out the Sex Conduct and Fantasy worksheet.

As part of the Fourth Step, you will be completing inventories on resentments, fears, and sex. Please complete and share your reflections with your sponsor this weekend. Each inventory is essential to the process, and we focus on one topic each month. All necessary worksheets are included in your packets.

A

Sharing Your Inventory With Your Sponsor

Once we are thorough and unflinching in looking at our side of the street, we are ready to share our inventory with another person. This brings us to Step 5.

Step 5 – Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Please make an appointment to meet with your sponsor and read your Fourth Step worksheet(s) to them. You will need at least an hour. When meeting with your sponsor, it's always good to begin and end your meeting with the *Serenity Prayer* or any prayer you prefer. Please give your Fourth Step to your sponsor between now and our next session.

B

Take Quiet Time After You Share

After giving your Fourth Step to your sponsor, please take some quiet time to yourself, as the Big Book advises.

- “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.... Taking [the Big Book] down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the Twelve Steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything.... Is our work solid so far?”

Please do not skip this part. Make time after meeting with your sponsor to follow the instructions in the paragraph above.

A

Perfection is the Enemy of Success

Next session, we will continue to work on our Fourth Step inventories by learning how to use our assets to counteract our liabilities. We will also take a closer look at the Fifth Step. Right now, don't worry about doing it perfectly. Just begin. Perfection is the enemy of success. Ask your Higher Power to help guide you in writing your Fourth Step and try to get it done as quickly as possible.

B

Read a Few Thoughts on Shame and Guilt

Also, please be aware that feelings of guilt or shame may arise while writing or reading your Fourth Step. If they do, please refer to the article in your packet titled, *A Few Thoughts on Shame and Guilt vs. Remorse*, and please discuss those feelings with your sponsor. Get all the support you need this weekend. Don't be afraid to ask for what you need from your sponsor. Tap into self-compassion and allow yourself to receive the gift of having a caring person hear your story.

A

Thank You For Sponsoring!

We are thankful to those who have stepped up to sponsor this month. Thank you for your generosity and service. By sharing your experience, strength, and hope you are helping others recover. There is nothing more vital to our fellowship, or more rewarding, than giving someone the gift of sharing their Fourth Step.

B

Principles of Step Four

We will complete today's lesson by looking at the principles we adopt as we take **Step Four, "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."**

The principle of COURAGE leads to the principle of CLARITY.

- FAITH and FAITHFULNESS from Step Three lead to COURAGE. We were told at the beginning of the Twelve Step process that we needed to be fearless: "*With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start.*" Facing ourselves and our character deficiencies is one of the most COURAGEOUS actions we can undertake. Because we have developed FAITH and have chosen FAITHFULNESS, we find the COURAGE to look at ourselves honestly.
- This COURAGE leads to CLARITY. By being willing to look at ourselves honestly, we begin to emerge from the fog and find CLARITY. We cannot fix what we cannot see, and we cannot change what we do not admit. CLARITY is a powerful Principle, for by living the principle of CLARITY we move out of the darkness and into the "*sunlight of the Spirit.*"

A

Looking Ahead

Also, this weekend, be prepared for intense emotions that may arise while writing and reading your Fourth Step inventories. Plan to take extra care of yourself during this process. Completing these steps quickly allows us to move through this challenging time more swiftly. Ensure you get plenty of sleep and rest, and if you need additional support, don't hesitate to seek outside help.

We'd also like to remind you to please make sure that you volunteer to serve and speak at MAA meetings. Thank you

Now, we'll ask **B** to qualify on Step 4.

[B qualifies on Step 4. Then end with the Serenity Prayer.]

END OF THURSDAY MEETING

FRIDAY MEETING – Fun Friday!

A time to build trust and relationships. Explore and experience relaxation, recreation, relief, and reward without using media. This meeting should have been planned earlier in the week by group members.