

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. This meeting will last 7 minutes longer.

A

Welcome and A Few Reminders

Welcome to week two of “Back to Basics: A Design for Living” for those who want freedom from media addiction. We invite you to put aside any nonessential electronic devices during these sessions. Your full attention to this material is the key to making the most of the recovery process offered by this program. This meeting will last 7 minutes longer today.

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).

First, we will introduce ourselves: [All Groups Sponsors share their names]. We are recovered, not cured, media addicts, and we are your Group Sponsors. Thank you for allowing us to serve you this week.

Before we begin this session, we would like to thank the individual sponsors in our group for the time and attention you have given 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 each of you!

B

Just a few reminders and suggestions:

1. **Donation:** If you haven't yet donated to MAA for the privilege of participating in B2B, please consider doing so right after this meeting and letting your sponsor know.
2. **Reading Reminder:** Group Sponsors will read sections A and B, while everyone else will focus on the bullet points. When you see a dash or number, that indicates a part for Group Sponsors to read.
3. **Stay Attentive:** 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.
4. **Read the Big Book:** If you don't already have a copy of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, we highly recommend obtaining a hard copy to read throughout this month. It serves as acceptable reading to support your media replacement plan.

5. **All Back to Basics Saturday Solutions Speaker Meetings:** Please make sure you have either attended the Saturday 2 PM speaker meeting or listened to the recording.

A

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.**

B

Compliance VS Surrender

In our last session, we began the surrender process by completing Step One: admitting we were powerless over media and that our lives had become unmanageable. As the Big Book says, “This is the first step in recovery.” Your honesty in taking this step is a major accomplishment, especially since many media addicts remain in denial. Step One’s core principles are HONESTY and ACCEPTANCE. We must first be honest with ourselves before we can accept our addiction. Once we accept this truth, we are better prepared to continue with the rest of the Twelve Steps. Acceptance marks just the beginning of our surrender process.

A

Allergy of the Body, Phenomenon of Craving

To deepen our understanding of why acceptance and surrender are so vital to our recovery, let’s turn to Dr. Silkworth’s insights from the Big Book. He observed that many alcoholics often declare they are “going on the wagon for keeps,” only to find themselves returning to their addictive behavior and bingeing even worse than before. This cycle is marked by remorse and repeated resolutions to change, yet a true, lasting commitment is rarely made.

B

Some of us have believed that after a period of complete abstinence from our addictive media, we could safely return to use without risk. However, as Dr. Silkworth explained, this persistent **phenomenon of craving** sets us apart: once we start using again, we trigger a craving that is beyond our control, making moderation impossible and highlighting why acceptance of our condition and surrender to a new way of living are essential for lasting recovery.

- “This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an **allergy** which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently [gotten rid of]. **The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence.**”

Please allow this point to sink in: for media addicts of the hopeless variety, we have an allergy to media. Unlike others, the only relief we have to suggest is **entire abstinence**.

A

Abstinence Model

What we consume eventually consumes us. While some medical professionals classify media addiction as a “process addiction,” many of us who have struggled with years of uncontrolled media binges experience it more like a “substance addiction,” similar to drugs, alcohol, or nicotine. When we view media as a substance, i.e., something we consume, an abstinence-based approach makes more sense and feels more effective, since the “**phenomenon of craving**” and the need for “**complete abstinence**” directly apply.

B

From Compliance to Surrender

Understanding the necessity of abstinence is only the beginning. Moving from compliance—simply following the program—to true surrender, where we let go completely, is where we eventually want to be. Compliance is a good start, but to receive the full benefits of the 12 Steps, we must be willing to let go of our way of doing things.

This was made clear last week when we read from “How It Works” in the Big Book:

- “Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are **willing to go to any length** to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps. At some of these, we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not.”

A

Reflection

Now, please take a moment to reflect on what you are truly willing to do to recover from this life-threatening illness of media addiction. Alternatively, consider if there are things you **will not** do for your recovery. Let’s pause for 30 seconds to reflect. As you do, notice what you may still be holding onto. Ask yourself: “Is it worth holding onto anything right now that does not move my recovery forward?” [Time for 30 seconds.]

If you haven’t reached full surrender yet, don’t worry; for many of us, understanding surrender took time and often deepened as we progressed, especially by the time we reached Step Seven.

B

Finding a Power to Restore Sanity

But the Big Book makes it clear that abstinence alone is not enough. True recovery requires a profound internal transformation—a psychic (soul) change and a spiritual awakening. Let’s remember that the Big Book tells us we have a soul sickness:

- “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

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

In our session today, our objective is to find a Power greater than ourselves, who will relieve us from the hopeless and compulsive nature of media addiction. 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

Let's reread the Doctor's Opinion, as it is essential to understand why we need to come to believe in a Power greater than ourselves that can restore us to sanity. As we read, we will substitute references to 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 [given in] 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."

A

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. The word "psyche" itself means "soul," so this is not just a mental shift, but a deep change at the very core of a person's being. It is a spiritual experience or awakening that fundamentally alters one's perspective on life.

B

This change involves a dramatic shift in emotions, attitudes, and ideas that previously dominated the person's life. Essentially, it's an emotional and spiritual rearrangement—a miracle that allows the addict to break free from compulsive behavior and discover a new way of living.

A

What we understand here is that 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."

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!"

A

How We Can Come to Believe

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.*" 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 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."

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."

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 own 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."

B

There is a plea for 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."

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."

A

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 [begin] 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."

What is the Alternative? A Life of Bedevilments!

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 **bedevilments** 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 non-believer. 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.”
- “A 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 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 were 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 was: So this is the God they have been talking about for all these years.”

A

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. 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.

B

Now we come to the ultimate question: 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?”

What IS Your Choice to Be?

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.”

A

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.

B

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.”**

A

Principles of Step Two

Having taken Step 2, let's look at the principles associated with Step 2. If we can apply those principles, we will progress more quickly 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.

B

Looking Ahead

Thank you all for reading. If you want more thoughts and support for finding your higher power, please look in your packets for the article: Finding Your Own Higher Power: *A Path to Recovery That Honors Your Beliefs*. We will put the link in the chat.

https://www.mediaaddictsanonymous.org/_files/ugd/7ab8aa_2f5918890a6e4e2fa3c7b15e34ae5b16.pdf

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. Also, Friday is our “Fun Friday” meeting. This is run by our 2nd and 3rd-month members. Please let us know if you need any extra support in planning this event. We will post this message in the WhatsApp group Chat.

We will now listen to **B** qualify on Step 2 and then take questions. [If time is up, pray out first and then have the GS qualify and take questions.]

*[B qualifies on Step 2 and takes questions. 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 addictions. 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 primary characteristic of compulsive media addicts. When we seek safety and happiness only for ourselves, 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 personify 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 founders of A.A. 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 recognize 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!”**

The thought of turning our will and lives over to another power felt terrifying for many of us. But then we realized that we had been regularly making a decision to turn our will and lives over to media and tech, hoping to find comfort and power there. It did not work, for in the last days of our binging, we found neither comfort nor power. Our new design for living now is to turn our will and lives over to a Higher Power rather than ourselves, our addiction, or our fear.

A

In this Third Step Prayer, we decide to do something that does not come naturally to most of us: We are deciding to make 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.

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 be willing to live our lives in a more spiritually conscious way.

B

We make a decision 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 deliver up 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 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.]*

B

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 decision 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 Group Sponsors 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 thing 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."

A

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.]**

Remember, we don't make this decision just once; we must make this decision every day. 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 and selfish needs. 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 lives on our own, and we learn that our Higher Power *can* and *will* if we seek this Power.

GUIDANCE brings us the power we had been lacking. Spiritual GUIDANCE brings us strength and courage to take the remaining Steps.

B

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.

A

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. This Friday is our Fun Friday. This is run by our 2nd and 3rd-month members. Please let us know if you need any extra support in planning this event. 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 MEETING

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 are essential prerequisites for successfully taking Steps 4 through 10. 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 still, 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

The way we view this in B2B is that 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 for 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, and we invite you to consider them when contemplating your own Higher Power. You don't have to use all of them. Please take home only those that resonate with you. Readers, please read four bullet points each.

- 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. (Pass)

- 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. (Pass)

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. Our Higher Power 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 this Power, in a natural way, that you would like to find the plan for your life or that you want inspiration and answers to the problems or situations 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 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, hurt ourselves, or harmed others. This can be painful and confusing, and may cause us to doubt either ourselves or our Higher Power. Here, we must accept that we are human and will make mistakes. What is important is to honor your sincerity. Ask for help to make it right. In some instances, others may not like our answers, but this does not mean we have made a mistake.

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 ourselves.

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.]*

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

B

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]*

A

Practice Two-Way Prayer and Go to Meetings

Begin practicing Two-Way Prayer on your own, or with your sponsor, group members, and at MAA's daily Two-Way Prayer 1 PM ET meeting (listed on the website). Create a calm, clutter-free space at home for meditation and daily quiet time. Start with at least 5 minutes a day, gradually increasing to 20 minutes.

B

Tomorrow we'll focus on **Step Four**. Please keep attending MAA meetings, and if you haven't already, listen to the "All Back To Basics" recording from last Saturday—it will reinforce what you're learning here. Attending the MAA Two-Way Prayer meeting can deepen your practice and provide a welcome break from daily stress.

A reminder: this Friday is **Fun Friday**. Organizers, please let us know in advance if there's anything we should prepare or bring.

Let's close 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 turn off all nonessential electronic devices 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 completed the first three Steps and learned to speak and listen to the Higher Power of our understanding. In taking these Steps, we made life-changing decisions. Now it is time for action—actions that will bring about the “personality change sufficient to bring about recovery,” not only from media addiction but from all parts of ourselves that make life difficult. The Big Book teaches us what lies at the root of our troubles:

- “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.”

B

How Do We Get Beyond Our Self-delusion?

The action we take now is to uncover why we turned to media to numb the pain in our lives. This begins with an honest look at the past—examining the **causes and conditions**, the **patterns and programming** that left us restless, dissatisfied, and disconnected. These unmet needs and unresolved hurts became the very fuel that drove us to seek relief through binging on media.

Step 4 – Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves, invites us into this process of discovery. It calls for a searching and courageous look at ourselves—an unflinching stock-taking of where we’ve been, what shaped us, and how those patterns continue to operate today.

- “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

Fact Finding—Like a Business Inventory

They compare this process 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 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.”
- “We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our makeup 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.”

Resentments—The Number One Offender

We will now conduct the equivalent of a commercial inventory of ourselves. This means that we will realistically examine our lives. Honestly acknowledging our liabilities so that we can see clearly the patterns in our makeup that we do not want to repeat. The first place the Big Book invites us to look is our resentments:

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

B

Here, we learn an important factor in our media addiction. That we have a soul sickness that we must address if we are to straighten ourselves mentally and physically. The Big Book goes on to tell us how to do this:

- “In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions, or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases, it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were “burned up.” On our grudge list, we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?”

The Big Book’s instruction to write resentments about people, institutions, or principles is meant to help us see the full sweep of where bitterness and anger can lodge in our lives—not just toward individuals but also toward systems and even ideas.

- **People** are those with whom we have direct, personal conflict: family, friends, employers, partners, people on social media, etc.
- **Institutions** are organizations or systems we resent: churches, governments, corporations, schools, courts, workplaces, medical systems, etc. These represent structures that we feel have wronged us or blocked what we wanted.
- **Principles** are ideas or abstract rules we chafe against: moral codes, philosophies, cultural expectations, authority in general, or spiritual concepts.

A

By broadening the list beyond just people, the Fourth Step inventory reveals that our anger can arise from relationships with larger systems and ideals, not only face-to-face interactions.

That’s why the text highlights writing it down—our mind may minimize, justify, or rationalize anger, but on paper, we see the precise connections between resentment and our underlying fears: threats to self-esteem, security, ambitions, or relationships. Here is the example from the Big Book page 65:

- “I’m resentful at: Mr. Brown

The cause: His attention to my wife. Told my wife about my mistress. Brown may get my job at the office.

Affects my: Sex relations. Self-esteem (fear). Security.”

- “I’m resentful at: Mrs. Jones

The cause: She’s a nut—she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking (he’s my friend). She’s a gossip.

Affects my: Personal relationship. Self-esteem (fear).”

- “I’m resentful at: My employer

The cause: Unreasonable. Unjust. Overbearing. Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account.

Affects my: Self-esteem (fear). Security.”

- “I’m resentful at: My wife

The cause: Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants the house put in her name.

Affects my: Pride. Sex relations. Self-esteem (fear). Security.”

We see that the first stage of inventory allows us to vent, to tell our side of the story. But the question is—does this really improve anything?

- “The first thing apparent was that this world and its people were often quite wrong. To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed sore. Sometimes it was remorse, and then we were sore at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got. As in war, the victor only seemed to win. Our moments of triumph were short-lived.”

B

Resentment Leads to Futility

What’s exposed here is how easily we slip into the role of the victim. We cling to being right, to proving our case, to nursing our wounds—and instead of freeing us, it traps us. For those of us caught in the cycle of media addiction, this trap can be deadly.

- “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. The insanity of [alcoholic media] returns, and we [binge] again. And with us, to [binge] is to die.”

The text is smashing home again another truth: a life run on deep resentment ends in futility and unhappiness. Every hour we waste stewing in it is time stolen from life. Resentment blocks us from our Higher Power’s help. The insanity of our addiction rises again. We binge. And for us, to binge is to die.

A

How Can We Find Freedom?

So how do we live without numbing out on our “alcoholic media”? If survival depends on freedom from anger, then self-pity, grudges, and mental battles can no longer be our comforts. For us, those are poison.

- “If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of normal [people], but for [media addicts] these things are poison.”

The way forward is a change of perspective. Instead of indulging in victimhood, we are invited to return to the list of resentments—because hidden there is a key to our freedom.

- “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 wrongdoing 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 [alcoholic media].”

B

Others Were Spiritually Sick Too

Looking again with honest eyes, we see that the world and its people have had power over us. Their actions—real or imagined—dominated our thoughts and moods. In that state, resentments had the power to destroy our lives just as surely as our media binges did. Maybe the people we were upset with were as spiritually sick as we were?

- “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, pity, 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.”*
- “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 [everyone].”

A

What we notice here is a shift: instead of focusing only on ourselves and how we were affected, we begin to consider the other person and what might have been happening within them. Most people would act better and be better if they truly could. In our own deluded and compulsive moments, we were doing the best we could. Others, too, are just as powerless to manage their lives and emotions as we were. So we must now get down to the truth:

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

A

List of Common Liabilities

The “Resentment Inventory” is the first part of our Fourth Step work. It helps us see where we were at fault and the places we need to examine with honesty. This process isn’t about blame—it’s about uncovering the patterns and liabilities that have kept us stuck.

Here are some of the common liabilities we will be looking at in our inventory. Each reader, please read one:

- **Self-pity:** Excessive, self-absorbed unhappiness over one's own troubles
- **Resentment:** A 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) 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.

The Big Book points out that fear is prevalent in nearly all of these liabilities if we truly look at them.

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

B

Read Helpful Articles in Your Packets

Please also be sure to read the articles included in your packets: *Thoughts on Shame and Guilt*, *Envy*, *Jealousy*, *Mistrust*, and *The Liability of Procrastination*. These readings will provide a deeper understanding of common obstacles that come up during our inventories and help illuminate the underlying emotions and patterns we are working to address.

Fear Inventory

The second inventory is the *Fear Inventory*, which month two members will complete this month. Here are the Big Book’s instructions to guide you through this important part of your 4th Step work:

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

A

A Better Way

How is one to overcome fear? The Big Book takes us back to Steps 2 and 3: recognizing that we are no longer running the show and accepting our human limitations. We had been relying on our limited selves and on media and tech to soothe our daily discomforts and fears. But now, perhaps, there is a better way.

- “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 [our Higher Power] would have us, and humbly rely on [this Power], does [God] enable us to match calamity with serenity.”
- “We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. 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 [our Higher Power] demonstrate, through us, what [a Higher Power] can do. We ask [Higher Power] to remove our fear and direct our attention to what [this Power] would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.”

Month Two members, to help you with your *Fear Inventory*, please be sure to read the article *Thoughts on Fear* included in your packets.

B

Sex, Fantasy, and Relationships Inventory

Now let's move on to the third inventory, which the month three member will fill out this month—the *Sex, Fantasy, and Relationship Inventory*. The Big Book is clear and direct in its approach to this often challenging but essential part of the program

- “Now about sex. Many of us needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes—absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation.”
- “Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind. They see its significance everywhere.”
- “One school would allow [people] no flavor for [their] fare, and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's [sexual] conduct. **We all have sex problems.** We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?”

Most of us would have preferred to skip over sexual issues and avoid this last part of the inventory. Yet the Big Book reminds us that we all have sexual problems in one form or another—because to be human is to struggle in this area. For many of us, guilt and shame around sex, fantasy, and relationships became fuel for media bingeing and escape. This inventory asks us to face those struggles honestly.

A

We needed to see how media shaped our views of ourselves and others, how our programming and fantasy life influenced connection and intimacy, and how often we chose fantasy to avoid real relationships. In the end, what we discovered was a consistent pattern: we had been selfish, dishonest, and inconsiderate of others.

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

As we fill out our *Sex, Fantasy, and Relationship Inventory*, we begin asking deeper questions of ourselves. What were these patterns and programs really producing in our lives? How often had we repeated the same behaviors, hoping for different results? And how could we become more conscious and considerate moving forward?

- “In this way, we tried to shape a **sane and sound ideal** for our future [fantasy, relationships, and] sex life. We subjected each [interaction] to this test—was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our **ideals** and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, **neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.**”

B

Shaping a Sound Ideal

What we learn here is that we are invited to begin shaping a sane and sound ideal—not of how others should be, but of how we want to show up in our relationships. When we were “playing God,” we tried to mold people into the image of what we wanted them to be. Now, the focus shifts: instead of controlling others, we seek to grow into the best version of ourselves.

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

Just as alcohol can have an intoxicating and seductive effect, media carries its own dangers—particularly through online pornography, dating sites, and other outlets that can quickly become addictive. At times, even seemingly harmless escapes like romance novels or films can pull our attention away from real intimacy, complicating our relationships further. These behaviors leave many of us and our partners isolated, dissatisfied, and unfulfilled.

A

If we are to complete a thorough inventory, we must be honest about how our use of media has affected our relationships and how it may have hurt others. To sum up about sex and intimacy, the program gives us clear direction:

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

Again, helping others is a key factor in our recovery, since selfishness and self-centeredness are always a struggle for us. The more we consider others, the more we step out of ourselves and into constructive connection. The author closes *How It Works* with a powerful reminder of what this work produces:

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

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.*"

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 Sexual Conduct and Fantasy worksheet.

Please complete your written inventories and share them with your sponsor this weekend. Please allow at least an hour. Meeting on Zoom, if you can, is preferred. All necessary worksheets are included in your packets.

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 listening to your sponsee's inventory. By holding the space for them to heal, you are also helping your own recovery. There is nothing more vital to our fellowship, or more rewarding, than giving someone the gift of sharing their Fourth Step.

B

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.

But before we move into this intense weekend, we get to have FUN FRIDAY! Thank you to all those planning this event for tomorrow.

Now, we'll ask **B** to qualify on Step 4. Then we will "pray out" with the Serenity Prayer, and then take questions on Step 4.

[B qualifies on Step 4 and takes questions. Or if out of time, say Serenity Prayer first, then qualify and take questions.]

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.