

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

WEEK 1 – Overview and Step 1

MONDAY MEETING

Notes for GS: There are no qualifications in this first meeting. There is a meditation at the end of this meeting, and no qualifications. This meeting may run 10 minutes over.

IMPORTANT: Decide who will read the meditation and ensure they have a copy, so you can stop screen sharing.

A

Welcome and Some Housekeeping

Welcome to the first meeting of “Back to Basics: A Design for Living” for media addicts. We’re glad you’re here and ready to invest in your recovery. Please put away all nonessential electronic media during these sessions, and make sure you are in a quiet place where you can fully focus—this will help you get the most out of your time in here.

Let us introduce ourselves: [All Group 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 month.

B

A Few Important Reminders:

Donation: If you haven’t yet donated to MAA for the privilege of participating in B2B, please do so today and let your sponsor know when you have made your donation.

A

For readings: 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’s for Group Sponsors to read. Please stay attentive to your place in the reading order, which will be shared daily in the chat.

Even if you’re familiar with the material, we encourage you to listen deeply and extract new insights.

B

Agreements To Help Our Meeting Run Smoothly

Screens on: Everyone has agreed to have their screen on for the entire meeting. If you go off-screen, we may pause the meeting until you return. Please take care of water, tea/coffee, and bathroom needs before we start. If you must have your camera off for any reason (such as traveling), let the Group Sponsors know in advance so we can announce it at the start of the meeting.

A

Group Chat: Please refrain from using the group chat unless you are a Group Sponsor or the person posting the reading order. Many of us have struggled with compulsive chatting, and unnecessary messages in the chat distract from our focus. Please help us keep the meeting centered on recovery by not using the chat during sessions.

B

Arrive 5 Minutes Early So You Can Read: Arrive five minutes before the meeting begins. We start promptly at [Time] . If you are not in your seat with your screen on at the start, your name will not be on the reading list, and you won't have the opportunity to read that day. The reading list is posted only once, so we can all focus on the meeting from the very beginning. Remember, if you are more than 10 minutes late, that constitutes a slip and will need to be made up. Sponsors, please help set the example for your sponsees.

A

Make Connections: The beginning and end of the meeting are important times for connection and building bonds. We often have qualifications and questions after the meeting closes. If you tend to join only at the start and leave immediately at the end, we invite you to reflect on what your recovery means to you—do you value it enough to fully engage in the experience? In our experience, *the more you invest in this process, the more you will gain from it.*

B

These guidelines are here to create a safe, focused, and supportive environment for everyone. We're all here to support each other's recovery and growth. Thank you for your commitment and for helping us maintain the integrity of the group.

Please join us in saying the WE version of the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

A

Our Four-Week Journey to Recovery

Over the next four weeks, you will embark on a transformative journey to recover from media addiction through taking the Twelve Steps, as outlined in the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* (*The Big Book* for short). This program offers a spiritual foundation and a practical "program of action," designed to guide you toward a life of fulfillment and purpose, liberated from compulsive media behaviors.

B

The authors of this time-tested approach affirm that participants can expect nothing less than "a new way of life" or, as they eloquently put it, "a design for living that really works." This process can potentially revolutionize your relationship with media and, more importantly, with yourself and the world around you.

A

Reading Adaptations

In our Back-to-Basics group, we primarily use text directly from the Big Book. While we generally respect A.A.'s request to read the Big Book as-is, we've made two key adjustments because we are reading it as you would with your sponsor:

1. We often substitute "media addiction" for "alcoholism" and related terms. This helps us understand the parallels between media and alcohol addiction, and why the Big Book offers our solution.
2. We've changed pronouns from third-person singular to plural for inclusivity.

These modifications aim to maximize the Big Book's relevance for us as media addicts and benefit each participant in our recovery journey together.

B

Where The Big Book Came From

For those of you who have never been exposed to 12-Step programs, the following lineage of Alcoholics Anonymous provides a quick look at why we use the 12 Steps and the Big Book in this group:

- **Early 1900s:** People realized that willpower alone wasn't enough to recover from addiction. Psychologist Carl Jung, influenced by spiritual writer William James, told one alcoholic patient, Rowland Hazard, that only a "vital spiritual experience" could bring about lasting recovery. Rowland found sobriety through the Oxford Group, a spiritual fellowship focused on honesty, amends, and helping others.
- **Passing It On:** Rowland Hazard brought the Oxford Group's message to Ebby Thacher, who got sober and then reached out to his old friend Bill Wilson. Ebby "sponsored" Bill by introducing him to these spiritual principles and the Oxford Group's system of recovery. Bill, in turn, shared this approach with Dr. Bob Smith, and together they began helping other alcoholics—one person guiding another.
- **Samuel Shoemaker:** An Episcopal priest and Oxford Group leader, Shoemaker mentored Bill Wilson and deeply influenced the spiritual content of the program. Many of the Twelve Steps were inspired by Shoemaker's teachings on practical spirituality and inclusivity.
- **Writing the Big Book:** As more people found recovery, Bill and the early members realized they needed a guide for those who couldn't get to meetings. In 1939, after much collaboration, they published the Big Book—*Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism*. It introduced the Twelve Steps as a "design for living" and included stories from real people who had recovered.

Why does this matter for us? The Steps and the Big Book have helped millions recover by offering not just relief from the addiction and obsession, but *a new way of life*. We adapt these principles for media addiction, but the method is the same.

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In short: We're not just reading an old book—we're tapping into a method that has changed lives for nearly a century. If you keep an open mind, you might find it can change yours, too. Understanding this history provides insight into the Back to Basics approach, which seeks to recapture the original, highly effective methods that led to A.A.'s early success rates.

B

Clarence Snyder and the Cleveland Group

Something remarkable happened after the Big Book was published. What had been a slow-growing movement suddenly had the tools to expand rapidly and help countless more people. Before the publication of The Big Book, A.A. had only about 100 sober members; after publication, its fellowship grew rapidly because the Big Book's method of recovery really worked!

- “Clarence Snyder, an alcoholic from Cleveland, Ohio, was one of the first to use the Big Book with prospective A.A. fellows. He helped build the A.A. fellowship, using the Big Book to guide his members' recovery process. Snyder, who was led through the 12 Steps by Dr. Bob, modeled a one-on-one sponsorship style in which an experienced member of the fellowship would walk a newcomer through all Twelve Steps as quickly as possible.”
- “Cleveland groups emphasized the *Four Absolutes* of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, and Love as well as the importance of working with other alcoholics. Their slogan was: ‘*Trust God, clean house, help others.*’ Unlike the New York A.A. groups, the Cleveland groups put more emphasis on the spiritual aspect of the program. New York's slogan was, ‘*Don't Drink and Go to Meetings.*’”
- “Snyder believed that relying only on meetings to keep sober, without working the 12 Steps and finding faith in a Higher Power, would doom A.A. to failure. Dr. Bob said to him once, “*There is an easy way and a hard way to recover from alcoholism. The hard way is by just going to meetings.*”

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We bring up Snyder's approach because up to this point in A.A.'s history, the recovery rate for alcoholics was around 30 percent, which at the time was still considered somewhat high, given that the true alcoholic faced little to no hope and a dismal chance for recovery before A.A. In his groups, Clarence had a 75 percent success rate by following the Big Book, using the one-on-one sponsorship method with newcomers, and emphasizing the spiritual aspect of the program. While this one-on-one approach is taken for granted in most 12-step programs today, in 1939, it had not yet been conceived.

B

Cleveland's Big Book style of sponsorship proved highly effective in the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous. Due to rapid membership growth, newcomers were often tasked with guiding other newcomers through the 12 Steps, even before completing the program themselves. This approach quickly spread to other A.A. groups because of its success.

A

Cleveland's Results Were the Best

The effectiveness of this method was evident in the stark contrast between different A.A. groups. While every member of the New York group, except for co-founder Bill Wilson, experienced relapse, an impressive 75% of members in Cleveland and Akron in Ohio, maintained their sobriety. This remarkable success rate in the Midwest groups demonstrated the power of the Big Book approach and personal sponsorship in achieving lasting recovery. Bill wrote in his book, *A.A. Comes of Age*:

- “Yes, Cleveland’s results were of the best. Their results were in fact so good, and A.A.’s membership elsewhere was so small that many a Clevelander thought A.A.’s membership had started there in the first place. The Cleveland pioneers had proved three essential things: the value of personal sponsorship; the worth of A.A.’s Big Book in indoctrinating newcomers, and finally the tremendous fact that A.A., when the word really got around, could now soundly grow to great size.”

For more in-depth historical content, you will find an article on Clarence Snider in the A.A. History portion of your packets.

B

How They Did It

The early A.A. members achieved remarkable success through a straightforward format that guided newcomers through all Twelve Steps in a short time frame. This simple yet effective approach allowed beginners to quickly grasp the program and experience a life-changing spiritual awakening.

A

The impressive recovery rates of the 1940s can be largely attributed to these Back to Basics-type meetings. For countless alcoholics, these Beginners Meetings became the cornerstone of their recovery journey. The authors of The Big Book assure us that they have discovered a viable path to sobriety. They promise that if we sincerely and honestly follow their instructions, we, too, will find relief and recovery from media addiction.

B

If you have any preconceived notions about the Big Book, we encourage you to approach it with an open mind and give the Big Book method a genuine chance. We understand that reading an older text can be challenging, especially one that may seem outdated or heavily focused on spiritual concepts, including references to God.

A

Additionally, you may encounter language and terms that feel out of place or potentially offensive by today’s standards. It’s important to remember that the authors were writing in their own time and context, and their language should not be judged by contemporary norms.

B

Despite these potential hurdles, we believe that if you keep an open mind and look beyond these initial impressions, you will have a much richer experience. Embracing its teachings may lead to insights and support that resonate deeply with your journey, regardless of language or personal beliefs. You might find yourself pleasantly surprised by the relevance and wisdom it offers, even across the decades.

A

Our Intent: A Safe Space for Recovery

Our primary goal for these closed Twelve Step study and sobriety groups is to create a secure and structured environment where participants can find mutual support. In this space, we will:

- a) Collectively fast from all unnecessary media
- b) Work through the Twelve Steps together
- c) Learn and apply the principles of recovery
- d) Support each other's recovery process

This approach, fasting and going through the 12 Steps quickly, is designed to help us stay ahead of the disease of media addiction. By supporting one another and sharing our experiences, we can build a strong foundation for lasting recovery and personal growth.

B

For this process to be effective, each participant has been paired with a recovering member who is willing to sponsor them throughout these four-week sessions. We encourage you to seek your sponsor's guidance in your recovery, appreciate their support, and trust in their ability to help you. By honoring your commitments to them and the group, you will be pleasantly surprised by how quickly you grow within this recovery container.

A

Review the Guidelines

This is a **WE** program. We attend these Back-to-Basics meetings together, we read the Big Book together, we **fast** together, we take the 12 Steps together, and we recover together. To remind you what we expect from you, here are brief guidelines for these sessions. *Each reader, please read two.*

- Your primary obligation is to show up for **EVERY** Back-to-Basics session.
- We will read parts of the Big Book, specifically passages that relate to taking the Twelve Steps.
- We will guide you through all Twelve Steps as written in the Big Book. Please take their directions as we read them to you.
- We have assigned you a sponsor to work with as you go through the 12 Steps. Contact them often for support.
- Give support to others in our Back-to-Basics group by making outreach calls. We find that daily contact is important to stay on track, especially at the beginning of recovery when people may experience withdrawal symptoms.
- Plan to spend approximately 15 minutes daily and at least an hour each weekend with your sponsor to share your Step work.
- Complete your daily assignments and read them to your sponsor. Show up for your sponsor on time.
- Throughout this entire month, fast from all unnecessary media. Please refer to the document, titled "*What Does Media Fasting Really Mean?*", to clarify the parameters of your media fast.
- Call your sponsor (or a group member) if you feel shaky about your media fasting.

- Attend other MAA meetings and share your experience, strength, and hope.
- After your first month, sponsor a new member if one is available.
- After your third month, consider becoming a Group Sponsor.

B

Understanding Media Addiction and the Solution

This week, our reading will focus on understanding media addiction, drawing from the first 60 pages of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. We encourage you to read the Big Book independently as well. A PDF of the 4th Edition is in your packet under Big Book History, but we encourage you all to have your own hard copy of the Big Book to read throughout these sessions. To save time, we won't provide page numbers.

To effectively address our media addiction, we must first examine how it has affected us and explore why we struggle to stop, even when we genuinely want to. Let's begin with this passage of The Big Book:

- “We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, ... are [individuals] who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics precisely how we have *recovered* is the main purpose of this book.”

A

The Big Book authors immediately state that their purpose is to show us how to recover from alcoholism—or in our case, media addiction. This is a revolutionary statement because, before this book, there was little hope for low-bottom alcoholics, let alone low-bottom media addicts. Today, anyone willing to follow the directions provided in the Big Book can recover. The authors continue (and we will now substitute "media" for "alcohol"):

- “You may already have asked yourself why it is that all of us became so very ill from [media addiction]. Doubtless, you are curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. If you are [a media addict] who wants to get over it, you may already be asking, ‘*What do I have to do?*’ It is the purpose of this book to answer such questions specifically. We shall tell you what we have done.”
-

B

The Big Book authors tell us that they have found a way out of their addiction that they all agree works.

- “The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree and upon which we can join in [mutual] harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from [media addiction].”
- “The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows, and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has *entered into our hearts and lives* in a way that is indeed miraculous. [God] has commenced accomplishing those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.”

This passage reveals a profound and perhaps unexpected solution to addiction: **a transformative spiritual experience**. The authors assert that this spiritual awakening has completely changed their outlook on life, relationships, and the world around them. They emphasize the certainty of a higher power's presence in their lives, working miracles that they couldn't achieve alone.

A

This answer might surprise you, as you may not have thought about this approach to treating media addiction. You may feel apprehensive about the idea of a "spiritual experience," wondering what it entails and how it relates to recovery. However, please keep an open mind, and we will soon discover why this has been the solution for addicts of all kinds.

B

The problem we all have, as stated in MAA's first symptom, is a "dissatisfaction with life." We are miserable WITH our addictive media. We are miserable WITHOUT our addictive media. We have found that much like the alcoholic, it was not drinking (or compulsive media use) that was our problem, but it was learning how to live without drinking or the numbing effect we derived from using media that terrified us. One A.A. member put it this way in the Big Book:

- "A.A. does not teach us how to handle our drinking.... It teaches us how to handle sobriety... It's no great trick to stop drinking; the trick is to stay stopped. I had come to A.A. to learn how to handle sobriety—which is what I could not handle in the first place. That's why I drank."

A

This is precisely why we need a solution that can fundamentally shift our state of mind. The Big Book writer continues to describe his struggle with alcohol, but we'll substitute "media" for "alcohol" so that we can better relate his story to our own compulsive media behaviors.

- "I had to use [media] ... to live, to cope with the demands of everyday existence. When I encountered disappointments or frustrations ... my solution was [to binge on media]. I had always been oversensitive to criticism.... When I was criticized or reprimanded, [media was] my refuge and comfort. When I was faced with a special challenge or social event ... I had to fortify myself with a couple of [videos, TV shows, movies, games, social media posts, or shopping]."
- "Too often, I would overdo it.... Above all, I was suffering inner pain because my performance and my accomplishments in life failed to live up to my own expectations of myself. I had to anesthetize that pain with [media]. Of course, the more I [binged on media], the more unrealistic my expectations became and the poorer my performance ... so the need to get [drunk on media] grew still greater."

B

A philosopher once said, "Everything has been figured out, except how to live." Well, the primary goal for us in these Back to Basics sessions is to provide you with "a design for living"—an effective solution to relieve your media addiction and a proven method to create a happy, useful, and satisfying life. Let's look at what this man finds when he becomes open to a new way of living:

- "The moment I made up my mind to go through with [this] process, I had the curious feeling that my [media addiction] was relieved, as in fact, it proved to be. Quite as important was the discovery that *spiritual principles* would solve all my problems. I have since been brought into a way of living infinitely more satisfying and ... more useful than the life I lived before. My old

manner of life was by no means a bad one, but I would not exchange its best moments for the worst I have now. I would not go back to it even if I could.”

A

By using the methods described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, we are going to give you the way to recover from compulsively using media and help you acquire time-tested principles that will give you a life second to none. If this is something you are looking for, you have come to the right place.

B

Next, the authors explain that, for us, there is no middle ground. We will either find a “*new way of living*” or else succumb to the ravages of media addiction.

- “If you are as seriously [addicted to media] as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: one was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best as we could; and the other, to accept *spiritual help*.”

Then they describe the [media addict] and tell us what it is going to take to recover:

- “If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit your [compulsive media behaviors] entirely, or if when [using media] you have little control over [how long you indulge in your activity], you are probably a [media addict]. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a *spiritual experience* will conquer.”

A

To be sure that everyone comprehends the last point, I will read the sentence again: “*If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which ONLY a spiritual experience will conquer.*” This makes clear what we should do to recover from our media addiction: we must undergo a life-changing, **spiritual transformation**. This is our goal for these next four weeks. We humbly invite you to this process and will share our own experiences with you as we go along.

B

Creating an Inner Truth Connection

We are going to show you an easy way to create an **Inner Truth Connection**. Some of us feel the internet and media have disconnected us from our inner truth. We are going to take you on this **Inner Truth** journey right now. Please grab a notebook or paper and pen, and join me in going inward.

[Stop Screen Sharing]

Meditation [please don't rush; leave enough time for members to really drop in]

Please close your eyes. Take a deep breath and relax. For the next few minutes, set aside your problems and worries. Just breathe and be present in this very moment.

[Pause 10 seconds.]

Starting from the top of your head, slowly scan down through your body, noticing any tension or discomfort. As you reach your feet, imagine any stress or worry flowing out through your toes.

[Pause 10 seconds.]

Feel what it is like to be in your body. To be experiencing life and the **Truth of the Reality** in this moment.

[Pause 5 seconds.]

Ask yourself, "What was the Truth inside me that made me seek out Back to Basics?"

"What is the knowing in me that I can't go on the way I have been with media?"

[Pause 10 seconds]

Where in your body do you feel this knowing?

[Pause 5 seconds]

What gave you that understanding of yourself?

What power got you here?

What power gave you the willingness to be here?

[Pause 10 seconds]

Feel what it is like to be here with other people who understand your addiction—who understand how desperate you are to stop hurting yourself with media.

There are billions of media addicts in the world suffering right now.

What makes you different?

You are sitting here today with all this support and fellowship.

[Pause 5 seconds]

What is this Truth inside you?

The Truth inside that tells you that you can't live a life full of purpose and fulfillment by compulsively losing yourself with media and tech.

And what gave you the desire of wanting to pursue a purpose?

Where does that feeling come from?

[Pause 10 seconds]

A Power in you brought you here because something inside you wants something more, something in you knows that you are living a discounted version of yourself.

Where does this Truth land for you?

[Pause 5 seconds]

Now, let's look at what we have been worshipping up to this point.

Worship is focusing intently on something.

Are video games, online shopping, social media, porn sites, news, novels, music videos a form of worship for you?

[Pause 10 seconds]

All these things alter our mood and consciousness and bring a kind of religious dopamine high.

These things are false gods and false idols.

We turn our will and our lives over to these because we believe and trust that they will comfort and rescue us.

But they never do.

[Pause 10 seconds]

So, today, we are at a crossroads.

Do we embrace the Great Truth?

Or do we embrace the god of Fantasy?

The god that has made our lives unmanageable.

Can you see that it was the Great Truth and Reality that brought you here?

Can you also see that Truth is everywhere?

Like electricity.

It's always there, but it isn't useful unless you plug into it.

[Pause 5 seconds]

We are here because we have some faith and hope that this process may work for us.

We have begun to lose faith that comfort and relief through media works for us.

Notice we are already practicing faith.

Faith works when we plug into it.

When we use it.

[Pause 10 seconds]

Know that you belong here.

Notice that you are not alone.

Feel the hope you have for yourself and everyone in this group.

[Pause 10 seconds.]

Envision your ideal day—what would it look like without the compulsive use of media?

See yourself going throughout your day without struggle.

Experience yourself feeling safe and protected.

[Pause 10 seconds]

Imagine your addiction as a heavy weight you've been carrying.

Now, picture yourself gently setting it down and walking away, feeling lighter with each step.

[Pause 10 seconds]

See yourself feeling connected to a Truth greater than your addiction.

Feel yourself connected to others.

See yourself connected to nature.

Feel yourself connected to your inner child—your innocence.

[Pause 10 seconds.]

See yourself fasting easily and enjoying being media sober.

Feel yourself growing in the way you wish to grow.

Allow your inner Truth to carry you to your highest purpose.

[Pause 20 seconds.]

Take a moment to feel grateful for this opportunity to heal and grow.

Appreciate your courage in taking this step.

Silently repeat to yourself: 'I am capable of transformation. I am worthy of a free and fulfilling life.'

[Pause 10 seconds]

As we prepare to end this meditation, gently wiggle your fingers and toes. Roll your head.

Take a deep breath, and when you're ready, slowly open your eyes

[Pause 10 seconds]

We will now take 5 minutes to write a letter to ourselves from our inner Truth. Write what you experienced and what advice your inner Truth has for you as you go through your Back to Basic experience this month. Start the letter out with: "My dear beloved" and then your name. Begin now.

[Time 5 minutes.]

A

Please take this letter, seal it in an envelope, and mail it to your home address. When the letter arrives, find a quiet, undisturbed space and take time to read it carefully. Spend at least 10 minutes reflecting on its contents, allowing yourself to fully absorb the message you've written.

Store the letter in a safe place where you can easily find it on the last day of our Back to Basics session. During our final meeting, we will create a space for participants to share the insights, feelings, and personal revelations they discovered through this reflective exercise.

B

This ends our first session of Back to Basics. Please make sure you attend your home group and volunteer to serve and speak at MAA meetings. Please also remember to make your donation to MAA before our next meeting. Please think about coming early for fellowship tomorrow. To close, please join us in the WE version of the *Serenity Prayer*.

God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

END OF MONDAY MEETING

TUESDAY MEETING

Note: There is a qualification today: B will qualify on the reading. This meeting may take 35 minutes.

A

Welcome to day two of Back to Basics – A Design for Living. Please put down all nonessential electronic media while attending these sessions.

Please join us in saying the WE version of the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Safety Statement for Back to Basics Step Study Groups

Before we jump into our material today, we would first like to review our safety statement for this closed group. We take the safety of each member seriously. We are not therapists, nor do we have expertise in mental health issues. These closed groups require you to be in a mentally and emotionally stable place.

B

Please ensure you have the needed outside support if any issues arise during this one-month session. By participating today, you affirm that you are mentally and physically capable of joining this committed sobriety group.

We kindly remind you that:

- MAA Tradition One states: “Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends on MAA unity.” In the spirit of this tradition on common welfare, please understand that this Back to Basics Step Study group is not a place to meet dating or hook-up partners.
- For the welfare and safety of this group, any communication or behaviors of a flirtatious, romantic, sexual, stalking, or aggressive nature directed toward any members are inappropriate and will not be tolerated. If you cannot abide by these rules, this group is not for you and you will need to find recovery elsewhere.
- Also, we do not allow any discrimination concerning sex, gender identity, race, creed, religion, or sexual orientation. If you observe or experience any inappropriate behavior, we ask that you immediately contact the Group Sponsors or a trusted member. Again, any inappropriate behaviors will not be tolerated and you will be asked to leave the group.

A

A Few Thoughts on Creating an Optimal Experience

As addicts, we often approach recovery with a fear of being controlled or a desire to do things our way. This can lead to resistance, resentment towards leaders or the group, and a reluctance to fully engage in the process. It's natural to feel vulnerable and want to maintain control. However, we encourage you to recognize these impulses and gently set them aside. By trusting the Twelve Step process and allowing yourself to be guided, you open the door to profound personal

transformation. Remember, our goal is not to control you but to provide a supportive environment where you can safely explore recovery and discover new insights about yourself.

B

It's crucial to recognize that during these meetings, you may experience moments of grumpiness or defiance. These feelings are completely normal and often indicate that you're going through withdrawal. We want you to know that it's okay to be exactly where you are in your journey right now. We encourage you to acknowledge and accept these feelings as a natural part of the recovery process. However, we also ask that you don't let these temporary emotions distract you from embracing the gift of recovery that you're offering yourself. Try to remain open to the process, even when it feels challenging.

A

Let's Not Take Ourselves Too Seriously

Humor is also beneficial in this process because it helps lighten the weight of our struggles and reminds us not to take ourselves too seriously. Laughter can create connections, ease tension, and foster a supportive atmosphere. We grow together, so let's have fun along the way too. Embracing humor can make the recovery process more enjoyable and help you navigate challenges with a lighter heart.

B

Focus On What the Material Means to You

During discussions, we ask that you focus on what we've read and what it means to you, rather than suggesting changes to the content. Judging the material can easily distract us from the important work at hand. By concentrating on your discoveries and reflections, you'll create space for personal growth and transformation. Miracles happen when you stay engaged and open to the process, allowing the material to resonate within you.

A

The Breakdown Worksheet

While our goal is to maintain all commitments to ourselves and the group as rigorously as possible, it's important to recognize that 1) we are addicts and 2) perfection is not possible. So we plan for the inevitable breakdown. In the event of a slip or broken commitment, we have a dedicated worksheet available for immediate use called "The Breakdown Worksheet." Honesty is a challenge for most media addicts, and acknowledging a slip right away is crucial to your ongoing attendance in this group. We encourage you to address any indiscretions promptly by completing a Breakdown Worksheet with your sponsor, which may be requested if you miss a meeting or slip up in one of our commitments.

B

The Breakdown Worksheet is a neutral process and serves as a valuable tool for self-reflection and growth. It allows us to analyze what happened, learn from our mistakes, and avoid sweeping the slip under the rug. Our Higher Power uses these experiences to teach us, and the worksheet helps us extract those lessons. **You can find the breakdown worksheet in your monthly packets,** and

it's recommended to keep a copy readily available, either digitally or in print. If you need assistance locating the worksheet, don't hesitate to ask a Group Sponsor for help.

A

The Reason for the B2B Method Reiterated

As we discussed in our last meeting, closed Back-to-Basics groups in MAA offer an intensive recovery program designed to expedite sobriety through a structured format, one-on-one sponsorship, and abstinence from non-essential media. This approach mirrors the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous, rapidly guiding participants through the Twelve Steps to maintain momentum and facilitate a faster spiritual awakening.

B

By emphasizing media fasting, the B2B method ensures participants have the clear mind and focused attention necessary to work the steps quickly, honestly, and effectively, much like an alcoholic in AA needs a hospitalization period to clear their brain before they are given the 12 Steps. This comprehensive approach aims to create a recovery process that provides a safe container and deeper engagement with the Big Book material. So, let's get started!

A

How it Works

Yesterday, we learned that to recover from media addiction, we must undergo a life-changing, spiritual transformation. You may be asking, "How am I going to be able to get this so-called spiritual transformation that will somehow revolutionize my life?"

Let's begin on page 58 of The Big Book, *How it Works*:

- "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates.
- They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. There are those too who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest."
- "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps. At some of these, we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not.
- With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas, and the result was [nothing] until we let go absolutely. Remember that we deal with [media addiction]—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help, it is too much for us.
- But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find [God] now! Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked [God's] protection and care with complete abandon."

B

Before we continue, let's pause and take a moment to answer this call to action from The Big Book authors. "*May you find [God] now!*" The authors urge us to find a Higher Power right now and to do so with complete abandon. This sounds like an impossible demand, right? And why would we need to find a Higher Power with such immediacy?

A

Because every action we take from this point forward as we progress through the 12 Steps requires the support of a power greater than our finite selves. You could say that even this group is a power greater than your finite self—and look you have found us! The authors emphasize that this power is crucial to our recovery. Whether we fully realize it or not, we are in a do-or-die situation.

B

Acknowledging and embracing a higher power is essential for our transformation and sustained recovery, as it provides the strength and guidance we need to overcome our addiction. The authors make it clear that to recover, we must "*completely give ourselves to this simple program*," be honest with ourselves, and seek help from the "*One who has all power*."

A

They also tell us that, although we might wish to find easier and softer ways to conquer our media addiction, the result will be nothing unless we surrender completely. This is a somber reminder of what we are dealing with—an addiction that is cunning, baffling, and powerful.

The Twelve-Step Method of Recovery

Here is the path that the Big Book lays at our feet as a method to find an ongoing solution to media addiction. *Would each reader please read three?*

- Step 1:** We admitted we were powerless over [media]—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- Step 2:** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- Step 3:** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood [God].
- Step 4:** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- Step 5:** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- Step 6:** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- Step 7:** Humbly asked [God] to remove our shortcomings.
- Step 8:** Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Step 9:** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- Step 10:** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step 11: 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.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to [media addicts], and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

[The last reader reads with feeling...]

- “Many of us exclaimed, ‘What an order! I can’t go through with it!’”

B

At this point, this may be a lot to take in right now. The Big Book reassures us not to be too worried.

- “Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to *grow along spiritual lines*. The principles we have set down are guides for progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.”

Yes! The authors reassure us that our journey through the Twelve Steps is not about perfection. The only requirement asked of us is the willingness to grow along spiritual lines. The 12 Steps serve merely as guideposts for progress, not hammers to beat ourselves with. Spiritual progress is our only goal—not spiritual perfection.

A

As we embark on this journey, each step naturally leads to the next, guiding us toward a profound rediscovery of ourselves beyond our addictions and unhealthy compulsions. This journey fosters a new way of thinking and living, which we embrace together with fellow recovering media addicts, finding strength and direction through the support of a Higher Power of our choosing.

B

This method of self-discovery and recovery has become the way out for many Real Media Addicts. An early A.A. member put it this way: “Steps 1, 2, and 3 get you right with **God**. Steps 4, 5, and 6 get you right with **yourself**. Steps 8 and 9 get you right **with others**, and Steps 10, 11, and 12 **keep** you right with God, yourself, and others.” Please keep this vision in mind as we move through these Steps together. The Big Book goes on to say:

- “Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:
 - a) That we were [real media addicts] and could not manage our own lives.
 - b) That probably no human power could have relieved our [media addiction].
 - c) That [a Higher Power] could and would if [One] were sought.”

A

A Spiritual Awakening

This transformation is not just possible but probable for those who honestly commit to the process. By embracing these spiritual principles and applying them diligently, we too can experience the profound change that has helped countless others overcome their addictions.

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

B

The Big Book authors admit that working the Steps will be challenging, but when they “*picked up the spiritual tools laid at their feet*,” something miraculous happened. This process will change your life, too, if you decide you want to go through with it. The 12 Steps are not a program for people who need it, and not a program for people who want it, it is a program for people who DO it. But how were we going to be able to do it? Where was the power going to come from?

- “**Lack of power, that was our dilemma.** We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power? Well, that’s exactly what this book is about. Its main objective is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself, which will solve your problem. [This] means we have written a book that we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God.”

A

We experienced peace and sanity return because we were willing to ask a power greater than our limited self to remove our desire and obsession to get drunk on media. This process allowed us to turn to a higher power rather than media for comfort and relief. Rather than living our lives in a chronically fearful state of mind, we took these steps to clear away past vexations and began living our lives on a more purposeful basis.

B

Of Course, We are Going to Bring Up the G-word

Yes, we will be discussing God or a Higher Power, as this concept is central to the solution offered in the Big Book. We understand that this is a sensitive topic for some of you. Your initial hope in hearing about recovery from chronic media addiction might waver when we introduce spiritual solutions. The writers of the Big Book were well aware of this potential difficulty, and they addressed it with empathy.

- “We know how [you] feel. We have shared [your] honest doubt and prejudice. Some of us have been violently anti-religious. To others, the word “God” brought up a particular idea of Him with which someone had tried to impress on [us] during childhood.”
- “Perhaps we rejected this particular conception because it seemed inadequate. With that rejection, we imagined we had abandoned the God idea entirely. We were bothered with the thought that faith and dependence upon a Power beyond ourselves was somewhat weak and even cowardly...”
- “Yet at other moments, we found ourselves thinking, when enchanted by a starlit night, ‘Who then, made all this?’ There was a feeling of awe and wonder, but it was fleeting and soon lost.”

B

The God Dilemma

Many of us have grappled with the concept of a Higher Power, finding ourselves at a crossroads. We were caught between the despair of our addiction and the uncertainty of embracing a spiritual solution. The prospect of returning to the chaos of media insanity was unthinkable, yet moving forward seemed daunting under these circumstances.

- “To [those who feel they are atheists or agnostics] such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as [they are] means disaster, especially if [they are media addicts] of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to a [media addict’s] death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.”
- “But it isn’t so difficult. About half of our original fellowship was of exactly that type. At first, some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true [media addicts]. But after a while, we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life—or else....”

A

How Can I Reach Out to a God I Have Rejected?

Many of us felt unsure about trying to connect with a God we had denied or rejected. Some of us do not know the first thing about reaching the spiritual realm, but the Big Book authors assure us that this realm is easier to connect with and closer than you think. It waits for you to open your mind to its reality.

- “We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek [God]. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all-inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all [people].”
- “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.”

B

You Don't Have to Believe Anything

We are not asking you to believe in anything that does not fit into your personal concept of truth or reality. In other words, you are empowered to find a Higher Power of your own understanding.

- “Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another’s conception of [a Higher Power]. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect contact with [a Higher Power]. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps.”
- “We found that 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

We Are Not a Religion

A.A. nor MAA is a religious program. We are free to call our Higher Power by any name we choose, provided it is a “*Power greater than ourselves.*” The Big Book authors use different names for this power, including *Creative Intelligence*, *Universal Mind*, *Spirit of the Universe*, *Creator*, and *Great Reality*. Often, they refer to this power as “God,” but they use the term for convenience rather than for religious reasons. Please refer to your Higher Power in any manner that feels right to you.

B

Where to Find Your Higher Power

We also invite you to dig deep and look for the deeper truths within yourself. If you are open to possibilities, miracles will happen.

- “Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman, and child is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by the worship of other things, but in some form or other, it is there. **For faith in a Power greater than ourselves and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as [humans themselves].**”
- “We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but [God] was there. [God] was as much a fact as we were. **We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis, it is only there that [God] may be found.**”

Let me repeat the last statement: “We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis, it is only there that [Higher Power] may be found.” Sometimes this is the last place we ever think of looking.

A

Finding Faith By Acting As If

We find it comforting that newcomers can start the media recovery process without a specific belief in a Higher Power or any beliefs at all. All that is required is a willingness to open ourselves to the possibility that a Higher Power might exist in some form and that we can connect to it. One member of A.A. who was both an alcoholic and drug addict tells how he found his faith:

- Within a year after my Dad's death, I was addicted to booze and heroin. I was addicted for 14 years. I was in pain. I was destroying my life and my relationships, and I was hurting those I loved. It made me into a liar. Whenever I am living against my conscience, which I was doing, there is a complete disconnection. I felt like I was a one-dimensional human being. I was a collection of appetites that needed to be fed all the time, and that became a full-time job.
- When I came into A.A., I knew I needed a spiritual realignment, but how? I couldn't believe in God. Then I read a book by Carl Jung (one of the early influencers of the A.A. fellowship) about synchronicity. Synchronicity is a coincidence, like when you are thinking about someone and then they phone you. Jung saw those as interventions by God to reach through and touch us on the shoulder to say: "I'm here."
- What Jung says is, "I can't use scientific tools to prove the existence of a God. But I have seen tens of thousands of people who have come to my clinic, and people who believe in God recover faster and their recovery is more enduring." For me, that was more impactful than if he had said he had proved the existence of God, which I would not have believed.
- What he was saying was that it is irrelevant if there is a God up there or not; if you believe in one, your chances of living a healthier life and in recovery are better. And it's an easier path. At that point in my life, I had made a vow that I would do anything, anything at all, if it increased my chance of recovery by even 1%.
- So I made a decision: I am going to start believing in God. But of course, there was the dilemma of how can I believe in something I couldn't see, smell, hear, or taste? But Jung answers that by saying, "Fake it till you make it, act as if." He said, "The faith will precede the evidence, and that the evidence will be overwhelming." So I started to pretend there was a God who was looking after me all the time. This has worked for me in my over 40 years of sobriety.

B

What is Faith?

To add further to this discussion, we'd like to share some insights from a contemporary of A.A.'s co-founder Bill Wilson, whose ideas greatly influenced the writing of the Big Book. Here are a few key statements that capture the essence of their philosophy. *Each reader read one only.*

- Faith is a state of Mind.
- Any impulse of thought repeated enough will eventually be accepted by the Mind.
- All thoughts that have been emotionalized and mixed with faith begin immediately to translate themselves into their physical equivalent.
- Emotions and feelings give thought vitality, life, and action.

- Conduct yourself as you would if you were already in possession of what you want.
- Faith is the eternal elixir that gives life power and action.
- Faith is the basis of all miracles and all mysteries that cannot be analyzed by the rules of science.
- Faith is the only known antidote for failure.
- Faith is the chemical element when mixed with prayer gives direct communication with infinite intelligence.
- Faith is the only agent through which the cosmic force of infinite intelligence can be harnessed and used by humans.
- One comes finally to believe whatever one repeats to oneself.

A

Let's Discover Together

To discover our own personal Higher Power, let's take a moment to locate the feeling of your Higher Power within. Open your heart and see if you can connect with a power greater than yourself. Look into your heart and see if you can feel the subtle energy of the God of your own understanding. I will set the timer for 1 minute. Please close your eyes and look or listen within.
[Time 1 minute.]

Thank you. Even if you do not feel anything or sense anything, do not worry. We all need to start somewhere. Making the attempt is all that matters.

B

We will now give you a simple prayer to start your journey toward conscious contact with a Higher Power and to deepen your spiritual journey. This is commonly referred to as the *First Step Prayer*.

It goes like this: ***Dear Higher Power, my name is (your name), and I am a real media addict, and I need your help today.***

Let's take a moment and say this prayer together.

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

This is our first step towards being open-minded and willing to connect with a personal Higher Power.

B

Now that we know WHERE to find this Power, much of the rest of the Big Book is devoted to the question of HOW to connect with and benefit from this Power. We connect to and utilize this Power by taking the Twelve Steps.

A

In the next session, we will focus on Step One. Please make sure you are attending MAA meetings and volunteering to serve and speak at the meeting.

We will now listen to B qualify on the reading today.

[After B qualifies (if time allows), end with Serenity Prayer.]

END OF TUESDAY'S MEETING

WEDNESDAY MEETING

Note to Group Sponsors: There is a qualification today. B will qualify on the reading. Start by asking a new member to lead the group in the First Step Prayer. Also, please announce that we will be reading our Resistance worksheets on Friday, so make sure they are completed and ready. This includes second and third-month members as well.

A

Welcome to the third session of Back to Basics – A Design for Living. Please put down all nonessential electronic media while attending these sessions.

We have asked (new member's name) to lead us in the First Step Prayer.

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

Thank you (name).

Understanding Step One

Today, we explore the First Step of our recovery - arguably the most crucial one. This step is foundational; without truly grasping it, you may lack the motivation to tackle the others. Remember, this isn't a one-time event. Even those with long-term sobriety revisit this step daily.

B

Step 1 – We admitted we were powerless over media; that our lives had become unmanageable.

Admission is the first action we must take if we genuinely want to recover from our compulsive media behaviors. The Big Book authors devote 51 pages to the first part of this recovery process—which is to admit honestly that we have a problem. We will not be able to accept that we *are* real media addicts if we cannot see the problem and admit it.

A

To help us understand the truth about media addiction, our reading today will focus on describing the physical symptoms and the mental insanity of alcohol addiction. We have come to understand that the same symptoms apply to media addiction. We begin with the first chapter in the Big Book, titled *The Doctor's Opinion*, by Dr. William D. Silkworth, a physician in New York City.

B

Dr. Silkworth's Discovery

In the 1930s, alcoholism was largely seen as a moral failing rather than a medical condition. Dr. William Silkworth, a pioneering physician, challenged this view by recognizing that alcoholism involves both mental and physical components. He discovered that some individuals have a unique physical reaction to alcohol—an “allergy”—which causes uncontrollable cravings. Dr. Silkworth explained:

- “We believe...that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy: that the **phenomenon of craving** is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at

all, and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their **self-confidence**, their **reliance** upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.”

A

Many of us can relate to this: losing our self-confidence because we can't stop using our alcoholic media once we start, and finding that no amount of behavioral therapy or will power can prevent the next binge. Dr. Silkworth continues with a crucial point:

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

Three key points stand out: 1) The message must have **depth and weight**, 2) recovery requires connecting with **a power greater than ourselves**, and 3) we must somehow find a way to **recreate our lives**.

B

Restless, Irritable, and Discontented

Dr. Silkworth goes on to state what drives an alcoholic to drink: a persistent state of restlessness, irritability, and discontent that is relieved through drinking.

- “Men and women drink essentially because they like **the effect** produced by alcohol. 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 alcoholic 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 taking a few drinks, drinks which they see others taking with impunity.

He argues that this cycle is not simply a matter of willpower, but the result of a powerful physical craving and mental obsession that only a profound internal change can overcome.

- 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 drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an **entire psychic change**, there is very little hope of [their] recovery.”

A

The Media Addict's Downward Spiral

What Dr. Silkworth says about alcoholics accurately describes the media addict. He is talking about the need for **an effect**. We use media because we crave the effect media has on us. Please listen carefully, and let's re-read his statement, and this time substitute *media* for *alcohol*.

- “Men and women [use alcoholic media] essentially because they like **the effect** produced by [their alcoholic 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-addicted] life seems the normal one. They are **restless, irritable, and discontented** unless they can again experience the sense of **ease and comfort [the effect!]** that comes at once by

[watching porn, online videos, playing a few games, or shopping or surfing the net, or losing themselves on social media] which they see others taking with impunity.

- After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the **phenomenon of craving** develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, **emerging remorseful**, with a firm resolution not to [become drunk on media] again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person **can experience an entire psychic change**, there is very little hope of [their] recovery.”

As you can see, the obsessive need for **the effect** that media has on media addicts closely mirrors Dr. Silkworth’s description of the compulsive downward cycle seen in alcoholics. Dr. Silkworth observed that even those who seemed hopeless could recover—if they experienced a profound **psychic change**.

B

What Does “Psychic” Mean?

Let’s take a moment to understand what psychic means.

- The word “psychic” comes from the Greek word psyche, meaning “soul” or “mind.” In this context, a “psychic change” refers to a deep transformation of the mind, spirit, or inner self—a fundamental shift in how a person thinks, feels, and approaches life.

Let’s see how that definition fits with what Dr. Silkworth discovered when an alcoholic had the experience of a psychic change:

“On the other hand—and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—once a **psychic change** has occurred, the very same 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 that required to follow a few simple rules.”

Dr. Silkworth’s insight points directly to the solution for media addiction. His understanding of compulsive disease suggests that when a media addict’s mind is triggered and succumbs to another binge, true recovery is unlikely without a psychic (soul-level) change.

A

Let’s Look at Current Medical Discoveries on Media Addiction

Now, let’s examine what current medical professionals have discovered about media addiction and see how it compares to Dr. Silkworth’s description of alcoholism. For example, Christina Gregory, PhD, has conducted research on “Internet disorders.” Here’s what she found:

- “Some evidence suggests that if you are suffering from [media addiction], your brain makeup is similar to those [who] suffer from a chemical dependency, such as drugs or alcohol. Interestingly, some studies link [media addiction] to physically changing the brain structure—specifically affecting the amount of gray and white matter in regions of the prefrontal brain. This area of the brain is associated with remembering details, attention, planning, and prioritizing tasks. ... One of the causes of [media addiction] is [a] structural [change] to the prefrontal region of the brain ... rendering you unable to prioritize your life. [That is,] the Internet takes precedence over necessary life tasks.”

- “[Media addiction], in addition to other dependency disorders, [seems] to affect the pleasure center of the brain. The addictive behavior triggers a release of dopamine to promote the pleasurable experience, activating the release of this chemical. Over time, more and more of the activity is needed to induce the same pleasurable response, creating a dependency. [For instance,] if you find online gaming or online shopping a pleasurable activity and you suffer from an addiction to the Internet, you will need to engage in more and more of the behavior to institute the same pleasurable feeling prior to your dependency.”

B

We learn from Dr. Gregory that a media addict’s brain is similar to that of an alcoholic. We see that certain types of media change the structure of the brain. This structural change impedes our ability to prioritize and manage our lives. Like alcohol, there is also a physical component to media addiction—a release of dopamine that creates a pleasurable state in the media addict’s body, which then triggers the compulsion for more and more media to gain the same initial dopamine hit.

A

The Three Kinds of Media Users

How do we know if we are a real media addict? To help us understand what constitutes a true alcoholic, the Big Book provides us with three types of users. Again, we will replace the word *alcohol* with *media*.

- “Moderate [users] have little trouble in giving up [media] entirely if they have a good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone. Then we have a certain type of [compulsive media user.] [They] may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair [them] physically and mentally.... If a sufficiently strong reason ... or the warning of a doctor becomes operative, this [individual] can also stop or moderate....”
- “But what about the real [media addict]? [They] may start off as a moderate [user; they] may or may not become a continuous [compulsive user]; but at some stage [in their media usage] career, [they begin] to lose all control of [their media use], once [they] start to [binge on it]. Here is [the person] who has been puzzling you, especially in [their] lack of control.... [They are] seldom mildly [drunk on media]. [They are] always more or less insanely drunk.”
- “[Their] disposition while using [media] resembles [their] normal nature but little. [They] may be one of the finest [people] in the world. Yet let [them binge on media] for a day, and [they] frequently become disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social. [They] have a positive genius for getting [media drunk] at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision must be made or engagement kept. [They are] often perfectly sensible and well-balanced concerning everything except [media], but in that respect [they are] incredibly dishonest and selfish.”
- “[They] often possess special abilities, skills, and aptitudes, and [have] a promising career ahead of [them]. [They use their] gifts to build up a bright outlook for [their] family and [themselves] and then [pull] the structure down on [their heads] by a senseless series of sprees. [They are individuals] who [go] to bed so intoxicated [on media they] ought to sleep the clock around. Yet early next morning [they search] madly for [their smartphone they] misplaced the night before. This is by no means a comprehensive picture of the true [media addict], as our behavior patterns vary. But this description should identify [them] roughly.”

Let's acknowledge that people differ in the variety of media they are addicted to. One person may be addicted to social media, and another to online movies and videos. Someone can spend hours on end playing video games, while another may get drunk on online research, and yet another will binge-read novels. For the alcoholic, it does not matter what brand or type of alcohol they drink—it still gets them drunk. The same is true for the media addict, and different media affect our minds and bodies in varying degrees.

B

No Defense Against the First Click

Why does a real media addict compulsively and obsessively get drunk on media when others can quit or take it or leave it? Let's see what the Big Book authors say about this third type of media drunk, the one of the hopeless variety.

- “Why [do so many media drunks] behave like this? If hundreds of experiences have shown [them] that one [click] means another debacle with all its attendant suffering and humiliation, why is it [they click that first click]? Why can't [they] stay on the [sobriety] wagon? What has become of the common sense and willpower that [they] still sometimes [display] with respect to other matters?”
- “Perhaps there never will be a full answer to these questions. Opinions vary considerably as to why the [media addict] reacts differently from normal people. We are not sure why, once a certain point is reached, little can be done for [them].”
- “We cannot answer the riddle. We know that while the [media addict] keeps away from [their triggering media], as [they] may do for months or years [at a time], [they react] much like other [people]. We are equally positive that once [a media addict] takes any [alcoholic media whatsoever] into [their] system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for [them] to stop. The experience of any [real media addict] will abundantly confirm this.”

A

The Big Book authors then explain the main reason a real media addict cannot stay sober from alcoholic media: **our minds have no defense against the first click.**

- “These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never [clicked] the first [click], thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the [media addict] centers in [their] **MIND**, rather than in [their] body.”
- “If you ask [them] why [they] started on that last bender, the chances are [they] will offer you any one of a hundred alibis. Sometimes these excuses have a certain plausibility, but none of them really makes sense in the light of the havoc [a media addict's binge] creates....”
- “If you draw this fallacious reasoning to the attention of [a media addict, they] will laugh it off, or become irritated and refuse to talk. Once in a while, [they] may tell the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is usually that **[they have] no more idea why [they clicked that first click] than you have.** Some [media addicts] have excuses with which they are satisfied part of the time. But in their hearts, they really do not know why they do it.”

B

As media addicts, we continue to try to hold on to the possibility that we can still control our media usage. But the truth is—if we are willing to admit it—our minds really have no defense against the first click. The Big Book goes on to say:

- “Once this malady has a real hold, they are a baffled lot. There is the obsession that somehow, someday, they will beat the game. But they often suspect they are down for the count.... The tragic truth is that if [this person is a real media addict], the happy day may not arrive. [They have] lost control. At a certain point in the [behavior of every media addict, they pass] into a state where the most powerful desire to stop [getting drunk on media] is of absolutely no avail.”
- “The fact is that most [media addicts], for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in [media]. Our so-called willpower becomes practically nonexistent. **We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force, the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first [click].**”

A

Let me read this last statement once more, for if we are ever to recover from media addiction permanently, we must understand this truth clearly: *“We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness, with sufficient force, the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first [click].”*

B

Jim's Story

The Big Book then gives us the excellent example of Jim, a hopeless alcoholic who, after brief sobriety, offhandedly picks up a drink. See if you identify. Jim was a World War I hero with a charming wife and family. He had inherited a lucrative automobile company and was a good salesman. By all accounts, he had everything in life he needed to be happy and to succeed.

A

Jim was normal except for a **nervous disposition** and, at age thirty-five, became a violent drunk. This resulted in him having to sell his business and work for the guy he sold it to. He was sent to an asylum as a last-ditch effort to save his job. While in the asylum, he was introduced to A.A.'s 12 Steps by two recovering alcoholics, and he became sober. When he started to apply the principles of A.A. to his life, everything began to improve.

B

But then he became complacent, and **he failed to enlarge his spiritual life**. To his consternation, he found himself drunk half a dozen times in rapid succession, despite the knowledge that he could lose his family and job. He ended up back in the asylum. His A.A. friends questioned him as to how this happened. This is his story:

- “I came to work on Tuesday morning. I remember I felt irritated that I had to be a salesman for a concern I once owned. I had a few words with the boss, but nothing serious. Then I decided to drive to the country and see one of my prospects for a car. On the way, I felt

hungry, so I stopped at a roadside place where they have a bar. I had **no intention of drinking**. I just thought I would get a sandwich. I sat down at a table and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk. Still no thought of drinking. I ordered another sandwich and decided to have another glass of milk.”

- “Suddenly, **the thought** crossed my mind that if I were to put an ounce of whiskey in my milk, it couldn't hurt me on a full stomach. I ordered a whiskey and poured it into the milk. I **vaguely** sensed I was not being any too smart, but **felt reassured** as I was taking the whiskey on a full stomach. The experiment went so well that I ordered another whiskey and poured it into more milk. **That didn't seem to bother me, so I tried another.**”
- “Thus started one more journey to the asylum for Jim. Here was the threat of commitment, the loss of family and position, to say nothing of that intense mental and physical suffering that drinking always caused him. He had much knowledge about himself as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk.”

A

Do you relate to Jim's thinking pattern when it comes to your alcoholic media? We media addicts can be rational and logical in many areas of our lives, but when it comes to our compulsive need to use media, we lose all sense of reality. The Big Book authors call this “*plain insanity*.”

- “Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this **plain insanity**. How can such a lack of proportion, or the ability to think straight, be called anything else”

B

They caution us not to think that this extreme case of misjudgment does not relate to us.

- “You may think this an extreme case. To us, it is not far-fetched, for this kind of thinking has been characteristic of every single one of us.... Our sound reasoning failed to hold us in check. **The insane idea won out.** Next day we would ask ourselves, in all earnestness and sincerity, how it could have happened.”

Reflect on your last binge and see if it isn't true that your sound reasoning went out the window right before you decided to use media. Notice how the insane idea won out and how you were without defense against the first click.

A

The Pure Insanity of the Media Addict

Sometimes we may feel justified in turning toward our chosen media because we feel lonely, tired, worried, or angry. The Big Book authors tell us that even this sort of justification is a part of the insanity of an addict, who must face the inevitable negative consequences of a media binge.

- “In some circumstances, we have gone out deliberately to get drunk, feeling ourselves justified by nervousness, anger, worry, depression, jealousy, or the like. But even in this type of beginning, we are obliged to admit that our justification for a spree was insanely insufficient in the light of what always happened. We now see that when we began to [use alcoholic media] deliberately, instead of casually, there was little serious or effective thought during the period of premeditation of what the terrific consequences might be.”

B

To help us understand even better the pure insanity of the media addict and alcoholic, the Big Book authors give us an even more extreme example of a compulsive jaywalker.

- “Our behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of an individual with a passion, say, for jaywalking. He gets a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles. He enjoys himself for a few years in spite of friendly warnings. Up to this point, you would label him as a foolish [person] having queer ideas of fun.”
- “Luck then deserts him and he is slightly injured several times in succession. You would expect him, if he were normal, to cut it out. Presently he is hit again, and this time has a fractured skull. Within a week after leaving the hospital a fast-moving trolley car breaks his arm.”
- “He tells you he has decided to stop jaywalking for good, but in a few weeks, he breaks both legs. On through the years, this conduct continues, accompanied by ... continual promises to be careful or to keep off the streets altogether. Finally, he can no longer work, his wife gets a divorce, and he is held up to ridicule.”
- “He tries every known means to get the jaywalking idea out of his head. He shuts himself up in an asylum, hoping to mend his ways. But the day he comes out he races in front of a fire engine, which breaks his back. Such [an individual] would be crazy, wouldn't he?”

A

While you may wonder how this analogy could apply to you, the authors ask that you consider where your addictions may eventually lead you. For instance, when media addicts use their devices while driving, they willfully put themselves and others at risk.

- “You may think our illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? We, who have been through the wringer, have to admit if we substituted [media addiction] for jaywalking, the illustration would fit exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where [media] has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It's strong language—but isn't it true?”
- “Some of you are thinking: Yes, what you tell us is true, but it doesn't fully apply. We admit we have some of these symptoms, but we have not gone to the extremes you [people] did, nor are we likely to, for we understand ourselves so well after what you have told us that such things cannot happen again. We have not lost everything in life through [compulsive media usage] and we certainly do not intend to. Thanks for the information.”
- “That may be true of certain [non-media addicted] people who, though [bingeing] foolishly and heavily at the present time, are able to stop or moderate because their brains and bodies have not been damaged as ours were. But the actual or potential [media addict], with hardly any exception, will be **ABSOLUTELY UNABLE TO STOP [COMPULSIVELY BINGEING ON MEDIA] ON THE BASIS OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE [ALONE].**”
- “This is a point we wish to emphasize and re-emphasize, to smash home upon our [media addict] readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience.”

B

We are Unable to Stop on the Basis of Self-knowledge Alone

This point is our basic message today. The real media addict will be unable to stop bingeing on media based on self-knowledge and willpower alone. Many of us had studied and learned all about the seductive and addictive qualities of media, but even with this knowledge, we still could not stop.

A

We sincerely hope that today's discussion has resonated with you, illuminating the stark reality faced by those trapped in media addiction. Recognizing your powerlessness over media and the unmanageability of your life is crucial.

B

First Step Principles

Now that we grasp the full meaning of the First Step ("*We admitted that we were powerless over media—that our lives had become unmanageable*"), we can introduce the first two principles of the 12 Steps: HONESTY and ACCEPTANCE.

- Unless we see reality honestly, we cannot hope to find solutions. How can we admit something without being honest? Step One requires this HONESTY: We become honest about media and how it affects our lives. Recovery begins when we honestly admit we are media addicts.
- While we were under the spell of our addiction, we believed that it was not that bad or that we could stop at any time. Once we are honest about our powerlessness against the first compulsive click, it is easier to accept the fact that we are media addicts and that our lives have become unmanageable.
- ACCEPTANCE is the beginning of the surrender process. It allows us to stop judging our addiction as a moral issue, to *accept the things we cannot change*, and to move into the solution that gives us *the courage to change the things we can*. HONESTY about our media addiction leads to ACCEPTANCE of ourselves and the solution.

A

Tomorrow: Bill's Story

Thank you all for reading. Tomorrow we will read how the co-founder of A.A., Bill Wilson, recovered from his hopeless addiction to alcohol. His story will give us hope that we can recover, too. We will also take the First Step together. Also, please ensure you have completed your resistance worksheet for this month. You will need them for Fellowship Friday's meeting.

We will now listen to **B** qualify on Step One and Powerlessness.

[B qualifies on step one and powerlessness, followed by questions and the Serenity Prayer.]

END OF WEDNESDAY MEETING

THURSDAY MEETING

Note: A moderates, and if time allows, B qualifies. Please ask a new member to lead the group in the First Step Prayer. Please remind members to bring their resistance worksheets to the Fellowship Friday meeting.

A

Welcome to the fourth session of Back to Basics – A Design for Living. Please put down all nonessential electronic media while attending these sessions.

We have asked (new member's 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).

A Short Review

We will now review what we have learned about media addiction so far:

Media is a mind-altering and mood-altering drug. It is our dope, or our dopamine high, as described by medical professionals. We have a physical allergy to media because of its mood-altering effect on our body. Because we have overused media in the past, this has affected our minds in that we are no longer able to use media with impunity.

B

In addition to this physical allergy, we have a mental obsession, which means we may be able to stay media sober for a while, but because of our obsession, we will eventually get drunk. We turn to media for relief, reward, recreation, and relaxation but then end up with deep regret and remorse. We have a mental block when it comes to media and are unable to remember how bad the last binge or media blackout was, so we pick up media again without any thought of the consequences to our lives or the lives of others. Our minds minimize the severity of our addiction, and we revert to the cycle of compulsive, self-destructive behavior.

A

Media addiction, like alcoholism, is a disease. It is not a moral issue. We are not bad people or weak-willed. When we consume media, we have an allergic response to it, which triggers the compulsive need to use more and more media. The solution is a spiritual one. Unless we experience a complete psychic change, we cannot hope to become sober or stay sober with media.

B

The Twelve Steps of A.A. and MAA represent the solution that allows us to have this psychic change. If we want to be free from our compulsion to get media drunk and to live our lives without self-medicating, we must decide to be *all in*. We must be willing to go to any lengths to achieve this recovery.

A

Lack of power is our dilemma, so we must find a Higher Power. It does not matter who or what we call this Higher Power, we only need to ask this power to relieve our obsession and mental cravings, so our thoughts will be restored to a clear and sound condition.

B

Bill Wilson's Story

If this is the first time you are reading the Big Book, you may be wondering how the 12-step programs got started. It all began when one alcoholic in recovery helped another hopeless alcoholic find freedom. We will now relate the story of one of A.A.'s co-founders, Bill Wilson, an alcoholic of the hopeless variety.

A

In the 1920s, Bill had a dream of becoming a successful Wall Street stock analyst and making millions in the stock market. When his story begins, Bill is twenty-two years old and returning home from World War I. He believes he is a leader in the making and is optimistic about his prospects. He says, *"My talent for leadership, I imagined, would place me at the head of vast enterprises, which I would manage with the utmost assurance."*

B

He took courses in law, business, and economics, but he almost did not pass his courses because of his drinking. He quit school to become a Wall Street tycoon. His ideas gained the attention of Wall Street brokers, and he had some early success. The more successful he became, the more he drank, but he was not worried. He writes:

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

A

After a while, his drinking began to affect his performance and those around him. When his coworkers confronted him, he became defensive. Bill started to isolate. He says:

- "My drinking assumed more serious proportions, continuing all day and almost every night. The remonstrances of my friends terminated in a row and I became a lone wolf.... The local banker watched me whirl fat checks in and out of his till with amused skepticism."

B

Stock Market Crash of 1929

Then the unthinkable happened. In October 1929, the stock market crashed, and the rug was pulled out from under him. With his fortune lost, he did what he had always done when faced with a problem. He turned to booze for strength and relief.

- "I was finished and so were many friends. The papers reported men jumping to death from the towers of High Finance. That disgusted me. I would not jump. I went back to the bar.... Tomorrow was another day. As I drank, the old fierce determination to win came back."

A

Bill reached out to a wealthy friend in Canada, who invited Bill and his wife, Lois, to come to live with him. By the next spring, he and his wife were living their accustomed lifestyle once again. But his drinking eventually catches up with him, and his friend asks him to leave. He and Lois then go to live at her parents' house.

B

Alcohol Ceased to be a Luxury

Bill was not to have any employment nor draw a sober breath for the next five years. His wife had to go to work to provide for them. Not only that, but Bill's behavior ostracized him from his friends and coworkers. His ability to manage his life was becoming more and more difficult, but he still believed he could control things.

- "Liquor ceased to be a luxury; it became a necessity.... I began to waken very early in the morning, shaking violently.... Nevertheless, I still thought I could control the situation...."

A

Things looked hopeless for a long time, but then a promising business opportunity came his way.

- "Stocks were at the low point of 1932, and I had somehow formed a group to buy. I was to share generously in the profits."

B

But before the deal could go through, Bill went on a bender, and the deal dried up. Finally, Bill began to see that something was very wrong.

- "This had to be stopped. I saw I could not take so much as one drink. I was through forever.... My wife happily observed that this time, I meant business. And so I did."

A

Nonetheless, he soon got drunk again with zero thought of the consequences. He says:

- "There had been no fight. Where had been my high resolve? I simply didn't know. It hadn't even come to mind. Someone had pushed a drink my way, and I had taken it. Was I crazy?"

B

Bill tried many more times, sometimes with more success, but each time he ended up falling back off the wagon.

- "The remorse, horror, and hopelessness of the next morning are unforgettable. The courage to do battle was not there. My brain raced uncontrollably, and there was a terrible sense of impending calamity."

Alcohol Was His Master

He began stealing from his wife to buy booze and even became suicidal. Forty pounds underweight, he was admitted to Towns Hospital to detox his brain. A doctor told him that in alcoholics, the will is weak when it comes to alcohol, though it might remain strong in other aspects of his life.

B

With this information, Bill believed he now understood himself and his problem. He left the hospital with high hopes and stayed sober for four months. “*Surely*,” he thought, “*this [is] the answer—self-knowledge.*”

A

But the day came when he drank once more. He returned to the hospital, and the doctor told his wife, Lois, that he would die of heart failure during delirium tremens or develop a wet brain by year's end. They had no more hope for him.

- “It was a devastating blow to my pride. I, who had thought so well of myself and my abilities, of my capacity to surmount obstacles, was cornered at last.... No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master.... Trembling, I stepped from the hospital a broken man.”

B

Bill had finally seen the truth of his condition. He finally admitted he was powerless over drinking, but Bill could not stop drinking on this admission alone. Soon after, he was drunk again, and everyone, even Bill, thought he would die of alcohol poisoning.

A

Ebby Thatcher's Miraculous Visit

However, something miraculous was about to happen. Looking back on this time, Bill relates:

- “How dark it is before the dawn! In reality, that was the beginning of my last debauch. I was soon to be catapulted into what I like to call the fourth dimension of existence. I was to know happiness, peace, and usefulness in a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes.”

Near the end of a bleak November in 1934, an old schoolmate and drinking buddy of Bill's, Ebby T, calls him on the phone and asks to drop by. Ebby, who earlier that year had been committed for “alcoholic insanity,” was, to Bill's surprise, sober. Bill had been drinking all day but hoped to recapture the spirit of their earlier drinking days and invited Ebby to dinner. Bill was not prepared for what he saw. He writes:

- “The door opened and [Ebby] stood there, fresh-skinned and glowing. There was something about his eyes. He was inexplicably different. What had happened?”

B

Ebby turned down Bill's offer of alcohol, which disappointed him but made him curious. He asked Ebby what was going on. Ebby tells him, "*I've got religion.*" Bill is shocked, but he lets Ebby continue, because as he writes, "*My gin would last longer than his preaching.*"

A

However, Ebby doesn't preach to Bill. Instead, he describes a group of people he has recently met, who have found a spiritual solution to many of the world's difficulties, including alcoholism. They had taught Ebby how to recover from his "alcoholic illness" by practicing the *Four Spiritual Activities*, activities (**Surrender, Sharing, Restitution, and Guidance**) that later became the foundation of the A.A. program.

B

Ebby tells Bill he was visiting to pass his experience along to Bill, if he wanted it. As they talk for hours, Bill remembers how much he had disliked religion as a child and how his grandfather had mild contempt for preachers and church folk.

A

Bill had to swallow hard while listening to Ebby talk about spiritual things, but he could not help but be curious. There was something in the way Ebby looked and talked that he could not deny.

- My friend sat before me, and he made the point-blank declaration that God had done for him what he could not do for himself. His human will had failed. Doctors had pronounced him incurable. Society was about to lock him up. Like myself, he had admitted complete defeat. Then he had, in effect, been raised from the dead, suddenly taken from the scrap heap to a level of life better than the best he had ever known!"
- "Had this power originated in him? Obviously, it had not. There had been no more power in him than there was in me.... That floored me.... Here was something at work in a human heart that had done the impossible. My ideas about miracles were drastically revised right then. I saw that my friend was much more than inwardly reorganized. He was on a different footing. His roots grasped a new soil."

B

Yet despite Ebby's living example, Bill still felt vestiges of his old prejudice against God and religion bubble up. Ebby suggested to Bill, "*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*"

- "That statement hit me hard. 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.... Thus, I [became] convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want Him enough.... Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view."

A

Bill Surrenders and Finds the Way Out

Soon after Ebby's visit, Bill checked into Towns Hospital. Under the care of Dr. Silkworth, Bill underwent alcohol withdrawal for the fourth time. But this time, while in the hospital, Bill applied the *Four Spiritual Activities* of **Surrender, Sharing, Restitution, and Guidance**, to his drinking problem. Bill decided to surrender completely. He writes:

- “There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction.”

B

Immediately after his surrender, Bill began **Sharing** his shortcomings with Ebby. Bill writes:

- “My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies.... I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since.”

A

Together Bill and Ebby identified the blocks that were preventing Bill from tapping into this Power that was greater than human power—the Power that would solve his problem. Then Bill learned how to remove these blocks by making **Restitution**.

- “We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters, to the utmost of my ability.”

B

Then Bill learned to get quiet, to listen to the God of his understanding, and to follow **Guidance**. These actions are essential for establishing a two-way relationship with the “*One who has all power*.”

- “I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me.”

A

Bill learned that, while these concepts are simple, they are not easy—that there was a price to pay. The price? An eradication of self-centeredness and fear.

- “Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure.”

B

Ebby tells Bill that as he works through the “Four Spiritual Activities” of **Surrender, Sharing, Restitution, and Guidance**, he will enter a new relationship with his Creator and receive the secrets to a new way of living that would address all his problems. As long as he remained willing, honest, and humble and believed in God's power to remove his desire to drink, Bill would be able to maintain lifelong sobriety, provided he helped others do the same.

- “Particularly was it imperative to work with others as [Ebby] had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us, it is just like that.”

A

The Entire Psychic Change

With Ebby as his guide, Bill had a sudden conversion experience. He had the “*entire psychic change*,” which Dr. Silkworth speaks of in *The Doctor’s Opinion*. Bill describes the details of his spiritual awakening:

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

B

When Bill made this direct contact with the “Spirit of the Universe,” he was able to recover from alcoholism. He had learned that alcoholism was a physical and mental illness that only a spiritual solution could conquer.

A

Bill Begins to Work With Other Alcoholics

Dr. Silkworth, Bill’s physician, observed dramatic changes in him and encouraged him to continue to work with other alcoholics, for this seemed to be the only way for Bill to achieve long-term sobriety. Silkworth writes:

- “In late 1934, I attended a patient who, though he had been a competent businessman of good earning capacity, was an alcoholic of a type I had come to regard as hopeless. In the course of his third treatment, he acquired certain ideas concerning a possible means of recovery.”
- “As part of his rehabilitation, he commenced to present his conceptions to other alcoholics, impressing upon them that they must do likewise with still others. This has become the basis of a rapidly growing fellowship of these men and their families.”
- “This man and over one hundred others appear to have recovered. I personally know scores of cases who were of the type with whom other methods had failed completely.”

B

Bill had to work with other alcoholics to stay sober himself. With these discoveries, he later developed a plan of action with the help of other alcoholics, which became the foundation of the A.A. program.

- “My wife and I abandoned ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of helping other alcoholics to a solution of their problems.... I soon found that when all other measures failed, working with another alcoholic would save the day.... I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet....”

A

Helping others brought purpose and joy back into Bill’s life. By helping others, he was helping himself.

- “The joy of living we really have, even under pressure and difficulty. I have seen hundreds of families set their feet on the path that really goes somewhere.... There is scarcely any form of trouble and misery which has not been overcome among us.”

B

Alcoholics Anonymous, a worldwide organization that has helped millions of people, came about because one man decided to help another man. This is the power of what service can do and the power of what God can do for us. Bill writes:

- “Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia. We have it with us right here and now. Each day, my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and goodwill toward [all humanity].”

A

Preparation for Taking Step One

This week, we highlighted important passages in the Big Book, which we hope helped you in recognizing the plight of the true media addict and the steps we need to take to recover. We hope we have shown you enough evidence to want to proceed on your path to recovery.

Like Bill Wilson and Ebby T, it's time for you to begin to take your journey toward a spiritual awakening that will change your life. Now let's prepare ourselves to take the First Step.

B

Step 1 – We admitted we were powerless over Media; that our lives had become unmanageable.

This is the first step in the surrender process, but before we can surrender, we must be honest and willing to see the truth of our condition. Once we fully admit that we have a problem with media, only then can we begin to accept the solution. The Big Book authors tell us exactly what we must do.

- “We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were [media addicts]. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.”

A

To smash the delusion that you are *not* a media addict, we will ask a simple question: Are you ready to concede to your *innermost self* that you are powerless over media and that your life has become unmanageable?

Before you answer, let's pause for one minute to ponder this important question: Are you powerless over media, and has your life become unmanageable? *[Time for 1 minute.]*

I will now ask again: Are you ready to concede to your innermost self that you are powerless over media and that your life has become unmanageable? All that is required is a “yes” or “no” answer. I will go around the room, and when I call your name, answer “yes” if you agree that you are powerless over media and that your life has become unmanageable. *[Stop screen sharing. Call on members by name in alphabetical order and wait for their answer.]*

Thank you! According to the Big Book authors, if you answered “yes” to this question, you have taken Step One, and you have begun the surrender process.

B

This week, we covered 60 pages of the Big Book and took the First Step. This is a remarkable accomplishment! Please congratulate yourself for taking this important first step. By being honest and admitting our problem, we can now begin to accept the solution.

A

Looking Ahead

Next week, we will continue our journey through the 12 Steps by presenting and taking Steps Two and Three. We will show you how to connect with your Higher Power by teaching you Two-Way Prayer, and we will give you guidelines for taking the Fourth Step.

B

Tomorrow we will meet for one hour for a special Fellowship Friday meeting. We will have a chance to get to know each other better. **Please bring your Resistance Worksheet to tomorrow’s session, and we will share them. We also invite second and third-month members to write a second Resistance Worksheet, so you can also share them with us.**

A

We will now listen to B qualify on what we read today.

[If time allows, B qualifies and answers questions. Then end with the Serenity Prayer. Have an aftermeeting fellowship if there is interest.]

END OF THURSDAY MEETING

FRIDAY MEETING

Note: Sponsors, please read this before you begin. After the opening prayer, take 3 minutes to do something playful and fun to raise everyone's energy level. The Group Sponsor can choose an activity—stretching, moving, laughing tea, or making silly faces—whatever feels right for this moment.

A

Intention for This Meeting

Welcome to Day Five of Back to Basics – A Design for Living! Please set aside all nonessential electronic devices as we dive into our sessions.

Let's come together and recite the WE version of the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant us the serenity to accept what we cannot change, the courage to change what we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Today, each of you will have a chance to share a bit about yourselves, helping us connect on this journey. Please sit up straight, listen attentively, and be present as we explore our resistance to media fasting. What could be more entertaining than discussing our defiance against a media fast and being in Back to Basics? Nothing, right? [SMILIE FACE!]

B

Sharing Our Intentions

We'll also take a moment to express why we're here and what keeps us showing up despite our resistance. At the end of our discussions, you'll have another opportunity to decide if you're ALL IN or prefer to opt out of Back to Basics.

Remember, each person here is a vital part of this recovery journey. Our group embodies a Higher Power that supports us all in reaching new levels of healing.

A

Strengthening Our Container

Today, let's unite to strengthen this group by sharing our deepest resistance to recovery and why we're willing to commit to one more day of fasting.

B

A Moment of Fun

Before we begin, let's take three minutes to lift our spirits with some lighthearted fun!

[The Group Sponsor can choose an activity—stretching, moving, laughing tea, or making silly faces—whatever feels right for this moment.]

A

Sharing our Resistance

Today, we'll explore our "Resistance Worksheets" together. The questions will be displayed in the chat for your sponsors to reference. When it's your turn, please share only what you've written on your worksheet.

We'll proceed alphabetically, starting with our newest members. Those in their second or third month who have completed an additional Resistance Worksheet will have a chance to share after the initial round.

Questions for All Members:

Goal: One-Month Media Fast

1. Why do you want this goal? (Resistance Worksheet, question 1)
2. Why don't you want this goal? (RW Q2)
3. What is the one short sentence that describes your resistance? (RW Q3)
4. What is the exact opposite of this statement? (RW Q7)
5. Read one example of where this is just as true. (RW Q8)

I'll call on each of you individually. If your sponsors are present, they'll guide you through these questions. If not, I'll facilitate the discussion myself. We'll begin with Month One members, followed by those in Months Two and Three.

A

[After the Resistance Worksheets have been shared, continue with the following.]

We would like to now hear from our new members. We would like you to share your thoughts on the following questions.

1. What brought you to Back to Basics?
2. What do you intend to gain from this experience?
3. What do you need from this group?
4. What is it you hope to contribute to this group?

We will put the questions in the chat so you can see them as you are sharing. You will each have **[TBD 2-3]** minutes to share. I will call on you in your reading order. Could we have someone keep time?

B

We will now ask our second and third **[or fourth]** month members to share for 2 minutes each on the following questions.

1. What has been your biggest win this past month while taking the 12 Steps and fasting from unnecessary media?
2. What has been the most challenging thing for you in the past month?

3. What do you need from this group as you continue working on the 12 Steps?
4. What do you plan to contribute to this group this month?

A

Thank you all for sharing today. Look around this virtual room. This is our sobriety tribe for the next three weeks. Millions outside this room will never have the chance to grow this way. **[Stop Screen Sharing so members can have a chance to connect]**

This month will be over before you know it. We want you to receive what you came for.

B

At this point, you have had a chance to learn what we are about and to get an idea of what working the 12 Steps of media recovery may look like. If you still want what we have and are willing to go to any lengths to achieve this, we will give you another chance right now to be "*all in*" or to "*opt out*."

A

Opting out now would be perfectly fine. It is better to be ready for this process than to enter next week half-heartedly. All are welcome who wish to be on this journey with us. If the process does not feel right for you or if this is not the right time for you, we wish you the best on your personal journey of recovery and are happy that you are honest with yourself and with us. You are welcome to opt out.

B

We will now go around the room. I will say your name, and please say either "*all in*" or "*opt out*."

[After everyone has spoken ...] We are thankful for everyone who will continue with us next week. This time flies by. We hope you will continue to get to know each other and support each other in this recovery process.

[If anyone has opted out, proceed with ...] To those who opted out, we wish you the best, and our doors are always open if you decide to join us in the future.

A

Please review your assignments this weekend and complete any unfinished work. You need to meet with your sponsor and share your writing with them between now and the next session. Please attend the Saturday *There Is a Solution* Zoom Meeting at 2 pm Eastern Time and support the B2B group members who are qualifying. The meeting is listed on the MAA website.

B

It's not uncommon to feel overwhelmed in B2B, but don't allow yourself to become overly concerned. You will get through it, and it will change your life. This is our experience. Give your recovery to your Higher Power. Show up, do the best you can, and you will see miracles happen. Continue to fast, and you will see everything fall into place. Let go and let God. We look forward to seeing you at our next session.

A

A quick reminder: Please attend MAA meetings and volunteer to serve and speak at these meetings. You all now have at least one week of abstinence from unnecessary media, so you have something to give others. People who are suffering need to hear your story.

B

Lastly, if you have slipped on any of your commitments, please make sure you complete a “Breakdown Worksheet” and read it to your sponsor. Keep honest and keep clean, one day at a time. If you do so, you will see that you can get better and better at fasting from all unnecessary media.

Please join us in saying the WE version of the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

[Answer any questions if needed.]