

BACK TO BASICS RECOVERY MEETING

"A Design for Living"

For MEDIA ADDICTS ANONYMOUS

Meeting Format for Session 2 – Steps 2, 3, 4, & 5

Welcome to session number two of the "Back to Basics—A Design for Living" meetings of Media Addicts Anonymous. Please put down all non-essential electronic media while listening to these sessions. By focusing on this meeting without distractions you will be able to access the recovery power of what these "Back to Basics" meetings offer.

My name is _____, a recovering member of Media Addicts Anonymous and I am your moderator for this session.

Please join me in saying the Serenity Prayer:

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

During these four one-hour sessions, you will learn how to recover from Media Addiction by taking the Twelve Steps as described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous — a spiritually based “program of action” that will provide you with a new way of living free of compulsive use of electronic media. The writers of this book testify that:

"A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, 'A design for living' that really works."

The material I will be reading from today is from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous as well as some of the information from the, “**Back to Basics – The Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners’ Meetings,**” subtitled “**The Steps We Took, in Four One-Hour Sessions.**” This booklet is a compilation of the early formats for Beginners’ Meetings used successfully in the 1940s. When reading from the Big Book, I may substitute or add Media addiction concepts where appropriate. To make this format more inclusive, I will change the pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural.

In our last session we started the **SURRENDER** process by completing Step One: we admitted we are powerless over Media and that our lives are unmanageable. We commend you for admitting you have a problem. As the “Big Book” says, “This is the first step in recovery.” Your admission is a major accomplishment, since many media addicts live in complete denial they have a problem.

During this session, we will continue the **SURRENDER** process by taking Steps Two and Three. After that we will provide you with the needed guidelines for taking the Fourth and Fifth Steps, which begins the **SHARING** process of the 12 steps. Between now and next session, you will share your inventory with another person, either your sponsor or action partner.

In this session our main objective is to find a power greater than ourselves who will relieve us from the serious unmanageability of media addiction and to become willing to turn our will and lives over to this power.

Now that we have admitted we are media addicts let’s look at what else we have to do in order to recover.

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

Remember last session the Big Book authors told us that our problem with addictions stem from a spiritual disease:

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

Last session we read the Doctor's Opinion by Dr. Silkworth and it bears re-reading again for the understanding of this is essential if we are going to be serious about taking the Second Step. I will replace drinking with media usage:

"Men and women [use media] essentially because they like the effect produced by [media]. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their [media drunk] life seems the normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by [getting on their media], [media] which they see others [using] with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known state of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to [use] again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire **psychic change** there is little hope of [their] recovery."

Here Dr. Silkworth goes on to say:

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

Dr. Silkworth is saying that something revolutionary needs to happen within the media addict in order for them to easily be able to control their desire for media. This is why taking Steps Two and Three are essential if we honestly want to get well.

The Big Book tells us that moral codes or rational philosophies (while powerful intentions) do not necessarily help the media addict, recover.

"If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome [media addiction] many of us would have recovered long ago. But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us, no matter how much we tried. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn't there. Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly."

What we read here is that, as media addicts, our own will power failed us utterly. We need power to stop our media addiction but what is it going to take for us to find this Power? The answer is in the back of the "Big Book" within Appendix Two.

"Most emphatically we wish to say that any [media addict] capable of honestly facing [their] problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided [they do] not close [their] minds to all spiritual concepts. [They] can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial."

"We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. **Willingness, honesty and open mindedness** are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable."

The "Big Book" authors tell us we need three things: **willingness, honesty, and open mindedness**. They are asking us to set aside everything we think we know about God and spirituality and keep an open mind. They also encourage us not to allow our arrogance or shortsightedness to keep us in the dark and block us from the "sunlight of the Spirit."

In the beginning of AA many members, even Bill W., the New York City co-founder, had great difficulty accepting a spiritual solution to the alcohol problem. In Bill's story, he describes how he "came to believe."

In late November 1934, Ebby T. visits Bill at his Brooklyn, New York home. It is during this visit that Bill first learns about the concept of "God as you understand God."

As we mentioned in the first session, Ebby is one of Bill's high school friends and a former drinking companion. In this story, Ebby has been sober for several months. He tells Bill his life has been transformed as a result of practicing the Four Spiritual Activities that of: **SURRENDER, SHARING, RESTITUTION, AND GUIDANCE.**

Bill has known Ebby for most of his life, so of course he is shocked when Ebby starts talking about God. However, he feels compelled to listen because he realizes something about Ebby has really changed—his eyes are clear, his face is fresh and healthy—he is sober for the first time in many years. Still, religion had left such a bad taste in his mouth as a youth that he resisted Ebby's solution.

“Despite the living example of my friend, there remained in me the vestiges of my old prejudice. The word “God” still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed that there might be a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn't like the idea. I could go for such conceptions as Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit of Nature, but I resisted the thought of a Czar of the Heavens, however loving His sway might be. I have since talked with scores of men who felt the same way.”

We have Ebby to thank for bringing the "God dilemma" solution that has given hope to all spiritually ambivalent members. It was at this moment that Ebby presents Bill with a revolutionary proposition.

“My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, “*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*”

“That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last.”

“*It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.* I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!”

For those of you who are unbelievers or feel that religion and its people have harmed you, Step Two may seem like too big of a pill to swallow.

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

The rational and scientifically minded kept wondering why they should believe in a Power greater than themselves? The writers of the Big Book realized that:

"The practical individual of today is a stickler for facts and results."

The early AA members assure us there are good reasons to consider that there are parts of reality that even the best minds can't comprehend. In all scientific exploration there is an assumption or hypothesis at the beginning of all research that focuses and enables the scientist to explore their theory.

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

So the Big Book authors are asking us to apply a reasonable assumption to our spiritual beliefs. This is not weakness or irrationality because even in science there is no perfect proof.

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

To believe our human intellect is "the end all and be all," puts us in the risky position of being overly self-important.

"Instead of regarding ourselves as intelligent agents, spearheads of God's ever advancing Creation, we agnostics and atheist chose to believe that our humans intelligence was the last word, the alpha and the omega, the begging and end of all. Rather vain of us, wasn't it?"

The Big Book authors beg us to lay aside prejudice, even against organized religion.

"We have learned that whatever the human frailties of various faiths may be, those faiths have given purpose and direction to millions... We used to amuse ourselves by cynically dissecting spiritual beliefs and practices when we might have observed that many spiritually minded persons of all races, colors, and creeds were demonstrating a degree of stability, happiness, and usefulness which we should have sought ourselves."

The "Big Book" authors ask us to set aside our contempt for spiritual principles and consider our own concept of a Higher Power. If we do, we will be in a much better position to understand the Second Step solution for our compulsive media problem.

"... We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a **willingness** to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power..."

The "Big Book" authors clearly state that it is impossible to define God. We have to stop trying to comprehend this Power with our mind and start accepting this Power with our heart.

"When, therefore, we speak to you of [a Higher Power], we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood [God]. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere. So, we used our own conception, however limited it was."

What was the alternative? For those of us who bristle at even the slightest mention of God or spiritual things, we are invited to see where we have handicapped ourselves by obstinacy, sensitiveness, and unjustified prejudice.

"... Faced with [media addict's] destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect, [the destructive us of media] was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process; we hope no one else will be prejudiced for as long as some of us were."

The Big Book authors make a powerful case for the existence of God.

"When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did."

One early member who could not stop drinking and feared he could also not believe in God had a powerful spiritual awakening while in a hospital trying to sober up. Alone in his room he asked himself this question:

"Is it possible that all the religious people I have known are wrong?...Who am I to say there is no God?"

"This man recounts that he tumbled out of bed to his knees... He was overwhelmed by a conviction of the Presence of God. It poured over and through him with the certainty and majesty of a great tide at flood. The barriers he had built through the years were swept away. He stood in the Presence of Infinite Power and Love. He had stepped from bridge to shore. For the first time, he lived in conscious companionship with his Creator."

With this spiritual awakening, this man found an unshakeable faith that became the cornerstone of his recovery. The Big Book tells us:

"His alcohol problem was taken away. That very night, years ago, it disappeared. Save for a few brief moments of temptation the thought of drink has never returned; and as such times a great revulsion has risen up in him. Seemly, he could not drink even if he would. God had restored his sanity."

This kind of healing is nothing more than a miracle, but this is what the Big Book writers promise. By thoroughly trusting in this new power, they tell us that sanity automatically returns, and not only that, the temptation for media is lifted.

"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even (electronic media). For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in (electronic media). If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward (media) has been given to us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we have been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition."

Once again we need to make a decision. We need to decide whether or not we are willing to believe in a Power greater than human power—a Spirit of the Universe—a God of our understanding. Are you willing to believe in a power greater than yourself?

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

Now, it is time to choose. Are you willing to concede that there is a "Power greater than yourself?" If you are, you're ready to take the 2nd Step.

Here are the directions in the Big Book:

"We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. 'Do I now believe, or am I even **willing to believe**, that there is a Power greater than myself?' As soon as [any man or woman] can say that [he/she] does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure [them] that [they are] on [their] way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built."

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

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

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

Because this is such an important and life changing question, we will pause for one minute to go to the stillness inside and listen for your answer. When we come back in 1 minute I will ask the question again.

[pause for 1 minute]

It is now time to take Step Two. “Do you now believe, or are you even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than yourself?” If so, please state your name out loud, followed by “Yes.”

Thank you. According to the “Big Book” authors, if you answered "yes" to this question you have taken Step Two.

END OF PART 1

PART 2

Now, let’s move on to the 3rd Step.

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

The “Big Book” authors tell us:

“Being convinced, *we were at Step Three...*”

Convinced of what? If we’ve taken the 2nd Step, we believe that a “Power greater than ourselves” can restore us to sanity. But, even though we may believe that the “A Higher Power” is the answer, this doesn’t necessarily mean we are willing to accept this solution. In order to recover from media addiction, we must make a decision to put this Power to work in our lives.

This is where the “Big Book” authors show us how to become "God-directed." But first they disclose how operating on self-will keeps us separated from this “inner resource.” They explain that, when we live on self-will, we are like actors trying to control every detail of a play.

“The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in [their] own way.”

Does this sound familiar? At one time or another, haven’t we all tried to convince those around us they would be much better off if they just did things our way? Attempting to control everything in our lives is one of the characteristics of compulsive media addicts. We want to feel safe and we want to be happy.

The passage continues:

"What usually happens, [they] begins to think life doesn't treat [them] right. [They] decide to exert [themselves] more. [They] become...more demanding or more gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit [them]...[They] becomes angry, indignant, self-pitying..."

"What is the basic trouble? ...[Are they] not really a self-seeker...[Are they] not a victim of the delusion that [they] can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if only [they] manage well?"

"...[Are they] not, even in [their] best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?"

"...Our actor is self-centered—ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays"

Then the authors declare that it is this selfish, self-centeredness that makes us miserable.

"Selfishness — self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt."

They make the point that addicts are the epitome of self-will run riot and this is our downfall.

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

The authors make clear in order to rid our selves of this self-centered fear, we need stop playing God.

"This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. [God] is the Principal; we are [God's] agents. [God] is the [Creator], and we are [God's] children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom."

By making God their employer, rather their egos, the authors found that miracles began to happen.

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

Now we know our place in God's Universe. Contrary to what we may have thought in the past, the whole world does not revolve around us. Realizing there is a "Power greater than ourselves" is the essence of God-consciousness. As we become aware of the "realm of the spirit," our lives change.

"...Established on such a footing, we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of [God's] presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn."

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

"We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All [people] of faith have courage. They trust their God."

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

“We found it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as our [partner], best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once.”

We're here today to take this monumental Step with you right now.

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

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

Taking the Third Step is making a contract, a contract with our Higher Power for the express purpose of being relieved of our self-centeredness by being of service to others. Here are the points this prayer makes:

1st, we make an offering. There is a beautiful tradition in many spiritual practices to make offerings, for instance on an altar you might place flowers, incense, food, wine, etc. Our "offering" to our Higher Power is ourselves. In this way we are presenting our Higher Power with the most valuable offering we can give.

2nd, by offering ourselves, we are giving our Higher Power our talents and skills to build something useful. What we are building is left up to the wisdom of our Higher Power. This means that, from now on, we ask for inspiration in all our life goals, we ask for God's direction.

3rd, we ask for relief from our human frailties and addictions so that we can be a better builder for our Higher Power's cause.

4th, we ask that our difficulties and obstacles be taken away so we may give others hope and a precedent of the way God can work miracles in our life.

5th, we are made aware that we help others through the Power of God, that this Power loves us all unreservedly, and that the "Way of Life" we are learning through surrendering our cares to God is a testament of this Love and this Power working in our lives.

6th, we commit to following the guidance of our Higher Power in every part of our lives.

Before we take Step Three, we are going to meditate for one minute so we can tune into our Higher Power and connect fully with what we are committing to.

[Pause for 1 minute]

Now, if you are ready to take the Third Step, please say the Third Step Prayer with me:

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

According to the “Big Book” authors, you have taken Step Three! Congratulations!

Let's review what we have accomplished so far.

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our compulsive media habits and that our media addiction made us unable to manage our own lives.

2. We found within us the willingness to believe in the possibility that a Higher Power could actually take away our compulsive desire for media and bring us back to a balanced and sane mind.
3. Then we took a huge leap of faith, and made a contract with this spiritual power that we will turn our will and cares over and let our lives be guided by this power. We will let this power love us and show us how to serve. To give us victory over our hardships and be a light for others by giving them hope that they too can be relieved of the bondage of self-centered fear and addiction.

When taking these first three steps, we have only made **decisions**. Now it is time to take **action**, actions that will result in the “personality change sufficient to bring about recovery” from media addiction. We will now move into the **SHARING** process of our program.

END OF PART 2

PART 3

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

The “Big Book” authors tell us what we need to do now that we’ve made our decision to proceed.

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

Please note the authors say at once. They instruct us to take the Fourth Step immediately after the Third Step prayer. We must overcome those things that have prevented us from tapping into the spiritual solution to our problem. We had to see clearly the "causes and conditions" that created our media problem.

So, we are now going to establish a direct line of communicating with the God of our understanding by eliminating those manifestations of self that have kept us in the depths of loneliness and despair. The “Big Book” authors disclose that liquor (in our case, media addiction) is but a symptom. Sure, our media binging behaviors have cut us off from God, but once we stop being media drunk, we’re still separated from the “One who has all power” because of our shortcomings. Now, it’s time to look at these “causes and conditions” by taking an inventory.

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

“Therefore we started upon a personal inventory. *This was Step Four.* A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-fac-ing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods; to get rid of them promptly and without regret.”

So, we are going to conduct the equivalent of a commercial inventory on our lives. This implies we are going to look at our assets and liabilities. That’s what a commercial inventory is all about. It’s an examination of what is working and what is not working in our lives. It allows us to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

“We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.”

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

In the *Back to Basics – The Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners’ Meetings* booklet the authors present us with a list of liabilities we need to eliminate and assets we need to accentuate.

Here is the list of liabilities:

- Resentment (the consequence of being angry or bitter toward someone for an extended period of time)
- Fear (the fear of losing something you have or not getting what you want)
- Selfishness/Self-centeredness (the concern only for ourselves and our own welfare or pleasure without regard for others)
- Dishonesty (involves theft or deceptions, cheating, lying or withholding the truth)
- False Pride (feelings of being better than [grandiosity, superiority, know it all] or less than [shame, unworthiness, low self-esteem])
- Mistrust (jealousy that has to do with suspicion, and distrusting other's motives and doubting the faithfulness of a friend)
- Envy (the desire to have a quality, possession, or other desirable attribute belonging to someone else)
- Procrastination (a kind of laziness to work or avoidance to follow through with right actions)

I will give you the list of assets in a moment. But let's look at the first liability: resentment.

The “Big Book” authors ask us to examine our resentments.

“Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics (media addicts) than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease...”

“...In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. ...”

The authors emphasize that our resentments keep us separated from being guided by the Spirit. We must eliminate them if we are to live a spiritual way of life.

“It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worthwhile. But with the [media addict], whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. ...”

Then the authors instruct us to look at our part in each situation to see if we need to make an amends.

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

Let’s look at the third sentence again. It reads, “Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?” These shortcomings are based on self-will. In addition, they are the opposites of the Four Standards of Honesty, Purity [of Spirit], Unselfishness, and Love, which is used as a test for God’s will.

Early on Bill W., Dr. Bob and other A.A. pioneers learned to test everything they thought, said or did. Now, they are asking us to do the same thing—test our actions. We need to know which path we’re on. Are we living in the solution and “walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe,” or are we living in the problem and sinking deeper and deeper into “that bitter morass of self-pity?” It is our selfishness and self-

centeredness that keep us blocked from the “One who has all power” and prevents us from finding the spiritual solution to our difficulties.

Concerning our resentments, the “Big Book” authors provide us with specific instructions on what to do. We must get beyond them if we “expect to live long or happily in this world.”

The Big Book authors explain that when we hold onto grudges, we are actually allowing others to control our lives, or what many of us like to say, “We allow them to live rent free in our heads.”

“We turned back to the list, for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than [our media addiction].”

If we don’t deal with our resentments, the future will just be a repeat of the past. Every time we are reminded of an old hurt, the old pain returns and we feel it again and again. In the past we may have used media to numb this pain, but now we are going to take actions to eliminate this pain.

The first thing we do is talk about our resentments with our sponsor or sharing partner. Healing starts with **SHARING** the hurt. But, the healing is not complete until we forgive those who have offended us. We overcome resentment with forgiveness. Therefore, **forgiveness** is the asset that corresponds to the liability of resentment.

We must change our attitude about the experience. We do this by seeing the source of our pain in a new light. We see the person as a sick individual who needs our prayers, not our anger. Whether it is a person who is still in our lives, someone who has passed on, someone we may never see again, or ourselves, the process is the same. The Big Book says:

“Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick, too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended, we said to ourselves, ‘This is a sick [person]. How can I be helpful to [them]? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.’

“We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn’t treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.”

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

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

If we have faith that God will keep us safe and protected, we will receive the strength and direction to overcome all of our fears. We overcome fear with faith. Therefore, according to the “Big Book” authors, **faith** is the asset that corresponds to the liability of fear. Here they say:

"Perhaps there is a better way—we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role [God] assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think [God] would have us, and humbly rely on [God], does [God] enable us to match calamity with serenity.... We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All [people] of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let [God] demonstrate, through us, what [God] can do. We ask [God]

to remove our fear and direct our attention to what [God] would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear."

As we share our liabilities to our sponsor or sharing partner, we use this information to make a list of those we have harmed. This will become our amends list – the people to whom we need to make restitution.

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

Remember that the Big Book authors tells us that when we are conducting an inventory, we look at our assets as well as our liabilities. They are telling us that when we are connected to our God-nature, or higher nature, these assets are automatically within each and everyone of us. Therefore, even if we are not aware of our assets in the situation, they are still there. The inventory process helps us let go of our old stories and embrace the natural goodness within us to be honest, kind and live with purity of spirit. Let's look at how these assets are the antidote to our problems and how by using our assets, we open ourselves to the "Sunlight of the Spirit."

Earlier we listed the eight liabilities we media addicts need to look at for our inventory. Here are the assets that are the antidote to these liabilities.

- The antidote to Resentment is **Forgiveness**. Forgiveness is a conscious decision to let go of deeply held negative feelings or to stop being angry with someone who has done something wrong.
- The antidote to Fear is **Faith**. Faith is the complete trust or confidence in someone or something.
- The antidote to Selfishness/Self-centeredness is **Consideration**. Consideration is being conscientious of another person's well-being and showing kindness, thoughtfulness, and sensitivity toward them.
- The antidote to Dishonesty is **Honesty**. Honesty is being truthful, straightforward, and ethical.
- The antidote to False Pride is **Humility**. Humility is the ability to see yourself and others in a realistic and non-hierarchical way; to feel neither superior nor inferior.
- The antidote for Mistrust is **Trust**. Trust is the firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.
- The antidote for Envy is **Contentment**. Contentment is the state of being satisfied and pleased with what you have; feeling at ease with the way things are.
- The antidote for Procrastination is **Action**. Action is the process of carrying out a task especially when dealing with a problem or difficulty.

Our liabilities contribute to closing ourselves off from other people and impede our ability to share our gifts to the world and fulfill our Higher Power's plan for us. The overall asset that can be applied to all liabilities is **Generosity**. For Generosity is authentically sharing ourselves with the world and giving all humanity the benefit of the doubt.

END OF PART 3

PART 4

Now we will tell you how to take the Fifth Step.

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

In taking the 5th step, we are told that we need to share it not only with ourselves and our Higher Power, but also with another human being. This is a key element to recovery, for in sharing our weaknesses with another person, we have found deep relief from our guilt and shame.

The big book authors tell us this step is essential for recovery from Media Addiction:

"We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves...In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further... If we skip this vital step, we many not overcome [media addiction]. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience...Almost invariably they got drunk."

It is important to take the 5th Step with the right person. Luckily for us in Media Addicts Anonymous, we have members who really understand this addiction and therefore, if following the simple instructions, can be good listeners and reflect back to their action partner, in a simple and pure way, their own words. We don't judge each other, we don't compare, we identity and support one another in our recovery process.

Here is how to conduct the inventory with your sponsor or action partner. If you are taking Step Five with and an action partner, make sure that you have set aside 1 hour per person to do this inventory.

1. List a person who you have a resentment for or list something or someone you fear.

IMPORTANT: We keep the list short and manageable. We will be repeating this process again and again, so don't feel like you have to get all your work done in one session. Over time you will see that the same liabilities show up again. Over time you will get clearer about how you sabotage yourself. Over time, if you commit to doing this process over and over, you will get to know yourself and your dis-ease very well.

2. When you have the person or fear you want to work on, your sponsor or action partner will ask you questions and take notes. Please keep your answers short and simple so that you don't waste time ranting about your side of the story and why you are upset. Remember this is your inventory, not theirs. This will also allow you to see how you have created your own suffering. Here are the questions:

- Why do you resent this person or have this fear?
- What is your reaction when you have this fear or resentment?
- Where do you feel it in your body?
- Where are you selfish or self-centered, or inconsiderate? Where have you felt the fear of losing something or not getting what you want?
- Where have you been dishonest? With them or with yourself? Where have you blamed them?
- Where have you felt better than or less than? Where did you feel superior? Where did you feel shame or low self-esteem?
- Where have you felt you wanted something that didn't belong to you? Where did you envy?
- Where did you procrastinate or avoid taking action?

3. Your sponsor or action partner, who has been taking notes, will then read your answers back to you.

4. Now your sponsor or action partner will say: "Are you willing to have God remove these liabilities and replace them with assets? If you say, "Yes" then you begin looking at the assets you want to

bring into your life. (We will be taking the 6th and 7th steps in the next session, this is just making preparation for those steps.)

5. Your sponsor or action partner will now ask you more questions and take notes. Remember to keep your answers short and simple. Here are the questions:

- What would this situation look like if you had Faith? Faith in yourself? Faith in God? Faith in the other person or institution?
- What would this situation look like if you had consideration? If you weren't reacting or blaming? If you had consideration for yourself? For the other person?
- What would this situation look like if you were honest and authentic? With yourself? With the other?
- What would this situation look like if you had humility? If you felt self-esteem? If you saw yourself and the other as equal? If you felt you were worthy? If you saw them as worthy?
- What would this situation look like if you felt acceptance and contentment?
- What would this situation look like if you felt the energy and willingness to take action?
- Where can you be generous in this situation? Where can you give your love, your gifts to the other person and not hold back? Where can you give the gift of "live and let live" to the other person?
- Are you willing right now to forgive this person 100% for everything they did to you?
- Are you willing right now to forgive yourself 100% for carrying this resentment or fear?

6. Your sponsor or action partner will read back to you what you have said and what they have written.

7. You then discuss if you have any wrongs to set right and any amends to make to this person or to yourself.

8. You make a short list of amends. We will discuss how to make amends in the next session.

9. Hold on to this list and your list of assets and liabilities and bring them both to the next session.

It's always good to begin and end your meetings with the serenity prayer or any prayer that you wish.

This process takes about an hour. If you are doing this with an action partner, you may want to meet for two hours or you may want to meet two separate times. Please get this sharing process done as soon as possible after the 2nd session. Do not delay.

We look at assets as well as liabilities because many of us have lost much of our self-esteem and self-worth as the result of our media addiction. Even though we've done some pretty foolish and destructive things while acting out in our addiction, we will never have to repeat those actions again, provided we are willing to admit our faults and correct them. If we are genuinely sorry, God has already forgiven us. Now, it is time to forgive ourselves.

The "Big Book" authors tell us:

"...If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to use again. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience."

So, it is time to make a searching and fearless moral inventory—time to clean up the wreckage of the past so we can experience the “miracle of healing,” and an abundant future.

There is no right or wrong way to do the Fourth and Fifth Step. Just do it. When we come back in our next session, We will be taking the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th steps. Have faith in this process and know that your Higher Power is guiding you.

Thank you for letting me be of service. Please join me in the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. The courage to change the things I can, and at the wisdom to know the difference.

I look forward to continuing this journey of recovery with you in session three. Until then, May God bless and keep you.

END OF PART 4