

BACK TO BASICS RECOVERY MEETING

"A Design for Living"

For MEDIA ADDICTS ANONYMOUS

Meeting Format for Session 4 – Steps 11 and 12

Welcome to session Four 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 sessions, we are learning 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."

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.

Let's see who's ready to be rocketed into the “fourth dimension of existence” that the “Big Book” authors write about. Will all who are working on their Ninth Step amends, please state your names. [pause] Thank you.

Our ultimate goal in these four sessions is to give you "a design for living:" a step by step process to help you create a life that is second to none. At this point you may be experiencing the spiritual awakening that leads to “a new freedom and a new happiness" that the Big Book authors write about.

Now, it is time to expand upon this new God consciousness. We do this by living Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve everyday. In the last session we took Step Ten. Remember Step Ten is practicing Steps Four through Nine on a daily basis. In this Fourth Session we will be exploring the last two steps: Step Eleven, which is to improve our spiritual connection to our Higher Power through prayer and meditation and Step Twelve which provides us with guidelines for working with other Media Addicts and carrying our life-saving message to others.

In Session one and two, we read that our problem had been a lack of power:

- “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?”

In Step Eleven we are going to consciously cultivate our connection to a Power greater than ourselves in a sustained and sincere ways.

Ultimately our daily usefulness and sobriety hinge on connection with a Power greater than ourselves. This is why we need to stay in fit spiritual condition. In Session Two we were told that if we take all 12 Steps as written in the Big Book sanity will return and miracles will happen:

- "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 give 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 place 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."

I want to read the last two lines again: "That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition." Step Eleven is the method by which we stay in fit spiritual condition.

So let's look at what we need to do to take Step Eleven.

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 Eleven asks us to do three things:

1. To improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power through prayer and meditation.
2. To pray only for knowledge of our Higher Power's will for us.
3. To be given the power to carry out the Will of God.

Seven words stand out in Step Eleven that are worth reviewing before we proceed. They are **Prayer, Meditation, Conscious, Contact, Knowledge, "God's Will" and Power.**

- "Prayer" is a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to a Higher power.
- "Meditation" is the act of contemplation, quiet reflection, concentration, and stilling the mind.
- Being "Conscious" is having knowledge or awareness of something.
- "Contact" is the state or condition of communicating, connecting, or meeting with another.
- "Knowledge" is the realization, perception, and understanding, of a given subject.
- "God's Will" is a personal directive given from a Power greater than yourself for the highest good of all.
- "Power" is the ability to do something or act in a particular way with potency and strength.

What we learn from these words is that we are going to develop and cultivate a daily practice in which we intentionally invoke the presence of a Power Greater than ourselves. In this devotional we will contemplate and correspond with this Power, just as we would a trusted parent or friend. During this daily connection, we will be given all the understanding we need to fulfill our Higher Power's desire for us in our life situation and if we ask for it, we will also be given the ability to carry out the actions advised by our Higher Power.

Many in the program refer to “prayer and meditation” as two-way prayer. Prayer is talking to God, and meditation is listening to God. We listen in order to receive guidance from the “One who has all knowledge and power.”

The “Big Book” authors have been preparing us for this conscious contact with the God of our understanding by interspersing references about two-way prayer throughout the book. Here is one passage in the “Big Book” that refers to guidance:

- “...So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator SHOW us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.”

In this passage, the “Big Book” authors are encouraging us to take a daily “quiet time” where we make conscious contact with our Higher Power. It is during this period of meditation that our Higher Power will guide us – to a new way of living based on the assets of PATIENCE, TOLERANCE, KINDLINESS and LOVE.

The Big Book authors tell us not to be shy in addressing the God of our understanding:

- “Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn’t be shy on this matter of prayer. Better [people] than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.”

If you had the opportunity to be given expert advice on how to proceed with your business or relationships at no cost to you except your time, wouldn't you want this free consultation with an expert? When we seek God’s guidance, we find a “new power, peace, happiness and ... direction.”

How does our Higher Power guide us?

- "God speaks directly to us through inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision.”

Here is another reference to two-way prayer:

- “...In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.”

We are to pray earnestly and with the sincere desire to be given advice and direction:

- “... We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for GUIDANCE in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing.”

These are just a few examples from the “Big Book” on prayer and meditation. They are sufficient to get us started. We now know what we need to do in order to live in the “realm of the spirit.”

The “Big Book” authors provide step-by-step instructions on how to stay in conscious contact with our Higher Power. They give us three times in our day this activity can take place: at night, in the morning, and as needed throughout the day.

At night, we review the day’s activities and take these issues to our Higher Power.

- “When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?”

This is self-reflection and is part of the meditation process. The authors provide us with directions for conducting a daily “quiet time.”

- “On awakening, let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.”

Let’s look at the third sentence again. It reads:

- “Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking...” —before we begin what? Before we begin listening to God. How do we know that we’re supposed to listen to God? Because, right afterward, it says “we ask God to direct our thinking.”

If we ask God to direct our thinking, doesn’t it stand to reason that our next thoughts and ideas are going to come from God? What do we do with these thoughts and ideas? We write them down. Why? So we won’t forget them.

The authors indicate during our “quiet time” our questions will be answered, they reveal how the One “who has all knowledge and power” is going to respond to our requests for help.

- “In thinking about our day, we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don’t struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.”

So, according to the “Big Book” authors, God is going to communicate with us through “inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision.” If the “inner resource” is going to supply us with “the right answers,” wouldn’t it be a good idea to jot them down so we can review them from time to time?

We close our time of “prayer and meditation” by asking God to guide us throughout our daily activities.

- “We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only.”

The authors then describe what we are to do throughout the day anytime we become troubled or confused.

- “As we go through the day, we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day “Thy will be done.” We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves...It works—it really does.”

This is an ironclad guarantee. It works! From first-hand experience, we can state that this kind of prayer has been working in our lives ever since we began a daily “quiet time.”

However, from time to time we may not feel we are receiving God-given thoughts or ideas? Remember, all we ever have is “a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” If we don’t feel “the presence of God,” it means we have work to do. Maybe we’ve taken back our will in some area of our lives, or, maybe we haven’t made a necessary amends. If this is the case, we need to take the actions that reconnect us to the source of “all knowledge and power.”

- "We [media addicts] are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined. But this is not all. There is action and more action. 'Faith without works is dead.'"

In order for two-way prayer to be effective, we must train our minds to call in the presence of God. It may take time to master this practice:

- "What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it."

As we become more proficient in listening to God, common sense soon becomes uncommon sense:

- "I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense."

When we ask God for direction and strength, we are calling upon the "Spirit of the Universe" for guidance and power to overcome our difficulties. In other words, "When God guides, God provides."

Please take a moment to write that sentence down. "When God guides, God provides." {pause}

It is essential that we "sit quietly," especially during periods of stress or uncertainty, so we can clearly hear what God has to say.

- Meditation is based on the belief that God speaks to those who are open to listen. We write down the thoughts and ideas we receive so we can contemplate on the guidance we received and the necessary actions to take. We come to trust in "infinite God rather than our finite selves."
- If what we have written is honest, loving, considerate and generous, we can conclude that this guidance is keeping with God's will for us. If what we have written is dishonest, resentful, selfish or fearful, we can assume this guidance is based on self-will rather than God's will.

We take action only on the guidance that passes all four elements of the test for God's will.

End of Part 1

Part 2

HOW TO LISTEN TO GOD

We're going to provide you with some additional material on how to establish a conscious contact with the God of your understanding. In the late 1930's, a friend of Dr. Bob's wrote a short essay titled, How to Listen to God. It is the one of the clearest set of instructions we have found on how to practice the 11th Step.

(Written in the late 1930's by John E. Batterson (A personal friend of Dr. Bob's — co-founder of A.A.) Distributed by Wally P., Archivist/ Historian/ Author)

We will briefly take you through this four-page pamphlet. It contains universal spiritual principles that can be applied by "anyone or everyone interested in a spiritual way of life." We suggest you conduct your daily meditation based on these guidelines.

In the opening paragraphs the author states that "prayer and meditation" will change our lives:

- “These are a few simple suggestions for people who are willing to make an experiment. You can discover for yourself the most important and practical thing any human being can ever learn—how to be in touch with God.”
- “All that is needed is the willingness to try it honestly. Every person who has done this consistently and sincerely has found that it really works.”

We have found that two-way prayer “works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.” With time and practice, it will “gradually become a working part of the mind.”

Before we begin, let's explore these fundamental points. They are based on the experience of thousands of people.

1. Your Higher Power is alive. Your Higher Power always has been and always will be.
2. Your Higher Power knows everything.
3. Your Higher Power can do anything.
4. Your Higher Power can be everywhere – all at the same time.
5. Your Higher Power is invisible – you can't see or touch your HP – but, HP is here. HP is with you now, beside you and surrounding you. Your Higher Power fills the room or the whole place where you are right now. HP is in you right now. HP is in your heart.
6. Your Higher Power cares very much for you. HP is interested in you. HP has a plan for your life. HP has an answer for every need and problem you face.
7. Your Higher Power will tell you all that you need to know. HP will not always tell you all that you want to know.
8. Your Higher Power will help you do anything that your HP asks you to do as long as you follow these conditions. Anyone can be in touch with their Higher Power, anywhere and at any time, if these conditions are observed.
 - To be quiet and still
 - To listen
 - To be honest about every thought that comes
 - To test the thoughts to be sure that they come from your Higher Power
 - To sincerely follow through with the guidance that comes (i.e. obey your Higher Power's direction for you)

So, with these basic elements as a background, here are specific suggestions on **How to Listen to God:**

1, Take Time.

Find some place and time where you can be alone quiet and undisturbed. Most people have found that the early morning is the best time. Have with you some paper and pen or pencil.

2. Relax.

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

3. Tune In.

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

4. Listen.

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

5. Write!

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

Don't say to yourself: This thought isn't important; This is just an ordinary thought; This can't be guidance; This isn't nice; This can't be from my Higher Power; This is just me thinking..., etc.

Write down everything that passes through your mind:

- Names of people
- Things to do
- Things to say
- Things that are wrong and need to be made right

Write down everything: Good thoughts - bad thoughts; Comfortable thoughts - uncomfortable thoughts; "Holy" thoughts - "unholy" thoughts; Sensible thoughts - "crazy" thoughts.

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

6. Test.

When the flow of thoughts slows down, stop. Take a good look at what you have written. Not every thought we have comes from God. So we need to test our thoughts. Here is where the written record helps us to be able to look at them.

- a. Are these thoughts completely honest, pure, unselfish and loving?
- b. Are these thoughts in line with our duties to our family – to our community?
- c. Are these thoughts in line with our understanding of the teachings found in our spiritual literature?

7. Check.

When in doubt and when it is important, what does another person who is living two-way prayer think about this thought or action? More light comes in through two windows than one. Someone else who also wants God's plan for our lives may help us to see more clearly.

Talk over together what you have written. Many people do this. They tell each other what guidance has come. This is the secret of unity. There are always three sides to every question – your side, my side, and the right side. Guidance shows us which is the right side – not who is right, but what is right.

8. Follow the Guidance.

Carry out the thoughts that have come. You will only be sure of guidance as you go through with it. A rudder will not guide a boat until the boat is moving. As you follow the guidance, very often the results will convince you that you are on the right track.

9. Blocks.

What if I don't seem to get any definite thoughts? God's guidance is as freely available as the air we breathe. If I am not receiving thoughts when I listen, the fault is not God's.

Usually it is because there is something I will not do: something wrong in my life that I will not face and make right; a habit or indulgence I will not give up, or a person I will not forgive; a wrong relationship in my life I will not give up; a restitution I will not make; something my Higher Power has already told me to do that I will not follow through with.

Check these points and be honest. Then try listening again.

10. Mistakes.

Suppose I make a mistake and do something in the name of God that isn't right? Of course we make mistakes. We are humans with many faults. However, God will always honor our sincerity.

God will work around and through every honest mistake we make. Our Higher Power will help us make it right. But remember this! Sometimes when we do obey God, someone else may not like it or agree with it. So when there is opposition, it doesn't always mean you have made a mistake. It can mean that the other person doesn't want to know or to do what is right.

Suppose I fail to do something that I have been told and the opportunity to do it passes? There is only one thing to do. Put it right with God. Tell Spirit you're sorry. Ask God to forgive you, then accept God's forgiveness and begin again. God is our Creator – God is not an impersonal calculator. God understands us far better than we do. (Aside: My addiction knows me better than I understand and know my media addiction. Therefore, isn't it wonderful to have a friend who knows and understands me far better than my addiction understands me.)

11. Results.

We never know what swimming is like until we get down into the water and try. We will never know what this is like until we sincerely try it. Every person who has tried this honestly finds that a wisdom, not their own, comes into their minds and that a Power greater than human power begins to operate in their lives. It is an endless adventure.

There is a way of life, for everyone, everywhere. Anyone can be in touch with the living God, anywhere, anytime, if we fulfill our Higher Power's conditions. When you listen, Spirit speaks. When you follow the guidance, Spirit acts. This is the law of prayer. God's plan for this world goes forward through the lives of ordinary people who are willing to be directed by Spirit.

GUIDED MEDITATION

I am now going to lead you in a guided meditation practice and two-way prayer. Before we begin, please write down a question or concern you have that you would like guidance with.

Now please follow this guided meditation:

Start by getting as comfortable as you can in your favorite meditation position and close your eyes, if you like. Make sure your legs are extended from your body and not crossed. Have your feet flat on the floor, relax your shoulders; let's begin with three full deep breaths.

Let's take the first breath – bring the air into your lungs and way deep down into your belly. And exhale.

(pause)

Now, let's take the second breath – bring the air way down deep into your belly and feel your chest expand and your belly open. And exhale.

(pause)

And now the third breath – inhale and feel your chest rise and expand as your belly and your torso open up to receive breath. And exhale slowly. Let your body sink into this peaceful place you have created.

(pause)

Relax the muscles between your eyebrows. Relax the muscles around your nose and mouth. Relax your scalp and the back of your neck. Let your jaw relax.

(pause)

Relax your shoulders and position them above your hips.

Experience the strength between your shoulder blades. Notice the strength in your lower back.

(pause)

Relax the muscles in your thighs. Relax the muscles in your shins and ankles, relax the bottoms of your feet. Feel the relaxation in your toes.

(pause) Relax and breathe.

(pause) Relax and breathe.

(pause for three seconds))

Accept yourself in the here and now. . . Accept who you are, what you are, and how you are– You are completely ok. . . Feel your Higher Power's presence with you, meeting you deep within.... . . . Feel your Higher Power's presence in your heart, feel the love, wisdom, gentleness and joy of your Higher Power resting in the warmth and the strength of your heart.

(pause for a couple seconds)

During this guided meditation, we focus on what our Higher Power's vision is for our individual lives, for this day, for right now. Prepare yourself to be open to whatever arises.

(pause for a couple seconds)

With a calm mind and peaceful heart, ask your Higher Power: What is your vision for my life? . . . What is your will for my life? . . . Relax and listen.

(pause for a couple seconds) Listen and breathe. Breathe and listen.

(pause for 45 seconds)

If you feel your mind wandering or if you're having distracting thoughts, that's completely natural. It happens. Just let them go with your out-breaths. Return to the calm in your mind and the peace in your heart and ask your Higher Power again: What is your vision for my life? What is your will for my life?

(pause for a couple seconds) Listen and breathe. Breath and listen.

(pause for one and a-half minutes)

Return your mind to calm and peace, let the little thoughts go, let all of the thoughts go on the out breath; return to the strength and warmth of your beating heart and ask your Higher Power one more time: "What is your vision for my life? What is your will for my life? "

Listen and breathe. Breath and listen. (pause for 45 seconds)

Now, with your eyes still closed, hold on to the feeling or image that you have experienced. . . Look at that vision in your mind's eye, feel your Higher Power's response in your heart. Let your body respond with gratitude.

Whether you received an elaborate plan, images, words, or the gift of peace, accept that gift and commend yourself for nurturing yourself in this way, for choosing to be with and depend upon your Higher Power.

(pause for five seconds)

Now, slowly and gently open your eyes and revive your body. Roll your shoulders and smile.

(pause for two seconds)

Rub your hands together and then hold them to your heart. Take in a deep breath, and smile.

(pause for three seconds)

This concludes the Guided Meditation.

We will now write down any thoughts or ideas you receive during this "quiet time." We will take 2 minutes to write down the guidance you received.

(After 2 minutes)

Now let's take some time to share what guidance you received.

We realize these thoughts or ideas can be very personal and are normally discussed with your sponsor or sharing partner. However, if you believe what you have written passes the test for God's will and can be of benefit to others, we ask that you share it now with the group. In addition, you will be helping those who are still struggling with the Eleventh Step to see how "God will constantly disclose more to you and to us."

Who's willing to share what they have written?

[For the next 5-10 minutes, have those who are practicing "two-way prayer" share their WRITTEN guidance.]

Thank you. Whether you shared your guidance or listened to others share their guidance, you have taken Step Eleven. We can now proceed to the Twelfth Step.

END OF PART 2

PART 3

Before we begin the study of the Twelfth Step, let's take a look at Chapter 11 in the Big Book entitled A VISION FOR YOU. Here we are warned to be careful not to recapture the old feelings of using the kinds of media that trigger a media binge. These things must remain in the past and can no longer be a part of our lives if we wanted to remain sober and in recovery:

- For most normal folks, [being on media] means conviviality, companionship and colorful imagination. It means release from care, boredom and worry. It is joyous intimacy with friends and a feeling that life is good. But not so with us in those last days of heavy [binging on media]. The old pleasures were gone. They were but memories. Never could we recapture the great moments of the past. There was an insistent yearning to enjoy life as we once did and a heartbreaking obsession that some new miracle of control would enable us to do it.
- There was always one more attempt—and one more failure...Then would come oblivion and the awful awakening to face the hideous Four Horsemen—Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair. Unhappy [bingers] who read this page will understand!

If we allow ourselves to forget or rationalize where our media addiction has taken us we will be pray to its seduction again. We cannot rest on our laurels or feel that after a time of sobriety, we can let up. We must be willing to say "good-bye" forever to those things that trigger in us a media binge. In order to do this we must find ways to be happy in sobriety. The Big Book authors make this clear.

- Now and then a serious [media binger], being [sober] at the moment says, "I don't miss it at all. Feel better. Work better. Having a better time." As ex-problem [media bingers], we smile at such a sally. We know our friend is like a [child] whistling in the dark to keep up [their] spirits. [They] fool [themselves]. Inwardly they would give anything to [watch a] half a dozen [shows or play a half dozen video games] and get away with [it]. They will presently try the old game again, for [they aren't] happy about [their] sobriety. [They] cannot picture life with out [the reward of media]. Someday [they] will be unable to imagine life either with [media] or without it. Then [they] will know loneliness such as few do....
- [They] say, "Yes, I'm willing. But am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum, like some righteous people I see? I know I must get along without [triggering media], but how can I? Have you a sufficient substitute?"

What do we substitute for media? We must replace it with something that will gratify us and give us more satisfaction and happiness than our addiction ever did. Besides the new found connection we have with our Higher Power, better health and recreation we create with a media replacement plan, the Big Book authors tell us that sharing our new found vitality and freedom with others will give us a happier outlook.

- Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in [Media Addicts] Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom and worry. Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at last. The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead. Thus we find the fellowship, and so will you.

In Media Addicts Anonymous, we understand media addiction better than family and friends ever will. We support each other in ways no one else can because others may not understand our need to be sober from media. To be in a media sober community, build together in unity, recovering from media addiction one day at a time and living the Twelve Steps, that for us is a blessed place to be. You are no longer alone. You matter. You have the potential to connect to others in significant and deeper ways.

- In Session Three we read that all addictions are manifestations of our inability to CONNECT with ourselves, our Higher Power, and others. Perhaps as little children we did not receive the nurturing and bonding we needed to thrive. Maybe we had no one to model healthy relationships for us. People's unstable behaviors could have scared us and we vowed never to put ourselves in a place to be hurt and therefore shut people out.
- Because we could not connect to important people in our lives, we found other "things" that felt safe or good to connect to, like food or drugs. Searching for love, purpose and safety, we media addicts compulsively sought satisfaction through the many sources of media. Electronic screens became our mother, our father, our friend, our lover, and even our Higher Power.
- The 10th, 11th and 12th Steps begin to transform this underdeveloped part of the addict self. In Step Eleven we become open to connecting and experiencing the love from our Higher Power. By continuing to make amends (Step 10) we learn how to get along with and appreciate REAL people. More importantly, as we find other ways to live without the constant use of our media, we connect to our inner lives and begin to love ourselves, our bodies, and the wonders of nature.

As you share this program with other Media Addicts, work with a sponsor and/or sharing partner, you will find a place of belonging. Here is where we discover genuine friendships and find that we never have to isolate or be lonely again. Get ready to have your hearts open and your true purpose blossom through the love and connection with your Higher Power and service to others, which is the Twelfth Step. You will be part of building a community of recovering members all taking this journey of media sobriety together.

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

Please notice that Step 12 has three different objectives. Here they are:

- The first purpose of Step 12 is to declare that we have had a spiritual awakening as a result of taking all Twelve Steps.
- The second objective of Step 12 is to direct recovered members to carry this message of hope and recovery to other media addicts who are still suffering.
- The Third consideration of Step 12 is to practice the PRINCIPLES of the 12 Steps in all our affairs.

We will explore each of these three objectives separately.

OBJECTIVE ONE—SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

By working Steps 2, 3, and 11, we have made conscious contact with the God of our understanding. This action has created in each of us a spiritual awakening. Spirit is now guiding us “in such a way that it is indeed miraculous.”

You may be asking yourself at this point:

- "Is this true? Have I really had a spiritual awakening? Because I am still struggling in some parts of my life, I am not perfect. Sometimes I feel guided, other times I feel lost. Can I really know I have had this life changing spiritual experience?"

The Big Book Authors say that life-changing experiences come suddenly to some, gradually to others. In Appendix II in the Big Book, they write about this “transformation of thought and attitude.” The authors define “spiritual experience” and “spiritual awakening:”

- "The terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening" are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from [media addiction] has manifested itself among us in many different forms."

In the first printing, back in 1939, the Twelfth Step used to read: "Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps..." During the two years between the first and second printings, the word "experience" was discussed at length. Eventually the word "experience" was replaced with the word "awakening." The "Big Book" authors made this modification in order to include those whose lives had truly changed, but more slowly over a period of time.

- "Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous."

Many of you will find this to be the case also. Your life is transforming, but gradually rather than suddenly. You may not be able to point to a specific experience that brought about the change, but the spiritual awakening has occurred nonetheless. For it is impossible for someone to go through all 12 Steps sincerely and earnestly and not receive a spiritual awakening.

Even if an individual goes through the Steps in a half-hearted way, the fact that they completed the steps has changed them. This is why we continue to repeat the *Back to Basics, A Design for Living* sessions—every time we take the steps, another layer is peeled away and Spirit has a chance to move deeper within us and effectuate change.

A spiritual awakening is nothing more than a PSYCHIC change that, among other things, may remove our obsession to hide or act out in destructive behaviors.

Bill W's rapid conversion experience at Towns Hospital is the exception rather than the rule. Here the authors describe a more gradual spiritual experience:

- "Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of [media addicts] such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the "educational variety" because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before [they are themselves]. [They] finally realize that [they] have undergone a profound alteration in [their] reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by [themselves] alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves."

The Big Book authors invite you to notice if friends and family are beginning to see a difference in you. This is a sign that something transformative has taken place and you may not yet be aware of it.

Let's look at the fifth sentence in the above paragraph again: "What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline." The "Big Book" authors make it clear that, if you take the Steps and then help others through them, you will recover within "a few months."

We realize that some will have a conversion experience during the first month, but others may not "get it" right away. Nevertheless, you will still have a gradual spiritual awakening as the result of going through the process again and again.

This is one of the greatest promises in the “Big Book.” Just think of it. Even under the most difficult circumstances, if you do the work, in about 90 days you will overcome any difficulty having a personal relationship with the God of your understanding.

The Big Book authors tell us that even the **awareness** of a Power greater than ourselves IS a spiritual awakening.

- “Most of us think this AWARENESS of a Power greater than ourselves is the ESSENCE of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it ‘God-consciousness’.”

That’s all there is to it. If you’ve made conscious contact with the God of your understanding and started listening to guidance, you have in fact, already had the “psychic change.” Take a moment and let that sink in. You have taken the steps and the result was a spiritual awakening. You are now living in the “sunlight of the Spirit.”

We are going to meditate for one minute. In this meditation observe how you have begun to transform yourself and your life through conscious contact with your Higher Power. (pause for 1 minute)

We will now take one minute to write what we observed in our meditation. The changes that have come about by taking the steps thus far. Have you had miracles happen? What has God done for you that you could not do for yourself? (1 minute)

(We will now take 30 seconds each to state one change you have seen in yourself.)

Thank you.

OBJECTIVE TWO—CARRYING THE MESSAGE

Now, let’s look at what we have to do in order to maintain this spiritual transformation.

Chapter 7 in the Big Book, in its entirety, is devoted to carrying the message of recovery to others.

- “Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from [binging on media] as intensive work with other [media addicts]. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other [media addicts]! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail.”

When we work with others, our lives will change.

- “Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—**this is an experience you must not miss**. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.”
- "When you discover a prospect for [Media Addicts] Anonymous, find out all you can about [them]. If [they] don't want to stop [compulsively using media], don't waste time trying to persuade [them]. You may spoil a later opportunity."

The “Big Book” authors provide us with specific instructions on how to carry our lifesaving message of recovery to others. They offer many valuable suggestions. Here are a few of them.

1. We begin by talking about our media addiction and our behaviors around media.

- “See [the media addict] alone, if possible. At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of [media addiction]. Tell [them] enough about your [media]

habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage [them] to speak of [themselves]. If [they] wish to talk, let [them] do so. You will thus get a better idea of how you ought to proceed.”

2. We explain how we recovered.

- “Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to [them]. It is important for [them] to realize that your attempt to pass this on... plays a vital part in your own recovery.”

3. Never talk down to anyone or be holier than thou. The authors ask us to treat the prospect with dignity and respect:

- ...“Never talk down to a [media addict] from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for [their] inspection. Show [them] how they worked with you. Offer [them] friendship and fellowship. Tell [them] that if [they] want to get well, you will do anything to help.”

4. Don't be discouraged and don't waste your time if a prospect doesn't respond at once:

- "Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another [media addict] and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a [person] who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, [they] may soon become convinced that [they] cannot recover by [themselves]. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other [media addict] an opportunity to live and be happy."

5. Keep the focus on trusting God and cleaning house. Every addict has excuses why they can't stop or why they need to keep using. Maybe they are in a very bad time in their life and need comfort and escape. Maybe they just lost their job. Maybe they are sick and can't get out of bed. The Big Book makes it clear that we can recovery no matter our circumstances:

- "...[They may] clamor for this or that, claiming [they] cannot master [their media addiction] until [their] material needs are cared for. Nonsense. Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job—[spouse or no spouse]—we simply do not stop [being drunk on media] so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God. Burn the idea into the consciousness of every [person] that they can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that [they] trust in God and clean house."

6. Don't let the prospect become overly dependent on you. You are not their therapist, mother, or Higher Power. It is important that your prospect depend on the God of their understanding and not on you.

- "...When and how to give..makes the difference between success and failure. The minute we put our work on a service plane the [media addict] comes to rely on our assistance rather than upon God."

7. Always direct your prospect towards a spiritual path of progress. Here the authors tell us that the rewards will be great.

- “Both you and the new [person] must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God’s hands were better than anything we could have

planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!"

8. Go where you are needed, keep your motives clean and God will keep you from harm.

- "Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed."

9. Only give advice that you have experience with.

- Media addiction affects everyone in the family. Partners and even children. It is important to only give advice that you have experience with. For instance, you are not married and the prospect you are working with is married and dealing with a partner who may be having issues with the changes taking place in the media addict, you might refer this person to someone who can relate to this situation.

We always want to use our own experiences rather than someone else's when possible.

- "If you have been successful in solving your own domestic problems, tell the newcomer's family how that was accomplished. In this way you can set them on the right track without becoming critical of them. The story of how you and your [partner] settled your difficulties is worth any amount of criticism."

CARRYING THE MESSAGE—A FEW MORE TIPS

The Big Book authors tell us that as long as we are doing the work of our Higher Power and we are in fit spiritual condition, we can go anywhere and do anything that we are called upon to do. When the obsession is removed, we are no longer fighting the urge and media no longer has the power over us. We are trusting in a Power Greater than ourselves and while we respect our past compulsions around media, we do not fear it.

- "Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things [media addicts] are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where [media is being broadcast]; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who [who are compulsively using media]; we must avoid [movies or advertisements] which [are meant to draw us into media]; ...our friends must hide their [video games] if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about [media] at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so."
- "We meet these conditions every day. A [media addict] who cannot meet them, still has a [media addict] mind; there is something the matter with [their] spiritual status. [Their] only chance for sobriety would be some place like the [the Sahara Desert], and even there a [tribesman] might turn up with a [smart phone] and ruin every thing!"
- "In our belief, any scheme of combating [media addiction] which proposes to shield the [addict] from temptation is doomed to failure. If the [media addict] tries to shield [themselves they] may succeed for a time, but [they] usually wind up with a bigger explosion than ever. We have tried these methods. These attempts to do the impossible have always failed."

The Big Book authors give one stipulation to this idea of being able to go where media is being used:

- "So our rule is not to avoid a place where there is [media], if we have a legitimate reason for being there... To a person who has had experience with a [media addict], this may seem like tempting Providence, but it isn't."
- "You will note that we made an important qualification. Therefore, ask yourself on each occasion, "Have I any good social, business, or personal reason for going [online or using media]? Or am I expecting to steal a little vicarious pleasure from the atmosphere of such places?"

There is a warning to not try to be more spiritually evolved than you are:

- "If you answer these questions satisfactorily, you need have no apprehension. Go or stay away, whichever seems best. But be sure you are on solid spiritual ground before you start and that your motive in [getting on media] is thoroughly good. Do not think of what [kind of hit] you will get out of the [media]. Think of [how you will use it to further your Higher Power's purpose for you]. But if you are shaky, you had better work with another [media addict] instead!"

The authors advise us that we want to keep ourselves open to human connection and to not push our abstaining from media on them.

- "Why sit with a long face in places where there is [media], sighing about the good old days. If it is a happy occasion, try to increase the pleasure of those there; if a business occasion, go and attend to your business enthusiastically... Let your friends know they are not to change their habits on your account. At a proper time and place explain to all your friends why [electronic media] disagrees with you. If you do this thoroughly, few people will ask you to [use media]. While you were [compulsively using electronic media], you were withdrawing from life little by little. Now you are getting back into the social life of this world. Don't start to withdraw again just because your friends [use media]."

You never know how your sobriety will inspire and help others who also have a problem with media addiction.

The Big Book authors advise us not to get up on a soap box and preach media sobriety. Compassion and Tolerance are key components in working with newcomers.

- "We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of [media] as an institution. Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every new [media addict] looks for this spirit among us and is immensely relieved when they find we are not witch-burners. A spirit of intolerance might repel [media addicts] whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate [media usage] any good, for not one [media addict] in a thousand likes to be told anything about [media] by one who hates it."
- "Some day we hope that [Media Addicts] Anonymous will help the public to a better realization of the gravity of the [media addiction] problem, but we shall be of little use if our attitude is one of bitterness or hostility. [Undeclared Media Addicts] will not stand for it."
- "After all, our problems were of our own making. [Smart phones] were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We have to!"

End of part 3

Part 4

OBJECTIVE THREE: PRACTICING THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

Where do we find the PRINCIPLES of the AA and MAA program? They are found in the Twelve Steps. In taking us through the 12 Steps, the Big Book authors have shown us 12 distinct phases that contain within them the Principles crucial in achieving long term recovery from media addiction.

Here is a breakdown of the Principles. Each one matches up with one of the 12 Steps. Practicing these Principles help us stay centered and focused on recovery. You will notice that each Principle has a partner. When we work to achieve the first Principle, we acquire the gift of receiving the second Principle.

- *Step 1: “We admitted that we were powerless over media — that our lives had become unmanageable.”*

Principles 1 & 2:

HONESTY leads to ACCEPTANCE

The first step begins with HONESTY. HONESTY about our compulsive use of media. Unless we truthfully see how we are acting out with media, we cannot hope to find solutions. HONESTY is a precursor to accepting we are powerless over media, powerless over our emotions, powerless over people. This ACCEPTANCE is the beginning of our **surrender** process. This ACCEPTANCE allows us to be authentic with ourselves and others. We can stop judging ourselves. You are the only one who can say if you are a media addict. Recovery only begins when you genuinely admit. 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. ACCEPTANCE is the key to admitting that when it comes to media, we are powerless and our life as an addict is unmanageable.

- *Step 2: “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”*

Principles 3 & 4:

FAITH leads to BELIEF

FAITH is believing in something that you cannot see or has not yet been manifested. When we accepted that we were media addicts, that our mind, body, and spirit had been affected by the degradation of our dis-ease, we could not image how we would find our way back to a sane life. We were told that FAITH in a power greater than ourselves—greater than our addiction—could restore us back to our true (sane) selves. First we came, then we came to, then we came to BELIEVE. FAITH was essential as we embarked on this journey of recovery. Over time as we see ourselves being restored to sanity, FAITH becomes BELIEF, for we are living proof that a Higher Power is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

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

Principles 5 & 6:

FAITHFULNESS leads to GUIDANCE

In Step Three, we take our FAITH in Step Two and turn it into FAITHFULNESS. When we come to BELIEVE we are then willing to make a deeper commitment. FAITHFULNESS means being loyal, constant, unswerving, steadfast, dedicated, and committed. In Step Three we make the life-changing decision to make a CONTRACT with the God of our understanding. This was a turning point in our recovery. When we are FAITHFUL to our Higher Power we are being FAITHFUL to our true selves. Up to this point we had only been faithful to our media. We made a decision to abandon this faithfulness to our addiction which was something **purposeless**, and focus our FAITHFULNESS on something **purposeful**: trusting in God. We made a decision to be faithful to the God of our understanding by allowing this Power to GUIDE and direct our lives. FAITHFULNESS leads to GUIDANCE. We could not manage our own lives, but found that God could and would if God were sought. We discovered that when **God guides, God provides**. FAITHFULNESS and GUIDANCE brought us spiritual strength:

"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."

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

Principles 7 & 8:

COURAGE leads to CLARITY

FAITH and FAITHFULNESS leads to COURAGE. We were told at the beginning of the 12 Step process that we were going to need to be fearless:

"With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start."

Facing ourselves and our character deficiencies is one of the most courageous undertakings we can carry out. Because we have developed FAITH and chosen FAITHFULNESS, we have the COURAGE to look at ourselves honestly. This COURAGE leads to CLARITY. By being willing to look out ourselves honestly, we started to come out of the fog and find CLARITY. We can't fix what we can't see. We can't change what we don't own. CLARITY is a powerful Principle, for by living the principle of CLARITY we come out of the darkness into the "sunlight of the spirit."

- *Step 5: "Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."*

Principles 9 & 10:

CONFESSION leads to FREEDOM

CONFESSION takes COURAGE. When we confess our fears and resentments to another person, we are acknowledging the values and Principles we wish to live by. CONFESSION allows us to release the guilt, shame, and self-limiting beliefs that have plagued us and made us turn to media for relief instead of our Higher Power or real people. CONFESSION ultimately leads to FREEDOM. With CONFESSION comes true relief, a kind of long-last-

ing relief that media, in all its seductive messaging will never deliver. Media addiction controlled our minds. CONFESSION frees them. CONFESSION is the crucial next action after embracing the principles of COURAGE and CLARITY. CONFESSION is essential if we have a slip. We want to confess this to someone as soon as possible so we don't act out more. CONFESSION brings us daily FREEDOM.

- *Step 6: "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."*

Principles 11 & 12:

WILLINGNESS leads to SURRENDER

In taking Step Six, we said to our Creator: "I am willing that you should have all of me, both good and bad." WILLINGNESS is letting go of the reluctance to move forward. WILLINGNESS is being open to doing something we have never done before. It is a byproduct of FAITH. Once we came to and came to believe, we then show our FAITHFULNESS to God's will for us, by being WILLING. Being entirely ready, we are all in. Willing to go to any lengths for recovery. Willing to go to any lengths to live life on life's terms. Willing to go to any lengths to live God's purpose for us. The WILLINGNESS in Step Six prepares us for more WILLINGNESS in Step Eight. WILLINGNESS leads to SURRENDER. We SURRENDER our defects to God. By doing so, we give up the attachments to our liabilities. In the past we may have believed to SURRENDER would mean defeat, but actually it means victory over the unmanageability of our dis-ease.

- *Step 7: "Humbly asked [God] to remove our shortcomings."*

Principles 10 & 14:

HUMILITY leads to UNITY

HUMILITY is the ability to see yourself and others in a realistic and non-hierarchical way; to feel neither superior nor inferior. HUMILITY is one of the simplest principles to understand because it's straightforward. When you're humble, you can see that there is both good and bad in every person. HUMILITY allows us to let go of the guilt and shame that held us back. HUMILITY opens us to more solutions because we are willing to be right size and listen to those who have come before us and have found FREEDOM. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, media addiction is the great equalizer. HUMILITY is owning our shortcomings because you can't change what you can't see. HUMILITY leads to UNITY because HUMILITY unifies us with the human race and is the first step in truly belonging. UNITY with other addicts allows us to be just another Bozo on the bus trying to find our way home. HUMILITY and UNITY are the prerequisites for Step Eight and Principle #8.

- *Step 8: "Made a list of all the persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to all of them."*

Principles 15 & 16:

CONSIDERATION leads to FORGIVENESS

CONSIDERATION is being conscientious of another person's well-being and showing kindness, thoughtfulness, and sensitivity toward them. CONSIDERATION is the antidote to self-centeredness. When we consider our part in any problematic situation we are able to see more clearly where we have harmed another. We show others empathy and compassion. We become WILLING to stop blaming others and forgive them instead. CONSIDERATION leads to FORGIVENESS, for when we consider the pain and unhappiness the other person has been suffering, it's easier to let go of our personal grudges against them. We also become willing to show empathy and compassion for ourselves and FORGIVE ourselves. Self-forgiveness is **essential** in the recovery process. If we have harmed another person, we have harmed ourselves. There is a quote by Ian Maclaren: "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."

- *Step 9: "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."*

Principles 17 & 18:

INTEGRITY leads to PEACE

INTEGRITY is being honorable and honest. It is the decency to rectify something you have done wrong in the past. When we have INTEGRITY we show fairness, sincerity, and trustworthiness. We respect ourselves and we respect others.

We make sure when we make our amends not to injure anyone else. We hold to our INTEGRITY even if we are tempted to try to let ourselves off the hook. INTEGRITY means we make clean amends and we do so right away. We build our character by making amends. We show others that they can trust us. We take responsibility for our side of the street. INTEGRITY asks for an even greater amount of COURAGE, the COURAGE we began to cultivate in the Fourth Step. INTEGRITY is COURAGE mixed with FAITH, CLARITY, WILLINGNESS, HUMILITY AND CONSIDERATION. Step Nine promises that: "We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word "serenity" and we will know PEACE." Therefore, INTEGRITY leads to PEACE.

- *Step 10: "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."*

Principles 19 & 20:

PERSEVERANCE leads to TRANSFORMATION

PERSEVERANCE is persistence, determination, steadfastness, purposefulness, patience, and diligence. It's falling down ten times and getting up eleven. Our goal is spiritual progress not spiritual perfection. We are going to be working the steps for the rest of our lives, God willing. There will be days we fall short. Days we make mistakes. We may take steps backwards. But in Step Ten we make the commitment to **persist until we succeed**.

In our daily prayers we ask God to do for us what we could not do for ourselves, that is, "To continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately (CONFES- SION) and make amends (INTEGRITY) quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we reso- lutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code."

Daily PERSEVERANCE ultimately leads to TRANSFORMATION. There is a difference between change and TRANSFORMATION. Change is ego based. TRANSFORMATION is Spiritually based. TRANSFORMATION is the difference between a caterpillar and a butter- fly. Once the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, it can't go back to being a caterpillar. Step Ten is the step of real TRANSFORMATION. Steps One Through Nine are but the foundation of our recovery. We must have PERSEVERANCE if we are to TRANSFORM into a beautiful butterfly. TRANSFORMATION doesn't happen overnight. TRANSFORMATION happens when you are not looking for it. All the Principles of the program are written into Step Ten. We are willing to let God TRANSFORM us one day at a time.

- *Step 11: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood [God], praying only for knowledge of [God] will for us and the power to carry that out."*

Principles 20, 21, 22:

AWARENESS leads to KNOWLEDGE.

KNOWLEDGE leads to POWER

Step Eleven is endowed with many gifts. It actually possesses three Principles. The first is AWARENESS—To improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power through prayer and meditation. We have seen that a psychic change is possible just by being AWARE of a Higher Power. Conscious contact is moment to moment AWARENESS that our Higher Power is guiding our daily activities.

AWARENESS leads to the second Principle: KNOWLEDGE. The more we are aware of our Higher Power's presence, the more KNOWLEDGE we are given on how to proceed, i.e., the more GUIDANCE we have. When we have KNOWLEDGE we ultimately have POWER. Becomes KNOWLEDGE is POWER! What is this POWER? It is the POWER to carry out the Will of the Spirit of the Universe. It is the POWER to live our life's purpose on a daily basis.

When we first came to MAA we were told that when it came to our media addiction, we had a lack of power. Our own lack of willpower around media had thrown us into despair.

"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... But where and how were we to find this Power?"

"[Your] main [objective in these steps has been] ...to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem."

There is no problem that can't be solved by using two-way prayer and living the Principles of the Eleventh Step.

- *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."*

Principles 23 & 24:

GENEROSITY leads to GRATITUDE

GENEROSITY is the full-throated spirit of service. Without GENEROSITY our whole fellowship would not survive. Someone was generous enough with their time and energy to help you. GENEROSITY helps us keep what we have so generously been given.

Bill W, the co-founder of AA could not stay sober without helping other alcoholics. This is the genius of the 12 Step Programs. Bill W's call to Dr. Bob, on that shaky night when he had a choice either to drink or to find another alcoholic to help, was a choice that changed the world. Millions of people are now recovering from all kinds of addictions because of this man's profound decision.

When you care about someone else's recovery you will care more about your own. When you see someone else's recovery you will better see your own. The final Step of MAA is to pay it forward. You've worked your way through the entire process of growing and setting yourself up for success in sobriety, now you have the opportunity to guide less experienced members through their own journey.

GENEROSITY encompasses our Twelve Traditions as well: "Our common welfare should come first; our leaders are but trusted servants"; "Our primary purpose is to carry the message to other media addicts"; "We are self-supporting through our own contributions"; "Anonymity as the spiritual foundation of all the steps, reminding us always to put PRINCIPLES before PERSONALITIES."

GENEROSITY allows us to accept each other as we are, to Live and Let Live. GENEROSITY leads to GRATITUDE. For it is in giving, that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. It is allowing our addiction to die that we are reborn into a life second to none. GRATITUDE pours out of the heart from one who thought they were lost forever and now they are found. Being GENEROUS with our time and talents by working with others, creates GRATITUDE in those we work with. This GRATITUDE connects us in a deeper way to others. We have moved from self-centered fear and compulsion, to deep and gratifying purpose. We are GRATEFUL for every day we are able to give back what we have so generously received.

Principles 25 & 26— TWO LAST HIDDEN PRINCIPLES

The Big Book authors give us two last principles that are not necessarily apparent in the 12 Steps: they are adamant that we enjoy our lives. To legitimately live the principles of MAA our recovery needs to not only be filled with service and usefulness but also CHEERFULNESS and LAUGHTER. We are to share with newcomers the joy and vitality of life that has come to us in recovering from media addiction. This paragraph from the Big Book may be one of the most important messages a recovering Media Addict can hear:

- "We have been speaking to you of serious, sometimes tragic things. We have been dealing with [media addiction] in its worst aspect. But we aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. **We absolutely insist on enjoying life.** We try not to indulge in cyni-

cism over the state of the nations, nor do we carry the world's troubles on our shoulders. When we see a [person] sinking into the mire that is [media addiction], we give [them] first aid and place what we have at [their] disposal. For [their] sake, we do recount and almost relive the horrors of our past. But those of us who have tried to shoulder the entire burden and trouble of others find we are soon overcome by them."

- "So we think CHEERFULNESS and LAUGHTER make for usefulness. Outsiders are sometimes shocked when we burst into merriment over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past. But why shouldn't we laugh? We have RECOVERED, and have been given the power to help others."

Let me re-read the last two lines: "But why shouldn't we laugh? We have RECOVERED, and have been given the power to help others." Here the Big Book authors tell us that, after having gone through the steps we have recovered. What have we recovered? We have recovered our dignity, self-esteem, connection to ourselves and to our fellows. We have recovered our purpose in life and the joy and vitality of authentic living. We have recovered our true nature and found there the God of our understanding. Where we were once lost, now we are found.

- "The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experience 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 which is indeed miraculous. [God] has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves."

Before we take the Twelfth Step commitment, let's read one final passage of the Big Book that sums up the journey we have been on and will continue to be on as we work the steps a day at a time:

- "God willing, we members of [MAA] may never again have to deal with [getting drunk on media], but we have to deal with sobriety every day. How do we do it? By learning—through practicing the Twelve Steps and through sharing at meetings—how to cope with the problems that we looked to [electronic screens] to solve, back in our [media drunk] days."
- "For example, we are told in [MAA] that we cannot afford resentments and self-pity, so we learn to avoid these festering mental attitudes. Similarly, we rid our-selves of guilt and remorse as we "clean out the garbage" from our minds through the Fourth and Fifth Steps of our recovery program. We learn how to level out the emotional swings that got us into trouble both when we were up and when we were down."
- "We are taught to differentiate between our wants (which are never satisfied) and our needs (which are always provided for). We cast off the burdens of the past and the anxieties of the future, as we begin to live in the present, one day at a time. We are granted "the serenity to accept the things we cannot change" —and thus lose our quickness to anger and our sensitivity to criticism."
- "Above all, we reject fantasizing and accept reality. The more I [used media], the more I fantasized everything. I imagined getting even for hurts and rejections. In my mind's eye I played and replayed scenes in which I was plucked magically from [the screen where I sat comatose] and was instantly exalted to some position of power and prestige. I lived in a dream world. MAA led me gently from this fantasizing to embrace reality with open arms. And I found it beautiful! For, at last, I was at peace with myself. And with others. And with God."

This concludes our presentation of Step Twelve. Let God guide you when you make your Twelfth Step calls and the “Spirit of the Universe” will keep you safe and protected. In addition, by relying upon guidance, you will “be of maximum service to God and the people about [you].”

Being of service to others is critical to our continued growth and the maintenance of our sobriety. Keep in mind that one of the primary services we can perform is to take prospective members through the Twelve Steps. Each time we do this, we learn more about our lifesaving program and gain additional insight into the “All Powerful Creator” who is at the heart of our new way of living.

Now, all that’s left is to practice these principles on a daily basis.

- HONESTY-ACCEPTANCE
- FAITH-BELIEF
- FAITHFULNESS-GUIDANCE
- COURAGE-CLARITY
- CONFESSION-FREEDOM
- WILLINGNESS- SURRENDER
- HUMILITY- UNITY
- CONSIDERATION-FORGIVENESS
- INTEGRITY, PEACE
- PERSEVERANCE-TRANSFORMATION
- AWARENESS-KNOWLEDGE-POWER
- GENEROSITY-GRATITUDE
- CHEERFULNESS -LAUGHER

It is time to make a commitment to work with others. Will those who have taken the first Eleven Steps, please be ready to respond to the following Twelfth Step question, “Will you carry this message to other media addicts?”

If so, please state your name, followed by “Yes.”

According to the “Big Book” authors, those who answered “yes” to this question have taken Step Twelve. This is a monumental achievement. Congratulations!

We are going to close this final session by reading this passages from The Big Book:

- “Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask [God] in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the [person] who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got. See to it that your relationship with [God] is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.”
- “Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to [God] and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you—until then.”

We wish to welcome those who have taken all Twelve Steps to the “fourth dimension of existence.” I thank you for providing me the opportunity to be your guide for this miraculous spiritual journey.

We are going to end our final session of the *Back to Basics, A Design For Living* with a prayer that encompasses the 12th Step in all its many manifestations.

The Prayer of Saint Francis

1. Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
2. Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
3. Where there is injury, pardon;
4. Where there is doubt, faith;
5. Where there is despair, hope;
6. Where there is darkness, light;
7. Where there is sadness, joy.
8. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
9. To be consoled as to console,
10. To be understood as to understand,
11. To be loved as to love;
12. For it is in giving that we receive;
13. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
14. It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

This ends our journey through the Twelve Steps. Thank you for allowing me to be of service.

May God keep you until we meet again on this beautiful highway of recovery.

END OF PART 4