

One-Month Series

BEFORE & BEYOND BACK TO BASICS,
"A Design for Living"
(An Open MAA Intergroup Sponsored Meeting)

MONTH TWO

SESSION FIVE-Step 2 (Week 1)

A

Welcome to the second month and fifth session of "Before & Beyond Back to Basics—A Design for Living" meetings for media addicts. Please put down all non-essential electronic media while participating in 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. We ask that if you are speaking or reading that you allow us to see you in Zoom.

My name is __A__, and I am ____B____. We are recovered members of Media Addicts Anonymous and we are your Group Sponsors.

We have asked ____ (Member) ____ to lead us in the First Step Prayer.

God, Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind, Spirit of Nature, Spirit of the Universe, my name is __ (your name) ____, and I'm a real media addict ... and I need your help today.

Thank you _____.

B

Most of what we will be reading in this Back-to-Basics group will be taken directly from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. In MAA we respect AA's request to read the Big Book as is, changing nothing. Back-to-Basics is a sponsored group. If you were reading the Big Book one-on-one with your sponsor, you probably would be asked to change alcohol to media so you could understand the full impact of how media is just like alcohol. Therefore, as your Group Sponsors, when reading, wherever it mentions terms related to alcoholism, we will often substitute or add media addiction concepts to help us understand how media addiction is similar to alcohol addiction and why our solution is to be found in the Big Book of AA. To make this format more inclusive, we have also changed the pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural. These two adjustments are made to serve each individual being sponsored both personally and in this sponsored group as a whole, to obtain as much benefit from the Big Book as possible.

A

In our last session we began 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.

B

Remember principles of Step One are two fold: honesty leads to acceptance. We must be honest before we can admit that we are indeed media addicts. When we can accept this truth, we are better able to take the rest of the Steps. We have only just begun the **SURRENDER** process; acceptance is the key to success as we continue taking the rest of the Steps.

A

We want you to be aware that long-term recovery from media addiction means we need to move from "COMPLIANCE" to "SURRENDER." Right now many of us are complying with this program in the hopes that we will recover. Yet in order to absolutely receive the promises of this program, we must **SURRENDER**. If you have not found the ability to surrender yet, do not worry. It may take some time. Many of us didn't really understand **SURRENDER** until we took Step Seven.

B

This month we will continue the journey through the Steps by taking Steps Two and Three. We will also provide you with the needed guidelines for taking Steps Four and Five, which begins the **SHARING** process of the Twelve Steps. Please make arrangements to give your 4th step away to either a Sponsor or a 12 Step Action Partner.

A

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

B

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 addiction stems from a spiritual disease:

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

A

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. We will replace drinking with media usage:

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

B

Dr. Silkworth is saying that something revolutionary needs to happen within the media addict in order for them to be relieved from their obsession to use media. This is why taking Steps Two and Three are essential if we honestly want to overcome this addiction.

A

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

B

As media addicts, our own will power has failed us utterly. We need power if we are to overcome 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 atti-

tude 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.”

A

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.”

B

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.”

A

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 of: **SURRENDER, SHARING, RESTITUTION, AND GUIDANCE**.

B

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 Bill's mouth as a youth that he resists Ebby's solution.

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

A

We have Ebby to thank for the solution to the “God dilemma.” 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!"

B

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 respect [media addiction] was a great persuader.”

A

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

B

The early 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 assumption as a starting point.”

A

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 proof is the weakest proof? It is being constantly revealed, as [humankind] studies the material world, that outward appearances are not inward reality at all.”

B

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 human intelligence was the last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning 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.”

A

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...”

B

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.”

A

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 addictive] destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect, [the destructive use 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."

B

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."

A

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."

B

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."

A

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 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.”

B

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?”

A

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 Second 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 individual] can say that [they] do 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.”

B

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.*”

A

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 into the stillness inside and listen for your answer. When we come back in 1 minute, I will ask the question again.

[Time for 1 minute]

It is now time to take Step Two. “Do you now believe, or are you even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than yourself?” If so, 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.

B

Having taken Step 2: “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity,” lets look at the principles of Step 2. If we can practice these principles in working Step Two we will progress faster in our recovery. In Step 2, FAITH leads to BELIEF.

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

A

Thank you all for reading. Next week we will continue our journey by taking Step Three.

B

Sharing

We will now open up the room for sharing for 3 minutes each. We will begin with our three readers in the order they read and then I will take more names. (A will keep time)

Reader 1 _____ Reader 2 _____ Reader 3 _____

(Share until 7:40 AM)

A

That is all the time for sharing we have today.

MAA has no dues or fees. We are self-supporting through our own contributions, which are for the development of MAA literature, costs incurred by the MAA General Service Board, phone and video meeting services and the maintenance of the MAA website at mediaaddictsanonymous.org.

Contributions can be made via PayPal on the MAA website. Please consider donating as we are a new group and need your support. (Repeat website)

Right now Media Addicts Anonymous has daily open meetings. You will find that information on the MAA website.

Before we close the meeting, we encourage you to exchange names for outreach. If you want to contact someone you heard on today's meeting or are looking for a sponsor or media sobriety partner, please use the chat room to connect with other members.

Closing:

In closing, the opinions expressed here today are strictly those of the individuals who gave them. The things we have heard here are spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. We do not take outside the meeting whom we hear at the meeting. If we try to absorb what we have heard, we are bound to gain a better understanding of the way to handle our problems and begin to change our lives. Let us talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, and let there be no gossip or criticism of one another, but only Love, Understanding, and Fellowship.

B

To close, please join us in the WE VERSION of the "Serenity Prayer."

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

Are there any questions about Beyond Back-to-Basics or MAA?

(A & B field questions)

SESSION SIX-Step 3 Week 2

A

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My name is __A__, and I am ____B____. We are recovered members of Media Addicts Anonymous and we are your Group Sponsors.

We have asked ____ to lead us in the Set Aside Prayer.

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

Thank you _____.

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A

Now, let's move on to the Third 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 Second Step, we believe that a “Power greater than ourselves” can restore us to sanity. But even though we may believe that 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. We must decide to put this Power to work in our lives.

B

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.”

A

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 a compulsive media addict. We want to feel safe and we want to be happy.

The passage continues:

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

B

Then the authors declare that it is self-pity, delusional thinking and 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.”

A

The authors make clear that in order to rid ourselves of this self-centered fear, we need to 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.”

B

By making God their employer, rather than 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.”

A

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.”

B

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.”

A

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

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

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

B

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!”

A

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

B

We ask our Higher Power to take our difficulties away so that, being victorious, we can show others who have been as lost as we were that there is another way. We are deciding to use our Higher Power rather than self power, to trust in our Higher Power's love for us and others, and to live a spiritual way of life. We decide here and now to allow a Power greater than ourselves to run the show. This is our 2nd chance to stop complying and ultimately SURRENDER. Here are the points this prayer makes:

- First 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 or wine. 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.
- Second, by offering ourselves, we are giving to 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.
- Third, we ask for relief from our human frailties and addictions so that we can be a better builder for our Higher Power's cause.

- Fourth, 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.
- Fifth, 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.
- Sixth, we commit to following the guidance of our Higher Power in every part of our lives.

A

Before we take Step Three, we are going to have B qualify for 3 minutes on the Third Step and the Third Step Prayer.

[B qualifies]

Thank you for qualifying.

We are now going to prepare ourselves to take the Third Step by saying the Third Step Prayer. We will meditate for one minute so we can tune in to our Higher Power before making this important commitment and promise.

[Time for 1 minute]

Now, we will each take the Third Step by saying the Third Step Prayer, or a similar type of prayer of your own choice. Each person in the group will say this prayer alone so you can personally feel the covenant you are making and so that we can all witness this trusting relationship you are developing with your Higher Power.

I will start and B will go next, and when I call your name, please say the Third Step Prayer out loud in the language of your choice. Make sure you have this prayer in front of you. If there are different words you wish to use, please feel free. The main objective is to mean this prayer with all your heart.

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

According to the Big Book authors, we have all taken Step Three. We are well on our way to a new life and a new happiness.

B

We will complete this session by introducing the principles of Step Three: “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood [God].” FAITHFULNESS leads to GUIDANCE

- In Step Three, we take our FAITH and BELIEF from Step Two and allow them to blossom into a new kind of FAITHFULNESS. We start to become loyal to something greater than ourselves. As we come to BELIEVE we are willing to make a deeper commitment. FAITHFULNESS means being loyal, constant, unswerving, steadfast, dedicated, and committed. In Step Three we are making the life-changing decision to make a contract or promise with the One Who Has All Power. This is a huge 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 addiction. We now made the decision to abandon this faithfulness to our addiction which was something *purposeless*, and become faithful to something *purposeful*. We made a decision to be faithful to the God of our understanding by allowing this Power to GUIDE and direct our lives. Therefore, FAITHFULNESS leads to GUIDANCE. We could not manage our own lives, but are finding that God could and would if God were sought. GUIDANCE will bring us the power we have been missing. Spiritual GUIDANCE will bring us strength and courage to take the rest of the Twelve Steps.

A

Thank you all for reading. Next week is a special session. We are going to present a method of practicing two-way prayer. Now that we have turned our will and lives over to a God of our understanding, we want to connect to this power right away. We will need a Higher Power's guidance to help us take the rest of the steps.

B

Sharing

We will now open up the room for sharing for 3 minutes each. We will begin with our three readers in the order they read and then I will take more names. (A will keep time)

Reader 1 _____ Reader 2 _____ Reader 3 _____

(Share until 7:40 AM)

A

That is all the time for sharing we have today.

MAA has no dues or fees. We are self-supporting through our own contributions, which are for the development of MAA literature, costs incurred by the MAA General Service Board, phone and video meeting services and the maintenance of the MAA website at mediaaddictsanonymous.org.

Contributions can be made via PayPal on the MAA website. Please consider donating as we are a new group and need your support. (Repeat website)

Right now Media Addicts Anonymous International has daily open meetings. You will find that information on the MAA website.

Before we close the meeting, we encourage you to exchange names for outreach. If you want to contact someone you heard on today’s meeting or are looking for a sponsor or media sobriety partner, please use the chat room to connect with other members.

Closing:

In closing, the opinions expressed here today are strictly those of the individuals who gave them. The things we have heard here are spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. We do not take outside the meeting whom we hear at the meeting. If we try to absorb what we have heard, we are bound to gain a better understanding of the way to handle our problems and begin to change our lives. Let us talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, and let there be no gossip or criticism of one another, but only Love, Understanding, and Fellowship.

B

This ends this session of Before & Beyond Back-to-Basics. To close, please join us in the WE VERSION of the "Serenity Prayer."

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

Are there any questions about Beyond Back-to-Basics or MAA?

(A & B field questions)

**SESSION SEVEN-
Two-Way Prayer— HOW TO TALK TO GOD
Week 3**

A

Welcome to the second month and seventh session of "Before & Beyond Back to Basics— A Design for Living" meetings for media addicts. Please put down all non-essential electronic media while participating in 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. We ask that if you are speaking or reading that you allow us to see you in Zoom.

My name is __A__, and I am __B__. We are recovered members of Media Addicts Anonymous and we are your Group Sponsors.

We have asked _____ to lead us all in the Third Step Prayer:

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

Thank you _____. Let's review what we have accomplished so far. We admitted that we were powerless over our compulsive media habits and that our media addiction made us unable to manage our own lives.

B

We found within ourselves 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.

A

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

B

Taking these first three steps is the beginning of the process of experiencing the personality change sufficient to not only recover from media addiction but also to be rocketed into a new spiritual dimension. By saying the Third Step Prayer, we have all talked to God. Prayer is the act of talking to God. But how do we listen to God? How do we hear answers to our prayers? Now that you have taken the first three steps, we invite you to start taking some quiet time every day to connect with your Higher Power. Today we are going to show you how to connect with this new God-consciousness by teaching you how to listen to your Higher Power.

A

Normally this lesson would be presented as part of **Step Eleven**: *Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.* We have found that to take Steps 4-10 successfully, we really need the help of our Higher Power to guide us through them. Therefore, we have placed this lesson after Step Three. We wish to give

you this information now, so you can start to practice these methods and begin to hear the still small voice of your Higher Power.

B

HOW TO LISTEN TO GOD

In the late 1930s, a friend of Dr. Bob's wrote a short essay titled, How to Listen to God.

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

This pamphlet gave clear instructions on how to practice what we call "Two-Way Prayer." This pamphlet, while being slightly dated, still contains universal spiritual principles that can be applied by "anyone or everyone interested in a spiritual way of life." We invite you to use some of these suggestions as you conduct your daily "quiet time."

A

Prayer is talking to God, and meditation is listening to God. 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 a Power greater than yourself. 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 too have found that consistently practicing two-way prayer really "works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it." With time and practice, it will "gradually become a working part of the mind."

B

Before we go further into this pamphlet, let's talk about the elephant in the room. Some of you may be feeling uncomfortable that we are bringing up the topic of talking to God. Maybe your conception of God does not fit into the idea or possibility that you would even receive information or inspiration from a source greater than yourself.

A

Some of you may feel that God has better things to do than to talk to you. You assume that you would not be worthy enough to have a close relationship with the "One who has all power" because this power does not deal in petty problems like your own. You may think that people who talk to God are crazy.

B

Some of you will have a knee-jerk reaction when we talk about anything that may sound as if we are defining God in a certain way, much like one might feel if they were being asked to join a religious cult.

A

Or some of you may be so angry with God and religion that it feels like we are opening up a wound that has not yet healed for you.

B

We are not asking you to believe anything. We are asking you to try something. It may seem like magical thinking to actually find a way to hear the voice of a Power greater than yourself, but we who have kept at this method consistently have had some real breakthroughs. Our Two-way Prayer sessions have been the source of deep solace. They have brought relief and clarity into our lives.

A

One of our members was having a difficult time with her image of God. She felt that her Higher Power was judgmental of her and punitive, and she did not trust that her problems could be solved by this Power. An experienced member told her: "You need to get a better Higher Power, because your conception is limiting you and your recovery." She had never realized that she could actually be limiting God.

B

We are going to introduce some possibilities of a Higher Power that, if you feel so inclined to allow in, has those qualities that can provide you with comfort, knowledge, and power to manifest your soul's purpose. One that has the power to help you in every part of your life.

A

So, please check out these qualities of a Higher Power. Take what you like and leave the rest. Remember, we are still talking about the God of YOUR understanding. We invite you to upgrade your Higher Power to something truly vital and fulfilling and to set aside all you think you know about God and see if there is something more to discover. Here are some ideas to consider:

1. Your Higher Power is alive. Your Higher Power always has been and always will be.
2. Your Higher Power knows everything. Your Higher Power can do anything.
3. Your Higher Power can be everywhere at the same time.
4. You can't see or touch your Higher Power but this Power can touch you, is with you, beside you and surrounding you. Your Higher Power fills the room where you are right now.
5. Your Higher Power is in you right now; in your heart.
6. Your Higher Power cares very much for you, is interested in you, has a plan for your life and has an answer for every need and problem you face.
7. Your Higher Power will tell you all that you need to know, but may not always tell you all that you want to know.
8. Your Higher Power will help you do anything that your Higher Power inspires you to do.

B

To hear the God of your own understanding, we suggest trying the following:

- Be quiet and still
- Listen
- Be honest about every thought that comes
- Test the thoughts to be sure that they come from your Higher Power
- Sincerely follow through with the guidance that comes

A

With these basic ideas as a back drop, here are specific suggestions on *How to Listen to God*:

1. Take Time

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

2. Relax

Sit in a comfortable position. Consciously relax all your muscles. Be loose. There is no hurry. There needs to be no strain during these 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, say to God, in a natural way, that you would like to find the plan for your life, that you want God's answer to the problem or situation that you are facing now. Be definite and specific in your request.

4. Listen

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

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.

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 on paper.

6. Test

When the flow of thoughts slows down, stop writing. 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.

- a. Are these thoughts completely honest, pure, unselfish and loving?
- b. Are these thoughts in line with our duties to our family and 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, ask another person who is living two-way prayer what they think about this thought or action. More light comes in through two windows than one. Someone who also wants God's plan for our lives may help us 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.

8. Follow the Guidance

Carry out the thoughts that have come. You will only be sure of guidance as you follow 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.

This is where I check to see if 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; a person I will not forgive; a wrong relationship in my life I will not give up; a restitution I will not make; or something my Higher Power has already told me to do that I will not follow through with.

I need to check these points honestly and 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 all make mistakes. We are human; however, God will always honor your 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 God's will, someone else may not like it or agree with it. When there is opposition, it doesn't always mean you have made a mistake.

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. Make it right with God. Tell God you're sorry. Ask God to forgive you, then accept God's forgiveness and begin again. God is not impersonal. God understands us far better than we do. (Aside: My addiction knows me better than I know and understand 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 in the water and try. We will never know what two-way prayer 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.

A

There is a way for everyone, everywhere, to listen to God. Anyone can be in touch with their Higher Power if they fulfill the above conditions. When you listen, your Higher Power speaks. When you follow the guidance, your Higher Power helps you act. This is referred to as "the law of prayer." God's plan for this world goes forward through the lives of ordinary people like us who are willing to be directed by a Power greater than ourselves.

We are now going to have the opportunity to practice two-way prayer together. ____ **B** will lead us in a guided meditation and two-way prayer.

B

GUIDED TWO-WAY PRAYER MEDITATION—this is about an 8-10 minute meditation.

[Please go slow enough so that participants will have the time to drop in]

Please sit as comfortable as you can and close your eyes.

Take 3 deep breaths.

First inhale through the nose and exhale out the mouth.

[pause 10 seconds]

For the next few minutes have no problems and no worries. There is plenty of time for that later. They will always be there later. But just for this little while, while we practice our meditation today, have nothing to worry about.

And notice how it feels to not have anything to worry about. Notice what it feels like to let the body move into deep relaxation.

Allow your shoulders to relax.

Relax your jaw, relax your tongue and forehead.

Relax the muscles between your eyebrows.

Relax the muscles around your nose and mouth.

Relax your scalp and the back of your neck.

(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.

Feel the whole body now completely relaxed and now let go completely.

(pause)

Relax and breathe.

(pause)

Breathe and relax.

(pause 3 seconds)

Allow yourself to accept yourself just the way you are just this minute.

Allow yourself to accept your body just as it is right this minute.

Allow yourself to accept your life just as it is right now.

Allow yourself to accept other people in your life just as they are right now.

Let go of everything you think you know about yourself and others.

Let go of everything you think you know about God.

Open your heart and your mind to see yourself and your life more clearly.

See yourself in a neutral way, open to all possibility.

(pause 10 seconds)

Now begin to feel the presence of a Higher Power within 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 own heart. (repeat)

(pause 15 seconds)

During this guided meditation, we focus on gaining access to what our Higher Power's vision is for our lives, for this day, for right now.

With a calm mind and peaceful heart, ask your Higher Power: "What is your vision for me today?"

"What is your will for my life?"

Focus in and listen. (repeat)

(pause 5 seconds)

Open your heart to your Higher Power.

Ask for answers to the problem or situation that you are facing today.

Be definite and specific in your request.

(pause 10 seconds)

Listen and breathe.

Be still, quiet, and open.

(pause 10 seconds)

Let your mind go "loose."

Let your Higher Power do the talking.

(pause 10 seconds)

Thoughts, ideas, and impressions will begin to come into your mind and heart.

Be alert and aware and open to every one of them.

(pause 30 seconds)

If you feel your mind wandering or if you have distracting thoughts, that's completely natural. It happens. Just let them go.

Return to the calm in your mind and the peace in your heart and ask your Higher Power again: "What is your vision for me today?"

"What is your will for my life?"

(pause 5 seconds)

Listen and breathe.

Breathe and listen.

(pause 60 seconds)

Continue to reach out with your mind and heart to your Higher Power. Feel the calm and peace in your heart.

Let the little thoughts go; let all of the thoughts go.

Return to the strength and warmth of your beating heart and ask your Higher Power again:

"What is your vision for me today? What is your will for my life?"

(pause 5 seconds)

Listen and breathe.

Breathe and listen.

(pause 30 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.

Whatever you received in your meditation, accept this gift and commend yourself for nurturing yourself in this way, for choosing to be with and depend upon your Higher Power.

(pause 5 seconds)

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

(pause 2 seconds)

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

(pause 3 seconds)

This concludes the Guided Meditation.

B

We will now write down any thoughts or ideas you received during your guided meditation. We will take 2 minutes to write.

(Time 2 minutes)

Now let's take some time to share what guidance you received. Who is willing to share what they have written? [1 min each or as time allows]

(Share until 7:40 AM)

A

That is all the time for sharing we have today. Please begin to practice two-way prayer on your own.

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B

To close, please join us in the WE VERSION of the "Serenity Prayer."

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

Are there any questions about Beyond Back-to-Basics or MAA?

(A & B field questions)

SESSION EIGHT-Steps 4-5 Week 4

A

Welcome to the second month and eighth session of "Before & Beyond Back to Basics—A Design for Living" meetings for media addicts. Please put down all non-essential electronic media while participating in 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. We ask that if you are speaking or reading that you allow us to see you in Zoom.

My name is __A__, and I am ____B____. We are recovered members of Media Addicts Anonymous and we are your Group Sponsors.

We have asked _____ to lead us all in the Third Step Prayer:

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

Thank you _____.

B

Most of what we will be reading in this Back-to-Basics group will be taken directly from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. In MAA we respect AA's request to read the Big Book as is, changing nothing. Back-to-Basics is a sponsored group. If you were reading the Big Book one-on-one with your sponsor, you probably would be asked to change alcohol to media so you could understand the full impact of how media is just like alcohol. Therefore, as your Group Sponsors, when reading, wherever it mentions terms related to alcoholism, we will often substitute or add media addiction concepts to help us understand how media addiction is similar to alcohol addiction and why our solution is to be found in the Big Book of AA. To make this format more inclusive, we have also changed the pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural. These two adjustments are made to serve each individual being sponsored both personally and in this sponsored group as a whole, to obtain as much benefit from the Big Book as possible.

A

Thus far we have taken the first three steps and learned how to speak to and listen to the God of our understanding. In 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. Remember, if we are going to be free of the things that make us seek relief from media, we need to look at the cause. The Big Book authors tell us that:

- “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 provoca-

tion, 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.”

We are now going to launch into actions that will begin to transform our fears and self-centeredness into faith and God centeredness. We are now about to move onto the **SHARING** process of our program.

B

Step 4 -- Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. The Big Book authors tell us what we need to do:

- “Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, 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 want to see clearly the “causes and conditions” that created our media problem.

A

By eliminating those manifestations of self that have kept us in the depths of loneliness and despair, we are in a better place to establish a direct line of communication with the God of our understanding. The Big Book authors disclose that liquor (in our case, media addiction) is but a symptom. Sure, our media bingeing 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 liabilities. Now, its time to look at these “causes and conditions” by taking a personal 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-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods; to get rid of them promptly and without regret.”

B

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.”

A

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 a list of assets we need to accentuate. We have added self-pity to this list since self-pity is the number one excuse media addicts use to justify slipping back into their alcoholic media. We have found that excessive self-pity leads to slips and relapses.

Here are the liabilities we will be focusing on:

- **Self-pity** (excessive, self-absorbed unhappiness over one's own troubles)
- **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** (concern only for ourselves and our own welfare or pleasure without regard for others)
- **Self-centeredness** (making ourselves the center of the universe, wanting to control and play God)
- **Dishonesty** (involves deception, cheating, lying, stealing or withholding the truth)
- **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, distrusting other's motives, or doubting the faithfulness of a friend)
- **Envy** (the desire to have a quality, possession, or other desirable attribute belonging to someone else)
- **Procrastination** (putting off work or not following through with right actions)

We will give you the list of assets later, but let's start with the liability of self-pity.

B

Self-pity is not only a waste of time, when we indulge in it we are at risk of slipping into addictive behavior. When we are full of self-pity we feel victimized, and the world becomes a terrifying place where we feel we have no real control. It gives us the excuse to not even try to improve our situation. In Alcoholics Anonymous there is a much repeated saying: "Poor me, poor me, pour me a drink." The Big Book refers to the alcoholic trait of self-pity many times. Here are just a few:

- "No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of **self-pity.**"
- "Driven by a hundred-forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and **self-pity**, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate."
- "I was not too well at the time, and was plagued by waves of **self-pity** and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me back to drink...."
- "When we were invited out, our husbands sneaked so many drinks that they spoiled the occasion. If, on the other hand, they took nothing, their **self-pity** made them killjoys."
- "Admitting he may be somewhat at fault, he is sure that other people are more to blame. He becomes angry, indignant, **self-pitying.**"
- "That feeling of uselessness and **self-pity** will disappear."

A

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

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

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

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

Here the Big Book is telling us that not only are these emotional states a waste of a good life, they are fatal for the media addict. Anything that cuts us off from God will have terrible repercussions, because we are sure to use media for relief again.

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

B

We have found that resentment is a poison that no media addict can afford. But what are we to do when these emotions come up strongly and we feel someone else is to blame?

This is where we must be honest with ourselves as we write down our Fourth Step inventory. We need to look at the whole picture. Is there something we are missing? To be rid of resentments we had to set them on paper:

- "...In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry....Referring to our list again. 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]."

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 intention], Unselfishness, and Love, which is used as a test for our Higher Power's will for us.

A

Early on, Bill W, Dr. Bob, and other AA pioneers learned to test everything they thought, said, or did. Now they are asking us to do the same thing—test our thinking and actions. We need to stay aware of the 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?" What blocks us from the "One who has all power" and prevents us from finding the spiritual solution to our difficulties?

B

Concerning our resentments, the Big Book authors provide us with specific instructions on what to do. We must get beyond them if we "expect to live long or happily in this world." The Big Book authors explain that when we hold on to grudges, we are 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]. When we saw our faults, we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight."

A

If we don't manage our resentments, the future will just 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.

B

The first thing we do is talk about our resentments with our sponsor. 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**.

A

We start to 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, [compassion], and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended, we said to ourselves, ‘This is a sick [person]. How can I be helpful to [them]? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.’ 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.”

B

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 with our sponsor, 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.”

A

Please fill out your 4th Step worksheets. These three worksheets, when completed, constitute fully taking the 4th Step. We focus on only one worksheet per month. These worksheets are in your packets and they look like this:

UA FOURTH STEP INVENTORY: RESENTMENTS

Read from bottom of page 83 through 85 of the Big Book before beginning.

1. Column 1: Page 64: "In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry." (Complete column 1 from top to bottom. Do nothing with column 2,3,4 until column 1 has been completed).
2. Column 2: Page 64: "We asked ourselves why we were angry." (Complete column 2 from top to bottom. Do nothing with column 3 & 4 until column 2 has been completed).
3. Column 3: Page 65: "On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?" (Complete each column within column 3 from top to bottom. Starting with Self-Esteem and finishing with Sex Relations. Do nothing with column 4 until column 3 has been completed).
4. Column 4: Page 67: "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 man's."

I'm resentful at: 1	The Cause 2	What part of self was hurt or threatened? 3						Where was I to blame? 4					
List the names of the people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry.	Why am I angry?	Self-Esteem	Pride	Emotional Security	Pocketbook	Ambitions	Personal Relations	Sex Relations	Selfish	Self-Seeking	Dishonest	Frightened	Inconsiderate

FOURTH STEP INVENTORY: FEARS

Read from bottom of page 67 through 68 of the Big Book before beginning.

1. Column 1: Page 68: "We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them." (Complete column 1 from top to bottom. Do nothing with column 2, 3, 4, 5, until column 1 has been completed.)
2. Column 2: Page 68: "We asked ourselves why we had them." (Complete column 2 from top to bottom. Do nothing with column 3, 4, & 5, until column 2 has been completed.)
3. Column 3: Page 68: "Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse." (Complete each column within column 3 from top to bottom. Do nothing with column 4 until column 3 has been completed.)
4. Column 4: What part of self does the fear affect? (Complete each column within column 4.)
5. Column 5: Page 68: "We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear."

What Am I Afraid Of?	Why Do I Have The Fear?	Which Part Of Self Have I Been Relying On Which Has Failed me?				Which Part Of Self Does The Fear Affect?					We ask for the fear to be removed	
		Self-Reliance	Self-Confidence	Self-Discipline	Self-Will	Self-Esteem	Pride	Emotional Security	Pocketbook	Ambitions		Personal Relations
Who, what, where?	Brief explanation. Keep it inside the box.											<p>"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 He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.</p> <p>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 men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear."</p> <p>Fear Prayer: "God, please remove my fear of _____ and direct my attention towards what you would have me to be."</p>

Next session we will continue to work on our 4th Step inventories by learning how to use our assets to counteract our liabilities. We will also take a closer look at the Fifth Step. Right now, don't worry about doing it perfectly. Perfection is the enemy of success. Ask your Higher Power to help and guide you in writing your 4th step and just get it done as quickly as possible.

We will complete today's lesson by looking at the principles we will be using and acquiring as we take Step Four: "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." The principle of COURAGE leads to the principle of CLARITY.

- FAITH and FAITHFULNESS from Step Three lead to COURAGE. We were told at the beginning of the Twelve Step process that we needed to be fearless: "With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start." Facing ourselves and our character deficiencies is one of the most COURAGEOUS 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 at 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 move out of the darkness and into the "sunlight of the Spirit."

B

Sharing

We will now open up the room for sharing for 3 minutes each. We will begin with our three readers in the order they read and then I will take more names. (A will keep time)

Reader 1 _____ Reader 2 _____ Reader 3 _____

(Share until 7:40 AM)

A

That is all the time for sharing we have today.

MAA has no dues or fees. We are self-supporting through our own contributions, which are for the development of MAA literature, costs incurred by the MAA General Service Board, phone and video meeting services and the maintenance of the MAA website at mediaaddictsanonymous.org.

Contributions can be made via PayPal on the MAA website. Please consider donating as we are a new group and need your support. (Repeat website)

Right now Media Addicts Anonymous has daily open meetings. You will find that information on the MAA website.

Before we close the meeting, we encourage you to exchange names for outreach. If you want to contact someone you heard on today's meeting or are looking for a sponsor or media sobriety partner, please use the chat room to connect with other members.

Closing:

In closing, the opinions expressed here today are strictly those of the individuals who gave them. The things we have heard here are spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. We do not take outside the meeting whom we hear at the meeting. If we try to absorb what we have heard, we are bound to gain a better understanding of the way to handle our problems and begin to change our lives. Let us talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, and let there be no gossip or criticism of one another, but only Love, Understanding, and Fellowship.

B

To close, please join us in the WE VERSION of the "Serenity Prayer."

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

Are there any questions about Before & Beyond Back-to-Basics or MAA?

(A & B field questions)