

**Media Addicts Anonymous presents
BEFORE AND BEYOND BACK TO BASICS
Open Big Book 12-Step Study Group**

**MODULE THREE
“Steps 4 through 9”**

MODULE 3, MEETING 1

Group Sponsors: Before the meeting begins, make sure you have three readers available (no abstinence requirement). Have at least one Group Sponsor stay after the meeting for a few minutes to answer any questions about Before and Beyond Back to Basics, Closed Back to Basics, or MAA.

~ A ~

Welcome to the NINTH session of Before and Beyond Back to Basics. Please put down all nonessential media while participating in this session. By focusing on this meeting without distractions, you will be able to access the recovery power that these Before-and-Beyond-Back-to-Basics meetings offer. We ask that you allow us to see you during the meeting by keeping your camera on.

My name is **A**, and I am **B**. We are members of Media Addicts Anonymous, abstaining from our alcoholic media, and we are your Group Sponsors. Please join us in saying 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.

~ B ~

The only requirement for participation in this weekly Open 12-Step Study Group is a desire to stop using media compulsively. Taking the 12 Steps can be a life-changing experience. The Steps provide us with a new way of living, free from the compulsive use of our "alcoholic" media. The authors of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous tell us that "A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, 'a design for living' that really works."

If you are new to this meeting, we welcome you. Is there anyone here for the first time? Please raise your hand and introduce yourself. *[Group Sponsors to allow time for newcomers to identify themselves.]* We stay on after this meeting for fellowship and to answer any questions.

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Most of what we will read in this Before-and-Beyond-Back-to-Basics group is taken directly from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. In MAA, we respect AA's request to read the Big Book as is, without changing anything. However, we have made some exceptions. If you were reading the Big Book with your sponsor, you may be asked to change the term alcohol to media so that you can fully grasp the extent to which media's impact is similar to that of alcohol. Therefore, as we read, wherever the Big Book mentions alcoholism, we will often substitute or add terms related to media addiction. This is to help us understand how media addiction parallels alcohol addiction and why our solution is to be found in the Big Book of AA. To make this format more inclusive, we have changed all pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural. These two adjustments have been made to serve each person and to help them gain as much benefit from the Big Book as possible.

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At the end of the meeting, we will exchange contact information so you can connect with others between meetings. This will be especially helpful to those looking for a sponsor, co-sponsor, action partner, or fellow member of MAA to connect with. We will also make some suggestions for homework that you can do between meetings to help you stay media sober. While the homework assignments are not mandatory, they are designed to keep you focused on your sobriety and help prevent cravings.

Today our readers, in alphabetical order, will be 1) _____, 2) _____, and 3) _____.

~ A ~

So far, we have taken Steps 1 through 3, learned Two Way Prayer, and we have been working on our Fourth Step. At this point in the Twelve Step process, you may feel overwhelmed and even a little moody—ok, maybe a lot moody! We have found that in the recovery process, “*The only way out is through.*” Our self-pity, fears, and resentments kept us trapped in the cycle of addiction. The only way to true freedom is to admit to ourselves what has held us back and to be honest about this with someone else.

Step Four (Continued)

It is now time to acknowledge you for completing your Fourth Step. If you haven't yet completed it, when your name is called, please say “I pass.” For those who have written their *Fourth Step Inventory Short Form* (Resentment, Fear, or Sex Conduct and Fantasy worksheets), please say, “yes” when I call your name. *[Stop screen sharing and go around the room and call on each member in alphabetical order or by video screen layout.]*

~ B ~

Congratulations! According to the Big Book, **you have now taken Step 4**. We commend you for having the willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness to do what is necessary to recover from media addiction. Your willingness to take these Steps paves the way to the promised spiritual awakening we've found to be miraculous.

~ A ~

We want to acknowledge your courage in doing this work. If you are still holding back or finding resistance, please know that this is normal, but remember, the Big Book authors tell us that “*The result was nil until we let go absolutely.*”

Writing our Fourth Step Inventory brings up memories and feelings that are not unlike grieving at a funeral. Stay gentle with yourself through this process and do your best to soldier on. We have found the slogan, “*It works if you work it!*” to be absolutely true.

Now that you've completed your *Fourth Step Inventory Short Form*, let's look at a way you can delve deeply into at least one person/situation that is particularly difficult for you to process or release. This can be done by using the *Fourth Step Inventory Long Form* for Resentment, Fear, or Sex Conduct and Fantasy.

Below is an excerpt from the *Fourth Step Long Form*. Choose a person or fear from your *Fourth Step Inventory Short Form* (e.g., “*I have a resentment or fear toward John*”) and answer the following questions.

Fourth Step Long Form Part I

[Have each member read four.]

- Why do you resent this person or have this fear or feel this guilt or shame?
- What is your emotional and physical reaction when you have this resentment or fear?
- Where do you feel it in your body?
- How has this affected you and your life?
- When were you thinking only of yourself due to this resentment or fear?
- How were you inconsiderate of others?
- How were you inconsiderate of yourself?
- At what point did you feel the fear of losing something or not getting what you want?
- Did you try to play God and be in control? How?
- Were you dishonest with yourself?
- How were you dishonest with others?
- In this situation, when did you blame others?
- When or how did you blame yourself?
- Did you feel superior? When and how?
- When or how did you feel shame or low self-esteem?
- When did you feel you wanted something that did not belong to you? (i.e., Where did you experience envy?)
- When or how did you procrastinate or avoid taking action?

~ A ~ (continued)

Then you will answer the question: “*Are you willing to have God remove these liabilities and replace them with assets?*”

If your answer is “yes,” you then begin to look at the assets you want to bring into your life. This process serves as preparation for taking the Sixth and Seventh Steps (when you will be ready to have God remove your character defects and humbly ask God to remove your shortcomings.) We will discuss the assets that counteract our liabilities later in today’s session.

~ B ~

Fourth Step Long Form Part II

[Ask members to resume reading, four each.]

- What would this situation look like if you had faith in a Higher Power?
- How would this situation look if you had faith in yourself?
- What would this situation be like if you had faith in the other person or institution?
- What would this situation look like if you had consideration for yourself?
- Describe how this situation would look if you had consideration for others?
- Describe how things would be if you were not blaming yourself or others?
- How would this situation be different if you were honest and authentic with *yourself*?
- How would this situation be different if you were honest and authentic with *others*?
- How would this situation feel if you had humility?
- What would this situation look like if you felt self-esteem?
- How would you view this situation if you saw yourself and others as equal?
- How would this situation be different if you felt worthy?
- How would this situation be different if you saw the other party as worthy?
- What would your experience be like if you felt acceptance for this situation?
- How would this situation be different if you had the energy and willingness to take action?
- Where could you be generous in this situation?
- How could you give your love and your gifts to others and not hold back?
- Where could you give the gift of “*live and let live*” to other people?
- Where could you find gratitude for this situation?
- What useful lessons have you learned from experiencing this situation?

~ B ~ (continued)

Then you will answer the questions:

- *Are you willing right now to forgive every person involved in this situation 100 percent for everything you believe they did to you?*
- *Are you willing right now to forgive yourself 100 percent for carrying this resentment or fear?*

Sharing the Fourth Step Long Form with someone will help you identify any wrongs you need to set right and whether amends need to be made.

~ A ~

Please continue to make a searching and fearless moral inventory, using the Fourth Step worksheets. This process of cleaning up the wreckage of the past paves the way to a joyous and abundant future through the *“miracle of healing.”*

The Big Book authors tell us that *“[t]aking a personal commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade.”* Part of the fact-finding process is to identify our assets and see how we can use them to rectify our liabilities, with the help of our Higher Power. The Big Book makes it plain that:

- *“...A life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worthwhile. But with the [media addict], whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of [media] returns and we [click] again. And with us, to [click] is to die. If we were to live, we had to be free of anger.”*

~ B ~

How do we keep from harboring the emotions that shut us off from the *“sunlight of the Spirit?”* We start by taking our liabilities and turning them around into assets. We include our Higher Power in this process by asking God to direct our thinking and actions towards the betterment of our character. In this way, we show willingness to see *“the flaws in our make-up, which caused our failure.”*

Focusing on the assets in our Inventory allows us to let go of our long-held stories and to embrace our own innate ability to be considerate, honest, and compassionate—in short, to live with a *“purity of Spirit.”*

~ A ~

It is helpful to consider both our assets as well as our liabilities in our Fourth Step process. This helps us regain some of the self-esteem and self-worth we lost while acting out our addictions. Even though we've done foolish and destructive things in our lives, we are less likely to repeat them if we are willing to admit our faults, learn from them, and make things right. If we are genuinely sorry, we believe we will be forgiven. The Big Book authors tell us:

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

~ B ~

It is also important to forgive ourselves. The Big Book says that when we felt remorse, “*we were sore at ourselves.*” Being sore at ourselves can lead to self-pity. If we hold onto self-condemnation and never let go of the past, this could lead to a slip or relapse. It is important to forgive ourselves as well as others. The Big Book promises that:

- “We are going to know a new freedom and 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....”

This promise can only be realized when we have also forgiven ourselves. Any time we can't forgive ourselves, we are not trusting in the goodness of others or in our Higher Power. This could lead us to seek relief through media. Here we can pray and ask Higher Power to help us forgive ourselves for any wrongs we have committed.

~ A ~

Assets as Antidotes to Our Liabilities

Last week, we gave you a list of the liabilities that are identified in the Big Book. We took stock of these liabilities, wrote them down as our Fourth Step Inventory, and read them to another person. Our liabilities close us off from other people, which prevents us from sharing our gifts with the world and from fulfilling our Higher Power's plan for us.

Now we will examine the **ASSETS**, which serve as antidotes to these unhelpful character traits. Identifying these assets allows us to have a clear view of our side of the street and prepares us for Steps Six and Seven. We want to have identified our assets, so that when we do ask God to remove our shortcomings, our Higher Power can replace them with those assets.

[Ask members to read two each.]

- The antidotes to **self-pity** are **SELF-COMPASSION** and **WORKING WITH OTHERS**. **Self-compassion** is the ability to sit with pain and difficulty, while staying gentle with ourselves. It calls for tenderness and self-nurture. **Working with others** draws us out of self-pity and shifts our focus toward the wellbeing of others.
- The antidote to **resentment** is **FORGIVENESS**. It is a conscious decision to let go of deeply held negative emotions and bitterness toward someone who wronged or harmed us or others.
- The antidote to **fear** is **FAITH**. It is a trusting belief or steadfast confidence in someone or something.
- The antidote to **selfishness** is **CONSIDERATION**. It means being mindful and conscientious of another person's wellbeing and showing kindness, thoughtfulness, and sensitivity toward them.

- The antidote to **self-centeredness** is **FAITH-CENTEREDNESS** or **GOD-CENTEREDNESS**. This is where we stop playing God, let go of our need for control, and accept things as they unfold—surrendering to God's will for us and others.
- The antidote to **dishonesty** is **HONESTY**. To live honestly is to interact truthfully, ethically, and in a straightforward manner (without ambiguity or evasiveness). We speak and act with integrity, which means our inner truth aligns with our outer life.
- The antidote to **false pride** is true **HUMILITY**. It is the ability to see ourselves and others in a realistic, non-hierarchical way—feeling neither superior nor inferior while recognizing the innate gifts, imperfections, and worthiness of others as well as our own.
- The antidote for **mistrust** is **TRUST**, which is the firm belief in the truth, ability, reliability, or strength of someone or something.
- The antidote for **envy** is **CONTENTMENT**, which is the state of acceptance and satisfaction with what we have and who we are without longing or craving for more. Living contentedly brings a sense of ease, gladness and peace with the way things are.
- The antidote for **procrastination** is **ACTION**. This is the willingness to address a problem or difficulty by carrying out a series of tasks, over time, to achieve a desired change or outcome. As outlined in the Big Book, note that working with others is the most effective and profound means of taking action.

The one asset that can counteract most liabilities is **GENEROSITY**. Generosity means giving humanity the benefit of the doubt and sharing ourselves authentically with the world.

~ B ~

To sum up: If we are to safeguard our sobriety, we must admit our wrongs, change our ways, ask God for forgiveness, and forgive ourselves. Now that we are committed to doing whatever it takes to recover from media addiction, we lead our lives by a new code—a code of tolerance, patience, kindness, and love. Rather than seek revenge, we look for ways to help others. We find others who are wounded and still hurting, and we show them empathy. Our Higher Power will guide and support us in this new way of being if we ask sincerely.

When we read our Fourth Step worksheets to another, we admit to them our wrongs, our liabilities, and our assets. This brings us to the Fifth Step.

Step Five

~ A ~

Let's now look at what the Big Book tells us about Step Five.

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

In taking Step Five, we are told that we need to share our “*moral inventory*” not only with ourselves and our Higher Power but also with another human being. This is essential for our recovery. In sharing “*the exact nature of our wrongs*” with another person, we find a relief we could never feel when turning to media. The Big Book authors are emphatic that if we don't share our wrongs with another living human being, we are at risk of relapsing into media-drunkenness.

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

~ B ~

When we confess our resentments, fears, and guilt or shame to another person, we open our eyes to the shortcomings that had blocked us from the “*sunlight of the Spirit*.” The Big Book authors remind us that once we admit our shortcomings, only then do our lives begin to change. We start to experience a “*transformation of thought and attitude*.”

- “Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the [media] problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.”

Those of us who have given away our Fourth Step can attest to this feeling of relief, serenity, and closeness to our Higher Power and others. Every time we share our Fourth Step with someone, we release bitterness, fear, guilt, and shame—emotions which have held us back from manifesting the life purpose our Higher Power has for us.

~ A ~

Once we thoroughly and unflinchingly look at our own “*side of the street*,” we are ready to share our inventory with another person, which brings us to giving away our Fourth Step to “*another human being*.”

Please make an appointment to meet with your sponsor, co-sponsor, action partner, or fellow member of MAA to read your Fourth Step worksheets so that you will be ready to work on Steps Six and Seven. You will need at least an hour to give away your Fourth Step. When you do meet, it is always a good idea to begin and end your meeting with the *Serenity Prayer* or another prayer you prefer.

After reading your Fourth Step to another person, spend an hour of **quiet time by yourself** following the directions in the last paragraph on page 75 of the AA Big Book:

- “Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank [our Higher Power] from the bottom of our heart.... Taking [the Big Book] down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the 12 Steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything.... Is our work solid so far?”

Please do not skip this part. After you have shared your inventory with another, take quiet time with your Higher Power and reflect on the Steps you have taken thus far to see if you have omitted anything. By doing this, **you will have completed your Fifth Step.**

~ A ~

Through **SHARING**, we identify with others, and we realize that we are not alone. We find freedom as our spiritual experience begins to unfold, and we witness our compulsive need for media being removed.

We will complete our session today by looking at the **principles of Step Five. Step 5:**
“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

The principle of **CONFESSION** leads to the principle of **FREEDOM**.

- Once we honestly look at our liabilities, we cannot stop there. If we keep our realizations to ourselves, we are very likely to fall back into our addiction for we are missing a crucial step: We must find the courage to share our shortcomings with another human being. We do this through the time-honored practice of **CONFESSION**.
- By embracing the principles of **COURAGE** and **CLARITY**, we pave the way to confession. Through confession we see our liabilities clearly, and we acknowledge the values and principles we wish to live by. We are now free to choose a new way of life.
- Confession ultimately leads to **FREEDOM**. Media controlled our minds. Confession frees our minds. When we confess our fears, resentments, and character liabilities to another person, we are finally able to release the guilt, shame, and self-limiting beliefs that hounded us into using media for relief.
- Now turning to *real* people and to our Higher Power, we find a lasting relief, which media in all its seduction could never deliver. **CONFESSION** brings us daily **FREEDOM**. Confession is essential if we have a slip. We must confess this misstep to someone as quickly as possible, so we may stop acting out and return to our newfound freedom.

Sharing

~ B ~

We will now open up the room for 3-minute shares. We will begin with our three readers in the order they read, and then I will take more names.

[Stop the screen sharing.]

[Ask A to keep time or get a volunteer to time the shares.]

Reader 1

Reader 2

Reader 3

Who else would like to share?

[Stop the individual shares at 5 minutes before the close of the meeting and return to screen sharing.]

~ A ~

That is all the time we have today for sharing. If you are comfortable sharing your information, we encourage you to put your name and number in the chat now so you can connect with other members of our group. *[Group Sponsors to add their contact information to the chat as well.]*

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. Contributions can be made via credit card, debit card, or through PayPal on the MAA website at mediaaddictsanonymous.org. Please give what you can, and if you can give nothing at this time, keep coming back because you are more important than your money.

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 our session of Before and 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.

Thank you for joining us. We hope to see you here next week. The homework assignments we recommend for this week are, and I will post them in the chat: 1) fill out the *Fourth Step Inventory Long Form* on one resentment (or, depending on where you are on this Step, on one fear or on one sex conduct), 2) read all of your Fourth Step Inventory worksheets to someone followed by an hour of quiet time with your Higher Power, and 3) complete the *Sixth Step Inventory – Liabilities to Assets* to prepare you for our meeting next week. *[Group Sponsors to copy the homework assignments in the chat by pasting the list below.]*

Feel free to stay after the meeting for a few minutes if you have any questions or would like to connect.

END OF MODULE 3, MEETING 1

MODULE 3, MEETING 1 Homework Assignments

1) Fill out the *Fourth Step Inventory Long Form – Resentments* (or *Fears* or *Sex Conduct and Fantasy* depending on where you are on this Step).

2) Read all of your *Fourth Step Inventory* worksheets (*Short Forms* and *Long Forms*) to your sponsor, co-sponsor, action partner, or fellow member of MAA and spend an hour of quiet time with your Higher Power reflecting on the Step work you have done so far.

3) Complete the *Sixth Step Inventory – Liabilities to Assets* worksheet to prepare you for taking Steps Six and Seven next week.

MODULE 3, MEETING 2

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Today our readers, in alphabetical order, will be 1) _____, 2) _____, and 3) _____.

~ A ~

1. We admitted we were powerless over media—that our lives had become unmanageable.
 - Have I been honest about my media addiction? Have I accepted that my life is unmanageable when I use alcoholic media compulsively? Am I able to see that I have an allergy of the body and an obsession of the mind when it comes to media? Is it now clear that only by abstaining from triggering or alcoholic media that I will be able to truly recover from this addiction? Have I let go of my defiance?

~ B ~

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
 - Have I found a Power greater than myself in which I believe? Do I have faith that this Higher Power can restore me to sanity? Have I let go of my defiance?

~ A ~

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
 - Have I decided to be faithful to my Higher Power rather than to my addictive media? Am I willing to turn my will and my life over to this God of my understanding? Am I willing to listen to and follow the guidance from this Source rather than look for relief from media? Have I let go of my defiance?

~ B ~

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
 - Have I been courageous in looking at my past? Have I been honest while reflecting on my resentments, fears, behaviors, and motivations? Have I been thorough in identifying past patterns and character traits that led to my present unhappiness? Have I begun to find clarity in seeing my way out of my suffering? Have I let go of my defiance?

~ A ~

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

- Did I find the courage to honestly confess all my liabilities to my sponsor and Higher Power? Did I find relief in doing so? Did this process begin to free me from guilt and shame? Did I omit anything? If so, am I willing to confess this too? Have I let go of my defiance?

~ B ~

You will notice that the last question in every paragraph is: “*Have I let go of my defiance?*” Defiance is a dominant trait in all media addicts. Until we are willing to do whatever it takes to recover and let go of our resistance and defiance, we cannot hope to find a way out from this baffling mental and physical illness of media addiction.

~ A ~

We will now pause for one minute to meditate on these five questions and consider how our media recovery program is going so far. *[Time for 1 minute]*

By taking the first five Steps to the best of our ability, we have made a sound beginning, but more action is required if we are to overcome our media addiction.

~ B ~

The actions in the first five Steps produce results in the form of *the promises* outlined in the Big Book. As our lives begin to change, these *promises* become an integral part of our transformation and spiritual living.

Step Six

~ A ~

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

In this Step, the Big Book authors have us answer a simple question:

- “*Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can [your Higher Power] now take them all—every one?*”

At first glance, Step Six seems like a piece of cake. Of course, we want all our character defects (our faults, foibles, insecurities, and weaknesses) to be removed! We are so darned tired of suffering and feeling miserable.

~ B ~

We must pause, however, and look at the word “*entirely*.” This word means completely, 100 percent, totally, absolutely, without resistance or defiance. There is no bargaining or negotiating here. It is important to pause and observe whether we are entirely ready to have our liabilities removed. We do not want to proceed further if we are merely paying lip service to this Step. Let’s take another look at our list of liabilities.

- **Self-pity:** Excessive, self-absorbed unhappiness over one's own troubles.
- **Resentment:** Consequence of being angry or bitter toward someone for an extended period.

- **Fear:** Preoccupation with the possibility of losing something you own or have or with not getting what you want.
- **Selfishness:** Concern only for ourselves and our own welfare or pleasure without regard for others.
- **Self-centeredness:** Making our self the center of the universe and wanting to control and play God.
- **Dishonesty:** Deception, cheating, lying, stealing, or withholding the truth.
- **False Pride:** Feelings of being *better than* (grandiosity, superiority, know it all) or *less than* (shame, unworthiness, low self-esteem).
- **Mistrust:** Jealousy that has to do with suspicion, distrusting others' 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.

~ A ~

Observe how these character defects have affected your life and those around you. Take a moment to reflect: Where are you resisting change? Are there defects or crutches that you continue to hold on to? How or where do you continue to fall back into your comfort zones? Look for your blind spots. Those of you who completed your *Sixth Step Inventory – Liabilities to Assets*, take a moment to consider each of the defects you added to your worksheets and dare to look deeply inward. *[Pause for 30 seconds]*

~ B ~

We stated in our first session that we are not saints. Rather we are simply willing to live life on a spiritual basis. Therefore, we seek *spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection*.

~ A ~

If we cannot say that we are *entirely* ready to have God remove our defects of character, the Big Book authors encourage us to ask our Higher Power to help us be willing: "*If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.*" Willingness is the key.

~ B ~

Sometimes, giving up a resentment feels impossible. We've built our life story and our identity on a wrong that has been committed against us. This is when we look to those assets (or qualities) that can help us overcome our resentments, and we ask God for willingness and more willingness to let go. We must rely on our Higher Power to guide us, give us clarity, and lead us to right action and to finding forgiveness. One early A.A. member tells of how she became willing to release her resentments:

- “Self-pity and resentment were my constant companions, and my inventory began to look like a thirty-three-year diary, for I seemed to have a resentment against everybody I had ever known. All but one 'responded to the treatment' suggested in the steps immediately, but this one posed a problem. This resentment was against my mother, and it was twenty-five years old. I had fed it, fanned it, and nurtured it.... It had provided me with excuses for my lack of education, my marital failures, ... inadequacy, and of course, my [media addiction].... I was reluctant to let it go.... In my prayers [one] morning I asked God to point out to me some way to be free of this resentment.”

~ A ~

God answered her prayers. That same day she read an article in a magazine by a prominent clergyman who had written that if you want to be free of resentment, pray for the person you resent:

- “Ask for their health, their prosperity, their happiness, and you will be free. Even when you don't really want it for them.... Do it every day for two weeks and ... you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness, resentment, and hatred, you now feel [compassion,] understanding and love. It worked for me then, and it has worked for me many times since, and it will work for me every time I am willing to work it.”

~ B ~

The spiritual teacher Emmet Fox says:

- “Bless a thing and it will bless you. Curse it and it will curse you.... If you bless a situation, it has no power to hurt you, and even if it is troublesome for a time, it will gradually fade out, if you sincerely bless it.”

This quote and the passage in the Big Book above teach us that what we give forth returns to us. Resistance blocks us from receiving our blessings. When we bless others and bless our own troubles, we are no longer hurt by them. When we fight and struggle with the way things are and with our need to be right, we lose the blessings we seek. What we resist persists.

When we resist, we mistakenly radiate resentment towards others who have harmed us, believing we are righting a wrong or getting even (if only in our hearts and minds). Then we learn that we have been dosing ourselves with this bitter poison of resentment and making ourselves ill. It is not easy to let go of resentments, but if we take action through prayer and include our Higher Power in the process, miracles will unfold in our lives.

~ A ~

According to the Big Book authors, having taken Steps 1 through 5, it is decision time once again. During Steps Five and Six, we looked at our liabilities, and we used the *Sixth Step Inventory – Liabilities to Assets* worksheet to identify the assets we can use as antidotes to our liabilities.

~ B ~

Through this exercise, we have been thoroughly preparing ourselves to turn our shortcomings over to the God of our understanding. In doing so, we have readied ourselves to take the Sixth Step. However, we must approach this Step with honesty and sincerity, or we will just be going through the motions. If we are still holding on to any shortcomings, we need to pray for the willingness to let them go.

~ A ~

We will now pause to meditate and pray to God (or our Higher Power) for the willingness to remove those personal liabilities we are still holding on to. We can ask God to remove our desire for triggering media and to lift the obsession of the mind. Are you willing to ask for these things to be removed? We will return after taking one minute to silently reflect on this question.

[Time for 1 minute]

Now, it is time to answer the **Sixth Step Question**:

“Are [you] now ready to let God remove from [you] all the things which [you] have admitted are objectionable?” If you are ready to commit to this Step today, when your name is called, please say “yes.” If not, say, “I pass.” *[Group Sponsor calls on each member by name.]*

Thank you to those who have taken Step Six. According to the Big Book authors, if you answered “yes” to this question **you have successfully completed the Sixth Step** and are now ready to proceed to Step Seven.

~ B ~

Before we move on to Step Seven, let's look at the **Principles of Step Sixth**. Step 6: *“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”*

The principle of **WILLINGNESS** leads to the principle of **SURRENDER**.

Could this be true? Could we finally surrender?

- **WILLINGNESS** is letting go of our reluctance to move forward. It means being open to doing something we have never done before. It is a byproduct of **FAITH**. Once we come to **BELIEVE**, we show our faithfulness to our Higher Power's will for us by becoming willing—willing to go to any lengths for recovery, willing to live life on life's terms, willing to live God's purpose for us. Being entirely ready, we are *ALL IN*.
- Willingness leads to **SURRENDER**. Our willingness in Step 6 prepares us for even more willingness in Step Eight (as we list all the people we have harmed and set out to make amends to them). We surrender our defects to God, and by doing so, we give up our attachment to our liabilities. In the past, we may have believed that surrender would ultimately lead to defeat, but in fact it means victory over the unmanageability of our disease. In the past we were merely compliant and tried to manage our liabilities merely to please others. When we **SURRENDER**, we allow our God to have all of us, good and bad, and to mold us into whom God would have us be.

Step Seven

~ A ~

Let's now look at Step Seven:

Step 7 – Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

~ A ~ (continued)

This Step is straightforward. It consists of a prayer in which we ask God to remove our liabilities and to strengthen our assets, so that we may be of maximum service to God and to our fellows.

The **Seventh Step Prayer** is found in the second paragraph on page 76 of the Big Book:

- *“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.”*

~ B ~

This prayer is so significant that we should take a moment to unpack its meaning.

- It begins with “*My Creator.*” This recognizes that, no matter what we believe about ourselves, each of us emanates from a Divine Source, and we hold the qualities of this creative source within us.
- “*I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad.*” This part of the prayer reflects our willingness to be loved by our Higher Power completely. By admitting that God can now have all of us, we authentically lay ourselves bare, not shying away from our vulnerability, just as we would give ourselves to a trusted friend or partner—warts and all. In this prayer, we recognize that we have assets within us, just as we have liabilities.
- “*I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character.*” We pray for our defects of character to be removed. *Character* has to do with our personality, temperament, mentality, habits, and so forth, while *defect* implies imperfection, faults, weakness, flaws, limitations, shortcomings and so on.
- “*... which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.*” We seek to have those defects, which impede our usefulness to God and to our fellows, removed. What the Big Book authors remind us of is that our character defects are not removed for self-centered reasons—simply to make us look or feel better. They are removed to serve God and our fellow humans.
- “*Grant me strength as I go out from here...*” The last part of this prayer asks for the strength we need to stand where we are right now—accepting life on life's terms—and for the strength to move forward.
- “*... to do your bidding.*” Earlier, when we took the Third Step, we decided to have a new director in our lives. In surrendering this role to our Higher Power, we ask for continual guidance from God. This reflects our desire to carry out God's will.

~ A ~

If you are ready to take the Seventh Step, please read the following prayer out loud. I will begin, **B** will go next, and then we will go around the room. If you are not ready, please say, “I pass.”

[Stop screen sharing. Copy and paste the prayer below into the Zoom chat. Call on each person around the room to read the prayer, alphabetically or by video image layout.]

Seventh Step Prayer

“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. AMEN.”

According to the Big Book authors, those who have said the Seventh Step Prayer **have now taken Step Seven**. Congratulations!

~ B ~

We will finish this session by looking at the **Principles of Step Seven**. Step 7: *“Humbly asked [God] to remove our shortcomings.”*

The principle of HUMILITY leads to the principle of UNITY.

- **HUMILITY** is the ability to see ourselves and others in a realistic and nonhierarchical way—to feel neither superior nor inferior. Without humility, we cannot own our shortcomings, nor can we change what we cannot see in ourselves. Humility allows us to release the guilt and shame that hold us back as we let go of the notion of perfection and begin to understand that God's forgiveness is a given.
- The principle of **HUMILITY** is simple and easy to understand: When we are humble, we can see both good and bad in every person. We do not place others on pedestals. Yet, we are willing to be right-sized and to listen to those who have come before us and who have experienced freedom. Thus, humility opens us up to others and to new possibilities.
- Humility leads to **UNITY**, because it bonds us with others and is the first step to true belonging. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from; media addiction is the great equalizer. Unity with other addicts allows us to be *just another bozo on the bus trying to find our way home*. Humility and unity are prerequisites to Step 8 (being willing to make amends) and to Principle 8 (living lovingly).

Sharing

~ B ~

We will now open up the room for 3-minute shares. We will begin with our three readers in the order they read, and then I will take more names.

[Stop the screen sharing.]

[Ask A to keep time or get a volunteer to time the shares.]

Reader 1

Reader 2

Reader 3

Who else would like to share?

[Stop the individual shares at 5 minutes before the close of the meeting and return to screen sharing.]

~ A ~

That is all the time we have today for sharing. If you are comfortable sharing your information, we encourage you to put your name and number in the chat now so you can connect with other members of our group. *[Group Sponsors to add their contact information to the chat as well.]*

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. Contributions can be made via credit card, debit card, or through PayPal on the MAA website at mediaaddictsanonymous.org. Please give what you can, and if you can give nothing at this time, keep coming back because you are more important than your money.

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 our session of Before and 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.

Thank you for joining us. We hope to see you here next week. The homework assignments we recommend for this week are, and I will post them in the chat: 1) review your Sixth Step Inventory and practice using one asset a day, 2) look up Dr. Bob's description of humility found on the MAA website and read it often, and 3) memorize the Seventh Step Prayer or create one of your own. *[Group Sponsors to copy the homework assignments in the chat by pasting the list below.]*

Feel free to stay after the meeting for a few minutes if you have any questions or would like to connect.

END OF MODULE 3, MEETING 2

MODULE 3, MEETING 2 Homework Assignments

1) Review your *Sixth Step Inventory – Liabilities to Assets* worksheet and practice using one asset a day (i.e., 7 assets in one week) Spend 15 minutes a day journaling about your chosen asset and how it felt to use it.

2) Look up Dr. Bob’s description of humility found on the MAA homepage under Open Back-to-Basics Step Study Module Three and make a copy of it so you can read it often. If you don’t have a printer, write it out on a piece of paper for yourself and keep it in your Big Book.

3) Memorize the *Back-to-Basics Seventh Step Prayer* on page 76 in the Big Book (see below) or create a Seventh Step Prayer of your own.

“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. AMEN.”

MODULE 3, MEETING 3

Group Sponsors: Before the meeting begins, make sure you have three readers available (no abstinence requirement). Have at least one Group Sponsor stay after the meeting for a few minutes to answer any questions about Before and Beyond Back to Basics, Closed Back to Basics, or MAA.

~ A ~

Welcome to the ELEVENTH session of Before and Beyond Back to Basics. Please put down all nonessential media while participating in this session. By focusing on this meeting without distractions, you will be able to access the recovery power that these Before-and-Beyond-Back-to-Basics meetings offer. We ask that you allow us to see you during the meeting by keeping your camera on.

My name is **A**, and I am **B**. We are members of Media Addicts Anonymous, abstaining from our alcoholic media, and we are your Group Sponsors. Please join us in saying 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.

~ B ~

The only requirement for participation in this weekly Open 12-Step Study Group is a desire to stop using media compulsively. Taking the 12 Steps can be a life-changing experience. The Steps provide us with a new way of living, free from the compulsive use of our "alcoholic" media. The authors of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous tell us that "A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, 'a design for living' that really works."

If you are new to this meeting, we welcome you. Is there anyone here for the first time? Please raise your hand and introduce yourself. *[Group Sponsors to allow time for newcomers to identify themselves.]* We stay on after this meeting for fellowship and to answer any questions.

~ A ~

Most of what we will read in this Before-and-Beyond-Back-to-Basics group is taken directly from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. In MAA, we respect AA's request to read the Big Book as is, without changing anything. However, we have made some exceptions. If you were reading the Big Book with your sponsor, you may be asked to change the term alcohol to media so that you can fully grasp the extent to which media's impact is similar to that of alcohol. Therefore, as we read, wherever the Big Book mentions alcoholism, we will often substitute or add terms related to media addiction. This is to help us understand how media addiction parallels alcohol addiction and why our solution is to be found in the Big Book of AA. To make this format more inclusive, we have changed all pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural. These two adjustments have been made to serve each person and to help them gain as much benefit from the Big Book as possible.

~ B ~

At the end of the meeting, we will exchange contact information so you can connect with others between meetings. This will be especially helpful to those looking for a sponsor, co-sponsor, action partner, or fellow member of MAA to connect with. We will also make some suggestions for homework that you can do between meetings to help you stay media sober. While the homework assignments are not mandatory, they are designed to keep you focused on your sobriety and help prevent cravings.

Today our readers, in alphabetical order, will be 1) _____, 2) _____, and 3) _____.

~ A ~

Now that we have taken Steps Six and Seven, we will move on to Steps Eight and Nine. In Chapter 2 of the Big Book, "*There is a Solution*," the authors remind us that we have been sick with media addiction and that this illness has not only affected us but also our family, friends, employers, children, and loved ones.

- "An illness of this sort—and we have come to believe it an illness—involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can. If a person has cancer all are sorry for [them,] and no one is angry or hurt. But not with the [media addict's] illness, for with it there goes annihilation of all the things worthwhile in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferers. It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad [spouses] and parents—anyone can increase the list."

Step Eight

~ B ~

So now we must make an honest attempt to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends or restitution. Let's look at Step Eight.

Step 8 – Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

The Big Book authors mention that they "*Made a list*." Remember we began to compile our list as part of our Fourth Step. This is why we hold on to our Fourth Step Inventory. Within it lies our Eighth Step list of amends. It is now time for action.

- "Now we need more action, without which we find that, '*Faith without works is dead*.' Let's look at Steps Eight and Nine. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory."

~ A ~

Our *Fourth Step Inventory* lists all the hurts caused by others. Seeing only one side of the equation makes us victims, and most addicts view themselves as victims. The *Sixth Step Inventory – Liabilities to Assets* worksheet helps us clearly see *our side of the street*. As we work through this worksheet, we refer to our Fourth Step Inventory and find where we were at fault and where amends are called for. We ask ourselves where we were unwilling to forgive someone whom we believe had harmed us. If we want to be free from suffering, we must find a way to forgive both ourselves and others.

~ B ~

When we step into recovery, we begin to let go of being a victim, and we take responsibility for our part in any situation. We start to see that other people's behaviors had nothing to do with us—that they too were acting out their "*dis-ease*." We acknowledge that our parents gave us the best they were equipped to give and that we also were doing the best we could. We admit that, while certainly not always, there were many times we allowed ourselves to remain in harmful situations.

~ A ~

By taking full responsibility for everything that we have done and accepting what happened to us in the past (which cannot be undone), we start to see that everything has happened "*for us*" rather than "*to us*." For every hardship has made us stronger.

~ B ~

Looking at our past, we must be honest about how we have harmed others through our media addiction. Merely staying sober by not bingeing on media is not sufficient for recovery. The Big Book authors tell us:

- "Sometimes we hear [a media addict] say that the only thing [they need] to do is to keep sober. Certainly [they] must keep sober, for there will be no [progress] if [they don't]. But [they are] yet a long way from making good to [their partners, children, friends, employers] or parents whom for years [they have] so shockingly treated.... The [media addict] is like a tornado roaring [their] way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. We feel a [person] is unthinking when [they say] that sobriety is enough."

~ A ~

Bearing this in mind, we will now spend a few minutes looking at where our media addiction has affected other people.

- Where have you used media to avoid getting close to someone else? Who was hurt by this?
- How have you used media to fight with someone? Who was hurt by this?
- How have you used media to gossip or destroy someone's reputation? Who was hurt by this?
- Where have you used media to avoid not working for your boss? (Include yourself if you are self-employed.) Who was hurt by this?

- Where have you used media to avoid helping or giving service to others? Who was hurt by this?
- How have you used media to avoid seeking help from your Higher Power? Who was hurt by this?
- How have you used media to avoid your own feelings? Who was hurt by this?
- How have you used media to avoid being in your body and in nature? Who was hurt by this?

Step Nine

~ B ~

Now let's prepare for taking Step Nine.

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

The amends process is explained in detail on pages 76 through 83 of the Big Book.

- “Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol [or in our case, media addiction].”

~ A ~

We may be hesitant to make amends to those who are still upset with us or suspicious of our motives. The authors provide us with guidelines on how to approach these individuals:

- “Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of business acquaintances and friends we have hurt, we may feel diffident about going to some of them on a spiritual basis.... To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach. We might prejudice them. At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.”

~ B ~

In the last sentence, the authors clearly state our purpose for living—that we are here to serve God and our fellows. They ask us to allow our actions—rather than our words—to demonstrate to others that we have changed.

- “It is seldom wise to approach an individual, who still smarts from our injustice to [them] and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But our [acquaintances and friends are] sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. [They are] going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.”

~ A ~

One of the most difficult amends to make is to someone we genuinely do not like. But whether we like the person or not, we must forge ahead.

- “Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to [them] in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.”

The Big Book authors even provide us with instructions on what to say:

- “Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply we tell [them] that we will never get over [our media addiction] until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell [them] what [they] should do. [Their] faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.”

~ B ~

The authors are clear that we must clean up the ravages of our past and pay off our debts. In this process, we are encouraged to rely on God for the strength and courage needed to make good on our “*past misdeeds*.”

- “Most [media addicts] owe money. We do not dodge our creditors.... Arranging the best deal we can, we let these people know we are sorry. Our [media addiction] has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to [compulsively use media again] if we are afraid to face them.”
- Keep in mind that courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is facing fear and walking through it.
- The Big Book authors instruct us to let the God of our understanding be our guide. This reliance on God is essential if we are to outgrow the fears that have separated us from the “*One who has all power*.”
- “Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.”

~ A ~

We are advised to be very conscientious of how we make amends. We must be sure we are not hurting anyone or implicating others through our amends process. The more serious the situation, the more we seek our Higher Power's guidance. Also, please remember to review your amends with your sponsor, co-sponsor, action partner or a trusted fellow in recovery who knows you well before approaching someone you have harmed. We need to be clear when making amends, so first bringing them to God and a trusted person in recovery, is always a good idea! The Big Book says:

- “Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people, we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked [our Higher Power] to help, and the drastic step is indicated, we must not shrink. Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let bygones be bygones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind.”
- Media addiction in the form of pornography, dating, and hook-up sites, can cause real injury to loved ones and wreak havoc on the entire family. The Big Book authors carefully give us guidelines on how to approach our family and loved ones.
- “The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with [a person online] we wouldn't care to have advertised.... [Media addiction] does complicate sex relations in the home.... [P]erhaps [a media addict] is having a secret and exciting affair with [a person] who understands. Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. If we are sure our [partner] does not know, should we tell [them]? Not always, we think. If [they know] in a general way that we have been wild, should we tell [them] in detail? Undoubtedly, we should admit our fault. [They] may insist on knowing all the particulars.... We feel we ought to say to [them] that we have no right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated. More than that we cannot do; we have no right to go further. Though there may be justifiable exceptions, and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found this the best course to take.”

~ B ~

The authors invite us to allow the principles of the program to guide both partners in finding a healthy and healing resolution. We are reminded how difficult some amends can be, especially if jealousy is involved.

- “Our design for living is not a one-way street.... It is better ... that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom [they] can vent jealousy.... Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion—jealousy.”
- Online gambling, debting, and compulsive shopping can have a grave effect on the financial security of families, employees, and businesses. In these cases, we must take sincere actions to right the wrongs we caused to those we promised to serve, love, support, and protect. The Big Book authors emphatically state that being sober with our media is only the beginning. We must take additional action if we are to recover.
- “Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. 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.... **The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.**”

~ A ~

Here we are told that to recover from our media addiction, we don't just take the Steps; rather we *live* the Steps on a daily basis. Here is a story of one man who was willing to go to any length to recover from alcoholism:

- “While drinking, he accepted a sum of money from a bitterly hated business rival, giving him no receipt for it. He subsequently denied having received the money and used the incident as a basis for discrediting the man. He thus used his own wrongdoing as a means of destroying the reputation of another. In fact, his rival was ruined. He felt that he had done a wrong he could not possibly make right. If he opened that old affair, he was afraid it would destroy the reputation of his partner, disgrace his family and take away his means of livelihood. What right had he to involve those dependent upon him? How could he possibly make a public statement exonerating his rival? After consulting with his wife and partner he came to the conclusion that it was better to take those risks than to stand before his Creator guilty of such ruinous slander. He saw that he had to place the outcome in God's hands or he would soon start drinking again, and all would be lost anyhow. He attended church for the first time in many years. After the sermon, he quietly got up and made an explanation. His action met widespread approval, and today he is one of the most trusted citizens of his town.”

The Big Book authors give us directions on what to do if we can't make amends to someone face-to-face:

- “There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter.... There may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people, we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone.”

~ B ~

We will end this session by learning **the Principles of Step Eight. Step 8:** *“Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.”*

The principle of CONSIDERATION leads to the principle of FORGIVENESS.

- **CONSIDERATION** is being conscientious of another person's wellbeing and showing them kindness, thoughtfulness, and sensitivity. Consideration is the antidote to selfishness. When we consider our part in any problematic situation, we can see more clearly where we have harmed another. We begin to show others empathy and compassion. We become **WILLING** to stop blaming others and to forgive them instead.
- **CONSIDERATION leads to FORGIVENESS**, for when we consider the pain and unhappiness the other person is suffering, it becomes easier to release our grudges against them. This also makes it easier for us to feel compassion for ourselves and to FORGIVE ourselves. Self-forgiveness is essential in the recovery process. When we harm another person, we harm ourselves. A quote by Ian Maclaren states, *“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle.”*

~ A ~

Thank you all for reading. Next week we will continue our discussion on Step Nine and how to make clean amends.

Sharing

~ B ~

We will now open up the room for 3-minute shares. We will begin with our three readers in the order they read, and then I will take more names.

[Stop screen sharing.]

[Ask A to keep time or get a volunteer to time the shares.]

Reader 1

Reader 2

Reader 3

Who else would like to share?

[Stop individual shares at 5 minutes before the close of the meeting and return to screen sharing.]

~ A ~

That is all the time we have today for sharing. If you are comfortable sharing your information, we encourage you to put your name and number in the chat now so you can connect with other members of our group. *[Group Sponsors to add their contact information to the chat as well.]*

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. Contributions can be made via credit card, debit card, or through PayPal on the MAA website at mediaaddictsanonymous.org. Please give what you can, and if you can give nothing at this time, keep coming back because you are more important than your money.

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 our session of Before and 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.

Thank you for joining us. We hope to see you here next week. The homework assignments we recommend for this week are, and I will post them in the chat: 1) answer the questions on how your media addiction has affected others, 2) review your answers and add these names to your *Eighth Step Worksheet – People We Have Harmed*, and 3) spend 15 minutes a day in Two-Way Prayer asking your Higher Power if there are any other names that should be added to your Eighth Step list. *[Group Sponsors to copy the homework assignments in the chat by pasting the list below.]*

Feel free to stay after the meeting for a few minutes if you have any questions or would like to connect.

END OF MODULE 3, MEETING 3

MODULE 3, MEETING 3 Homework Assignments

1) Answer the questions pertaining to how your media addiction has affected other people in your life, which can be found on the MAA homepage under Open Back-to-Basics Step Study Module Three.

2) Look at your answers to the above questions and circle the names of people you have harmed by your media addiction and add those names to your *“Eighth Step Worksheet – People We Have Harmed”* form. Please include yourself on this list and any other names that come to your mind. Don’t forget to include names of those people to whom you owe money. For help with the categories listed under Column 4, please refer to the document titled *“The Nature of Our Wrongs.”*

3) Spend 15 minutes a day in Two-Way Prayer asking your Higher Power if there are any other names that should be added to your Eighth Step list.

MODULE 3, MEETING 4

Group Sponsors: Before the meeting begins, make sure you have three readers available (no abstinence requirement). Have at least one Group Sponsor stay after the meeting for a few minutes to answer any questions about Before and Beyond Back to Basics, Closed Back to Basics, or MAA.

~ A ~

Welcome to the TWELFTH session of Before and Beyond Back to Basics. Please put down all nonessential media while participating in this session. By focusing on this meeting without distractions, you will be able to access the recovery power that these Before-and-Beyond-Back-to-Basics meetings offer. We ask that you allow us to see you during the meeting by keeping your camera on.

My name is **A**, and I am **B**. We are members of Media Addicts Anonymous, abstaining from our alcoholic media, and we are your Group Sponsors. Please join us in saying 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.

~ B ~

The only requirement for participation in this weekly Open 12-Step Study Group is a desire to stop using media compulsively. Taking the 12 Steps can be a life-changing experience. The Steps provide us with a new way of living, free from the compulsive use of our "alcoholic" media. The authors of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous tell us that "A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, 'a design for living' that really works."

If you are new to this meeting, we welcome you. Is there anyone here for the first time? Please raise your hand and introduce yourself. *[Group Sponsors to allow time for newcomers to identify themselves.]* We stay on after this meeting for fellowship and to answer any questions.

~ A ~

Most of what we will read in this Before-and-Beyond-Back-to-Basics group is taken directly from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. In MAA, we respect AA's request to read the Big Book as is, without changing anything. However, we have made some exceptions. If you were reading the Big Book with your sponsor, you may be asked to change the term alcohol to media so that you can fully grasp the extent to which media's impact is similar to that of alcohol. Therefore, as we read, wherever the Big Book mentions alcoholism, we will often substitute or add terms related to media addiction. This is to help us understand how media addiction parallels alcohol addiction and why our solution is to be found in the Big Book of AA. To make this format more inclusive, we have changed all pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural. These two adjustments have been made to serve each person and to help them gain as much benefit from the Big Book as possible.

~ B ~

At the end of the meeting, we will exchange contact information so you can connect with others between meetings. This will be especially helpful to those looking for a sponsor, co-sponsor, action partner, or fellow member of MAA to connect with. We will also make some suggestions for homework that you can do between meetings to help you stay media sober. While the homework assignments are not mandatory, they are designed to keep you focused on your sobriety and help prevent cravings.

Today our readers, in alphabetical order, will be 1) _____, 2) _____, and 3) _____.

~ A ~

Before we continue with Step Nine, **let's take Step Eight together**. I will call your name, and please say "yes" if you made a list of your amends. If you haven't made a list, just say, "I pass." *[Stop screen-sharing and call on group members, alphabetically or by video layout.]*

Thank you! According to the Big Book authors, if you answered "yes" to this question **you have taken Step 8!** Now that you have made your list, you are ready to begin making amends. This, of course, requires more action.

~ B ~

We must make headway on our amends if we are to have lasting recovery from media addiction. Therefore, we strongly suggest making your amends as soon as you possibly can. Miracles will happen, and you will feel real freedom upon completing your amends.

~ A ~

The Ninth Step is often the Step where people get stalled. Once you have identified, with the help of your sponsor, which amends you must make, please work through your list systematically and swiftly. Stay the course and only pause *if* it has been revealed to you to delay specific amends. By not following through with our amends, we increase our chances of losing our sobriety. This has been our experience, and we urge you to keep this in mind.

~ B ~

Remember, we agreed at the beginning of this journey that we were willing to go to any lengths to recover. We might mistakenly believe that something in our life should take precedence; however, whatever we put ahead of our recovery is itself at risk of being lost if we are not solid in our sobriety. We therefore must prioritize and protect our recovery. Any negligence, procrastination or laziness should be replaced with vigilance, enthusiasm, and action.

~ A ~

Dr. Bob, the Akron, Ohio A.A. cofounder, realized that he could not stay sober until he made his reparations. He was so sincere and desperate to recover from alcohol, he completed all his amends in one day.

- “One morning he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received and learned that many knew of his drinking. Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business (he was a well-known doctor in his town). ...At midnight he came home exhausted, but very happy. He has not had a drink since.”

~ B ~

The authors conclude with a list of blessings we can expect to receive once we've taken the Ninth Step. They tell us precisely what is going to happen after we commence clearing the wreckage of our past. These are the promises we can expect once we complete our amends.

- “If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. 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. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.”

~ A ~

A new way of living is promised if we are painstaking about making amends and about following through by living them daily: A life of serenity and peace awaits. Our self-centered fear will diminish, and we will be able to walk freely in the world with our heads held high.

Our connection with our Higher Power will grow, and we will know how to move forward in powerful and loving ways. If cleaning “*our side of the street*” can transform our relationship with media in healthy ways and keep us blissfully connected to our Higher Power, is it not worth letting go of resentments and fully forgiving ourselves and others for their wrongdoings? Would we rather be right, or would we rather be happy?

~ B ~

As you sincerely work these Steps—that is, turn your life over to your Higher Power, take personal inventory, share your shortcomings with another person, become willing to have these shortcomings removed, ask your Higher Power for guidance, and diligently make amends to those you have harmed—you will indeed find “*that God is doing for [you] what [you] could not do for [yourself].*” This process has been repeated over and over by many of our members, and its promises have been realized time and again. It has indeed been time-tested. We invite you to test it for yourself. “*With all the earnestness at [your] command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start.*”

~ A ~

Making Amends

As we become ready to embark on the Ninth Step, please keep in mind the sensitive and delicate nature of making amends. We must first prepare ourselves with the guidance of our Higher Power. As so many of us have learned the hard way, our attempts at making amends can backfire and cause more harm than good. So, let's review what we have learned about making amends.

- **Direct Amends:** We make direct amends whenever possible; meaning we go to the person we harmed and face them directly.
- We don't make direct amends if to do so would injure them or someone else. Consider the adage, "*first do no harm.*" We have no right to compound any existing harm we have already created, not even if we are desperate to free our conscience. This would be a selfish act.
- We take all these considerations to God and to another person, such as our sponsor, who is neutral, objective, and knows how to make clean amends.
- **Indirect Amends:** If we cannot speak to the person we have wronged directly or determine whether it would be appropriate to approach them, we can write them a letter. If someone has passed away, we can still write them a letter. If we cannot locate someone we have wronged, we can write a letter to them and send it to ourselves. Another form of indirect amends would be for us to make financial or service contributions to organizations that help people overcome the type of harm we inflicted on the person (or institution) in our *B2B Eight & Ninth Step – Amends Action Form*. Such service or contributions or also qualify as Living Amends.
- By writing a letter of amends, we want to use our words, which have power, to let our Higher Power know we are sorry, and to reach out with our hearts to the other person—even if they are not in our lives—letting them know we admit our wrongs and would make them right if we could.
- **Living Amends:** Living amends may also take the form of an ongoing course of positive action towards a loved one, other person, or an institution we have harmed. We don't avoid creditors. We pay our debts. We stop compulsive gambling and spending.
- We are willing to let go of relationships (online, fantasy, or otherwise), which interfere with our committed relationships. We sincerely make amends and live them daily, with the help of our Higher Power.
- We invite our loved ones to allow us to change and to let go of the past with us. We ask them to pray with us, to help make our relationships more spiritual, and to find forgiveness and peace—as a couple, a family, or as friends.

~ B ~

Let us give you some practical guidelines for making amends. We will also provide you with a script you can use to help you make healthy and clean amends. Start by making the amends you think will be the easiest first. As we discussed above, there are three kinds of amends:

1. **Direct amends** entails contacting someone we have harmed directly and talking to them, either face-to-face or on the phone.
2. **Indirect amends** have to do with making amends when direct contact is not possible or appropriate. Sometimes we may need to pray for the person for a while to make sure we've truly forgiven them. Other times, it may be dangerous to contact someone, so we pray for them instead. If someone is no longer living or we've lost contact with them and cannot reach them in person, we can write them an *Amends Letter*, which we can mail to them, mail to ourselves, or surrender to God.
3. **Living amends**: Through *living amends*, we change our behavior around the person we have harmed and do everything we can, through our actions, to show them that we are genuinely remorseful. Sometimes living amends must be made before we feel certain that we can live up to the direct amends we wish to make. In this case, we opt first for action, then words.

~ A ~

Making Direct Amends

When making direct amends, it is wise to keep it simple. Here is an easy script to use:

- Here's what I have done wrong or here is where I was wrong.
- *"I apologize for this"* or some of us also say, *"Could you forgive me for this?"*
- Is there anything I can do to make this right?
- Is there anything else I have done to harm you that you want to discuss?

I will repeat the above four lines to help us incorporate them into our amends: *"Here's what I have done wrong. I apologize for this (or could you forgive me?). Is there anything I can do to make this right? Is there anything else I have done to harm you that you want to discuss?"*

~ B ~

Clean Amends, Dirty Amends, and Double-Dog Dirty Amends

Clean amends are clear and concise. They focus on what you did wrong and on the other person's wellbeing. Here is an example of simple clean amends:

- *Mary, I yelled at you the other day and you did not deserve that. I regret having done that. Can you forgive me for this? Is there anything I can do to make this right with you? Is there anything else I don't know about that you want to discuss with me?*

Dirty amends, on the other hand, add an excuse and shift the focus back to you. Here is an example of dirty amends:

- *Mary, you know the other day when I raised my voice, I was having a really hard day. My boss yelled at me, I got rear-ended and threw my back out, and I think I am coming down with a cold. Anyway, I'm sorry. I was just having a bad day.*

As you can see in this example, the whole apology was about the person making amends rather than the person it was meant for. Dirty amends are full of self-pity, where you're trying to get the other person to feel sorry for you, so they won't be upset with you.

~ A ~

Double-dog dirty amends: When you make amends to someone hoping that they will see they have wronged *YOU* and need to make amends to *you*, some of us call this *double-dog dirty amends*. This has nothing to do with making amends: It is sheer manipulation—trying to get the other person to admit they are wrong to allow your ego to hold on to its sense of entitlement to its resentment. Here is an example of double-dog dirty amends:

- *Mary, you know the other day when I raised my voice, I was having a really hard day. I had a flat tire on the way to work, my boss yelled at me, you did not call me on time, and I felt like you were giving me the cold shoulder. Anyway, I am sorry I raised my voice. I was just having a bad day.*

If we are to make clear, clean amends, we must let go of manipulation and self-centeredness.

~ B ~

Sometimes you might think you need to make amends when you really don't.

- This is where your Higher Power and the help of a wise advisor or sponsor comes into play. Don't attempt to figure out your amends on your own. Seek help and feedback from others.
- Also, remember this: Don't make amends until you feel you have fully forgiven all parties and have worked through your role in the situation. Otherwise, you may end up making double-dog dirty amends.

Keep amends simple and sincere and leave the rest to your Higher Power. If you have expectations about how the other person is supposed to react, you may end up despondent if the person doesn't accept your amends or responds in a different way than you expected.

- Sometimes people are not ready to forgive and will not welcome your amends. Don't take this personally. Allow people time. Remember that we make amends for our personal recovery and then surrender the outcome. People are free to accept our amends or not. This is why we keep our amends clean and simple.

It is often suggested that we make living amends until our Higher Power tells us the right time to make direct amends. Listen to your Higher Power every step of the way.

~ A ~

Please begin to make amends to those whom you have harmed. By making amends, you will help repair the ruptures you created and will convert the barriers of separation into bridges of reconciliation. By leaning on your Higher Power, you will receive much needed “*strength, inspiration, and direction*” to change lives, starting with your own. Miracles *will* happen.

- All addictions have one thing in common—the inability to connect with other people. Very often, we attach to our addictions instead. We love to spend time with fantasy characters in movies and shows but find it difficult to enjoy real people. This is why making amends is essential to overcoming our media addiction.
- When we make amends sincerely, we connect with another human being in an authentic and considerate way. Our hearts open up to them, and we often experience their hearts opening up in return. Because we now feel nourished by these personal connections, we no longer fear people or need to hide compulsively behind our media. We begin to view others through a different lens, and we start to see ourselves in a new light.

Part of your assignment for our next session is to begin making amends, one at a time, to those on your *People We Have Harmed* worksheet. If you are not sure how to proceed with specific amends, ask for help from your sponsor or spiritual advisor and, of course, from your Higher Power. Log the details of your amends on the *Amends Action Form* to keep track of the amends you make. Do not delay unless there is good reason or guidance to do so.

~ B ~

Let's end our discussion by looking at the **Principles of Step Nine**. Step 9: “*Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*”

The principle of INTEGRITY leads to the principle of PEACE.

- **INTEGRITY** means living in alignment with our values and inner truth. It entails being honorable and honest, and having the decency to rectify a wrong. When we live in integrity, we reflect fairness, sincerity, and trustworthiness. We respect ourselves and others. We make certain not to injure anyone when we make amends. We hold on to our integrity even if we feel tempted to let ourselves off the hook. Integrity requires that we make clean amends, without delay. We show others that they can trust us. We take responsibility for *our side of the street*. We build our character through completed amends, made without expectations.
- Integrity requires **FAITH** and **CLARITY** and demands even greater **COURAGE** than what we cultivated in Step Four. Integrity *is* courage, combined with **HUMILITY**, **WILLINGNESS**, 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.*” Thus, making amends with integrity leads us to **PEACE**—the peace of knowing that we are good with God, good with ourselves, and good with others.

~ A ~

This concludes our discussion of Step Nine—the third *Spiritual Activity of Restitution*. At our next meeting, we will show you a method that will help you find forgiveness for those whom you feel have wronged you. The process includes writing a “*Forgiveness Letter*,” and here is what it looks like:

~ A ~ (continued)

Using the same person on whom you wrote your Fourth Step Inventory Long Form, write an apology letter from that person to you.

Please write a letter from the person who has harmed you. Let them give you the apology you always wanted or needed to hear from them, so that you may feel able to heal this resentment. Write everything you would like to hear them say to you for you to feel satisfied and happy. Don't hold back, and please keep the letter simple and concise.

Sharing

~ B ~

We will now open up the room for 3-minute shares. We will begin with our three readers in the order they read, and then I will take more names.

[Stop screen sharing.]

[Ask A to keep time or get a volunteer to time the shares.]

Reader 1

Reader 2

Reader 3

Who else would like to share?

[Stop the individual share at 5 minutes before the close of the meeting and return to screen sharing.]

~ A ~

That is all the time we have today for sharing. If you are comfortable sharing your information, we encourage you to put your name and number in the chat now so you can connect with other members of our group. *[Group Sponsors to add their contact information to the chat as well.]*

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~ B ~

This ends our session of Before and 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.

Thank you for joining us. We hope to see you here next week. The homework assignments we recommend for this week are, and I will post them in the chat: 1) complete the *B2B Eighth and Ninth Step – Amends Action Form* on the website, 2) attend at least one MAA meeting and get the name and number of someone who is media sober and has made an amends, and 3) call this person and ask them about their experience making amends. *[Group Sponsors to copy the homework assignments in the chat by pasting the list below.]*

Feel free to stay after the meeting for a few minutes if you have any questions or would like to connect.

END OF MODULE 3, MEETING 4

MODULE 3, MEETING 4 Homework Assignments

1) Complete the *B2B Eighth and Ninth Step – Amends Action Form* on the MAA homepage under Open Back-to-Basics Step Study Module Three.

2) Attend at least one MAA meeting and get the name and number of someone who is media sober and has made at least one amends in MAA or B2B.

2) Call this person and ask them about their experience making amends. Talk to them if you have any concerns about making yours.

MODULE 3, MEETING 5

Group Sponsors: Today is the Forgiveness Letter. Before the meeting begins, ask for two people who have gone through an actual Forgiveness Letter process to qualify on what it was like to read their Forgiveness Letter and on what it was like to facilitate this process. If you don't have two people at your meeting to qualify, A and B will have to qualify themselves.

Please read this script exactly as written and do NOT use any other personal letter(s). Also, keep to the script during the sharing portion after the demonstration.

Have at least one Group Sponsor stay after the meeting for a few minutes to answer any questions about Before and Beyond Back to Basics, Closed Back to Basics, or MAA.

~ A ~

Welcome to the THIRTEENTH session of Before and Beyond Back to Basics. Please put down all nonessential media while participating in this session. By focusing on this meeting without distractions, you will be able to access the recovery power that these Before-and-Beyond-Back-to-Basics meetings offer. We ask that you allow us to see you during the meeting by keeping your camera on.

My name is A, and I am B. We are members of Media Addicts Anonymous, abstaining from our alcoholic media, and we are your Group Sponsors. Please join us in saying 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.

~ B ~

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If you are new to this meeting, we welcome you. Is there anyone here for the first time? Please raise your hand and introduce yourself. *[Group Sponsors to allow time for newcomers to identify themselves.]* We stay on after this meeting for fellowship and to answer any questions.

~ A ~

Most of what we will read in this Before-and-Beyond-Back-to-Basics group is taken directly from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. In MAA, we respect AA's request to read the Big Book as is, without changing anything. However, we have made some exceptions. If you were reading the Big Book with your sponsor, you may be asked to change the term alcohol to media so that you can fully grasp the extent to which media's impact is similar to that of alcohol. Therefore, as we read, wherever the Big Book mentions alcoholism, we will often substitute or add terms related to media addiction. This is to help us understand how media addiction parallels alcohol addiction and why our solution is to be found in the Big Book of AA. To make this format more inclusive, we have changed all pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural. These two adjustments have been made to serve each person and to help them gain as much benefit from the Big Book as possible.

~ B ~

At the end of the meeting, we will exchange contact information so you can connect with others between meetings. This will be especially helpful to those looking for a sponsor, co-sponsor, action partner, or fellow member of MAA to connect with. We will also make some suggestions for homework that you can do between meetings to help you stay media sober. While the homework assignments are not mandatory, they are designed to keep you focused on your sobriety and help prevent cravings.

~ A ~

The Fourth and Ninth Steps ask a lot from us. First, we are asked to admit where we have done something wrong in the past. Second, we are asked to make restitution for the harm we have caused to others.

~ B ~

Many of us find it problematic to admit our wrongs, when we feel the person hurt us more than we hurt them. We feel we have a right to hold on to the role of victim, and we want to keep the other person in the role of perpetrator. Often, we feel a need to hold on to these roles. Otherwise, it might feel like the victim is being blamed. We were hurt when bad things were done to us—things that should not have happened, very hurtful things. We may believe that these things should not be forgiven or forgotten. This is part of our story, part of our identity. We may feel we are entitled to this resentment.

~ A ~

For a media addict of the hopeless variety, it is imperative to rethink these roles. If we resist this, a state of self-pity and defiance can easily take hold and undermine our recovery, driving us right back to getting media drunk. If we truly want to be free—not only of the media obsession, but free of all resentments and fear—we must be willing to set aside everything we think we know about a situation and look at it from as many angles as we can. In doing so, we begin to loosen up those hard-held beliefs that have caused our suffering for all these years.

~ B ~

This method *will* work if you are sincere, and if you really want to see the truth—*if you really want to find freedom*. However, this method *will not* work if you cling to staying in the role of the injured party. The truth is, given the choice, we all would like to find a way to forgive and let go of the past. It's painful to hold onto resentment, fear, and contempt for those we feel owe us an apology. For this reason, we write the apology letter we always wanted to have—to help loosen the grip our resentments have on us.

~ A ~

As we work the Steps, we now live on a different plane of consciousness. We are trying to live our lives on a spiritual basis. We are trying to live our lives according to principles rather than our emotions. We know, if we are going to maintain long-term abstinence and recovery, we must free ourselves from the bitterness of the past. But how?

~ B ~

One tool we have found to be effective in being able to forgive and move on is the *Forgiveness Letter*, which is an apology letter we write to ourselves from the person who has harmed us and then we re-read the letter twice, using turnarounds—once from us to the person who has harmed us, and then from us to ourselves. This helps us see all sides of a situation and helps us to forgive others as well as ourselves. Today we will witness the process of the Forgiveness Letter for someone in our group.

~ A ~

Here is how to write an Apology (or Forgiveness) Letter:

Using the same person on whom you wrote your Fourth Step Inventory Long Form, write an apology letter from that person to you.

Please write a letter from the person who has harmed you. Let them give you the apology you always wanted or needed to hear from them, so that you may be able to heal this resentment. Write everything you would like to hear them say to you for you to feel satisfied and happy.

Don't hold back, and please keep the letter simple and concise. Be prepared to read this letter to your sponsor during your one-hour appointment this weekend.

In today's demonstration, I will act as the sponsor, and **B** will act as the sponsee. The sponsee will read their letter, and I will ask them questions.

Please be aware that when you are working with your sponsee, you will witness someone working through a process of discovery and forgiveness. This may be an emotional experience for the person who is reading their letter, and it may be emotional for you, who is witnessing it.

We ask everyone to hold this space sacred as you witness this process so that we may all be enlightened and healed by this experience.

Okay, let's begin. Remember you are writing a *Forgiveness Letter* from the same person on whom you completed your *Fourth Step Inventory Long Form*.

Demonstration of a Sample Forgiveness Letter Process

As a reminder, this is simply a demonstration. **B** did not write the letter they will read. They are merely reading a sample letter, created for this demonstration. In your case, however, you are writing the *Forgiveness Letter* on the same person for whom you wrote a *Fourth Step Inventory Long Form*.

Okay, let's begin. **B**, who did you write your Fourth Step Inventory Long Form on?

~ B ~

My mom.

~ A ~

Okay, good. Please read the letter from your mom just as you wrote it.

~ B ~

Dear (B),

First, let me tell you how much I love you. You were always so special to me. When you were growing up, I loved watching you dance and sing. You were quite the entertainer.

I want to apologize to you my dear (B) for all the times I was not there for you, for all the times I was in a drunken stupor and could not see what was going on in your life. I am sorry I was not there to protect you from your overly strict and abusive teacher and that I could not see how hard you were trying to be good. I am sorry that I taught you things that hurt you and made you feel inadequate.

I would never want to hurt you. I love you. Can you forgive me for my inability to see you and understand what was going on for you? Can you forgive me for abandoning you?

If there is something I can do to make this right for you, please let me know. I want all to be right with us going forward.

Love,

Mom

~ A ~

Thank you. How does it feel to hear this apology?

~ B ~

I feel good. I have always wanted her to see that she hurt me by not being there for me.

~ A ~

Thank you. In this situation, what roles did you cast the other person in?

~ B ~

I cast her in the role of abandoner, of an unfit mother. As someone who didn't love me enough to protect me.

~ A ~

Thank you. What roles did you cast yourself in?

~ B ~

The lost child. The victim of abuse by my teacher. The good girl who is not being validated. Someone unworthy of my mother's attention.

~ A ~

Thank you. What roles did the other person cast you in?

~ B ~

Someone who didn't need protection. Someone doing okay without her. Someone she didn't need to worry about.

~ A ~

Thank you. As far as you can observe, what roles did the other person cast themselves in?

~ B ~

Someone barely holding it together. Someone who was trying to be a good mother and teach her child how to be good and how to get to Heaven. Someone who wants the best for her child.

~ A ~

Thank you. Now read the letter again and this time read it as if this is the apology letter YOU wrote to your mom. Hint: Keep it simple and clear when changing words and keep it as close to the original letter as possible.

~ B ~

I will read the same letter as if I wrote it to my Mom, changing words and phrases to fit her and the situation.

Dear Mom,

First, let me tell you how much I love you. You have always been so special to me, even when I didn't show it. When I was growing up, I loved watching you bake bread and plan holidays. You were quite the cook and you loved making holidays special.

I want to apologize to you, my dear Mother, for all the times I was not there for you, for all the times I was in a Media blackout and in self-absorbed fantasy stupor and could not see what was going on in your life. I am sorry I was not able to tell you about my strict and abusive teacher at school and that I could not see how hard you were trying to be a good Mom. I am sorry that I believed things that hurt you and made you feel guilty for them and inadequate.

I would never want to hurt you. I love you. Can you forgive me for my inability to see you and understand what was going on for you? Can you forgive me for abandoning you?

If there is something I can do to make this right by you, please let me know. I want all to be right with us going forward.

Love,

(B)

~ A ~

Thank you. How does it feel to give this apology?

~ B ~

I feel sad. I can see that I didn't see her either. I didn't see what she was going through. I can see that I didn't trust her enough to tell her about my schoolteacher and how afraid I was. I can also see how much she did for the family and how she made the holidays awesome. Basically, I can see that it was not all bad. There were a lot of good times too.

~ A ~

Thank you. As you reread it, did you notice if you still cast the other person in the same role as before?

~ B ~

No, I was beginning to see her as more loving than I had remembered. She was there for me more than I give her credit for. I think this time I cast her in the role of caring mother rather than abandoning mother.

~ A ~

Thank you. Did you notice if you were in the same role that you cast yourself before?

~ B ~

No. I can see where I hurt my mom—that I abandoned her, that I didn't see her, that I didn't appreciate her or really know what she was going through. I can see that I was in a media stupor—that I was a drunk too, that I wanted to escape too. I can see that I was like her.

~ A ~

Thank you. Does this situation look any different to you from this perspective?

~ B ~

It does, though it's hard to admit it. I still feel like she should have been there for me because I was the child, and she was the parent, but I think I'm looking at it with more adult eyes now. I can see that she was doing the best she could, given everything that was going on in her life. I can see that she loved me, even though I wanted her to show it in a different way. I can also see that I punished her for not being the mother I wanted and that my behavior towards her hurt her.

~ A ~

Thank you. Now read the letter again and this time read it as if this apology letter is a letter YOU wrote to YOURSELF. Please slow it down so you can really FEEL your apology.

~ B ~

I will read a letter that I wrote to myself, changing some words to make it clear what I did to me.

Dear (B),

First, let me tell you how much I love you. You were always so special to me. When we were growing up, I loved watching us dance and sing. We were quite the entertainers!

I want to apologize to you, for all the times I was not there for you—for all the times I was in a media-drunken stupor and could not see what was going on in your inner life. I am sorry I was not there to protect you from the strict, abusive teacher by either speaking up or finding adult support and that I could not see how hard you were trying to be good but instead repeatedly told you how bad you were. I am sorry that I told you things about yourself that hurt you and made you feel inadequate.

I would never want to hurt you. I love you. Can you forgive me for my inability to see you and understand what was going on for you? Can you forgive me for abandoning you by not letting you be your authentic self?

If there is something I can do to make this right with you, please let me know. I want all to be right with us going forward. Love, (B)

~ A ~

Thank you. How does it feel to give this apology to yourself?

~ B ~

It feels personal. It feels like I am now really getting in touch with myself and seeing how I don't love myself enough, how I abandon myself, and how much my self-talk is abusive and unkind. I always told myself how bad I was. I never let myself off the hook. I shamed myself all the time. I never stood up for myself.

~ A ~

Thank you. As you reread it did you notice any recurring roles that you have played out with yourself?

~ B ~

Dictator. Abuser. Strict disciplinarian. Abandoner. Never satisfied with who I am. Shaming myself.

~ A ~

Thank you. Did you notice more deeply how you have limited yourself with these roles?

~ B ~

Yes, I am harder on myself than anyone else. I abandoned myself by not speaking up and by not allowing myself to feel worthy. I don't validate myself, and I expect other people to do that for me. This limits my ability to take care of myself and be happy.

~ A ~

Thank you. Does this situation look any different to you from this perspective?

~ B ~

Yes. I can see that when it comes to hurting myself, I do it better than anyone else. I can see that others are not as hard on me as I am on myself. I can see that I need to find ways to be kinder and more loving to myself.

~ A ~

Thank you. What roles can you recast the other person in that would serve you both?

~ B ~

I think I am going to say, "*loving mother*," because she was loving. She did the best she could. She still is trying to make me happy.

~ A ~

Thank you. What roles can you recast yourself in that would serve you, the other person, and the world?

~ B ~

Resourceful adult. A good parent to myself. Compassionate and understanding with myself. A nurturing, loving, forgiving friend. I could be the kind of mother to myself I wanted my mother to be for me.

~ A ~

Thank you, **B**. This ends the demonstration.

We would like to go over a few points before we listen to the qualifications from the sponsee and sponsor. You may have noticed that as sponsors, or facilitators, for the *Forgiveness Letter*, we do not comment on what the sponsee shares. The sponsor says only, “*Thank you.*” Their job is to listen and hold space for the sponsee to find their own answers to the questions. Our job as sponsors is to allow our sponsees to make their own discoveries. The only time a sponsor might give some feedback is if the person reading the letter feels stuck and asks for help. Then it might be appropriate to give some suggestions for the turnarounds. We do not try to do this worksheet for them. What makes this process valuable is the sponsee’s own self-discoveries.

You will notice that as the sponsee reads their second and third letters—the apology to the other person and the apology to themselves—they try to keep each one as close to the original as possible. However, there may be instances when an exact turnaround does not feel authentic, as it does not apply to you literally. In these instances, you may replace words or phrases with something more applicable, which rings true. Also please keep the letter simple and not too long so that you may have easier turnarounds.

Sharing

~ B ~

[If you found two people before the meeting who have gone through an actual Forgiveness Letter process to qualify, call on them to share their experience. If not, A and B will need to qualify. Ask A, if not qualifying, to keep time or get a volunteer to time the shares.]

We will now ask (_____) to qualify for two minutes on what it was like reading their forgiveness letter to their sponsor. *[Stop screen sharing. Time for 2 minutes]*

Now we ask (_____) to qualify for two minutes on what it was like to facilitate their sponsee's *Forgiveness Letter*. *[Stop screen sharing. Time for 2 minutes]*

We will now open the meeting up for sharing. Each person has 2-3 minutes to share. Please keep the focus on what it was like to witness the *Forgiveness Letter*, or if you have done this exercise before, you may talk about what it was like to share your own *Forgiveness Letter* or to facilitate it.

[Stop screen sharing. Time for 2-3 minutes for each member. Member sharing ends at 5 minutes before the hour to allow for questions.]

[Start screen sharing.]

~ A ~

Thank you all for sharing. Does anyone have any questions about the *Forgiveness Letter*? This is not a discussion. We wish only to answer any questions you might have about how to write the letter and do the turnarounds. *[Q&A for 5 mins.]*

That is all the time we have today. If you are comfortable sharing your information, we encourage you to put your name and number in the chat now so you can connect with other members of our group. *[Group Sponsors to add their contact information to the chat as well.]*

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. Contributions can be made via credit card, debit card, or through PayPal on the MAA website at mediaaddictsanonymous.org. Please give what you can, and if you can give nothing at this time, keep coming back because you are more important than your money.

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 our session of Before and 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.

Thank you for joining us. We hope to see you here next week. The homework assignments we recommend for this week are, and I will post them in the chat: 1) write a Forgiveness Letter, 2) read the letter to your sponsor, co-sponsor, action partner, or fellow member of MAA, and 3) have that person read you the *Forgiveness Questions*. *[Group Sponsors to copy the homework assignments in the chat by pasting the list below.]*

Feel free to stay after the meeting for a few minutes if you have any questions or would like to connect.

END OF MODULE 3. MEETING 5

MODULE 3, MEETING 5 Homework Assignments

1) Using the same person on whom you wrote your *Fourth Step Inventory Long Form*, write an apology letter **from** that person who has harmed you **to** you. Let them give you the apology you always wanted or needed to hear from them, so that you may be able to heal this resentment. Write everything you would like to hear them say to you for you to feel satisfied and happy. Don't hold back, and please keep the letter simple and concise.

2) Read your Forgiveness Letter to your sponsor, co-sponsor, action partner, or fellow member of MAA before we meet again next week.

3) When you have finished reading your Forgiveness Letter, ask the person listening to go through the *Forgiveness Questions* on the MAA homepage under Open Back-to-Basics Step Study Module Three with you so they can help you gain another perspective.
