

Weekly Series  
**BEFORE & BEYOND BACK TO BASICS,"A Design for Living"**  
MAA Intergroup Sponsored  
Open 12 Step Study and After Care Big Book Study Group  
**MONTH ONE**  
“Overview and Step 1”

SESSION 1

A

Welcome to the FIRST session of "Before and Beyond Back to Basics—A Design for Living" meetings for media addicts. Please put down all non-essential electronic media while participating in these sessions. By focusing on this meeting without distractions you will be able to access the recovery power of what these Back-to-Basics meetings offer. We ask that if you are speaking or reading that you allow us to see you in Zoom.

My name is \_\_A\_\_, and I am \_\_\_\_B\_\_\_\_. We are recovered members of Media Addicts Anonymous and we are your Group Sponsors.

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

Moderators for this meeting have a least four months of media abstinence and have been Group Sponsors of a closed Back-to-Basics group. We ask for three readers at each meeting. After our reading our three readers will be asked to share for 3 minutes, then we will open up the meeting for sharing. You don't have to be media abstinent to share or to attend these Open Back-to-Basic meetings. However, we do ask that you keep your sharing on the topic of our reading. At the end of the meeting we will exchange phone numbers and you will be able to connect to sponsors and media sobriety partners. We will also answer any questions you have about Back-to-Basics or MAA.

## A

We will be going through all 12 steps which will take us four months to complete. We hope you will join us weekly to allow yourself to take advantage of working the steps with a group and to further your recovery with other committed media addicts. By attending every meeting you will continue to recover from media addiction. Remember, as we take the Twelve Steps as described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, we are provided with a new way of living free of compulsive use of our "alcoholic" media. The writers of this book give tell us that: "A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, 'A design for living' that really works."

## B

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

## A

Some of you here have completed at least one month of the committed Back-to-Basics sobriety groups. You have seen for yourself that there is a design for living that really works, we are the living testimony of that. Today our readers are 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_ 3)\_\_\_\_\_

### **Overview and History**

Everything we are about to read and every action we are going to take to recover from media addiction had its genesis with Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob

Smith. Their goodness and generosity in writing down the recipe for recovery, that is in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, has changed our lives and changed the world.

## B

It was in 1939 that the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous (we often shorten it to just say Big Book) was printed and made available to alcoholics. Before its publication, there were only about 100 sober members of AA. After publication, however, the fellowship rapidly began to grow, and the AA fellowship started to be built directly from the information and directions given in the Big Book.

- Clarence Snyder, an alcoholic from Cleveland, Ohio, was one of the first to use the Big Book with his prospects. He built a fellowship using just the Big Book to guide his AA members' recovery process. Snyder, who was taken through the steps by Dr. Bob, modeled a style of one-on-one sponsorship in which a member of the fellowship, who was experienced in the Twelve Steps, would take a newcomer through all Twelve Steps as quickly as possible. The sponsor and newcomer would meet and work their way through the Big Book together, page by page. Cleveland sponsors emphasized the Four Absolutes: Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, Love and the importance of working with other alcoholics.

## A

We bring up his approach because up until this time in the history of AA, the recovery rate for alcoholics was around 30%, which was still pretty high, since a true alcoholic before AA had very little hope of recovery. But Clarence's groups began to have 75% success rate due to using the Big Book and using the one-on-one sponsorship method with newcomers. While today this one-on-one approach is a given, in 1939 this had not yet been tried.

## B

Due to the sudden swell in membership, newcomers were often put to work taking other newcomers through the book before they even finished the Steps themselves. Because of its success, Cleveland's Big Book style of sponsorship quickly spread to other AA groups.

## A

Bill Wilson, AA's Cofounder, was impressed at the growth and success Cleveland was having in sobering up alcoholics. Bill wrote in the book AA Comes of Age:

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

## B

The phenomenal success rate of the early AA members was due to a simple format that was used in those days to enable beginners to take all Twelve Steps in a short period of time. This format could be used right away. It enabled them to quickly receive the help they needed via a life-changing spiritual awakening.

- AA’s remarkable recovery rate during the 1940s was due, in large part, to these Back-to-Basics Meetings. For many thousands of alcoholics, the Beginners Meetings became “the foundation stone of their recovery. The Big Book authors tell us they have found a way out that works. In fact, they guarantee that if we follow the directions and are sincere and honest in our effort, we will recover. "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path..."

## A

If you carry any prejudice towards the Big Book, we ask you to keep an open mind, to give the Big Book method the old college try. We think if you do, you will be pleasantly surprised.

## B

Our purpose for these Twelve Step Study and Sobriety groups is to provide a safe, structured environment where participants fast from all unnecessary media, take the Twelve Steps, learn the principles of recovery so we can stay ahead of the disease, and learn to live a spiritually fulfilled and useful life without our media drug.

## A

In order for this process to work, each participant has been matched up with another recovering member who is willing to be their sponsor through these four-week sessions. We encourage you to use your sponsor to help you in your recovery, to appreciate them and give them the position they need to help you. When you keep your commitments to them and to this group you will be surprised how fast you will grow in this program.

## B

This is a **WE** program. We attend the these Back to Basic Meetings together, we read the Big Book together, we stay sober together, we take the Steps together, and we recover together. To better understand what is expected of you, here are some brief reminders of guidelines for these sessions:

- We encourage you to make this your home group and attend every weekly session for this four-month series.
- We will read the appropriate parts of the Big Book to you, specifically those passages that relate to taking the Twelve Steps.
- We will guide you through all Twelve Steps as written by the Big Book authors. Please follow their directions, as we read them to you, and you will recover from media addiction.
- If you have a sponsor to contact them often to get support. If you don't have a sponsor we encourage you to get one.
- Give support to others in our Back-to-Basics group by making outreach calls. We find that daily contact is important to keep on track, especially in the beginning of recovery when people experience withdrawal.
- Plan to spend daily or weekly time with your sponsor or sobriety partner sharing your writing and step work.
- Throughout this whole month, fast from all unnecessary media or abstain from all alcoholic media. Share your media sobriety plan with your sponsor or other abstinent member of Back-to-Basics
- Call your sponsor (or group member) if you feel you are about to slip and use your alcoholic media.

- Attend other MAA meetings, share your strength and hope.
- If you are a recovered member, meaning you have completed 3 months of Back-to-Basics and have remained abstinent, volunteer to sponsor another member. Sponsorship adds to the quality of our recovery.

Our reading on Step One this week will be taken from the first 60 pages of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. We encourage you to read the Big Book on your own as well. To save time, we will not be giving the page numbers. Let's begin.

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

## A

The Big Book authors immediately tell us that the purpose of their book is to show us how to recover from alcoholism, or in our case, media addiction. This is a revolutionary statement, because until this book was written, there was no hope for alcoholics, let alone media addicts. Today, everyone who is willing to follow the directions they provided can recover.

They go on to say (and we are going to now substitute media for alcohol):

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

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

- "The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly [and sisterly]

harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from [media addiction].”

## B

They tell us that the way they recovered from alcoholism was through a deep and effective spiritual experience.

- "The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows, and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. [God] has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves."

We of Media Addicts Anonymous have found that, much like the alcoholic, it was not drinking (or compulsively using media) that was our problem, but it was learning how to live without drinking (or the numbing effect we derived from using media) that terrified us.

## A

One AA member put it this way in the Big Book:

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

He goes on to write about his struggle with alcohol, but we are going to substitute media so that we might relate his story to our compulsive media behaviors:

- "I had to use [media]...to live, to cope with the demands of everyday existence. When I encountered disappointments or frustrations...my solution was [to binge on my electronic devices]. I had always been oversensitive to criticism... When I was criticized or reprimanded, [electronic screens were] my refuge and comfort. When I was faced with a special challenge or social event...I had to fortify myself with a couple of [videos, games, social media posts or shopping.] Too often, I would overdo it...Above all, I was suffering inner pain because my performance and my accomplishments in life failed to live up to my

own expectations of myself. I had to anesthetize that pain with [electronic media]. Of course, the more I [binged on media], the more unrealistic my expectations became and the poorer my performance...so the need to get [drunk on media] grew still greater."

## B

The ultimate goal for these Back to Basic sessions is to provide you with "a design for living," an effective solution to relieve your media addiction and a proven method to create a happy, useful and satisfying life. One early AA member wrote:

- "The moment I made up my mind to go through with [this] process, I had the curious feeling that my [media addiction] was relieved, as in fact it proved to be. Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems. I have since been brought into a way of living infinitely more satisfying and...more useful than the life I lived before. My old manner of life was by no means a bad one, but I would not exchange its best moments for the worst I have now. I would not go back to it even if I could."

## A

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

## B

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

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



## A

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

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

## B

To make sure everyone understands what we just read, I am going to read the last line again: “If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which ONLY a spiritual experience will conquer.” We now know what we have to do in order to recover from our media addiction. We must undergo a life-changing, spiritual transformation.

## A

Since this is our first Back-to-Basics session, we would like to take a few minutes to create an intention for ourselves and for this group as we work together this month. Please have a notebook or something you can write on, for we are going to ask you to write down your vision and intention for this month.

### **Meditation**

Now everyone, please close your eyes. Take a deep breath and relax. For the next few minutes have no problems or worries. Just breathe and be present in this very moment.

(pause 5 seconds)

Feel what it is like to be here with other people who understand you, who understand how desperate you are to stop hurting yourself with media. Notice that you belong here. Notice that you are not alone. Notice that you have hope for yourself and everyone in this group.

(pause 5 seconds)

Think about why you are here. Think about what you wish to get from these sessions.

(pause 5 seconds)

Think about what your ideal day would look like without the use of media. See yourself going throughout your day without struggle.

Feel yourself safe and protected.

Feel yourself connected to a Higher Power.

Feel yourself connected to others.

Feel yourself connected to your true nature.

(pause 5 seconds)

Now make an intention for yourself. What do you want to get out of Back-to-Basics? Where do you want to be at the end of this month?

(pause for 5 seconds)

See yourself showing up the way you want to show up. See yourself achieving sobriety. Feel yourself growing the way you wish to grow. Let your spirit take you to your highest intention.

(pause for 10 seconds)

Now open your eyes and we will take 1 minute to write down what intention you have given yourself for this month.

(Time for 1 minute)

[After 1 minute]

B

**Sharing**

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

Reader 1\_\_\_\_\_ Reader 2\_\_\_\_\_ Reader 3\_\_\_\_\_

(Share until 8:35 AM)

A

That is all the time for sharing we have today.

### **Announcements**

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

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

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

### **Closing:**

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

B

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

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

**Questions**

Are there any questions about Before & Beyond Back-to-Basics or MAA?  
(A & B field questions)

END OF MEETING 1

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MEETING 2

A

Welcome to the second session of "Before & Beyond Back to Basics—A Design for Living" meetings for media addicts. Please put down all non-essential electronic media while participating in these sessions. By focusing on this meeting without distractions you will be able to access the recovery power of what these Back-to-Basics meetings offer. We ask that if you are speaking or reading that you allow us to see you in Zoom.

My name is \_\_A\_\_, and I am \_\_\_\_B\_\_\_\_. We are recovered members of Media Addicts Anonymous and we are your Group Sponsors.

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B

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your sponsor, you probably would be asked to change alcohol to media so you could understand the full impact of how media is just like alcohol. Therefore, as your Group Sponsors, when reading, wherever it mentions terms related to alcoholism, we will often substitute or add media addiction concepts to help us understand how media addiction is similar to alcohol addiction and why our solution is to be found in the Big Book of AA. To make this format more inclusive, we have also changed the pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural. These two adjustments are made to serve each individual being sponsored both personally and in this sponsored group as a whole, to obtain as much benefit from the Big Book as possible.

## A

Last week we learned that in order to recover from media addiction we must undergo a life-changing, spiritual transformation.

Chapter 5 of the Big Book tells us exactly what this commitment to a transformational recovery process will look like:

### HOW IT WORKS:

- "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those too who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest."
- "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps. At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely."

Remember that we deal with [media addiction]—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find [God] now!"

B

Before we venture on, let us pause and take a moment to answer this call to action from the Big Book authors. *May you find God now!* The authors want us to find God right now. What an impossible demand, right? Why would we need to find a Higher Power with such immediate urgency? Because every action we are going to take as we move forward, needs the help and support of the God of our understanding. The authors are telling us that this is do or die.

- "Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked [God's] protection and care with complete abandon."

A

The authors make it very clear that in order to recover, we must “completely give ourselves to this simple program,” be honest with ourselves, and seek help from the "One who has all power."

B

They also tell us that, although we would like to find easier and softer ways to try to conquer our media addiction, the result is nil until we surrender completely. This is a reminder that we are dealing with an addiction which is cunning, baffling, and powerful.

A

Only a spiritual transformation will relieve us from the obsession of compulsive media usage and the devastation that follows when we feel totally out of control.

B

Now let's see why we are really going to need a higher power. "Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

- Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over [media]—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

- Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood [God].
- Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- Step 7: Humbly asked [God] to remove our shortcomings.
- Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood [God], praying only for knowledge of [God's] will for us and the power to carry that out.
- Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to [media addicts], and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”
- "Many of us exclaimed, 'What an order! I can't go through with it.' Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides for progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection."

As you can see, every step takes us on a spiritual journey, a journey which we don't take alone. A journey in which we are accompanied by other recovering members and a Higher Power.

## A

The authors also reassure us that our journey through the Twelve Steps is not about being perfect. The only requirement asked of us is the *willingness*

to grow along spiritual lines. The steps are merely guideposts for progress, not hammers to beat ourselves with. Spiritual progress is our only goal, not spiritual perfection.

## B

An early AA member says, "Steps 1, 2, and 3 get you right with God. Steps 4, 5, and 6 get you right with yourself. Steps 8 and 9 get you right with others, and Steps 10, 11, and 12 keep you right with God, yourself and others." Please keep this vision in mind as we move through these steps together. The Big Book goes on to say:

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

## A

These Steps are the solution to media addiction. The Big Book authors admit that working the Steps is not easy, but when they picked up the spiritual tools laid at their feet, something extraordinary happened.

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

## B



For those who are agnostic or atheist, these ideas may seem unacceptable to your sensibilities. But the authors tell us this need not stand in the way of your recovery:

- “To [those who feel they are atheists or agnostics] such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as [they are] means disaster, especially if [they are media addicts] of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to a [media addict’s] death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.”

#### A

Not only is a spiritual experience possible, it is a guarantee as long as you keep an open mind and work the Steps as described in the Big Book. They tell us we “need not be disconcerted” or too concerned if we can't see how spiritual living will be achieved when we don't believe in God.

- “But it isn’t so difficult. About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type. At first some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true [media addicts]. But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life—or else. Perhaps it is going to be that way with you. But cheer up, something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics. Our experience shows that you need not be disconcerted.”

#### B

We find it amazing that the newcomer can start the media recovery program without any specific beliefs or, for that matter, without any beliefs whatsoever. All a person needs is “willingness, honesty and open-mindedness” to believe that others have recovered from media addiction by following the guidelines spelled out in the Twelve Steps. If they can do it, so can you.

#### A

Let us assure you, we do believe a Power greater than ourselves has restored us to sanity. The Twelve Steps have changed our lives and the lives of countless other alcoholics and addicts. This program will change your life, too, if you honestly want to recover from this baffling affliction of media addiction.

## B

Our own lack of willpower in curbing our media usage had thrown us into despair. The Big Book was written specifically to give us all the opportunity to partake in a spiritual solution to all our problems.

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

## A

The authors ask us to develop our own concept of God. In other words, they want us to find a God of our own understanding.

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

Many of us felt unsure of trying to connect with a God we had rejected or denied earlier. Some of us don't know the first thing about making contact into the spiritual realms. But the Big Book authors assure us that the spiritual realm is easier to reach and closer than you think. It is only waiting for you to open your mind to its reality.

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

## B

To recap what we have just learned thus far; the Big Book authors have just told us that we are going to take actions that will lead us into the “realm of

the spirit.” Our personalities will change from self-directed to God-directed. Our “attitude and outlook upon life will change” from “self-sufficiency” to “God-sufficiency.”

#### A

Neither AA, nor MAA, is a religious program. We’re free to call this Power by any name we wish, as long as it is a “Power greater than ourselves.” The Big Book authors use many different names for this Power including “Creative Intelligence,” “Universal Mind,” “Spirit of the Universe,” “Creator,” and “Great Reality”. Quite a few times they call this Power, “God,” but they use the word God merely for convenience rather than for any religious purpose. Please refer to this Power by any name you believe in or feel comfortable with.

#### B

In order to recover from media addiction, we have to find a “Power greater than ourselves.” But where are we going to find this Power? The authors answer this question:

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

#### A

These are dramatic and, for some of us, revolutionary concepts. Let us summarize them for you. First, the authors of the Big Book announce that they have found a way to free us from the bondage of media addiction.

#### B

Next, they describe the solution as a “Power greater than ourselves.”

A

Then, they tell us where to find this Power: right inside each and every one of us. Sometimes this is the last place we ever think to look.

B

We would give you a simple prayer to start your journey towards conscious contact with a Higher Power or to deepen the spiritual journey you are already on. This is often referred to as the First Step Prayer. It goes like this: *God, Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind, Spirit of Nature, Spirit of the Universe, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in your name) \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a real media addict ... and I need your help today.*

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

*God, Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind, Spirit of Nature, Spirit of the Universe, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ (your name) \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a real media addict ... and I need your help today.*

This is our first step today in contacting our personal Higher Power.

A

Our next step is to find this Higher Power. Open your heart and see if you can connect with a power greater than yourself. Look into your heart and see if you can feel the subtle energy of a God of your own understanding. I will time for 1 minute. Please close your eyes and look and listen within.

**(Time 1 minute)**

Thank you. Even if you didn't feel anything or get anything, don't worry. We all have to start somewhere. Making the attempt is what counts.

B

Now that we know **where** to find this Power, much of the rest of the Big Book is devoted to the question of **how** to find this Power.

A

Basically, we find this Power by taking the Twelve Steps. In the next session we will focus on Step One.B

B

**Sharing**

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

Reader 1\_\_\_\_\_ Reader 2\_\_\_\_\_ Reader 3\_\_\_\_\_

(Share until 8:35 AM)

A

That is all the time for sharing we have today.

### **Announcements**

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

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

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

### **Closing:**

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

B

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

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

**Questions**

Are there any questions about Before & Beyond Back-to-Basics or MAA?  
(A & B field questions)

END OF MEETING 2

\*\*\*\*\*

WEEK 1 MEETING 3

Please ask a new member to lead the group in the First Step Prayer.

A

Welcome to the third session of "Before and Beyond Back to Basics—A Design for Living" meetings for media addicts. Please put down all non-essential electronic media while participating in these sessions. By focusing on this meeting without distractions you will be able to access the recovery power of what these Back-to-Basics meetings offer. We ask that if you are speaking or reading that you allow us to see you in Zoom.

My name is \_\_A\_\_, and I am \_\_\_\_B\_\_\_\_. We are recovered members of Media Addicts Anonymous and we are your Group Sponsors.

We have asked \_\_\_\_*(member)*\_\_\_\_ to lead us in the First Step Prayer.

*God, Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind, Spirit of Nature, Spirit of the Universe, my name is \_\_\_\_*(your name)*\_\_\_\_ and I am a real media addict ... and I need your help today.*

Thank you \_\_\_\_*(member)*\_\_\_\_.

B

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

A

Today we are going to study the first step.

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

B

Admission is essential in order to recover from our compulsive media behaviors. The Big Book authors devote 51 pages of the book to the first part of this process, which is to be honest enough to admit we have a problem. We won't be able to accept our addiction if we can't see the problem and admit it.

A

The authors help us to see our addiction by describing the physical and mental symptoms of alcoholism, much of which can also be applied to media addicts. Later they ask us to acknowledge that we have an addiction, or in our case that we are drunk due to the compulsive use of media. Before we can do this, we need to know what "media addiction" is.

B

The first chapter in the Big Book is titled "The Doctor's Opinion." Much of it is based on two letters written by Dr. William D. Silkworth, a physician in New York City. In the late 1930s, very little was known about alcoholism, but much of what Dr. Silkworth wrote then is still relevant today.

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

## A

What Dr. Silkworth says about alcoholics also accurately describes the media addict. Please listen carefully and we will re-read his statement again and substitute media for alcohol.

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



## B

Media addiction or "internet disorders" has been researched now for over 10 years. What medical professionals have discovered is that media addiction is very similar to alcoholism. Let's read what one modern professional found in her research into compulsive media usage. The following is an excerpt from an article written by Christina Gregory, PhD on the signs and symptoms of internet disorders. (<https://www.psychom.net/iadcriteria.html>)

- "Some evidence suggests that if you are suffering from [media addiction], your brain makeup is similar to those [who] suffer from a chemical dependency, such as drugs or alcohol. Interestingly, some studies link [media addiction] to physically changing the brain structure – specifically affecting the amount of gray and white matter in regions of the prefrontal brain. This area of the brain is associated with remembering details, attention, planning, and prioritizing tasks. ...One of the causes of [media addiction] is structural changes to the prefrontal region of the brain...rendering you unable to prioritize your life, i.e., the Internet takes precedence to necessary life tasks."
- "[Media addiction], in addition to other dependency disorders, [seems] to affect the pleasure center of the brain. The addictive behavior triggers a release of dopamine to promote the pleasurable experience activating the release of this chemical. Over time, more and more of the activity is needed to induce the same pleasurable response, creating a dependency. [For instance] if you find online gaming or online shopping a pleasurable activity and you suffer from an addiction to the Internet, you will need to engage in more and more of the behavior to institute the same pleasurable feeling prior to your dependency."

## A

What we learn from this article by Dr. Gregory is that a media addict's brain is similar to that of an alcoholic. We see that media changes the structure of the brain. This structural change makes it so that we can't prioritize and manage our lives well. Like alcohol, there is also a physical component to media addiction: a release of dopamine that creates a pleasurable state in

the media addict's body which then triggers a compulsion for more and more media to gain the same initial dopamine hit.

B

As you can see, the same cycle of compulsive behavior Dr. Silkworth writes about when describing the downward cycle of an alcoholic, parallels the media addict's obsessive need to use media in a similar way. Silkworth witnessed that if an alcoholic could undergo a psychic change, recovery, even for the most doomed alcoholic, was possible.

- "On the other hand—and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems [they] despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds [themselves] easily able to control [their] desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules."

A

We of Media Addicts Anonymous let Dr. Silkworth's statement guide us to a solution to media addiction. His understanding of compulsive disease tells us that once an addict gets triggered into their compulsion and succumbs to the desire to binge again, there is very little hope of recovery without a **psychic change**.

B

It's important to acknowledge that people will differ in the types of media they are addicted to. One person may be addicted to social media; another to online movies and videos; another spends hours a day playing video games, someone else may get drunk on on-line research.

A

For the alcoholic, it doesn't matter what brand or type of alcohol you drink, it still gets you drunk. The same is true for the media addict.

B

Let's explore what the Big Book says about the different types of alcoholics. Again, we will be replacing the word alcohol with media.

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

A

Why does a media addict compulsively use? Let's see what the Big Book authors say about this third type of media drunk, the one of the hopeless variety:

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

## B

The Big Book authors explain that the main reason we media addicts can't stay sober from our alcoholic media is because our minds have no defense against the first click:

- "These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never [clicked] the first [click], thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the [media addict] centers in [their] MIND, rather than in [their] body. If you ask [them] why [they] started on that last bender, the chances are [they] will offer you any one of a hundred alibis. Sometimes these excuses have a certain plausibility, but none of them really makes sense in the light of the havoc [a media addict's binge] creates...If you draw this fallacious reasoning to the attention of [a media addict, they] will laugh it off, or become irritated and refuse to talk. Once in a while [they] may tell the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is usually that [they have] no more idea why [they clicked that first click] than you have. Some [media

addicts] have excuses with which they are satisfied part of the time. But in their hearts, they really do not know why they do it."

A

Because our minds go "off-line" when we consider clicking that first compulsive click, we are a baffled lot. We obsessively try to hold on to the possibility that we can still control our media usage:

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

B

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

A

Here is an excellent example from the Big Book of a drinker named Jim. See if you can identify your media habits with his behavior.

B

Jim was a World War hero, with a charming wife and family. He had inherited a lucrative automobile company and he was a good salesman. By all accounts he had everything in life he needed to be happy and succeed. Jim was normal except for a **nervous disposition** and at age thirty-five became a violent drunk. He was sent to an asylum and was introduced to

the AA principles by early AA members. When he started to apply the principles of AA to his life everything began to improve.

## A

But there was one problem: he failed to enlarge his spiritual life. To his consternation, he found himself drunk half a dozen times in rapid succession. In spite of the knowledge that he would lose his family and job he ended up back in the asylum. His A.A. friends questioned him on how it happened. This is his story:

- "I came to work on Tuesday morning. I remember I felt irritated that I had to be a salesman for a concern I once owned. I had a few words with the boss, but nothing serious. Then I decided to drive to the country and see one of my prospects for a car. On the way I felt hungry so I stopped at a roadside place where they have a bar. I had no intention of drinking. I just thought I would get a sandwich. I sat down at a table and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk. Still no thought of drinking. I ordered another sandwich and decided to have another glass of milk. **Suddenly the thought crossed my mind that if I were to put an ounce of whiskey in my milk it couldn't hurt me on a full stomach.** I ordered a whiskey and poured it into the milk. I vaguely sensed I was not being any too smart, but felt reassured as I was taking the whiskey on a full stomach. The experiment went so well that I ordered another whiskey and poured it into more milk. That didn't seem to bother me so I tried another."
- "Thus started one more journey to the asylum for Jim. Here was the threat of commitment, the loss of family and position, to say nothing of that intense mental and physical suffering which drinking always caused him. He had much knowledge about himself as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk!"

## B

Do you relate to Jim's type of thinking when it comes to your alcoholic media? Media addicts can, in many places of their lives, be rational and logical. But when it comes to their compulsive need to use media, they lose all sense of reality. The Big Book authors call this "plain insanity."

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

A

They ask us to be careful if we think we can't relate to this extreme case of misjudgment.

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

B

Reflect back on your last binge and see if it isn't true that your sound reasoning went out the window right before you decided to use media. Notice how your frontal lobe went "off-line" and you were without defense against the first click.

A

Sometimes we may feel justified to get on our media because we are lonely, tired, worried, or angry. But the Big Book authors tell us that even this justification is part of the addict's insanity when faced with the eventual negative consequences of a media binge.

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

## B

To again help us understand the pure insanity of the media addict and alcoholic, the Big Book authors give us an extreme example of a compulsive jay-walker.

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

## A

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

- "You may think our illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? We, who have been through the wringer, have to admit if we substituted [media addiction] for jay-walking, the illustration would fit exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where [media] has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It's strong language--but isn't it true? Some of you are thinking: Yes, what you tell us is true, but it doesn't fully apply. We admit we have



some of these symptoms, but we have not gone to the extremes you [people] did, nor are we likely to, for we understand ourselves so well after what you have told us that such things cannot happen again. We have not lost everything in life through [compulsive media usage] and we certainly do not intend to. Thanks for the information. That may be true of certain [non-media addictive] people who, though [bingeing] foolishly and heavily at the present time, are able to stop or moderate, because their brains and bodies have not been damaged as ours were. But the actual or potential [media addict], with hardly any exception, will be **ABSOLUTELY UNABLE TO STOP [BINGEING] ON THE BASIS OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE**. This is a point we wish to emphasize and re-emphasize, to **smash home** upon our [media addict] readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience."

B

This point today is our basic message. That the real media addict will be unable to stop bingeing on media on the basis of knowledge and will power alone. Many of us had lots of knowledge about the seductive and addictive qualities of media, but we still could not stop.

A

We hope that we have been able to reach you and to smash home the reality of what media addiction is. If you cannot admit to this part of the disease, it will be difficult for you to accept it. And if we can't accept our addiction we will not go to the lengths needed to recover using the 12 Steps.

B

Having studied the first Step, we now have the first two principles of the MAA program taken from Step One. "We admitted that we were powerless over media — that our lives had become unmanageable." The first two principles are HONESTY and ACCEPTANCE.

- The first step begins with HONESTY; HONESTY about our compulsive use of media. Unless we truthfully see how we are acting out with media, we cannot hope to find solutions. HONESTY is a precursor to ACCEPTING we are powerless over media, powerless over our

emotions and powerless over people. This ACCEPTANCE is the beginning of our surrender process. This ACCEPTANCE allows us to be authentic with ourselves and others. We can stop judging ourselves. You are the only one who can say if you are a media addict. Recovery begins only when we genuinely admit. While we were under the spell of our addiction, we believed that it was not that bad or that we could stop at any time. ACCEPTANCE is the key to admitting that when it comes to media, we are powerless and our life is unmanageable.

A

Honesty about our media addiction leads to acceptance of ourselves and acceptance of the solution. Thank you all for reading. Next week we will read how the co-founder of AA recovered from his hopeless addiction to alcohol. His story will give us hope that we can recover too. We will also take the first step together.

B

### **Sharing**

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

Reader 1\_\_\_\_\_ Reader 2\_\_\_\_\_ Reader 3\_\_\_\_\_

(Share until 7:35 AM)

A

That is all the time for sharing we have today.

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

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

**Closing:**

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

**B**

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

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

Are there any questions about Before & Beyond Back-to-Basics or MAA?  
(A & B field questions)

END SESSION 3

\*\*\*\*\*

MONTH 1 WEEK 4

Please ask a new member to lead the group in the First Step Prayer.

## A

Welcome to the fourth session of "Before & Beyond Back-to-Basics—A Design for Living" meetings for media addicts. Please put down all non-essential electronic media while participating in these sessions. By focusing on this meeting without distractions you will be able to access the recovery power of what these Back-to-Basics meetings offer. We ask that if you are speaking or reading that you allow us to see you in Zoom.

My name is \_\_A\_\_, and I am \_\_B\_\_. We are recovered members of Media Addicts Anonymous and we are your Group Sponsors.

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

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

Thank you (member).

## B

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

A

We will now review what we have learned about media addiction so far: Media is a mind-altering and mood-altering drug. It is our dope or a dopamine high, as we learned from medical professionals. We have a physical allergy to media because of its mood-altering effect on the body. Because we have overused media in the past, this has affected our minds and we have lost the ability to use media with impunity.

B

In addition to this physical allergy, we have a mental obsession which means we may be able to be media sober for a period of time, but because of our obsession, we will always get drunk again. We turn to media for relief, reward, recreation, and relaxation, but then end up with deep regret and remorse. We have a mental block and were unable to remember how bad the last binge or media black-out was, so we picked up media again without any thought of the consequences to our lives or others. Our minds minimized the severity of our addiction and we reverted back into the cycle of compulsive behavior.

A

Media addiction, like alcoholism, is a disease. It is not a moral issue. We are not bad people or weak-willed. When we ingest media, we have an allergic response to it, which triggers the obsessive need to use more and more media.

B

The solution is a spiritual one. Unless we have an entire psychic change, we cannot hope to become sober and stay sober with media.

A

The Twelve Steps of AA and MAA are the solution to having this psychic change and if we want to be truly free of our compulsion to get drunk on media, and live our lives without medicating ourselves with media, we have to be all in. We have to be willing to go to any length to achieve this recovery.

B

Lastly, lack of power is our dilemma so we must find a God of our understanding. It doesn't matter who or what we call this Higher Power, but we must have a power greater than ourselves who will relieve our obsession of the mind so we can transform the brain back to its original nature.

#### A

In the early years of A.A. it was difficult for many alcoholics to admit that they were powerless over alcohol. For those of us who are media addicts this admission can be just as distressing. But there is hope. We will now relate the story of how one of the co-founders of AA, Bill W., an alcoholic of the hopeless variety, overcame his alcoholism.

#### B

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

#### A

He took courses in law, business, and economics, but almost didn't pass his courses because of his drinking. He quits school to become a Wall Street tycoon. Some of his ideas get the attention of Wall Street brokers and he has some early success. The more successful he becomes the more he drinks. But he isn't worried. He writes:

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

#### B

After a while his drinking begins to affect his performance and those around him. When his co-workers confront him, he gets defensive. Bill starts to isolate. He says:

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

A

Then the unthinkable happens. On October 1929 the stock market crashes and the rug is pulled out from under Bill's dreams. With his fortune lost, he does what he always does when he has a problem. He turns to booze for strength and relief.

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

B

Bills reaches out to a rich friend in Canada and he invites Bill and his wife, Lois, to come live with him. By the next spring he and his wife are living in their accustomed style again. But his drinking eventually catches up with him and his friend tells him he has to leave. He and his wife go to live at her parent's house.

A

Bill was not to have any employment nor draw a sober breath for the next five years. His wife has to go to work to provide for them. Not only that, Bill's behavior ostracizes him from his friends and co-workers. His ability to manage his life is becoming harder and harder, but he still believes he can control things.

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

B

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

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

A

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

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

B

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

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

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

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

A

He began stealing from his wife to get booze and even became suicidal. Forty pounds under weight, he was placed in a hospital to clear his brain. A doctor told him that in alcoholics, the will is weak when it comes to alcohol, though it might remain strong in other aspects of his life.

B

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

A

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



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

## B

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

## A

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

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

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

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

## B

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

A

But, Ebby doesn't preach to Bill. Instead, he describes a group of people he has recently met who have found a spiritual solution to many of the world's difficulties, including alcoholism. They taught Ebby how to recover from his "alcoholic illness" by practicing the "Four Spiritual Activities," activities that later became the foundation of the AA program.

B

Ebby tells Bill he has come to pass his experience along to Bill, that is if Bill wants it. As they talk for several hours, Bill is reminded how much he had disliked religion as a child, how his grandfather had some mild contempt of preachers and church folk.

A

Bill had to swallow hard to listen to Ebby talk about spiritual things. But he couldn't help but be curious. There was something in the way Ebby looked and talked that he couldn't deny:

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

B

Yet, despite Ebby's living example, Bill still felt vestiges of his old prejudice of God and religion bubble up. Ebby had a suggestion. He said, "Bill, why don't you choose your own conception of God?"

- "That statement hit me hard. It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning...Thus [I became] convinced that God is

concerned with us humans when we want Him enough... Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view."

### A

Soon after Ebby's visit, Bill checks into Towns Hospital. There, under the direction of Dr. Silkworth, Bill is physically withdrawn from alcohol for the fourth time. But this time, while in the hospital, Bill applies the Four Spiritual Activities to his drinking problem. Bill decides to make a complete **Surrender**. He writes:

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

### B

Immediately after his Surrender, Bill begins **Sharing** his shortcomings with Ebby. Bill writes:

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

### A

Together, Bill and Ebby identify the blocks that were preventing Bill from tapping into the Power greater than human power – the Power that would solve his problem. Then, Bill learns how to remove the blocks by making **Restitution**.

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

### B

Then Bill gets quiet, listens to the God of his understanding, and follows **Guidance**. These actions are essential for establishing a two-way relationship with the "One who has all power."

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

A

Bill was told that these concepts were simple but not easy, a price had to be paid. The price? An eradication of self-centeredness and fear.

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

B

Ebby tells Bill that as he works through the "Four Spiritual Activities" of Surrender, Sharing, Restitution and Guidance he would enter a new relationship with his Creator and be given the secrets to a new way of living that would address all his problems. As long as he remained willing, honest, and humble and believed in God's power to remove his desire for drink, Bill would be able to maintain life-long sobriety given he was willing to also help others do the same.

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

A

With Ebby as his guide, Bill takes all Twelve Steps and has a sudden conversion experience. He has the "entire psychic change" Dr. Silkworth talks about in "The Doctor's Opinion." Bill describes the details of his spiritual awakening:

- "These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of

a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound.”

B

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

A

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

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

B

Bill had to work with other alcoholics in order to stay sober himself. With these discoveries he later developed, with the help of others alcoholics, the AA program.

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

A

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

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

B

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

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

A

This week we have highlighted some important passages in the Big Book we hope have been helpful in recognizing the plight of the true media addict and the steps we need to take to recover. We hope we have shown you enough evidence to want to proceed.

Now, it is time for you to begin, like Bill W., to take your own journey toward a spiritual awakening that will change your life. Let's prepare ourselves now to take the First Step.

B

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

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

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

A

In order to smash the delusion that you are not a media addict, we are going to ask you to answer a simple question. “Are you ready to concede to your innermost self that you are powerless over media and your life has become unmanageable?”

Before you answer, let's pause for one minute to take time to ponder this important admission. Are you powerless over media and is your life unmanageable?

[Time for 1 minute]

Now I will ask again: “Are you ready to concede to your innermost self that you are powerless over media and your life has become unmanageable?” All that is required is a “yes” or “no” answer.

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

B

This month we have covered 60 pages of the “Big Book” and taken the First Step. This is a remarkable accomplishment, please congratulate yourself for taking this important first step. By being honest and admitting our problem we can begin now to accept the solution.

A

Next month we will continue our journey through the Steps by presenting and taking Steps Two and Three. We will also begin moving into the Sharing process by providing you with guidelines for taking the Fourth and Fifth Steps.

B

### Sharing

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

Reader 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Reader 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Reader 3 \_\_\_\_\_

(Share until 8:35 AM)

A

That is all the time for sharing we have today.

### **Announcements**

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

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

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

### **Closing:**

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

B

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

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

### **Questions**

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



(A & B field questions)

[END OF SESSION 4](#)