

## **BACK TO BASICS RECOVERY MEETING**

### **"A Design for Living"**

#### **For MEDIA ADDICTS ANONYMOUS**

#### **Meeting Format for Session 1 - "Overview and Step 1"**

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

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

Please join me in saying the Serenity Prayer:

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

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

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

Most of the reading you'll hear in these sessions is taken directly from the “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous. When reading, wherever it mentions terms related to alcoholism, I will often substitute or add media addiction concepts where appropriate. To make this format more inclusive, I will change the pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural.

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

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 I am 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, social media posts, shopping, gaming etc.] 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], the more unrealistic my expectations became and the poorer my performance...So the need to get [drunk on media] grew still greater."

The ultimate goal of these four sessions is to give you "a design for living." A way to create a life that is satisfying and useful. 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 alcoholic [or for us media addiction] condition 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 movements for the worst I have now. I would not go back to it even if I could."

So the goal of these sessions is to recover from compulsively using media and acquire the time-tested principles that will give us a life second to none. If that is something you are looking for you have come to the right place. Let's get started...

### **Session #1 — Overview and Step One**

There was a period in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous when the program produced an estimated 75 percent recovery rate from alcoholism. This was unheard of at the time. 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 12 steps in 4 meetings. This format could be used right away, even before a member had a sponsor. It enabled them to quickly receive the help they needed via a life-changing spiritual awakening. Later, once they found a long-term sponsor, they would go through the Steps in greater detail. Back then, if you had a drinking problem, you could telephone Alcoholics Anonymous for help and AA would respond by sending two people out to see you. Here is what these ex-problem drinkers would do for the person suffering:

- They would talk about their personal experiences with alcohol and how they found a way out
- They would tell the newcomer that, as part of their recovery, they try to be of service to others
- The newcomer would be assigned a sponsor whose responsibility it is to accompany the newcomer to Alcoholics Anonymous Beginner's Meetings
- The newcomer would then take all Twelve Steps in one month.
- The new comer's life changes, and the desire to drink leaves them. Many never drank again.

Sounds incredibly simple doesn't it? Well, it was simple and it worked! AA's remarkable recovery rate during the 1940s was due, in large part, to these four Back to Basics Meetings. For many thousands of alcoholics, the Beginner's Meetings became "the foundation stone of their recovery."

The book we are reading from is our textbook for recovery. This is the only book we will use during these sessions, except for an occasional reference to an AA pamphlet, newsletter article, or source material used to write the Big Book, and one other article by a psychologist about media addiction.

We begin this session by reading a statement from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

"We are not an organization in the conventional sense of the word. There are no fees or dues whatsoever. The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking (or stop compulsively using media). We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination, nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted."

What we have just read sums up the 12 Step fellowships quite well. We are not a religion and we don't get involved in politics, psychology or medicine. As the title of the book implies, we are an anonymous society. You can be assured we will protect your anonymity at this and any other 12 step meeting. We ask that you do the same for us and for everyone else who is here.

The "Big Book" was first published in April 1939. It was written by several of the first 100 men to recover from alcoholism. Since then, alcoholics and addicts of all kinds have used this book as a program of recovery. We in Media Addicts Anonymous are here to pass on the AA program as written and practiced by the early members so that you too can recover from media addiction.

These type of Beginners' Meetings began in the early 1940's when AA started growing so rapidly it became impossible for the older members to individually take new prospects through the Steps. The sessions were formalized in a September 1944 pamphlet titled *Alcoholics Anonymous – An Interpretation of our Twelve Steps*, published by the Washington, D.C. Group. The preface to the pamphlet contains the following:

"These meetings are held for the purpose of acquainting both the old and new members with the 12 steps upon which our program is based."

"So that all twelve steps may be covered in a minimum amount of time, they are divided into four classifications, and one [session] will be devoted to each of the four subdivisions."

Our purpose for these four sessions are to provide a safe, structured environment where participants learn the principles of recovery, take the Twelve Steps, and have a life-changing spiritual experience.

In order for this process to work for Media Addicts, each participant must be matched up with another recovering member who is willing to be their Sponsor or Sharing Partner through the four one-hour sessions.

So that you will better understand what is expected of you, we are going to explain some of the guidelines for these sessions:

1. Your primary obligation is to listen to or read all four sessions with your sponsor or sharing partner. You may listen to them together or on your own.
2. We will read the appropriate parts of the “Big Book” to you, specifically those passages that relate to taking the 12 Steps. We will guide you through all 12 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.
3. Find a Sharing Partner or Sponsor to work with as you go through the steps. Contact them often to get support and give support. We find that daily contact is important to keep on track, especially in the beginning of recovery.
4. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> session, plan to spend about an hour or two on the phone with your Sharing Partner listening to his or her Fourth Step and then sharing your own. If you have a sponsor, you will schedule a time to have them listen to your 4th step.

This is a **WE** program. We attend the Beginners’ Meetings together, we read the “Big Book” together, we take the Steps together, and we recover together.

Our reading on Step 1 today 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, I will not be giving the page numbers. Let’s begin.

“We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women 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.”

So, 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. Now, anyone who is willing to follow the directions THEY have provided can recover.

They go on to say (and I am going to now substitute alcohol for media):

"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."

This message of hope is expressed again here:

“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].”

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."

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 [media addicted] 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."

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 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."

To make sure everyone understands what I just read, I am going to read the last line again: "...If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness 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.

(END OF PART 1)

(PART 2)

In Chapter 5 of the Big Book it summarizes 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!"

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

The authors make it very clear that in order to recover, one must a) completely give themselves to this simple program, b) be honest with themselves, and c) they must seek help with the "One who has all power." 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. There is a reminder that we are dealing with an addiction which is cunning, baffling, and powerful. Only a spiritual transformation will relieve us from this the obsession of compulsive media usage and the devastation that follows when we feel totally out of control.

The authors now lay out the steps we must take in order to recover.

"Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over Media— that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than our selves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
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.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other 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."

Here the author's reassure us that our journey through the 12 Steps are not about being perfect. The only thing that is being asked of us is the *willingness* to grow along spiritual lines. The steps are merely guide posts for progress. Not hammers to beat ourselves with. Spiritual progress is our only goal, not spiritual perfection.

They go 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."

These steps and principles are the solution to media addiction. The Big Book authors admit that working the steps is not easy, but living a life of hopelessness and futility is even more disheartening. When they saw that the program really worked they picked up the spiritual tools laid at their feet and found heaven.

"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."

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

"To one who feels [they are] an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as [they are] means disaster, especially if [they are] a [media addict] of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to a [media addicts] death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face."

Not only is a spiritual experience possible, it is a guarantee. Just keep an open mind and take the Steps as described in the "Big Book." The authors then disclose that, no matter what our present beliefs, there is hope for us.

"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.”

We find it amazing that the newcomer can start the Media Addiction Anonymous program without any specific beliefs or, for that matter, without any beliefs whatsoever. All a person needs is the “willingness, honesty and open-mindedness” to believe that others have recovered from media addiction by following this program and that they too can recover.

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 addicts. This program will change your life too, if you honestly want to recover from this baffling affliction of media addiction.

Our own lack of willpower around media 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.”

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 and closer than you think and 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.”

To recap what we have just learned thus far; the “Big Book” authors have just told us that we are going to take some 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.”

As we said earlier, 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,” among others. 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.

So, in order to recover from our 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.”

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

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.

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

(END OF PART 2)

(PART 3)

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

SURRENDER 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 the SURRENDER process, which is to admit we have a problem.

The authors begin 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, 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.

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 1930’s, 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 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 state 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 little hope of his recovery."

What Dr. Silkworth says about alcoholics also accurately describes the media addict. Please listen carefully and I 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 state 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 little hope of her recovery."

Media addiction or "internet disorders" have 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 (<https://www.psychom.net/iadcriteria.html>) on the signs and symptoms of internet disorders.

"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, seem[s] 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."

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. That 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.

As you can see, the same cycle of compulsive behavior Dr. Silwork writes about when describing the downward cycle of an alcoholic, parallels the media addict's obsessive need to use media in a similar way.

Silworth was encouraged, however, by Bill W., one of the co-founders of A.A., who did recover from alcoholism. He 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 [they] followed a few simple rules."

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

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 is click bated to online movies and videos; another spends hours a day playing video games. 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.

Let's explore what the Big Book says about the different types of alcoholics. Again, I 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--ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor--becomes operative, this [individual] can also stop or moderate, although [they] may find it difficult and troublesome..."

"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] consumption, 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 becomes disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social. [They] has 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] that [they] ought to sleep the clock around. Yet early next morning [they] search madly for [their smart phones 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."

Why does a media addict compulsively use? There are no definitive answers to this.

"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 addicts] bout creates. They sound like the philosophy of [an individual] who, having a headache, beats [themselves] on the head with a hammer so that [they] can't feel the ache. 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 video] 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. 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 the [person] be a real [media addict]... [They have] lost control. At a certain point in the [media usage] of every [media addict], [they] pass into a state where the most powerful desire to stop using is of absolutely no avail. This tragic situation has already arrived in practically every case long before it is suspected."

"The fact is that most [media addicts], for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice [to use 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 again the first [click]."

Media time drunkenness puts us in the pitiful state of losing control and then losing desire to manifest our dreams and fulfill our life purpose. We don't want to believe we are out of control, as media addicts, we want to believe we can lick this.

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

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 A. A. principles by early A.A. members. When he started to apply the principles of A.A. to his life everything began to improve. 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 had eaten there many times during the months I was sober. 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 whisky 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 I felt reassured as I was taking the whisky 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 whisky if only he mixed it with milk!"

Can you relate to this type of thinking when it comes to your 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 "plan 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?"

They tell us to be careful if we think we can't relate to this extreme case of misjudgment right before the first drink.

"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?"

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.

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 addicts 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 drink deliberately, instead of casually, there was little serious or effective thought during the period of premeditation of what the terrific consequences might be."

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. [They] get a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles. [They] enjoy [themselves] for a few years in spite of friendly warnings. Up to this point you would label [them] as a foolish [person] having queer ideas of fun. Luck then deserts [them] and [they are] slightly injured several times in succession. You would expect [them], if [they] were normal, to cut it out. Presently [they are] hit again and this time has a fractured skull. Within a week after leaving the hospital a fast-moving trolley car breaks [their] arm. [They] tell you [they have] decided to stop jay-walking for good, but in a few weeks [they] break both legs."

"On through the years this conduct continues, accompanied by... continual promises to be careful or to keep off the streets altogether. Finally, [they] can no longer work, [their spouse] gets a divorce and [they are] held up to ridicule. [They try] every known means to get the jay-walking idea out of [their] head. [They shut themselves] up in an asylum, hoping to mend [their] ways. But the day [they] comes out [they] races in front of a fire engine, which breaks [their] back. Such an [individual] would be crazy, [yes]?"

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 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 [binging] 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 [BINGING] 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."

(END OF PART 3)

(PART 4)

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 A.A., Bill W., an alcoholic of the hopeless verity, overcame his alcoholism.

In the 1920's 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."

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 boon of the late twenties was seething and swelling. Drink was taking an important and exhilarating part in my life...Everyone spent in thousand and chattered in millions...I made a host of fair-weather friends."

After a while his drinking does begin 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."

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."

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. 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 still he 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..."

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."

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."

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."

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. There, 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. 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."

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."

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.

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 times 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?"

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."

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. They are:

1. **Surrender**— which became AA's first 3 Steps.
2. **Sharing**— which became Steps 4,5,6 and 7, as well as Step 12.
3. **Restitution**— AA's Eighth and Ninth Steps.
4. **Guidance**— AA's Tenth and Eleventh Steps.

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. 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 even 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."

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."

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."

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 newfound Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since."

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."

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."

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."

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.”

With Ebby as his guide, Bill takes all Twelves 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.”

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.

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.”

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— into 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..."

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 hundred 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."

Alcoholic's 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]."

In this session we have highlighted some important passages in the Big Book that 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.

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

This is the first step to the **Surrender** process. 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.”

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

[Pause for 1 minute]

Now I will ask again: “Are you ready to concede to your innermost self you are powerless over your 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.

In this first session 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. You are well on your way to recovery from media addiction.

In the next session, we will continue the **Surrender** process 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. After our next session you will complete your Fourth Step inventory and share it with your sponsor or sharing partner between the second and the third sessions.

Thank you for letting me be of service.

To close this session, please join me in the Serenity Prayer:

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

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

(END OF PART 4)