**BACK TO BASICS, “A Design for Living”**

A Closed and Committed 12-Step Study and Media Sobriety Group

**Assignments for Month 2**

**WEEK ONE**

**Gratitude Practice**: Reflect on some of the people, places, living beings, institutions, personal circumstances, experiences, or things you are grateful for. Select ten of them and write about them briefly. Read your gratitude list to someone or share them at an MAA meeting this week.

**Day 1 – Step 1**

**Writing Assignment**: Read the following passage from the Big Book (page 34) and answer the question below. Read what you wrote to your sponsor this week.

* “As we look back, we feel we had gone on drinking many years beyond the point where we could quit on our willpower. If anyone questions whether he has entered this dangerous area, let him try leaving liquor alone for one year. If he is a real alcoholic and very far advanced, there is scant chance of success. In the early days of our drinking we occasionally remained sober for a year or more, becoming serious drinkers again later. Though you may be able to stop for a considerable period, you may yet be a potential alcoholic. We think few, to whom this book will appeal, can stay dry anything like a year. Some will be drunk the day after making their resolutions; most of them within a few weeks.”

**Question**: Do you believe that you have entered the “*dangerous area*” with your media, and do you still think that you might be able to be successful in beating your media addict on your own will power?

**Days 2 Through 5 – Step 1**

**Writing Assignment**: Read the *Signs and Symptoms of Media Addiction* below and write about your media addiction symptoms, which brought you to MAA. Read what you wrote to your sponsor.

**Question**: Which symptoms do you relate to, and how did these symptoms manifest for you?

**THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MEDIA ADDICTION**

1. **Dissatisfaction with Everyday Life**: We depend on media as a way to avoid emotional discomfort, boredom, pain, and problems. Media has become our main source of **relief**, **reward**, **relaxation**, **recreation**, and **relationships**.
2. **Mental Obsession**: We have a fear of missing out, so we want our media with us at all times. We are preoccupied with what’s trending in the news and social media. We lose ourselves in gossip, too much information, and the absorption of negative media, all of which result in constant unrest and agitation.
3. **Depression, Shame, and Hopelessness**: We feel depressed, ashamed, and guilty about the amount and type of media we’re consuming. We want to stop, but we don’t believe we can live without our media dependency. This hopelessness has contributed to us having prolonged periods of depression and anxiety, and some of us have even had suicidal thoughts.
4. **Compare and Despair**: We compare ourselves with what we see in magazines, films, TV, and social media. We try to create a persona that other people will admire but end up feeling despair when we can’t live up to those artificial ideals. We feel compelled to follow seemingly perfect people on social media even though we know it never fails to make us feel inferior.
5. **Isolation**: We prefer to be alone with our media rather than socialize. When we are with other people, we often become distracted by our devices. Isolation causes us to avoid those life enhancing activities which used to bring us joy and connection.
6. **Fantasizing**: Rather than having meaningful relationships with *real* people, we turn to media to satisfy our need for romance, intimacy, and sexual fantasy. We end up losing even more connection and intimacy with others, which leads to more deprivation and loneliness.
7. **Risky Behavior**: We endanger our health, life, or someone else’s life to get our media fix. We may drive while sending text messages, overeat while bingeing on movies and shows, or deprive ourselves of sleep while using all forms of media.
8. **Time Irreverence**: Time is the only commodity we can never get back. When grazing or bingeing on media, we lose track of time and forget what is truly important in our lives. Media takes priority over everyone and everything.
9. **Avoiding our Life's Purpose**: We neglect or abandon creative endeavors, intellectual pursuits, and our goals, because we prioritize passive media consumption. We jeopardize our income, education, careers, and overall success by procrastinating and repeatedly using media during study and work hours. We lose faith in ourselves and hope for the future.
10. **Disconnection From our Bodies and Nature**: We become detached from our body and do not fully enjoy all of our senses. We fail to meet our body’s basic needs for rest, sleep, exercise, and proper nutrition. We hide indoors with media while avoiding the beauty, belonging, connectedness, and nurturance found in the natural world.
11. **Physical Ailments**: With prolonged media consumption, we experience backaches, neck pain, headaches, sleep disturbances, digestive issues, carpal tunnel syndrome, and vision problems.
12. **Withdrawal Symptoms**: When we stop using our addictive media, we experience withdrawal and detoxification symptoms. Some do not stay stopped and succumb to the urge to use their addictive media. Each time they do this, they reignite the mental obsession and their amplified cravings make it increasingly difficult to stop again.

**WEEK 2**

**Gratitude Practice**: Reflect on some of the people, places, living beings, institutions, personal circumstances, experiences, or things you are grateful for. Select ten of them and write about them briefly. Read your gratitude list to someone or share them at an MAA meeting this week.

**Day 1 – Steps 2, 3 and 11**

**Writing Assignment**: Read the following passage from the Big Book (page 25) and answer the questions below. Read what you wrote to your sponsor this week.

* “If you are as seriously alcoholic 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 we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help. This we did because we honestly wanted to and were willing to make the effort.”

**Questions**: (a) Are you accepting spiritual help?

(b) Have you been willing to make an effort to bring a Higher Power into your recovery process?

(c) If so, how are you doing this now?

**Days 2 Through 5 *–* Step 4 and 5**

1. **Writing Assignment**: Read the following passage from the Big Book (page 67) and answer the questions below. Read what you wrote to your sponsor.
* “Notice that the word ‘*fear’* is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer, and the wife. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn’t deserve. But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling? Sometimes we think fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble.”

**Questions**: (a) Where has fear stolen the life you’ve really wanted?

(b) Where does fear keep you from surrendering to these steps?

1. **Reading**: Read ***A Few Thoughts on Fear*** (document in your packet).
2. ***Fourth Step Inventory Short Form Month 2 – Fear***

**Reading**: Read the following quote from the Big Book.

* “We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us? Self- reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn’t go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn’t fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.”

**Assignment**: Fill out your *Fourth Step Inventory Short Form – Fear* worksheet and make an appointment with your sponsor to read it to them by this weekend.

**WEEK 3**

**Gratitude Practice**: Reflect on some of the people, places, living beings, institutions, personal circumstances, experiences, or things you are grateful for. Select ten of them and write about them briefly. Read what you wrote to your sponsor this week.

**Day 1 – Steps 4, 5 and 6**

**Read** the following passages from the Big Book (page 68).

* “Perhaps there is a better way—we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.”

“We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality [is] the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.”

1. ***Fourth Step Long Form – Fear***

Complete your *Month 2 Fourth Step Long Form* for one of the fears you listed on your *Fourth Step Inventory Short Form*. Make an appointment with your sponsor to read it to them by this weekend.

**Day 2 and 3 – Steps 6 and 7**

1. Incorporate this into your daily **Quiet Time** and prayer by asking your Higher Power to remove your shortcomings and replace them with assets (*Seventh Step Prayer*).

**Day 4 – Steps 8 and 9**

1. ***Eighth Step Worksheet – People We Have Harmed*** and ***Eighth & Ninth Step – Amends Action Form***.
* Add new names (as they occur to you) to the *People We Have Harmed* worksheet and to your *Amends Action Form* and include the required details in each form.
* Discuss each new amends item with your sponsor.
* If you are ready and able, start making amends to those you have harmed. Start with the easier ones, as described in the *Amends Action Form*, and work your way to the more challenging ones.
1. ***Forgiveness Letter*: Apology Letter from your Higher Power to You**
* If you feel that there is a place in you that holds anger or resentment towards God or fate as it has manifested in your life, then write a letter from this Source to you. Allow this Higher Power to give you the apology you need to be able to heal this resentment. Include everything you would like to hear them say to you for you to feel satisfied and happy. Don’t hold back, and please keep the letter simple and concise.
* Please read this letter to your sponsor during your one-hour appointment this weekend.

**WEEK 4**

**Gratitude Practice**: Reflect on some of the people, places, living beings, institutions, personal circumstances, experiences, or things you are grateful for. Select ten of them and write about them briefly. Read what you wrote to your sponsor this week.

**Day 1 – Step 10**

**Writing Assignment**: Read the following **Tenth Step Principles** and answer the question below. Read what you wrote to your sponsor this week.

* We will work the Steps for the rest of our lives, God willing. There will be days we fall short and days we make mistakes. We may sometimes even take a step backward, but within Step Ten, we make the commitment to persist until we succeed. Our goal with step work is “*spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection*.”
* In our daily prayers, we ask God to do for us what we could not do for ourselves, which means to help us “*to continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear*.” When those crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately (**CONFESSION**), and we make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone (**INTEGRITY**). Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help (**GENEROSITY**). *“Love and tolerance of others is our code*.”
* **DAILY PERSEVERANCE** ultimately leads to **TRANSFORMATION**. Note that there is a difference between *change* and *transformation*. Change is ego-based, while transformation is spiritually based. Transformation is the difference between a caterpillar and a butterfly. Once the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, it cannot go back to being a caterpillar.
* In our Twelve-Step program, Steps One through Nine serve as the foundation of our recovery. Step Ten, however, is the step of real transformation. We must persevere if we are to transform into beautiful butterflies, and transformation does not happen overnight. Transformation occurs as we persevere over time when we are not looking. All the Principles of the program are encompassed by the Tenth Step—allowing our Higher Power to transform us, one day at a time if we persevere.

**Questions**: How are you going to persist in your recovery so you can have the promised transformation?

**Day 2 – Step 11**

**Daily Quiet Time**:Continue your Daily Quiet Time practice, by either adopting some (or all) of the suggestions below or by creating your own process—whatever feels right for you.

1. Find a clean, private, quiet place you can use daily for your practice.
2. Keep a notebook or journal dedicated for your **Two Way Prayer writing**. We cannot emphasize enough the value of writing during these daily sessions. It has helped us immensely in our recovery, connecting us to our true selves and to the *Realm of the Spirit*. For some, writing in itself is a form of meditation and prayer.
3. Schedule regular times during the day for your practice. This will help you build the habit of having daily spiritual connections.
4. Set a time limit so that your quiet time has a beginning, middle, and an end.
5. Select the prayers you wish to use in each of the three Daily Quiet Time sessions.1
6. Decide whether you would like to use music, chanting, singing, or any other tool to help you get closer to your Higher Power. 2
7. Set your plan in writing in the table below by entering details for your personal **Morning, Midday**, and **Evening Quiet Times**.

Enjoy this part of your day. Look forward to spending time with your Higher Power.

**Notes**: 1You can find prayer materials and the *Guided Two Way Prayer Meditation* script on MAA’s **Intergroups | Resources** page(<https://www.mediaaddictsanonymous.org/resources>). Also posted there are audio recordings of prayers and meditations.

MAA’s *Sunday Serenity 2-Way Prayer Meeting* (1 PM to 2 PM Eastern Time) is another great resource.

onlyo consider music for this short spiritual time of day if it is not part of your bottom-line, alcoholic media.

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| **Plan you Quiet Time! It will help keep you consistent.***(See examples below.)* |
| **Morning Quiet Time**  |
| Time of Day | **Length** | **Opening** | **Prayers** | **Meditation** | **Closing** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Midday Quiet Time** *(Set a timer to remind you.)* |
| Time of Day | **Length** | **Opening** | **Prayers** | **Meditation** | **Closing** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Evening Quiet Time** |
| Time of Day | **Length** | **Opening** | **Prayers** | **Meditation** | **Closing** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Example f**or **Morning Quiet Time** |
| 7 AM | 15-20 mins | Serenity Prayer | First Step Prayer | Two Way Prayer and writing | Third Step Prayer |
| **Example for Midday Quiet Time** |
| Noon | 10-12 mins | Serenity Prayer | Sick Man’s Prayer | 5-10 min Silent Meditation | Set Aside Prayer (2nd Step) |
| **Example for Evening Quiet Time** |
| 7 PM | 15-20 mins | Serenity Prayer | Seventh Step Prayer | 15-20 min Silent Meditation | St. Francis Prayer |

**Day 3 – Step 12**

**Writing Assignment**: Read the following passage from the Big Book (page 89) and answer the question below. Read what you wrote to your sponsor.

* “Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.”

**Questions**: (a) How have you begun to feel that you are making a difference in other people's lives?

(b) How has this helped your own program?

**Day 4 – Catch Up**

Use this day to catch up on your assignments. Make plans with your sponsor to continue your fast and continue to complete your Steps during the one-week break.

**Assignments Going Forward:**

1. **Repeat this Back-to-Basics process WITH a sponsor** for a third month without a break (for **90 days**). Continue your fast until you complete all your steps. This means continuing to fast during your group's one-week break.
2. **Sponsor** or continue to sponsor at least one person in the next Back-to-Basics round. Share the message when you can.
3. **Qualify** (share your experience) whenever you can at an MAA or a Media Recovery Underearners Anonymous meeting.
4. **Attend** at least two media related recovery **meetings** per week, and three is even better (this includes MAA, ITAA, and Media Recovery UA meetings)—spread the message by sharing your experience, strength, and hope.
5. Stay in touch with your **B2B Sobriety Group** on a daily basis.
6. **Listen to *“Back to Basics”* and *“There Is a Solution”* recordings** regularly. If you feel the urge to use or that your sobriety is on shaky grounds, ask your Higher Power for guidance, go to a meeting, make an outreach call, fill out an *Urge Surfing Worksheet*, and/or listen to a B2B/Solutions recording. You may find it helpful to start your day by reading recovery literature, including sections of the Back-to-Basics meeting scripts.
7. Continue to use **Two Way Prayer** on a daily basis.
8. Use ALL the **MAA Tools** daily or as many as you can on a given day.
9. **Give** **service** at media recovery meetings. Volunteer to serve as meeting moderator or to operate the Dashboard for the Saturday Qualifications phone meeting.
10. **Support your MAA meeting(s)** and help build them up by attending their monthly business meetings.
11. Apply the principles **Honesty**, **Confession** and **Freedom** with your sponsor to stay on track.
12. Finally, the most important assignment: **HAVE FUN EVERY DAY!** Enjoy your life. Insist on abundant living by regularly engaging in activities on your *Media Replacement Plan*. Find ways to be happy, joyous, and free without your media. Insist on enjoying your life.

**Definition of True Fun** (Source: *The Power of Fun* by Catherine Price)

“True fun … is the feeling of being fully present and engaged, free from self-criticism and judgement. It is the thrill of losing ourselves in what we’re doing and not caring about the outcome. It is laughter. It is playful rebellion. It is euphoric connection. It is the bliss that comes from letting go. When we are truly having fun, we are not lonely. We are not anxious or stressed. We are not consumed by self-doubt or existential malaise…. True Fun makes us feel alive.”

Discipline is remembering what you want. One hundred percent of your job is filling up your cup!