

**[The Buddhist Recovery Network does not officially endorse documents of this nature, but facilitates their distribution to promote discussion and debate].**

**HOW IT WORKS (revised and adapted from AA 'Big Book'. This is not an AA authorized revision but is a means to create inclusive and gender neutral language)**

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 that 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 that we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all 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 addictive substances or behaviors - cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power - that One is our Higher Power - may you find that Higher Power now.

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked our Higher Power's wisdom and care with complete abandon.

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

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addictions - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power as we understood that Higher Power to be.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to our Higher Power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to transform our failings into life lessons and understanding.
7. Humbly asked ourselves and our Higher Power as we understand our Higher Power to help us grow beyond our failings and honor our gifts.
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. We also made efforts to forgive others when possible.
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 our Higher Power as we understood our Higher Power, praying only for knowledge and wisdom to become our true self.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to 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 were willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter of the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we are addicted to substance or behavior and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our addiction.
- (c) That our Higher Power as we understand it could show us if we are ready.

***Note: this is a working draft document and all critiques or suggested changes should be addressed to [revalexholt@earthlink.net](mailto:revalexholt@earthlink.net) but he also hopes that the spirit of the 12-step program will be embedded in these linguistic changes. He has used this version at various 12-step meetings in Washington State and also at a Buddhist retreat on addiction and recovery.***