

**Step with Our Suggestions (SOS):  
The Experience, Strength and Hope  
of Alcoholics and Addicts**

By

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## Preface<sup>1</sup>

When Gene Mason and I began writing an article<sup>2</sup> about homeless people in recovery from addiction, he showed me a journal that he had kept when he stayed at the Center for Addictive Behavior at Tewksbury State Hospital, Tewksbury, Massachusetts for six months in 1997 and 1998. CAB is primarily a holding facility for people in recovery who have completed their sentence in jail or prison and are waiting for a place in a halfway house or treatment program upon release to the outside world. It is similar to stations for the military where soldiers wait to be sent to war. Everyone is anxious, uncertain about his or her future. They know that they will face a life and death situation, and many are not sure whether they will survive. The residents at CAB know that if they relapse, they could overdose; if they do not die, they will inevitably be sent back to jail after another addiction-induced crime, and many would rather die than go back. They do not know what halfway house or treatment program they will go to and when. Few have friends or loved ones to turn to upon release. Their family and friends have the right to protect themselves from their excesses.

I was amazed at Gene's encyclopedic journal, called *Save Our Suggestions: The Experience, Strength and Hope of Alcoholics and Addicts, A Work in Progress*. *Save Our Suggestions* is a meticulous compilation of notable things that recovering addicts and alcoholics said at Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings. Gene had recorded these expressions at CAB and at many other places where he attended meetings on his road to recovery. There are currently

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Wong works at Education Development Center, Inc. in Newton, Mass. He dedicates this article to Father Thomas Szeliga, who celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> year as a priest in October 2001, and who promoted a simple but effective cure for addiction: work, love, and prayer.

<sup>2</sup> John Wong and Gene Mason, "Reviled, Rejected, but Resilient: Homeless People in Recovery and Life Skills Education," *Georgetown Journal for Poverty Law and Policy*, Vol. 8.2, 2001.

more than 5,000 quotes in the *Save Our Suggestions* collection. Gene continues to collect quotes each time he attends an AA and NA meeting. It is a living document.

These bursts of words and phrases by recovering alcoholics and addicts offer penetrating insight into the world of addiction and recovery. Meeting attendees expressed deep personal feelings, often reluctantly, but they were articulate and perceptive. They expressed a full spectrum of emotions, ranging from the darkest thoughts about suicide to the elation of reuniting with their loved ones after becoming sober; from humorous recounting of regrettable things they had done while intoxicated to somber accounting of their financial, personal, and spiritual losses. Gene and I soon realized we should share, not merely save, the suggestions. We selected 360 quotes and wrote *Share Our Suggestions* to illustrate the process of addiction and recovery.<sup>3</sup> The intended audience of *Share Our Suggestions* is the general public. Our goal is to raise awareness of the heroic struggles of the addicted to reach sobriety.

*Save Our Suggestions* could also be a tool to help people with their recovery from addiction. These quotes are valuable because one of the more insidious facets of alcohol and drug addiction is that it drains the life out of relationships. It severs connection to family and community and the resulting feelings of isolation and loneliness feed the need for the welcoming arms of drugs. As one AA and NA meeting attendee referred to the worsening isolation, "My life got smaller and smaller." In loneliness, many addicts become bitterly self-centered, thinking that no one else has endured what they are suffering.

But they are not alone. More than 2 million people call themselves members of AA.<sup>4</sup> NA holds nearly 20,000 weekly meetings in 70 countries.<sup>5</sup> By sharing the

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<sup>3</sup> Save Our Suggestions has been submitted to serial magazines for publication.

<sup>4</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. AA Fact File, 1998. [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/english/E\\_FactFile/M-24\\_d1.html/](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/english/E_FactFile/M-24_d1.html/) Last visited December 29, 2001

<sup>5</sup> Narcotics Anonymous. "Basic Facts." <http://na.basicwebpage.org/facts.html/> Last visited December 29, 2001

voices of people attending AA and NA meetings, we hope that readers who are recovering addicts and alcoholics will find a sense of communion with others; and readers who are not will find a bridge to understanding the plight of addicts and alcoholics and to support their recovery. This is the intent of *Step with Our Suggestions*.

Addiction Experts have evaluated AA's effectiveness. Gorski states that The Twelve Steps of AA is the "single most effective tool for recovery."<sup>6</sup> Frances and First concludes that, "Alcoholics Anonymous (and its offshoots) is the great success story in the treatment of addictions."<sup>7</sup> In his longitudinal research study that examined the lives of 400 people over 40 years, Vaillent found that "more recovered alcoholics ... began stable abstinence while attending Alcoholics Anonymous than while attending alcoholic treatment centers."<sup>8</sup> Founded in the 1930s, AA has led to many other support groups using the same philosophy and methodology, including Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous National Organization, Sexual Addicts Anonymous, and Recovering Couples Anonymous.

The Twelve Steps are a progression that instructs and guides addicts and alcoholics to develop truthful and meaningful relationships with themselves, God, the AA and NA group, and family and community. The Twelve Steps center on truthful self examination; trust and dependence on God; mutual acceptance and support with other alcoholics and addicts; and humility, honesty, and redemption in integrating back with family, community, and society. The following chart illustrates how the Twelve Steps develop the self and progress in relationships with God, other addicts and alcoholics, and family and society.

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<sup>6</sup> Gorski, p. X.

<sup>7</sup> Frances and First

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Relationship	Steps	Self	God	AA/NA Group	Family Society
Establish and develop	Step One: Admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable				
	Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than us could restore us to sanity.				
	Step Three: Made a decision to turn my will and my life over to God				
	Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves				
	Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs				
	Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character				
	Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings				
	Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all				
	Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others				
Maintain and grow	Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it				
	Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for His will and the power to carry that out				
	Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs				

John we previously said 360 quotes.

We chose 505 quotes from *Save Our Suggestions for Step with Our Suggestions* and organized them according to the 12 Steps of AA and NA. For each step, we explain the concept behind it and present quotes that can be a source of resonance and support to recovering addicts and alcoholics in their difficult task of working the steps. In writing this book, we tried to convey the meaning, lessons, and principles expressed in the quotes, guided in no small part by Gene's own experience with addiction and recovery. The power of this work is its authenticity of voice.

## Prelude: Origin of SOS<sup>9</sup>

The atmosphere at the Center for Addictive Behavior and other holding facilities for alcoholics and addicts that I have been in, is full of fear. A "waiting for death" syndrome engulfs the people there. Call them patients, residents, inmates, or detainees, take your pick. There is one that reflects the perspective of your choosing. The experience is the same regardless of the label. I saw fear and dependence often during the six months I was in CAB in 1997 and 1998. I have seen it often when I return, as I do regularly, to carry the message of hope to the 170 or so men held there.

I went there from jail, only a forty-day stay this time, and in the recovery unit at that. I was there for several charges of "larceny over \$250", and was being "surrendered" by my probation officer. There was no doubt in my mind that I was going away again for several years. They had given me loads of chances. I had over a dozen arrests and convictions for "larceny over \$250" during the two to three years preceding this latest arrest. When I went to court, I was prepared not to see the outside for three years.

When I was brought before the judge, my probation officer was nowhere to be found. So my lawyer began describing the reasons why I needed another chance to recover. All of a sudden, with a burst of energy, my probation officer came running into the courtroom. She was waving my court papers over her head and yelling out to the judge that I had had too many chances. She was full of fire. I

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<sup>9</sup> Gene Mason is a former professor and college vice president, and author of several books and numerous articles in refereed journals, journals of opinion, and law reviews. He has been a successful fund-raiser and prosperous businessman. He was a candidate for the U.S. Congress. (See Gene Mason, "A Middle Class Trip Through the American Judicial System," in Gene Mason and Fred Vetter, Eds., *The Politics of Exploitation*. New York: Random House, 1973.) He holds a Ph.D. in political science. Dr. Mason also has a life-long battle with drugs and alcohol. Due to his addiction, he suffered tremendous professional, financial, physical, and personal losses. He hit "rock bottom" many times. He lived on the streets and his blood pressure was so high for so long that he developed congestive heart failure. His physician

couldn't take my eyes off of her and neither could the judge. My attorney noticed and whispered that I should look at the judge and not at her. I did. Then the judge stopped looking at her and looked at me. As he looked at me she began losing his attention. When she completed her lengthy oration, the judge said, "I disagree." "What could he be thinking?" I thought. "Not enough time?"

The judge simply turned to me and said, "I'm going to give you another chance at treatment. Find a 28-day residential program and get in it within 10 days." The smallest feather could have toppled me in my boots. I was weak. The judge told me to go down to the Substance Abuse Clinic and get a plan. I could not believe it. The bailiff took the handcuffs and shackles off of my wrists and ankles. As I walked down to the clinic I was dizzy, very dizzy.

I knew the head of the clinic. He had interviewed me before to make a recommendation to the various judges I found myself in front of. I loved his spiritual presence. When I walked into his office, he recognized me. He stood. He asked me what I was there for. I have never done this before, but I simply said, "I think I'm here to thank God." He said, "Let's do it together." We stayed standing. He asked me to hold his hands. And we prayed.

After we finished, he said, "You'll find your way to a program. You won't need my help." I thought for sure that I needed his help, but I walked out and promised to stay in touch.

I had no idea where to go or to whom to talk. I walked toward Boston's Chinatown and the old "combat zone." I knew about St. Francis House, that it was a day shelter, and I could get off the dangerous streets and figure out what to do.

When I got to St. Francis House I went upstairs to the day room and sat down. I needed to sit down. I was approached by a young man, a staff person, a

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recommended that he be placed on the heart replacement list. Today, he has made the hard climb back to sobriety, work, good health, and loving relationships with family and friends.

half-hour or so later. He told me his name was Jim and asked if he could help me. I told him what had happened and that I wanted to go to Tewksbury, that I had been trying to get past the answering machines for a month, without success. He said, "Come with me." I walked to his small office. He made a phone call, then turned to me and said that a van would pick me up at 1:00 PM the following day. God, I thought. It took him ten seconds, and I couldn't get past the recording devices in a month's effort!

I found a bed in another shelter that evening. I was up at 5:00 AM and went to a Bible study group and prayed with them for an hour. Then I walked over to St. Francis House and anxiously awaited the arrival of the van. Jim gave me access to a telephone and I called the man at the Court's Substance Abuse Clinic. He knew I had been a fundraiser for non-profit organizations much of my life and asked if I wanted to help him start a spiritually-based halfway house when I finished the 28-day program at CAB. I couldn't believe that someone wanted me to help them do something right. Another first, I thought. Doors were opening for me everywhere I turned.

In jail I had surrendered. I had thrown in the towel. I wanted whatever God had in store for me. I was just putting one foot in front of the other, and wonderful things were happening to me with no real struggle. My doubts were there, of course. But I accepted everything, no matter what it was. I had read in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous that this was the way things would happen when I took Steps One and Two of the Twelve Steps<sup>10</sup> (Step One: Admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than us could restore us to sanity.)

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<sup>10</sup> The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous is the book of principles that guide AA.

The van trip took longer than the 45 minutes I anticipated. It made lots of stops to pick up others. When we did arrive my doubts surfaced. It was the smell. I had been to a dozen mental hospitals over the past twenty-five years to see my brother. As I moved from state to state I would get him transferred so we could be near one another. This place smelled just like all of those places.

When they found out that I had a heart condition, they put me on First Floor East. This is the wing for the infirm. I walked into the room that held seven men. I struck up a few conversations. I figured that since I was going to be there for 28 days, I should get to know my roommates.

Red introduced himself. We chatted for a bit. Everyone seemed to know him and like him. I thought there was a lot of familiarity among the men. I asked Red how he liked the place. He replied that he had been there over a hundred times. I was stunned. Then I asked how long he stayed each time. "Well, I've been here 17 months so far this time." I didn't think anyone stayed there longer than 28 days.

Red introduced me to Chet. He had been there seven years.

Chet introduced me to Kenny. He was wearing a cape and a crown and lots of lipstick. He was so proud that he held the record: twenty-seven years in the same room. I was ready to bail out! Panic was striking. My heart fluttered like a hummingbird's wings.

"Be calm, Gene," I told myself. "Maybe there is something here you don't understand quite yet." It was hard to be calm. My best thought was that if they can do it, I could do it.

As I later learned, these men were considered permanent residents. They could stay as long as they liked. It was not a 28-day program for them or for anyone else.

The 28-day notion was the way they got us to come there—"I can do 28 days standing on my head," I said to myself. But if they had told me my stay was

indeterminate, I might not have been so grateful. But I was. After all, I was facing several years in jail.

When in jail, I had started to read the Bible daily. Since I thought I was going to be locked up for several years, I figured some self-improvement program would be in order. Now it looked like I might be able to actually read the entire Bible. I didn't, but I read a great deal and felt improved by it.

A few days into the CAB program, I realized that I didn't have much time to read. The lights had to be turned off early. Most of my roommates were asleep before 8:30 or 9:00 PM. I was restless and developed the habit of going down to the service desk and talking with a staff man named Jerry. He was a huge man and had a huge, well-worn Bible. I asked him to suggest readings for me. He just loved to do that. He would say, "Go read Luke Chapter 19." I did. The Parable of the Ten Gold Coins is a story about using the gifts that God has given us and make it multiply. In my condition, I didn't have anything to give away. So that night I prayed for love so I would have something to give away.

The next day I had so much love to give away I startled people. It was really noticeable. Other men would ask me why I smiled so thoroughly. They were amazed at something. I was overwhelmed.

That evening I went down to Jerry and told him what was happening. I asked him for some other passages to read. All of this was virtually incomprehensible for me. I had never experienced anything like this. Jerry readily gave me the citations. They were all about asking God for more love and being overwhelmed by it. Jesus told the man again that if he was overwhelmed by giving away God's love, he should ask for more love. And give it away! I could hardly believe it, but I was so overwhelmed that I did it again. And I was overwhelmed again.

By then I learned that no one knew when or to where he was going to be discharged. They were all waiting for beds to become available in halfway houses. I

didn't care how long I stayed there. I was not in charge. I was safe because I was not in charge. For almost twenty years I had not been able to be safe from my addictions and myself. Now I was safe.

And I was busy. I went to five recovery meetings each day. I was walking a couple of miles a day, around the building and around the building. I sang to myself when I was far enough away for no one to overhear.

I've always been an organizer. I wanted to organize the men there. I want to see them develop additional bonds of unity in recovery. So I started what I thought would be a three or four page newsletter. I asked two other men there, Lee and Kevin, an artist, to help. They were so willing and worked very hard. The first issue was over thirty pages. People were so hungry for it when it was distributed. It was fun and positive and rewarding. We thought it was enriching. People wanted to be in it. Many of the men volunteered to do something for the next issue. Even the CAB Transitions Director thought it was "awesome, just awesome."

I asked the director to permit me to bring a computer there and give me a room with a lock on it. They did! This permission was totally outside of my experience in a total institution, and I had spent years in them. We put poster board on the wall with our plans for the next issue.

A very popular section of the first issue was called "SOS" (Save Our Suggestions). It was full of those sayings AA and NA folks espouse and put on bumper stickers. It had been almost twenty years since I was first forced to attend AA. I hated going. I did not want anyone to interfere with my perceived right to drink and drug. And I hated those simplistic sayings. Simple sayings were for simpletons. I thought I should probably rewrite the Big Book of AA, the right way. Now, I was collecting as many of these sayings as I could. And planning to publish them!

At that time I thought there were only fifteen or twenty such sayings that were commonly recognized as worthy of remembering and repeating. But when I

started recording what I wanted to remember and repeat, a whole new world opened up to me. In the first issue we selected for publication 200 of the “sayings” we collected. The next month we published 200 more, and then 200 more in the third issue. **Then I prepared to leave CAB.**

In May 1998 I was admitted to the St. Francis House Moving Ahead Program (MAP). It is an intensive 14-week life skills and job readiness program. Frankly, with only six months in continuous recovery I felt unprepared to be on my own. I wanted to stay in some form of protective custody. MAP required that I reside in a halfway house and attend MAP classes daily. I was still full of fear to leave Tewksbury, but at least this way I stayed wrapped in recovery for another five months or so. During that time Lee and I continued to record and collect what we wanted to remember at AA and NA meetings. Kevin would draw cartoons illustrating the sayings. In Tewksbury, we had collected quotes primarily from the residents, who were all men. We had also collected some quotes from women visitors attending the meetings. Away from Tewksbury, there were more women speakers to quote.

Soon, others at the halfway house joined us in this process. When we returned to the halfway house late in the evening we would record in my computer what we collected. Others pooled what they heard and wanted to remember. We heard what we could identify with and had a grand time laughing about how crazy we were. Six hundred sayings collected at Tewksbury soon turned to thousands.

I have continued this process to this very day, having collected three more at the last meeting I attended. My book collaborator, John Wong<sup>11</sup>, and I picked 505 quotes for this article. The number looked like SOS. Even to this day, I can see the faces of most of the people behind these quotes.

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<sup>11</sup> We are writing a book on cases of formerly homeless people in recovery who have successfully moved to mainstream society and the treatment methodology that have helped them make that transition. Three such cases are presented in John Wong and Gene Mason, “Reviled, Rejected, but Resilient: Homeless People in Recovery and Life Skills Education,” *Georgetown Journal for Poverty Law and Policy*, Vol. 8.2, 2001.

Perhaps you can identify with the quotes we share with you now. A larger collection of 3,676 quotes is presented at [www.verbatimdesign.com/sos](http://www.verbatimdesign.com/sos). We hope that this abridged presentation of the quotes and the SOS collection can be a dynamic document, and that people in AA and NA will continue to contribute to it. For as long as hopelessness, fear, loneliness, despair, and utter human misery plague the addicted, there is a fellowship that will help them escape from their demons.

**Step One: Admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.**

The main principle of Step One is that alcoholics and addicts can not control their addiction and therefore can not manage their lives. Because of excessive alcohol and drug abuse, everything in their lives has spiraled out of control. As AA and NA members said in meetings " I drained my spirit and raped my soul." Because of addiction, they have lost everything that make them healthy, safe, happy, loving, and loved. That their lives have become unmanageable is manifested in the reality that they have lost loved ones, jobs, freedom, health, and nearly their lives. Step One may take a long time to accomplish. One AA and NA meeting participants admitted, "It took me thirty-four years of use to admit I was an addict."

AA and NA meeting participants talked remorsefully about hurting their loved ones, how their addiction destroyed relationships and lives. As one said, "The people

I sold my kids' winter clothing right before it got cold. I was trying to figure how to get the washer out of the house.
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My mother did everything she could to keep me from drinking and drugging, and I wanted to take her life for it.
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Eventually, I took the money from my kid's piggy bank to buy crack.
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I left my nine-year-old daughter at home alone, emptied my bank account, and was out there doing my own thing.
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I left the hospital early after I had my baby to start shooting coke again.
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My children became the parents when I became the child.
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I gave away five children and three wives. Willingly.
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My son used to call someone else "Dad." I know this was a direct result of my drinking and drugging.

I can't forget the pain I inflicted on my family when they had to take my kids.

I stole my baby's internal organs. [a female addict whose child was born with physical disabilities due to the mother's addiction]

My daughter's head got bashed. That's where drugs took me.

For addicts in AA and NA meetings, the unmanageability of life manifested itself not only at home but also in the workplace. Their addiction affected their work, ruining careers and livelihoods. They lost interest and motivation to work, or they simply could not perform up to standard. Alcoholism and drug use lead to increased absenteeism, industrial accidents, turnover, premature death, and medical costs. More than 14 percent of Americans employed full- and part-time report heavy drinking.<sup>12</sup> Seventy-three percent of all current drug users aged 18 and older (8.3 million adults) work, including 6.7 million full-time workers and 1.6 million part-time workers<sup>13</sup>. The cumulative result on the economy is a staggering loss of productivity—estimated at 246 billion dollars<sup>14</sup>. The participants at AA and NA meetings traced their loss of livelihood to their addiction. They recognized the debilitating aspects of drug and alcohol. At first, the addiction got in the way of work. Then work got in the way of drugs and alcohol.

I'm a physician, addicted to Valium. I ate my mail. [The speaker was referring to samples sent by drug companies.]

I was a bus and train inspector. I got high on the job daily. I drove the T myself down

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<sup>12</sup>

<sup>13</sup>

<sup>14</sup> National Institute of Health

to Field's Corner to buy more drugs. [The speaker did not have the authority to drive a train. He just took the train for his use.]

I lost my job as a cop. I lost my family. I lost my pension. I kept my heroin and took it to detox after detox until I went to jail.

I was with the air control warning system in the Air Force. I was passed out half the time and drunk all the time when I was protecting you.

My boss said working and drinking don't mix, so I quit working for two years.

I wanted to grow up to be the greatest American writer. Instead, I'm a not so great American waiter.

Cocaine turned my construction business into a non-profit corporation, almost overnight.

I was doing coke in the bathroom at my office and having liquid lunches.

Booze took away my self-respect, my dignity, my honesty and my trade.

I worked in a medical library, and drank to seven in the morning. I would pass out in the stacks.

I would drink during work and learned the meaning of on the job absenteeism.

College was basically a blackout.

I had a scholarship to be a diver, and on my way to work with an Olympic diver, I was too busy smoking weed and thinking about what bicycles I could steal on the way home.

I didn't want to work. I was losing my will to live.

As addicts lose their capacity to work, they still need to find money to support their drug habits. When they can no longer scam their family and friends for their increasing need for drug money, they resort to crime. The possession and use of illicit drugs and illegal behavior associated with drug and alcohol are the most

significant reason why so many Americans are incarcerated in prisons and jails. There are 1.7 million adult Americans in prison and 1.4 million of them are addicted to drug and/or alcohol and became incarcerated because of their addiction. Eighty percent of the prison population has a history of substance or alcohol abuse, committed the crime under the influence, and/or committed the crime in order to feed their habit<sup>15</sup>. Alcohol and drugs are closely associated with violence crimes and injuries. Committing the crime under the influence of alcohol or a drug accounts for a significant portion of inmates incarcerated for violent crimes: 25 percent at state prisons, 17 percent at federal prisons, and 30 percent in jails. In addition, a significant proportion was incarcerated for committing crime under the influence of more than one drug or a combination of drug and alcohol: 28 percent at state prisons, 22 percent at federal prisons, and 25 percent in jails<sup>16</sup>. Violence and crime become part of the lives of many addicts and alcoholics.

I was food shopping at my Mother's house, and shoplifting at my Father's.
I was on a first-name basis with the loss prevention staff of all the major department stores in Boston.
113 arrests. 69 convictions. All behind my addiction.
I had six DWI convictions, and totaled thirteen cars.
When I drink I don't end up in Palm Beach sipping an exotic drink, I end up in jail.
At the end of my using, all I could do was steal, con and cop.

<sup>15</sup> Yet only 18 percent of inmates who need addiction treatment receive it in prison and jail. While the need has increased by 22 percent from 688,415 inmates to 840,188 inmates in state and federal prisons from 1993 to 1996, the number of inmates getting treatment has reduced by about one percent from 150,498 to 149,246 (CASA, 1998). Moreover, these treatment programs tend to be sporadic, poorly funded, and less intensive than they should be. The high rate of addiction among the prison population is clearly associated with the comparably high rate of recidivism. Researchers have argued that "it would take \$6,500 per year to treat an inmate for substance abuse and provide him/her with vocational training. But for every inmate that returns successfully to society, such programs would save \$68,000 in reduced crime, prosecution, and incarceration costs and potential earnings in the first year after release (Califano, 1998)."

<sup>16</sup> CASA, p. 9.

I got a brother in New York doing twenty-five to life. He still doesn't remember that he killed somebody.

My face beat up a lot of fists.

I saw people being gunned down for a twenty.

My brother gave me a beating of biblical proportions and dropped me off in a detox.

The cops hauled me off. I got beat with a chain trying to buy coke. I broke my hand hitting someone I thought was trying to beat me. I led the denial contingent in detox.

My wrecked cars could fill this room.

At the age of fifteen, I lost my middle finger but that's fine--they put it back on.

At the end, I was constantly having accidents, falling down stairs, giving myself a black eye. I couldn't stop when I wanted to.

John, shouldn't the next paragraph be in the present tense, i.e.,  
 "turns morose", "talk about the injuries"?

The tone of AA and NA meetings often turned morose. The participants talked about the injuries, health problems, and other physical deprivation they go through because of their addiction. In 1997 there were close to 10 million cases of illnesses and injuries related to alcohol and 3.1 million illnesses and injuries related to illicit drugs<sup>17</sup>. Attendees recounted the extreme measures they took to feed their habits and the consequences of their actions.

I OD'd so many times, I'd just pull up to the hospital and shoot up in the bathroom.

I always carried guns with me in my pickup, a pistol, three rifles, and me. I don't

<sup>17</sup> *Prevention Alert*, Vol. 2, Number 22, July 23, 1999. [www.health.org/govpubs/prevalert/html-p43/v2page21.htm](http://www.health.org/govpubs/prevalert/html-p43/v2page21.htm) Last visited September 6, 2001.

know why. I put the pistol inside my mouth and blew the side of my face off. I don't know why. I continued to drink for ten years.

I overdosed four times. I was fortunate that someone was with me to take me to the hospital. Every time I was discharged, I went immediately for more heroin and coke. I couldn't stop even when I was scared.

I would wake up in bed with a man I don't know. Then I'm HIV positive.

I'm thirty-seven, and have been druggin' heavy since I was thirteen. I've been stabbed twice, shot once, had my skull fractured and my neck broken. I didn't know why I keep doing this.

I had to have bile coming out of my ass, my mouth and my nose at the same time. Still, it didn't scare me.

Booze did everything it was supposed to do to me. It took everything I had before I tried to commit suicide.

I've had my heart zapped four times in the last three years.

Again, "talk often about death"--

The mounting losses would eventually drive addicts and alcoholics to the depth of despair. Meeting participants talked often about death, their own or those of those people around them; the inevitability of early death if they do not stay clean and sober; and the despair and hopelessness that plague them with thoughts of suicide. Their words about death spotlight how extreme and desperate many lives would become. Statistics show that their foreboding is warranted. Just two years before the year Gene entered CAB, 1997, there were 105,000 alcohol-related and 38,900 drug-related deaths in the United States.

I attempted suicide six times before I got here. When I came here all I could think about was suicide. Now I think about suicide only once or twice a day.

<p>My disease can afford to be patient. For the rest of my life, it just wants one more fuck-up from me.</p>
<p>My disease sits in a Barcalounger, lights a cigar, and waits. That is all it has to do.</p>
<p>Death plays a big role in my recovery. When my brother died, I got drunk. When my father died, I got sober. When my sister died, I got the steps.</p>
<p>My parents called me once a week to see if I was still alive.</p>
<p>At the beginning, this disease is a lot of fun. At the end you go right up to the assassin and say shoot me.</p>
<p>I literally had a guy pull a gun on me over a dime [a \$10 piece of crack or bag of heroin]. I put the gun in my mouth and told him to go ahead and do me a favor.</p>
<p>My brother died in the arms of his son with the brains from the back of his head all over the wall. That's alcoholism.</p>
<p>I've done jails and mental hospitals. The next thing for me is death. I truly believe that.</p>
<p>I wanted my little brother to be just like me. He was. It killed him.</p>
<p>Drugs just killed my sister. I kept getting high.</p>
<p>I became obsessed with ending my life.</p>
<p>I've been using alcohol, coke and heroin since I was thirteen. I had a son who was adopted through DSS. I had a daughter and another son. They both died of overdoses. I was in the house when my son died. I didn't notice it for eight hours. I don't use today.</p>
<p>I lost fifteen friends over the last ten years to banging coke.</p>
<p>My best friend really hit the hard drugs. I talked with him one night, he blew his head off the next.</p>

## **Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than us could restore us to sanity**

Addicts and alcoholics live in a world of chaos. The essence of Step Two for the addict and alcoholic is to accept the notion that they can not change this insane world, but a Higher Power—God—can. As they deal with liver damage, hepatitis, ICU stays, incarceration, homelessness, or close brushes with death, many addicts and alcoholics try to muster the willpower to change. However, a tortured summoning of self-control generally does not result in sobriety. As they try to be self-sufficient, they turn inward, become even more isolated, and more vulnerable to drugs and alcohol.

My relationship to booze was insane.
Many of us tried to quit using with will power alone.
I continued to get worse by using my own will.
I thought I could beat this disease by outsmarting it.
I didn't understand that I was insane when I was drunk.

Many AA and NA meeting attendees tried to run away from their problems, attempting "geographic cures." They believed that they could control their obsessions by changing their address. They soon found that new locales have the same temptations and succumbed to them.

I moved to another town and stopped drinking, for a minute.
I went from Ireland to Saudi Arabia thinking I wouldn't drink. I found the home brew

black market and drank everyday.
If you crate up a jackass, ship it some place, when you uncrate it, it's still a jackass.
My never-ending feeling was that if I could just move to somewhere else, I would be O.K. I brought my problems with me every time.
I had about twenty-five addresses within a six year span.
I put everything on the outside back together, but forgot about the inside.

I like the next paragraph—it's in the present tense.

During this chaos, addicts and alcoholics lose their perspective, judgment, and sense of reality. Drug and alcohol affect their thinking and they become paranoid, neurotic, and emotional. In their impaired state of mind, they feel grandiose about themselves but in reality they are powerless in managing their lives.

I was a hundred and seven pounds, and I'd walk through Mission Hill daring people to hurt me. Nothing scares an addict.
I would sell things out of my house to buy drugs and convince myself someone stole them from me. I even bought very expensive locks for my windows.
We got so paranoid off cocaine that we thought there were people looking in our window on the fifth floor.
I thought I was Al Capone, but I was only Al Coholic.
I was drunk, shot in the hand with a .357. I got off the ground and said, "See, they can't kill me."
Sometimes I get disappointed that I'm not going to be the next Napoleon Bonaparte.
I thought I was justified in all the childish and grandiose things I've done.
Oblivion drinking led to oblivion drugging to oblivion behavior.

Now we went back to the past tense. Shouldn't we stay in the present?

At some point in this process, many addicts and alcoholics sought a Higher Power. In AA and NA language, they surrendered. They needed to surrender in order to achieve fundamental change. They realized they had to relinquish control of their decisions and leave it to a power that can finally change their insane ways: "I really want to give myself a chance. I don't want to go through that insanity again."

I thought trying to get sober over and over again was insanity.
Self-reliance and no God lead to insanity.
Instead of having a power greater than myself. I always tried to be a power greater than myself.
I didn't quit, I surrendered.
Let go of control so you can get control.
I was filled with self-sufficiency, and I cut myself off from any power greater than myself.
I said "God, help me please, I'm a sorry mofo".
I'm in bad company, when I'm by myself.
I can't, He can; I let Him.
I've gotta be changin my way, or they gonna be closin that coffin on me.
My skin was breaking out from the second stage of syphilis. I thought I was allergic to musk oil. They asked me at the hospital what men I'd been with. I didn't know. Maybe ten, three or so the first hour. I thought she was talking about last night. I surrendered.
Accept what your addiction has done and submit to defeat.

### **Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God as we understood Him**

In Step One, alcoholics and addicts accept their powerlessness over alcohol and drugs. In Step Two, they surrender to a Higher Power that can help them. In Step Three, they ask for and accept that help. As one AA and NA participant said, "I was an empty shell at the end;" addicts and alcoholics as such can become a vessel to which help can flow. "I got to the end. I couldn't imagine taking another step in the direction I was going. I asked God for help."

Step Three, however, does not mean to passively wait for assistance. Addicts and alcoholics have to study the Big Book to understand the principles, meaning, and ideas of the Twelve Steps. They should also seek professional help, to deal with any social, psychological, and physical needs. Step Three begins to build hope. There is a body of knowledge in the Big Book that can guide them through recovery. All they need to do is to open up to receive this help. Their "god" was their addiction<sup>18</sup>. Addicts and alcoholics are now willing to turn over control to God. To do so, Step Three addicts and alcoholics have take a step into the unknown. How sizable a jump of faith will depend on each addict and alcoholic's preconceived notion of God.

Step Three includes an important qualification: Made a decision to turn over our will and our lives to the care of God *as we understood Him*. The traditions of AA and NA describe God as a loving God. However, addicts and alcoholics who are not atheists may have different beliefs about the nature of God. These views include:<sup>19</sup>

- A "punishing God" who merely punishes them for their sins; believed to be "judgmental, strict, negative, rigid, cruel, and arbitrary"

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<sup>18</sup> Gorski, p, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Carnes, p.96-97

- An "accepting God" who cares about them regardless of the sins; viewed as "caring, trustable, loving, purposeful, compassionate, and predictable"
- A "noninvolved God" who does not care at all about the lives of human beings; thought of as "distant, indifferent, uncaring, nonattentive, absent, and disengaged."

Step Three accepts these varying perspectives. It teaches addicts and alcoholics to accept the following regardless of their initial perception:

- There is a God to understand.
- Addicts and alcoholics have a certain understanding about God at the beginning of the Twelve Steps program.
- As they work the Steps, they will find fundamental changes within themselves; this would include their understanding of God.<sup>20</sup>
- They should therefore keep an open mind about their understanding of God.
- They should allow that understanding to evolve as they work the Steps.
- God will reveal Himself to each addict and alcohol to adapt and enrich her or his understanding.

Acting on faith came as a relief for many participants of AA and NA meetings. They found solace. They found working Step Three takes a tremendous burden from them.

I had no problem with a Higher Power. Everything had more power than I did.
I can't do this alone.
It sure relieves the pressure of life to ask God for help.
Don't look too hard at the fact that you can't drink or drug. Give your will to a Higher Power. Look at what you can do with your life.

<sup>20</sup> Jensen, James. "Step Three: Turning It Over." Hazelden, p. 23.

I knew everything I needed to know clinically fifteen years ago about this disease.

That didn't get me sober. This program and my Higher Power keep me sober.

I grabbed onto a Higher Power. He takes care of my needs; my wants can come later.

Man makes plans; God makes results.

When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.

If I allow God to speak through me, I don't have to come up with my own solutions.

If you've got a lot of problems, give them to God tonight; He's going to be up all night anyway.

I wish to give myself to God. I ask him to give me the courage to do so.

## **Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves**

Step Four teaches participants to inventory their strengths and weaknesses. To open up to others and to accept help, AA and NA participants have to recognize their own positive and negative character traits. To work this step, addicts and alcoholics confront themselves about the problems that have led to their addiction. They write down the inventory. The act of putting it down to pen and paper underscores the importance of this step. As one attendee attested, "Before I wrote down my Fourth Step, I was convinced I was a piece of garbage. Until I got rid of my baggage with the Fourth Step, I had no idea how heavy it was."

It has been said that, in terms of importance, the Nile is to Egypt what denial is to an addict and alcoholic. The Nile is the source of life to Egypt, and denial is the source of excuses and lies that keep addicts and alcoholics from confronting the truth of their addiction. Participants in meetings often talk about DENIAL, the acronym for Don't Even kNow I Am Lying. They encourage each other to admit to the truth.

Addiction is a disease of denial, delusion and deception.
I wore a raincoat to shield me from the raindrops of denial. It was a throwaway coat because I only stayed sober three months.
I was in a state of solid denial for five years.
Denial is the falsehoods I tell about myself that I believe.
I'd tell myself a lie and believe it.
People told me for years, I was an alcoholic. I couldn't see it.
I hadn't a clue that I wasn't sober.
My mind has a built in self-defense mechanism. Sometimes it forgets where I came

from.
I came to AA fully convinced I wasn't an alcoholic.
The most perplexing thing about this disease is its denial stages.
If I'd made a list of my problems, I would have put alcoholism third or fourth on the list. I just didn't understand.
<b>Statements of denial</b>
You know, I'm a pretty important guy today. I'm sober. I wish all those other jerks would realize it.
When they told me to take inventory, I said, "well, I got three thousand in the bank, a house, a car."
It's hard to stay humble when you sound so good.
I never had any denial. I always knew I was an alcoholic.

While some attendees at meetings still struggle with denial, others are very perceptive about it. Addicts and alcoholics defend their actions by arguing that they have a right to drink and drug. Then they minimize their problem by thinking that others have a bigger habit than they did. "I'm really not that bad." Eventually they resent other people's interference and blamed others for the situation that they are in. "After a while, denial becomes defiance."

I gained a lot of skill at protecting my right to drink.
I didn't think I could be an alcoholic because I was not old enough to drink.
I thought everyone had a worse problem than I did.
Whenever any person said anything about the way I drank and drugged, I would change the subject.
I wasn't ready to admit I had that big of a problem.

I suffered severely from self-justification.
I thought conditions drove me to drink. I didn't think and needed change. I thought the world around me needed change.
I settled for less and thought it was more. I had a resentment to life.
I had unreasonable expectations of everyone else but myself.
I had real and imagined resentments toward everyone in my life.
All those excuses are right there at the bar.
I delayed taking a moral inventory because I attributed so much of my troubles to others.
I was defiant. Nobody was going to tell me nothing.

When the foggy steam of denial is wiped off, one can look clearly into the mirror. Meeting participants were perceptive in identifying the role of the ego. They thought of themselves as being self-centered and selfish—compulsively so. In the preface we presented the case that one of the most insidious aspects of addiction is that it severs relationships. Another side of this depravity is that alcohol and drugs feed on the ego and make it the center of everything. As one person said, "I was always the hero of the story."

It takes courage to put aside one's ego and look honestly at one's faults. It also takes much encouragement and nurturing. This assessment, done on paper and not just as a mental note, is a process of self-discovery. As one meeting member said, "I'm not in recovery. I'm in discovery." Step Four is the beginning effort to identify and then purge behavior that lead to addiction and block recovery.

The following are examples of faults identified in AA and NA meetings. They include false pride, selfishness, self-pity, resentment, fear, lack of responsibility, and dishonesty<sup>21</sup>.

I was an ignorant, callous, cold, self-centered twenty-year-old.
The self-centeredness of the alcoholic was me.
Pride and fear are the boogey men of the Fourth Step.
Pride keeps us in the streets for a long time.
I'm here because I'm selfish.
Self-pity is a huge, huge part of this disease.
I'm weak. All I'm thinking is what you're thinking about me.
I'm a chef. I wanted to stick my boss in the neck with a fork. He just didn't realize how important I think I am to myself.
My ego has always been bigger than my ability to listen.
I have relinquished the title of "God".
I don't want to be no King Baby today.
My wantness was all wrong.
In my drinking career, my only communication was with myself.
It was my inability to accept personal responsibility that led me to these halls.
I rebel at having to make plans because that involves me being responsible.
I could get around the responsibility of my own life by blaming those in charge.
The only thing this program wants is for me to be disciplined, responsible, reliable and dependable.
I wouldn't get sober, because I wouldn't get honest.

<sup>21</sup> These traits were also identified as characteristics that addicts and alcoholics need to address, as in Hazelden Foundation, "Step Four: Knowing Yourself." In

I was a resentment machine.

Anger, Resentment, Fear and Sex are what you deal with in the Fourth Step.

A concrete task that a person takes during Step Four is to identify a sponsor who will help work through all the steps, including helping to make the inventory of strengths and weaknesses. A sponsor is a recovering addict or alcoholic who serves as teacher, mentor, friend, supporter, and emergency call-in when one is severely tempted to drink or use drugs. The relationship between a sponsor and recovering addict is as unique as the individuals involved. [Get description from Seeds of Grace.]

My pride and my ego get in the way sometimes. This is why having a sponsor is so important.

Between my sponsor and my group, they saved my life.

My sponsor has never been my lawyer, my accountant or my banker. He is also not my life adviser. He is the guy I share the Steps with.

I call my sponsor each day, whether I talk with him or not.

My sponsor said he'd rather see a sermon than hear one.

Call me before you drink, or don't call me.

A good sponsor is as much helped as the person being sponsored.

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

Steps One through Four are preparations for Step Five. Steps One through Four are essentially inward looking—admitting that life has become unmanageable because of drug and alcohol, surrendering to God, asking God for help, and taking inventory of strengths and weaknesses. Step Five begins to look outward. While admitting to themselves their wrongs, addicts and alcoholics admit their wrongs to God and to another person they trust.

It's all about fixing what's wrong with us.
I was doing things I thought were right and they weren't. Then I was doing things I thought were wrong. Then I was doing things I knew were wrong and didn't care.
If you stab yourself so many times for so many years, you should know something is wrong.
When we admit we are powerless over our addiction, we gain more than personal strength. We become a part of the collective "we."

Step Five teaches participants to step outward, open up, and share. By sharing, they begin to search for meaning and acceptance in life and to address the underlying loneliness, lack of self-esteem, sorrow, self-pity, and other debilitating weaknesses that led to addiction. Step Five teaches participants to open up and confide in one person. AA and NA teaching does not prescribe a particular kind of individual for this purpose. It could be a professional involved in counseling, such as a priest or minister, drug counselor, and psychologist. It could be a family member,

AA and NA member, sponsor, or stranger. The essence of Step Five is the act of "Letting Go and Letting God"<sup>22</sup>. Addicts and alcoholics learn to relinquish tight-fisted control of their lives and share the burden and solution with God and with others, beginning with a trustworthy listener.

AA and NA meetings have been preparing addicts and alcoholics for Step Five all along the previous steps. At AA and NA meetings, people find acceptance a willingness to share. Sharing is difficult for many addicts and alcoholics given their history, and it could be traumatic, even to one person in confidence. It takes tremendous courage for addicts and alcoholics to speak openly and truthfully. However, once this initial fear is overcome, a transformation takes place. At AA and NA meetings, participants learn to open up, admit their wrongs, and find support in the group consciousness. Examples of how AA and NA meetings help addicts and alcoholics share experiences and help them work Step Five are as follow:

The first time I spoke I said, "My name is Jim and I'm an alcoholic. I hate being here." Two people patted me on the back and said, "It was great to hear from you."
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I would walk in AA and see people laughing, smiling and happy. I couldn't stand it.
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It blew me away that someone could admit they were wrong.
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He's a black man. I'm a white man. Big deal. We're both drunks and addicts. We're the best of friends.
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I get hugs and kisses just for being here.
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If I can fit into AA, I can fit in anywhere.
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When you come to AA, you're never alone again.
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<sup>22</sup> Edward Sellner, "Step Five: Reconciliation," in Hazeldon, p. 67.

## **Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character**

Step Six teaches addicts and alcoholics to turn weaknesses into strengths, flaws to virtues. Having identified the faults that led to addiction in Step Four and share them in Step Five, addicts and alcoholics now ask for the willingness and readiness to change. As one member said, "In AA, your weaknesses are turned into strengths."

To be willing and ready, addicts and alcoholics need to first identify the defects that they want to eliminate, acknowledge that these defects cause harm to themselves and to others, and commit to do what is necessary to get rid of the defect. In Step Six, addicts and alcoholics look to God for courage, hope, faith, and power to remove character defects, but they must also act to eliminate their vices<sup>23</sup>. Addicts and alcoholics will find it helpful to review Step One. In Step One, they admitted that they could not manage their addiction and lives. It follows that they are also powerless to change their character defects. Therefore, they need to ask God to change their flaws in order to gain control over their addiction and lives<sup>24</sup>. They refer to the inventory made in Step Four and focus on becoming willing to eliminate those defects<sup>25</sup>. In examining their lives, AA and NA meeting participants said the following concerning their character flaws:

I have only one character defect, my inability to see the other five hundred.
I'm FINE—fucked-up, insecure, neurotic and emotional.
I'm really good about bitching and moaning when it comes to any kind of

<sup>23</sup> Gorski, *Passage Through Recovery*, p. 79.

<sup>24</sup> Brandon, James. "Step Six and Seven: The Forgotten Steps," in Hazelden Foundation, pp. 72-74.

<sup>25</sup> *The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey*, p. 118-119.

responsibility.
I was an ignorant, callous, cold, self-centered twenty-year-old.
I'm not much, but I'm all I think about. I feel like an egomaniac with an inferiority complex.
I was a cheat, liar, thief, piece of shit, scumbag on the street.
I really got stuck on stupid.
I was loaded with no self-esteem.
I'm still in the frame of mind of an eleven-year-old kid.
In my addiction, I'm a coward.
I suffered severely from self-justification.
We're addicts. We have conniving minds.
I hurt a lot of people in my path, but, of course, it was your fault.
My character defects want me to be in the spotlight.

The next crucial aspect of Step Six is to ask God for the willingness to change. Addicts and alcoholics will find it helpful to examine each of their flaws and ask themselves questions such as the following:

- What do they fear will happen if they eliminate the particular defect?
- Why is it hard to let go of the particular frailty?
- What pain and suffering will be eliminated if the character defect is amended?
- What benefits will happen if the character weakness is reduced or eliminated?
- How would life improve?

By answering these questions, addicts and alcoholics can understand the problems that their flawed behavior has caused and the benefits that result if they change.

With that understanding, they become willing and ready to change.

If you come to these meetings, you'll change your attitude. If you change your attitude, you'll change your thinking. If you change your thinking, you'll change your behavior. If you change your behavior, you'll change your life. If you change your life, you'll change your destiny.

Change begins with the person we are, not the person we think we are.

I have to change this ass-hole into the person I am becoming.

I have to change everything on the inside and on the outside too.

I have to change my behavior to make it fit my heart.

Today, I'm struggling with the change in my life, but it's a positive change, and it's more than worth the struggle.

## **Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings**

Spiritual growth and personal development have transpired since Step One. In previous steps, addicts and alcoholics examined their personal side and admitted powerlessness (Step One), identified character traits (Step Four), and shared them (Step Five). On their spiritual side, they accepted a God (Step Two), decided to turn control over to God (Step Five), and asked God for the willingness to change (Step Six). In Step Seven, spiritual and personal changes converge in an essential transformation: addicts and alcoholics becoming humble and willing to ask God to change their shortcomings.

Humility is the foundation for accepting God and asking for change in moral character. In Step Four, addicts and alcoholics identified their flaws. Some of the words that meeting attendees used to describe their shortcomings to the group were: "callous, cold, self-centered, self-centeredness, fear, pride, selfish, self-pity, ego, and resentment." One said that he had held the title of 'God' in his own mind. Clearly, an underlying shortcoming for addicts and alcoholics is obsession to feed the extreme emotional and psychological needs of the self.

Step Seven teaches addicts and alcoholics to be humble. Humility manifests itself in many ways. First, addicts and alcoholics admit powerlessness. Second, they appreciate the fact that a High Power, not they, should be in control. Third, they are grateful that they are receiving help in their recovery.

I'm aware enough to know I am not in charge. I'm humble enough to know I should not be in charge.
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I had to be struck with humility before I could be open for faith in a Higher Power.
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My Father was an alcoholic who never got treatment because of his fear and pride. It
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killed him. My brother, an addict and a policeman, is following that pattern.
AA is a good place to learn what it means to be humble.
I got gratitude when community service kept me humble.
Get humility so you won't get humiliated.
I have to humble myself, especially when I'm being disrespected.
If I'm not humble, if I'm not grateful, I'm a dead duck.
It's amazing how humility and gratitude gives us such strength.

The fourth aspect of humility that addicts and alcoholics need to follow is to simplify their lives. Driven by their self-centeredness, addicts and alcoholics will create elaborate schemes, excuses, lies, and denials. To overcome these flaws, they need to make their recovery and lives simple and manageable. AA and NA slogans such as "Keep it Simple," "Easy Does it," and "Let Go and Let God" are important reminders for addicts and alcoholics as they work this step<sup>26</sup>.

Us alcoholics and addicts, we are very intelligent people. We complicate everything.
An addict will complicate a glass of water.
I've been to a lot of programs. For a long time I complicated it.
It's a simple program for complicated people.
Do not even listen; simply wait. Do not even wait; be quite still and solitary.
There is a lot to be said for the simple life. It is that way when I don't try to arrange it.
KISS=Keep It Simple Stupid

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<sup>26</sup> James Brandon, p. 77.

Step Seven is also readiness to take action. Addicts and alcoholics accept God's help to change their behavior.

I went to downtown Boston and didn't want to drink. That was the first sign for me.

I changed my room. I changed my sheets. I changed my habits. I changed my life.

I think of Miss America on July 4th, dressed up in an American flag outfit. She was so sexy. But I don't drink.

That spike can take a hike.

I don't need to use today, I don't need to trick today, I don't need to sell myself today.

I decided to get off the pain train.

I've been a crash dummy my whole life. I want to be a janitor and clean things up.

I don't want to be part of the living dead anymore.

I'd love to buy some hot tires for my car, but I can't. This place got me wicked honest.

If God does the steering and I do the rowing, I'm OK.

## **Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all**

"I was a tornado in people's lives," said one meeting participant. Addicts and alcoholics generally cause chaos in other people's lives as well as their own. Step Eight begins the process of rebuilding ruptured family and community ties. It focuses on the three R's of recovery: reconciliation and restoration of relationships.<sup>27</sup> To integrate back to civil society, addicts and alcoholics have to begin anew by purging their past. In Step Eight, they take full responsibility for their actions.<sup>28</sup> In previous steps, addicts and alcoholics admitted that their addiction have caused harm to others. In this Step, they list those harmed and become willing and prepared to make amends to them to the best of their ability. In Step Seven, addicts and alcoholics humbly allow God to change their defects. In Step Eight, they get ready to go into action. Before joining civil society fully, they become committed to redeeming themselves with people they have harm and forgiving persons who have harmed them.

The procedure is straightforward. Addicts and alcoholics ask themselves whom they have hurt because of their addiction and how they hurt them. They then ask what they can possibly do to rectify the damage done. Alcoholics and addicts also make a list of people who have done them harm. But rather than demanding amends from those people, addicts and alcoholics prepare to forgive them for the harm. Addicts and alcoholics are also encouraged to write down the following for each person harmed:<sup>29</sup>

- *Memories of harm done*, including the situation, actions, and reactions
- *Thoughts about the harm*—current reflections on what happened

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<sup>27</sup> Pat M. "Step Eight: Restoring Relationships," in Hazelden Foundation

- *Feelings about the harm*—current feelings, including shame, guilt, or pain
- *Intentions you now have*, including on what is to be accomplished and the motivation for making amends
- *Amends you can make for the harm caused*, listing specific actions that can be done, unless the contact may cause even more harm
- *Date*—entering the date when amends are carried out.

Harm includes not only wrongs inflicted on others, but also unfulfilled obligations. To feed their addiction, addicts and alcoholics often abandon their responsibility to their families and communities. They neglect their duties as spouse, parent, or offspring, and as a member of society. "Spiritual wrongs" or "acts of omission" also causes harm for which addicts and alcoholics should make amends.<sup>30</sup> Addicts and alcoholics talked about the many ways they neglected their responsibilities.

My wife died. I was a single parent with three kids. I drank until I gave them up, one by one, to DSS. I chose to drink rather than raise my children.
My house became a shooting gallery, and my son saw it.
It's hard to learn to be a mother. I left my six-year-old son when he was eight months old. He told me he hated me three times this week. He's got every right.
I missed a lot of life by being high. I missed a lot of my son's life by being high.
It blew me away to see how much damage I had done to my kids.
My little daughter knew all about drugs and alcoholism because of me.

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<sup>28</sup> The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey, p. 140

<sup>29</sup> Carnes, p. 229

<sup>30</sup> The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey, p. 141

After writing down the details of harms and amends, the addict and alcoholics focus on the inner strength needed. In AA and NA meetings, they identified three common character defects as self-pity, resentment, and guilt. These three weaknesses in particular need to be turned to strengths in working Step Eight. Self-pity is defined as "feeling sorry for ourselves...feeling hopeless, feeling like a victim of circumstance."<sup>31</sup> Guilt and resentment are lingering bad feelings that addicts and alcoholics hold toward themselves and toward other people, respectively.<sup>32</sup> Self-pity is what allows guilt and resentment to continue and fester.

How do addicts and alcoholics turn self-pity into good feelings about themselves? Through spiritual connection with God, they gain humility in the face a Higher Power. In Steps One through Three, they have admitted to themselves that they are powerless over their addiction and lives, found hope in a Higher Power, and turned their lives over to God. This foundation provides psychological and spiritual strength to enable addicts and alcoholics to be honest with their feelings about themselves and others. Addicts and alcoholics should identify the relationships that produce the greatest guilt and resentment.<sup>33</sup> They are encouraged to understand why they find it emotionally difficult to forgive people who harmed them, learn not to pass judgement on these persons, and forgive them in order to break the "cycle of hatred."<sup>34</sup>

When addicts and alcoholics are honest with their feelings, they can forgive themselves and others. Forgiveness is an important outcome of Step Eight.<sup>35</sup> It stops guilt and resentment from becoming rage. AA and NA meeting participants often spoke of the need to address guilt, resentment, and amends.

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<sup>31</sup> Hazelden, p. 40.

<sup>32</sup> Hazelden, p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey., p. 142.

<sup>34</sup> The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey., p. 142-143.

<sup>35</sup> Psychotherapist Beverly Engel argues that addicts and alcoholics do not have to forgive those who have harmed them. Forgiveness is not a necessary condition for healing and for making amends. She states

Deal with guilt.
I started to get resentments. I wasn't honest.
Anything that made me feel uncomfortable made me feel resentful.
That guilt will eat you up.
I'm grateful that someday I'll be able to make amends, to try to pay something back.
To amend is to change.

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that forgiving someone for past harm could amount to giving that person permission to perpetuate the same harm . The Power of Apology, pp. 110-111.

## **Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others**

Step Nine teaches alcoholics and addicts to turn their preparation, achieved in Step Eight, into action. Making amends does not mean saying you are sorry and then leaving. It means, when possible, participating in the lives of people you have hurt or who have hurt you and repairing the relationships. Many addicts and alcoholics must overcome their fear and be humble, asking for forgiveness and making reparation. And they often find acceptance, understanding, and forgiveness from family, friends, and other people in return. It is rare that a sincere apology is refused<sup>36</sup> and the effort to make amends is rebuked. This new found family and community support is an important outcome of Step Nine and a lasting foundation for recovery.

There are three kinds of amends: direct, indirect, and to self.<sup>37</sup> In direct amends, addicts and alcoholics make personal contact with the people they have injured in some way, through personal appointment if possible and through the telephone and letters if distance is a constraining factor. In cases where the persons harmed are not accessible, addicts and alcoholic can make an indirect amend. The person harmed may have died or moved away to an unknown location. In these cases, addicts and alcoholics could perform amends in honor of the person harmed. Possible choices include writing a letter to that person but not mailing it, saying prayers, and doing kind work on behalf of that person.<sup>38</sup> The third kind of amends is amends to self. In this instance, the addict and alcoholic makes amends for the harm their excesses have perpetuated on their own being. As one person said at a meeting, "I got the sh-t kicked out of me in every way, physically, mentally,

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<sup>36</sup> Engel, p. 155.

spiritually, emotionally, economically, aesthetically." One approach to self-amends is to write a letter to oneself, seat in front of the mirror, and read it.<sup>39</sup>

After taking responsibility for past harmful acts and making restitution for them, addicts and alcoholics will see their self-esteem renewed.<sup>40</sup> By rebuilding relationships, they step out of their isolation and assume valued and contributing roles in the lives of family, friends, and community.

I'm grateful that someday I'll be able to make amends, to try to pay something back.

I spend August 1982 through November 1982--the holiday season [Thanksgiving] -- working on my Eighth Step.

Today I'm standing up for everything instead of falling for everything.

My mother wouldn't send me twenty dollars when I was in Bridgewater. I resented it. Today, my resentment has turned to gratitude.

I was always rippin' and tearing. I never paid attention to my family. Yesterday I helped my father with a cookout, and we smiled all day.

I'm sorry I took so much time, but I have so much gratitude I want you to know.

I'm going to get my children back some day.

I got all my losses back. It just keeps getting better.

It was so freeing to have someone that I really liked forgive me.

I can play with my grandchildren and not worry about being a sick individual.

I didn't get the program at first. They had a lot of lingo, "Hang on," "Let Go," "Surrender," "stay strong," "give up," "keep coming," and stuff. Now I have a good relationship with my parents and with my brother and sister.

<sup>37</sup> The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey, p. 162.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 162

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p 162

<sup>40</sup> The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey, p. 161.

I make time for things--recovery, family, job, and significant other.

I started doing stuff that `sorry' couldn't take care of.

It wasn't always that I could look a person in the face and tell them that I love them.

The friends I have today like me for who I am.

I don't spoil Christmas any more.

It wasn't always that I could look a person in the face and tell them that I love them.

Today I'm able to go around my family and be treated with respect.

I went over to my parents' house today, and I was welcomed.

## **Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it**

The essence of Step Ten is vigilance. Having made amends and integrated oneself into community life, Step Ten teaches alcoholics and addicts to be careful of auspicious returns and stay with the AA and NA program. Sobriety is not a permanent end state. Recovery must be maintained and managed. "Fallen off the wagon" is a cliché because a slip or a relapse is common for many recovering addicts and alcoholics. As one meeting participant noted, "constant vigilance is hard work."

One important tool for maintaining sobriety is to continue the behavior taught in Steps One through Nine: acknowledging powerlessness, asking for help, turning over control to God, taking a moral inventory, willingly asking God to correct character defects, and making amends with people in the community previously affected. In NA and AA parlance, addicts and alcoholics have the spiritual tools to use and the knowledge to use the tools.

"Spot-check," "daily," and "long-term periodic" inventories are recommended.<sup>41</sup> These inventories are similar to the inventory taken in Step Four. Addicts and alcoholics use them to structure series of self-assessments to manage their recovery and their lives.

The essence of spot-check and daily inventory is to identify wrongs that have been done, admit it, understand the consequences that it has caused, and promptly correct it. These routine inventory checks also examine how addicts and alcoholics are feeling. If they feel isolated, withdrawn, compulsive, depressed, they need to

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<sup>41</sup> The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey, pp.169-176.

reach out to sponsors, friends, and other means of help<sup>42</sup>. They need to pray and to rely on their Higher Power to overcome their weaknesses in moments of need.

The long-term periodic inventory is a period of personal reflection for addicts and alcoholics that may occur once or twice per year, or in other intervals, depending on the particular person. This broad examination may include updating the inventory done in Step Four, comparing the "old self" and the "new self," listing the new strengths and weaknesses, and celebrating the new successes.<sup>43</sup> This larger view allows the addicts and alcoholics to visualize their spiritual growth; changes in their relationships with family, friends, and the community; and developmental trends in their lives. It also allows them to see any problem areas ahead. Most significantly, it allows them to renew their commitment to working the Steps and maintaining their sobriety.

I think I'm here now. I've got to make sure I stay.
Every time I'm faced with a hard decision, I come to this meeting.
I keep my channels open to my Higher Power.
God has a plan for my life. He didn't bring me this far for nothing.
If it were up to me, I would have been dead long ago. Someone else is in control.
Life is God's greatest gift. If you didn't do well with it, try sobriety. It is a new gift of life. Your gift to God is what you do with it.
Today I plan my recovery not my relapse.
Today I use spiritual tools.
I have the tools and I know what to do. I have no excuses.
My mind is on automatic pilot to use the tools of recovery.

<sup>42</sup> The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey, p. 172.

<sup>43</sup> The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey, pp. 174-175

You did then what you knew; when you know better, you can do better. Maya  
Angelou

**Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for His will and the power to carry that out**

Another tool for maintaining sobriety is to enhance the contact with God. There are two essential parts to Step Eleven. The first is that recovering addicts and alcoholics acknowledge that God has taken their lives out the chaotic world identified in Step One. More importantly, God has changed their moral behavior. They are no longer self-centered. They have become humble. They have made amends with people in their families and communities whenever possible.

The second important aspect of Step Eleven is that recovering addicts and alcoholics pray and mediate in order to deepen their relationship with God. They pray for continuing grace and guidance on all aspects of their new spiritual lives.

Be a trophy of God's amazing grace.
I used Luke last night, The prodigal son. That was me. I thanked God for Luke. I'm grateful.
I'm conscious of being a miracle, lying in the space of grace.
I'm not here because I love God. I'm here because God loves me.
I ask God to help me live an open life. I don't want a secret life any more.
I may not be the person I could have been. I may not be the person I wanted to be. Thank God I'm not the person I used to be.
Enough grace restores me to sanity.
Faith is experienced in the absence of doubt.
I asked God for strength that I might achieve. I was made weak that I might learn

humbly to obey.
Intolerance toward spiritual principles will defeat us.
It works. The Big Guy was here.
Spirituality is one of the greatest gifts of the program.
When I let God in, He lets me out. I provide the perspiration. He provides the inspiration.
Tables and chairs exist. Humans are supposed to thrive.
I think that being here in the program, doing what I'm doing is God's will.
I live in the protective custody of God and AA.
Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. (Jesus Christ, Mt. 7:7.)
I think God has a lot to do with keeping us alive until we get here.
It's the grace of God that gets us here. It's the grace of God that keeps us here.

**Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs**

"One of our gifts as recovering addicts is we can sense the desperate that is crying." The Twelfth Step teaches addicts and alcoholics who are managing their recovery to use their experience and insight to give back and help others. These AA and NA members are maintaining loving relationships and making a contribution to society. They are a source of inspiration to the group.

What is a spiritual awakening? It is not an event but a continuing process that may have begun with Step One and may never end.<sup>44</sup> It is that point in the recovery process in which addicts and alcoholics become aware—aware of God and order, their hope and faith, their new sense of humility, or commitment to the Steps. It is different for each individual, but each will know it when they experience it, if not at the time, then upon reflection days, months, or years later. It may even be awareness of the past. As one AA and NA member said, "Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have--the key to life and happiness for others."

I don't know if I had a spiritual awakening; I have a spiritual turnaround. I'm not robbing people now.
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When you get with God, there is order in the universe.
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I had this ongoing spiritual awakening since coming to AA.
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<sup>44</sup> Peter Converse McDonald, "Step Twelve: Language of the Heart," in Hazelden, pp. 115-117.

In Step Twelve addicts and alcoholics carry the message of their spiritual awakening. They do this in order to benefit themselves as well as others. Sharing their own story supports the recovery process.

My recovery hinges on my ability to share the message.
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It's great to be here on a commitment. I won't drink tonight.
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Be a good enough friend to yourself to be a friend to others.
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In essence, "Helping the person that needs help is the Twelfth Step in recovery." Step Twelve is the vehicle for extending the work of the Twelve Steps. It creates a cadre of people sharing their own experiences, using the opportunity to teach others, and continuing the work of AA and NA.

In the 19th century fires were put out by bucket brigades. You didn't care who was in front of you or who was behind you, you passed the bucket. AA put out the fire of alcoholism in my life. I receive the message and pass it on.
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What I like most about the Twelfth Step is the power of example you become for others.
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You've got to be there for people, and people will do the same.
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If someone hadn't Twelve Stepped me, I wouldn't have stayed.
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Carry the message, not the disease.
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I have to understand service: that which I do, and that which is done for me.
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I love passing the message.
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These are some of the messages that they carry.

<b>Quality of Life</b>
I don't endure life anymore. I live it.
Now that I'm sober, I'm able to keep thousands of dollars in my bank account, and I didn't steal any of it!
I was under every bridge, in every jail and in every mental hospital. Today I'm a productive member of society.
The other day, I went on a jet ski and a trampoline for the first time. I never had time to enjoy these things because I was on drugs.
My wife doesn't understand why I go to so many meetings, but she likes the results.
I have a life today beyond my wildest dreams.
I didn't have a job a month ago; now I have two jobs.
I just got a 20% raise on my job because I have a good attitude.
With AA, I've started to make progress with my writing career.
I thought that my first day of sobriety would be the worst day of my life. It was the best.
I actually went through all the trials and tribulations of relationships, and a couple of weeks ago, I got married.
I've run in the last five Boston Marathons. I'm going to compete next year in the triathlon. These are gifts of AA.
My mother and I had a cup of tea this morning. She told me she loved me. She loved me from fourteen to twenty-four when I was a using prostitute, but she just couldn't handle it.
I don't drink anything that says "nonalcoholic." That's because I'm not a nonalcoholic.
I'm now a productive member of society, and I'm proud of it.

I don't have a great big job, but I just got a promotion, to \$6.40 an hour. I moved from French fries to hamburgers at Wendy's.

I make time for things--recovery, family, job, and significant other.

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. I was given life that I might enjoy all things.

I can play with my grandchildren and not worry about being a sick individual.

It's great to be in recovery. I play golf. I got a hole in one. I bowl. I won a bowling tournament last week.

I go to AA, my wife gets cured.

### **Serenity**

Getting better is a life-long thing.

Life isn't always great for me today, but it is always better than it was.

I love being sober.

I've got twenty-nine years sober; fifteen of it was not in these halls. I came here to be sober and serene.

Each small task of everyday life is part of the total harmony of the universe.

I don't think I could live such a peaceful and fulfilling life without AA.

In my drinking days, nothing could compare with my current life.

The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead.

Nothing in the world can compare to my sobriety.

The farther away I got from a drink or a drug, the closer I am, because I tend to forget. I got a built-in forgetter.

Today, I got up and I was free, free from alcohol.

I don't settle for less no more.

I will do what I have to do to protect my serenity. That's life insurance.

Life is good to me today. I don't have to settle for less. And you don't have to settle for less.

## Verses

Thousands of AA and NA meetings take place every day of every year throughout the country and around the globe. Meeting participants often repeat words they hear in meetings. Some sayings become polished over time and are proliferated as part of the AA and NA mantra. Slogans are one of the essential components of recovery.<sup>45</sup> As members repeat these sayings, they come to understand the meaning behind the words. As they say in meetings, "Fake it `til you make it," and "Give it lip service, and it will happen to you." Some slogans were presented in previous sections; others are listed below.

My drug of choice is more.
I wasn't a bad woman that needed to get good, I was a sick woman that needed to get better.
My name is Gary, and I'm an idiot.
What I didn't know was when I started trying to control my drinking, I was already out of control.
The best drug for me today is a hug.
I thought things would be different each time I drank. They were the same.
Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.
If you don't remember your last drink, you haven't had it yet.
Getting sober, I had to spend some time with a guy I didn't like. Me.
Alcohol is not my problem. Drugs are not my problem. I am the problem. They were my solution.

<sup>45</sup> Gorski, Terence, *Passages Through Recovery: An Action Plan for Preventing Relapse*, p. 36. Two other essential components are meeting attendance and sponsorship.

I had a lot. I didn't lose it. I threw it away.
I never went to sleep, I passed out. I never woke up, I came to.
I'm not responsible for my disease, I'm responsible for my recovery.
Say God is good. Avoid saying I am great.
In the beginning, I would drink two beers and say I had drunk six; in the end, I would drink twelve and say two.
My getting recovery was like learning to water ski. I'd crash over and over again, but would never let go of the rope.
Smoking crack will take you places you never imagined you'd go. Smoking crack will make you do things you never imagined you'd do.
We're not punished for our sins; we're punished by them.
At the beginning, alcohol and drugs interfered with my life. At the end, my life interfered with alcohol and drugs.
I didn't know you drank until I saw you sober.
I never drank at home because I never made it home.
I was on one side of the fence wanting to get sober while I got high on the other side.
Addiction is a long journey away from yourself. Recovery is a long journey back to yourself.
It is possible to be honestly dishonest.
Get a check-up from the neck up.
When I took my first drink, I felt power. When I took my second drink I felt more power. I had no idea of powerlessness.
I drank, I drugged, I lost.
It is important to know who the enemy is and where he lives.
It always got worse, never better.

You can grow or you can go.
He told me to cease, expire, conclude, relinquish, extinguish, end, stop, arrest, retire--nine damn words that mean the same thing.
I'm in bad company when I'm by myself. I'm in a bad place when I'm in my head.
I have a disease that's progressive, chronic, incurable, fatal and arrestable.
My disease sits in my head and tells me, "I've got a better idea, let's just do it."
God gave us two ears and one mouth so we could use the ears twice as much.
The elevator is broken; you've got to take the Steps.
No matter how deep in the dark woods we are, it takes only Twelve Steps to get out.
They told me a monkey can't sell bananas, but I could--for two weeks. [A common denial is that an addict can sell drugs and not use them.]
<b>Acronyms</b>
HALT = Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired
GOD = Grasp Of Divinity
GOD is a Group Of Drunks, with a Gift Of Desperation, Getting Off Drugs, with the Giving of Dozens, getting Good Orderly Direction
HOPE = Help Other People Escape
WHO = Willing, Honest, Open-minded
NUTS = Not Using The Steps

## Bloopers

When actors make mistakes in front of the camera, the director stops the action, lets the actors compose themselves, and re-shoots the scene. Scenes with acting mistakes comprise "bloopers" shows. People under the influence of drugs and alcohol make mistakes. AA and NA give them the opportunity to stop, restore their sanity, and then guide them through sobriety.

If part of the recovery process is to be able to look at one's past actions in a less serious light and to use humor to teach, then AA and NA meeting participants are using that tool. Often a hearty, self-deprecating, and collegial laugh can be therapeutic. Purgation is essential to recovery. Laugh or cry. Many do both. Most prefer to laugh when they look back at all the things that they have done while intoxicated. It is the blessing of AA and NA that many addicts and alcoholics have the opportunity to look back and laugh at their own bloopers.

<b>Incidences</b>
Finally, the cops came and got me. They were real cops. I wasn't hallucinating.
I became Crackula [referring to the transformation that cocaine caused.]
In the last two years doing coke, I've had about three hundred sexual experiences. Came twice!
Mixed with marijuana, AA wasn't too effective.
When I got lost in the Everglades, I had forgotten that I had moved to Florida.
I planned my meetings around the TV Guide, and I wondered why I couldn't get the program.
My mother loved me to pieces, and I'm still trying to put them together.

<p>I passed out for so long I had to learn how to go to sleep again.</p>
<p>It wasn't long before I sold two ounces to the head of the drug task force of the New York State police in the presence of twenty-two undercover state troopers.</p>
<p>My brother got insane every night. I only got insane two nights a week. I decided we should do an intervention on my brother.</p>
<p>My father was a show-off alcoholic. He would park the car on the front porch, drive over the mailbox, and set fires. We didn't have to give the fire department our address.</p>
<p>I tried just to have a few at a local bar. But there were too many local bars.</p>
<p>I lost my license to drive so I rode my bicycle drunk.</p>
<p>I found it hard to ask the passenger next to me in the airplane where the plane was going.</p>
<p>I thought I had died from an overdose ten to twelve years ago and was just going through a stage of purgatory.</p>
<p>I came out of a blackout. I was married and had a son.</p>
<p>Once, in a blackout, I tried to steal a car. It had no tires on it and was propped up on milk crates. I must have passed out. The cops came and surrounded the car thinking there was a dead body inside.</p>
<p>At some point I came to realize that when I sat there having my second beer for breakfast, I would never do anything but drink if I didn't stop altogether.</p>
<p>I would sit and watch the vertical hold flip on my T.V. But there was nothing wrong with the T.V.</p>
<p>I lost my pants in Copley Square, rode a bus home in my underwear.</p>
<p>I remember my last drink. I picked up heroin.</p>
<p>In high school, I would walk down the hallways and the hallways would tilt.</p>
<p>In Aruba, on the 18th floor of a hotel, I stayed in the bathroom for two days. I told</p>

my wife I couldn't come out because someone was outside the window.
My last drink lasted 90 days. I drank 100 cases of beer.
After my wreck and for the whole time I was in a coma, I didn't pick up.
I was sentenced to have an alcohol evaluation test. I thought that was a terrible sentence. After my alcohol evaluation test, I realized I wouldn't be president the first week after I quit drinking.
I got my report card again, and it was just another withdrawal and a "D."
I got tired of going to bed with Bo Derek and waking up with Bo Didley.
I had no identity. A girl passed me a joint and said, "John, you're one of the best guys I know, but who are you?"
It's not normal behavior to be down on your hands and knees kissing your dog's best paw.
My second DWI, I ran into a cop car and tried to escape in an Opel Cadet.
I asked my Higher Power to relieve me of my sexual obsession, and I got the chicken pox.
I had an affinity of throwing up. My name is Chuck, my nickname was Upchuck.
<b>Perspectives</b>
I'd steal your wallet and help you look for it.
AA is a kind of spiritual kindergarten.
AA is like having sex. When it's good, it is very, very good. When it's bad, it's still pretty good.
I found out I wasn't a unique misunderstood genius.
AA is like the Mafia. Once you get in, you know too much, and you can't get out.
The people who said that things do get better obviously were from a different planet.
Bend your knees instead of your elbows. [Praying instead of drinking at the bar]
A drug is a drug whether you drink it, swallow it, snort it, shoot it or put it between

your toes.

It ruins your whole day when you're dead.

I feel like I have two brain cells left. I'm hoping one is male and one is female so they will multiply.

An alcoholic was walking by a bar and saw a sign, "All You Can Drink, \$2.00." He ran in and said, "Give me \$10 worth."

I didn't have any shortcomings so this will be a short course.

I find it hard to talk freely about my morality without exhibitionism.

If I were in Alaska, I'm sure I could dig a hole through the ice and snow and find a bar.

I had a black hole in my heart and a horse race in my head. Lust and theft ran neck and neck. The photo finish was not at the wire but behind bars.

I was real smart, sharp as a beach ball.

I sleep in the house now. I pee in the toilet, not the closet.

I came in here sounding like an outboard motor--but-but-but-but-but-but.

AA beats the DA.

If you're here, you're not all there.

My life was caught in the whirlpool of water in the bottom of a toilet bowl.

The best gram is the program.

If you're having trouble with God, imagine the trouble God is having with you.

The way I live my life might be enough to make the people in AA drink. The way you live your life might be enough to make me drink.

## Conclusion

This book brings together for the first time over 500 quotes from addicts and alcoholics in recovery. Separately, their voices offer glimpses into the complex world of addiction, including such crises as self-destruction, self-pity, visions of death, and utter misery; as well as the process of recovery, including such essential qualities as surrendering, trust, honesty, hope, courage, humility, and gratitude. Together, the voices form a metaphor for spiritual and personal transformation from addiction to recovery. They are also an interpretation the Twelve Steps program, giving direct and individual insight into what it means to work each step.

Addiction is ultimately a fatal disease. The havoc and toll that it takes on addicts and alcoholics themselves, their families and loved ones, their communities, the judicial system, and society in general is immeasurable. But this disease can be cured. Those battling the disease have spoken in one voice.

This is a book of inspiration and celebration. To honor those fighting this terrible disease, we present twelve pairs of quotes below to contrast the pain of addiction with the joy and serenity of recovery.

<b>Addicted</b>	<b>In recovery</b>
At the end, I was valueless.	I'm good to people who are not good to me. Twice as good, because I love them.
My whole life was trying to find a quick fix to happiness.	I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
The people I hurt the most were the people I loved the most.	Once again, the people I affected most were the ones I loved.

We drank ourselves into euphoric splendor and we drank ourselves into living death.	It is good to be back from the dead and know peace.
We just lived pure Hell together before it got worse.	AA won't get you to heaven, but it will open up the gates to escape from hell.
I used to be NUTS--Not Using The Steps.	I didn't want a half a pint, I didn't want a half a bottle, and I don't want half of the Steps.
I was uncomfortable in my own skin twenty four hours a day seven days a week.	I have that peaceful, serene feeling inside.
My favorite sign at meetings was the exit sign.	By the grace of God and the miracle of AA, I stayed sober despite myself.
I went to twelve wakes in one year. All ODs, guys thinking they could get high one more time.	It's a gift of God that I have friends now, not running buddies.
I woke up for dope and to smoke that coke.	I woke up this morning with choices and with these choices, I make changes.
My self-loathing got so strong, I wanted to commit suicide even when I was sober.	Life is good and life is bad. Now I can show up for it.
In the heart of this disease I did things I knew I shouldn't do.	I asked my Higher Power to relieve me of my sexual obsession, and I got the chicken pox.

## Epilogue

Dr. Gene Mason is now the director of Workforce and Entrepreneurial Development at the St. Francis House Moving Ahead Program in Boston. He also has a flourishing marketing business. After four years of sobriety and two years of nutritional supplement intake, his heart has returned to its normal size. He no longer needs the nine prescriptions for high blood pressure and heart failure that he once required to stay alive.

Lee has a successful and rewarding career working for a large information technology company in Cambridge, Mass. Red left CAB sober. Chet and Kenny are still living at CAB. Jerry and his well-worn Bible are at the same post there. Jim is no longer a counselor at St. Francis House. He is working with his actor brother Mark Wahlberg on a new foundation to help young people.

In his most recent AA and NA meeting at CAB, Dr. Mason saw many old faces and some new ones. He listened to the same discussions about fear, death, estranged families, and losses. He also heard encouragement, gratitude, and words of strength, faith and hope. From this meeting, he collected three more quotes for SOS: "My biggest accomplishment in life was passing a field sobriety test." "I tried to escape from detox, so I crawled up on the roof and jumped. I landed on the inside of the fence and was captured again." "I've known chaos, and I've known serenity, and I know which one I want."