

YES, I HAVE A PROBLEM

Addiction drags us down lower and lower, but we can stop the descent and start climbing. Sometimes addicts never get a chance to hit rock bottom, because many die before knowing they had a problem.

So now at least we know that maybe we have a problem?

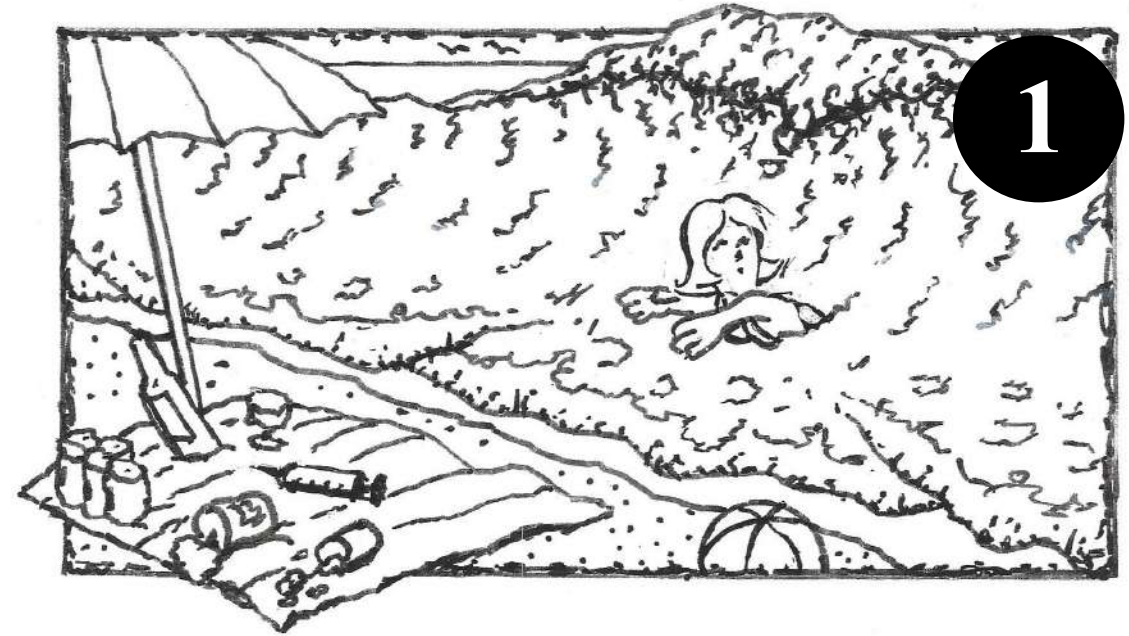
We can't do it alone. If we don't ask for help, we will not be able to get out of this vicious circle. Recovery begins when the decision to "let go" is made and to allow a power greater than ourselves to take control and help us.

We have to be very brave to take the leap and surrender. It can be a tough thing to do, but we have already gone through the hell of alcohol, drugs or other addictions.

Let's take a moment to think

- Have you felt sick and tired of being sick and tired?*
- Do you feel like you've hit rock bottom?*
- Are you willing to take the first step towards recovery?*

FINDING THE "WAY" TO RECOVERY



DO I HAVE A PROBLEM?

How many times have you said:

"I don't need lessons from anyone. Everyone wants to tell me what to do; my parents, teachers, family, police, judges. They all think they know what I need."

Well, if you want to stop others telling you that you have a problem, maybe it's time for you to think:

Have I ever felt that....

- My life revolves around drugs and alcohol.

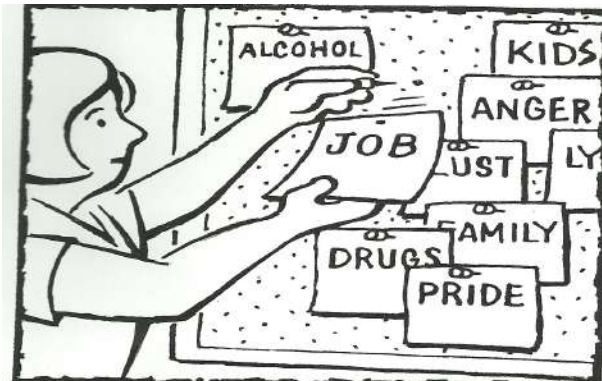
- I have legal problems or troubles with the law.
- I can lose custody of my children.
- I've been hurting the people I love.
- I can't control my anger and reactions.
- I felt hopeless and nothing “works”.
- I felt that there is no escape anymore.
- I felt discouraged and demoralized.

Lily said the other day:

“I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired; I am in the lowest point of my life.”

At that moment Lily realized she had a problem.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)



SERENITY PRAYER

Lord, grant me the Serenity to accept
the things I cannot change,

The Courage to change the things I can,
and the Wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,

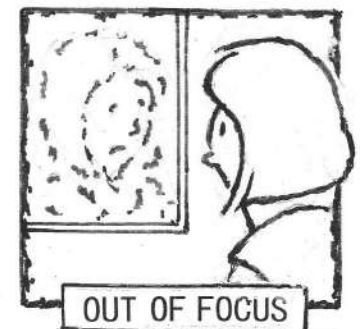
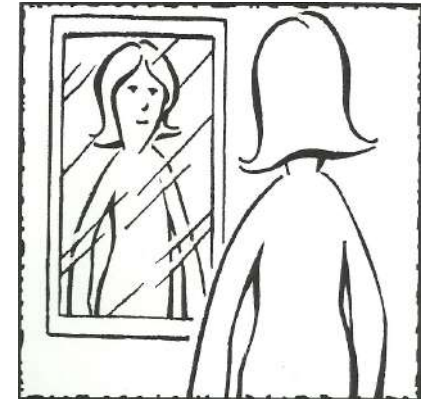
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,

Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,

If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,

And supremely happy with You forever
in the next.

Amen



MAKE A CHOICE

Let's try to reflect on ourselves.

*Have you tried to get out of the addiction on your own?
What happened?*

Do you feel that you are angry or frustrated with yourself? Why?

*How many times have you disappointed your loved ones with promises
you couldn't keep?*

*What are you willing to do to break the barrier that separates you
from a better life?*

Before I used to pray this way:

**"God help me not to drink
too much."**

He never helped me.

**Then I began to pray:
"God help me STOP drinking."**

I got sober. God helped me!

FINDING THE "WAY" TO RECOVERY



WELCOME, YOU ARE ONE OF US

Every day Mrs. M swore to herself that this day would be her last day using drugs or alcohol. She had nothing left. She was about to separate from her Husband and losing her children. She had lost her job and she had no projects or ambitions.

One morning around 6.30 am Mrs. M was shaking and crying after another tough night. She begged to God for help, while was looking for a bar to have one more drink. It was very early in the morning and she remembered that there was an open restaurant a block away from her house.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (Ephesians 5:8-14)

As Mrs. M saw several women entering, she decided to enter too. She wore a hoodie that covered completely her head. As soon as she set a foot inside the room, she tripped and fell because of her drunkenness.

She got up quickly, took off the hood and saw a bunch of women looking at her. "Welcome, you are one of us. We were waiting for you." She didn't know, but she had walked into an AA meeting.

God heard her pleas. That day, 12 years ago, Mrs. M's life changed forever. She surrendered to God, admitted her addiction and began a new path to recovery.



Have you ever felt like Mrs. M?

Do you think you can surrender and recognize that you need help?

SURRENDER

Surrendering is not giving up as we think it is. Surrendering can make us feel very free.

"Because what you resist...you will probably persist".

It's like a war where we say, "I prefer to die than surrender." Our ego and our pride dominate us. We prefer to die in our fear and insecurity instead of giving up; like climbing to the Cross of our real present and letting our unreal illusions die there.

Generally, we don't give up so easily. We are temperamental; we are childish and we believe that we have control over our addiction.

It's very possible that we will only surrender when we have already lost everything or are about to lose it. We know that our addiction has turned us into unhappy and purposeless people and we also know that "hitting rock bottom" is part of our daily lives. "God, please help me stop drinking". We have said that phrase a thousand times as we look for the next bar to buy a drink.

There is no magic if there is no surrender and there is no surrender if there is no humility. Only when we humbly and honestly admit that we have a Problem, do we begin to see the path a little brighter.

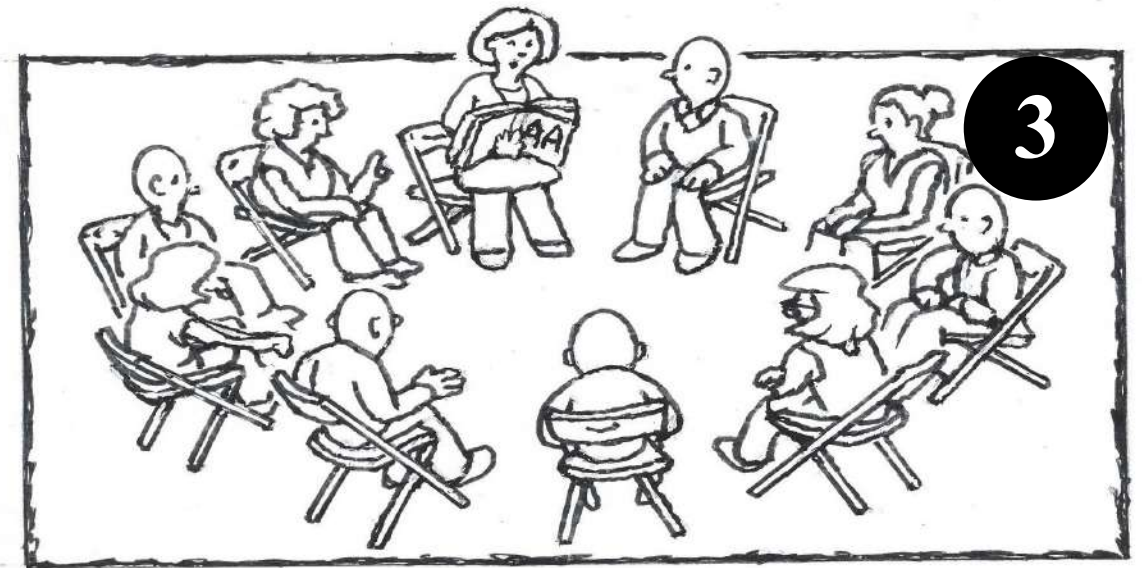


ONE DAY AT A TIME

I hadn't slept for 3 days. I had started consuming on a Friday and before I knew it was Tuesday. I hadn't eaten or slept. I had only done alcohol and drugs. My family left me a long time ago. They couldn't stand to see me like this anymore and they had tried everything. I kept telling everyone that I could control it, that I could quit drugs and alcohol whenever I wanted. One day I was at work and I fell down the stairs. I ended up in the hospital with several broken ribs. The doctor told me that I was lucky to be alive. I was so intoxicated that I hadn't even realized how I had gotten there. The saddest thing was that nobody came to see me. No one believed in me anymore.

One morning a nurse came in to check on me and saw me crying. With sincere eyes, she looked at me and told me, "As the doctor said, you are alive by a miracle. I hope this will make you reconsider and change forever." I don't know if it was her words, my pain, my being fed up with myself or that I couldn't fall any deeper, but that day was the last day I felt sorry for myself. I feel that God had a lot to do with it, because I felt hope. I knew that day that I suddenly had a chance to get ahead. A year and a half ago I started on the road to recovery. Every day I'm scared about a relapse, but also every day I have the hope that with humility, responsibility and work, I will be able to get ahead. One day at a time.

FINDING THE "WAY" TO RECOVERY



FREEDOM THROUGH HONESTY

The definition of "honesty" is:

- * The quality or fact of being honest; uprightness and fairness.
- * Truthfulness, sincerity, or frankness.
- * Freedom from deceit or fraud.

Honesty is the spiritual principle related to Step 1 of Alcoholics Anonymous:

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable."

Honesty is not always easy for some of us, because the process of recovery is a journey, and that journey starts when we choose to look inside and be HONEST with ourselves!

To begin the process of recovery we must do a self-examination of our entire life, and this could be an extremely painful process.

**ARE WE WILLING TO FACE
1 OUR OWN PAIN?**

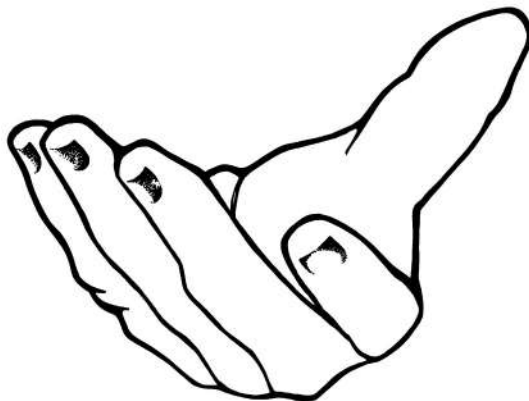
THE FISHERMAN'S STORY

Peter is a fisherman in the middle of the sea waiting for his nets to fill with fish. Suddenly he sees a light glow in the distance. It looks like a figure that moves steadily. When he finally gets to see more clearly, he sees a man walking on the sea.

Peter was immediately terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and he cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to him saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

Kindly, Jesus does what he asks. Peter gets off the boat and steps into the rough waters.

He begins to walk steadily towards Jesus. But suddenly, another feeling takes over him. "When he looked at the windstorm, he was afraid" (Matthew 14:29). When Peter sees the rough sea and the waves crashing violently against the boat, he panics. Is he going to die there, swallowed by the waters?



In a few moments, fear drowns his faith, and Peter begins to sink like a stone in the sea. Although he is an expert swimmer, he does not trust his own strength and begins to shout, "Lord, save me!" Immediately, Jesus grabs him by the hand and pulls him to the surface.

Already standing on the waters, he says to him: "Man of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew. 14:31). Peter follows Jesus as he walks to the boat.

Climbing up, he sees that the storm has disappeared. Peter admits with admiration: "You are truly the Son of God" (Matthew. 14:33).

Peter feels grateful. That night he had learned to overcome his doubts and fears; to trust in Jesus.

***Take a moment to think about
Peter's story.***

*What happened to Peter when he gave in to
doubts and weaknesses?*

*Can weaknesses (addictions) eat away at our
faith?*

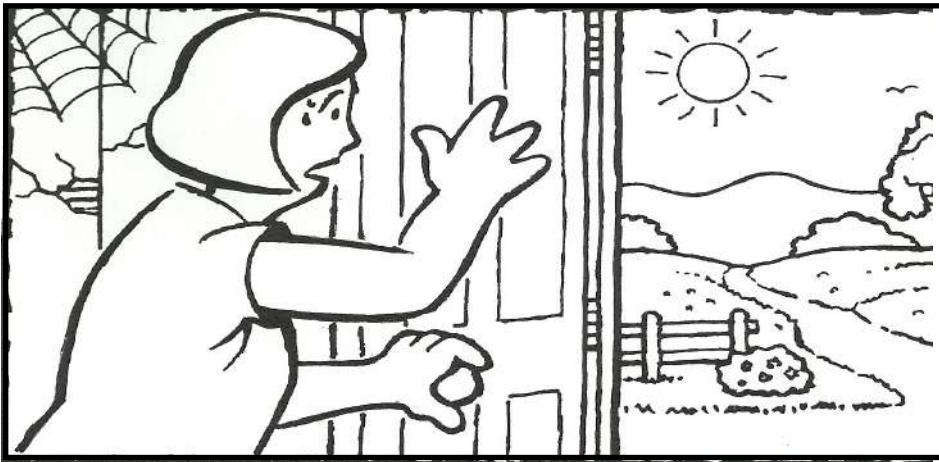
How can we fight them?

Let's think!

Have you ever been in Rosa's shoes?

What is HONESTY for you?

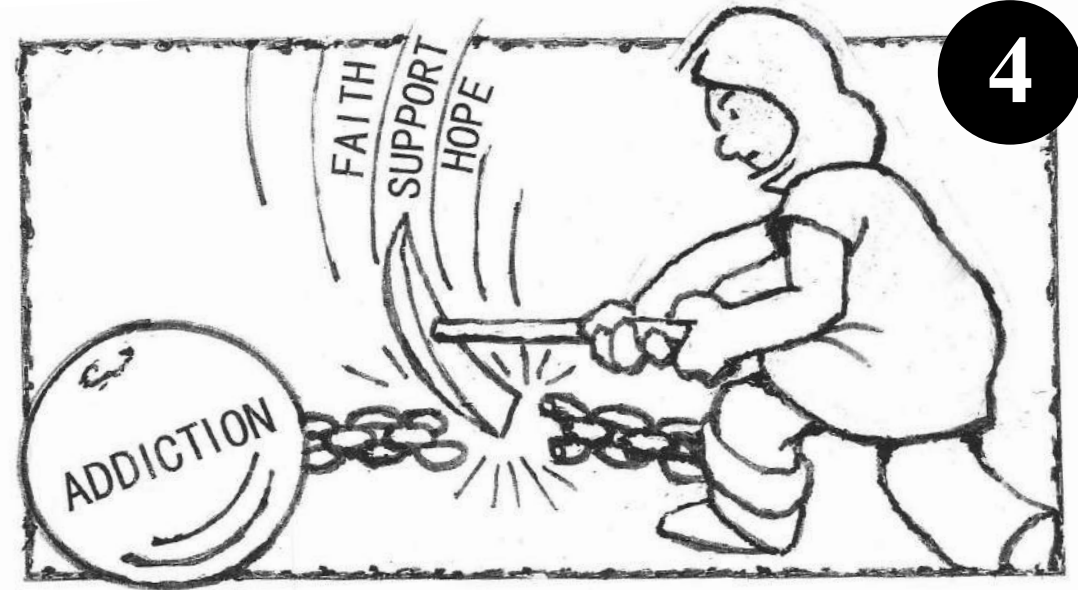
Have you ever been able to open your heart and be honest with yourself and with others?



1 Peter 5: 8-10

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY



THE EXCUSES

"My partner left me." "They fired me from my job." "My parents don't love me." "I only drink or do drugs on weekends for fun." "Reality is very hard for me." "I have no future."

Each person has their own story, and all stories have value. But we know that when it comes to addictions, many of us want to use excuses to give ourselves a reason and fall again and again.

PAIN?

A couple broke up. He left her after years of relationship. The girl plunged into a deep pain. To "turn off" that pain she decided to drink a whole bottle of vodka. She soon realized that alcohol anesthetized her pain, so drinking began to be more and more frequent.

Before she could realize it, she depended on alcohol to function every day. The alcohol ceased to be enough and the drugs began. Drugs came along with the wrong people and debts.

JOY?

Three friends were invited to a party and since the party was boring they decided to start drinking. The night gets out of control and the next day they all have a terrible hangover.

The following weekend they decided to go out again and drink. Soon they discovered that there was no fun without alcohol. In less than a year it was no longer just alcohol, but they started to use other substances.

Soon one of the friends realized that, with the excuse of having fun, he used to be drunk all the time. He wanted to get out of the problem by himself, but he couldn't. He relapsed several times until he asked for real help.



-Have you ever drank for joy? And for sadness?

-How many times did you feel that without alcohol you couldn't have fun anymore?

-When have you been able to be HONEST and realize that you just couldn't be alone?

WEAKNESSES AND FEARS

Rosa started consuming when she was very young. At sixteen she had already tried everything. She got carried away by her so-called "friends". Rosa had a loving family that took care of her. However, at eighteen, she stopped being the nice and funny girl that she had always been and became a lonely person.

Time passed and Rosa was sinking lower and lower. Her family tried to help her, but all attempts were in vain. Rosa didn't know how to live without alcohol and drugs. When her family got tired of trying to help her, Rosa decided to leave home. She didn't want to listen to anyone. She lived on the street to continue buying drugs and soon she no longer had money to eat.

Completely drunk, Rosa stole a car and drove without knowing what she was doing until she finally crashed into a tree. After three years in jail, Rosa began to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

During her time in jail she spent very dark moments. For months she promised herself that leaving the jail, she would consume all the drugs and alcohol in the world, but God had other plans for her.

Rosa got out of jail and instead of going back to the streets, decided to get in a rehabilitation center. It was by her own decision.

She stopped lying to herself, making excuses, believing that she could do it on her own. Rosa was HONEST for the first time in her life. Rosa decided in freedom that she wanted to begin the way to recovery.

STEP FOUR...LET'S THINK ABOUT THIS!

When we face the reality, as clearly and as honestly as we can,
Let's think about the situation!

- 1- Have you felt that someone else is blamed for your addiction?
- 2- Do you believe that addiction can take you away from God?
- 3- Have you felt that you were not deserving of God's love?

But there are other questions we can ask ourselves... Questions like:

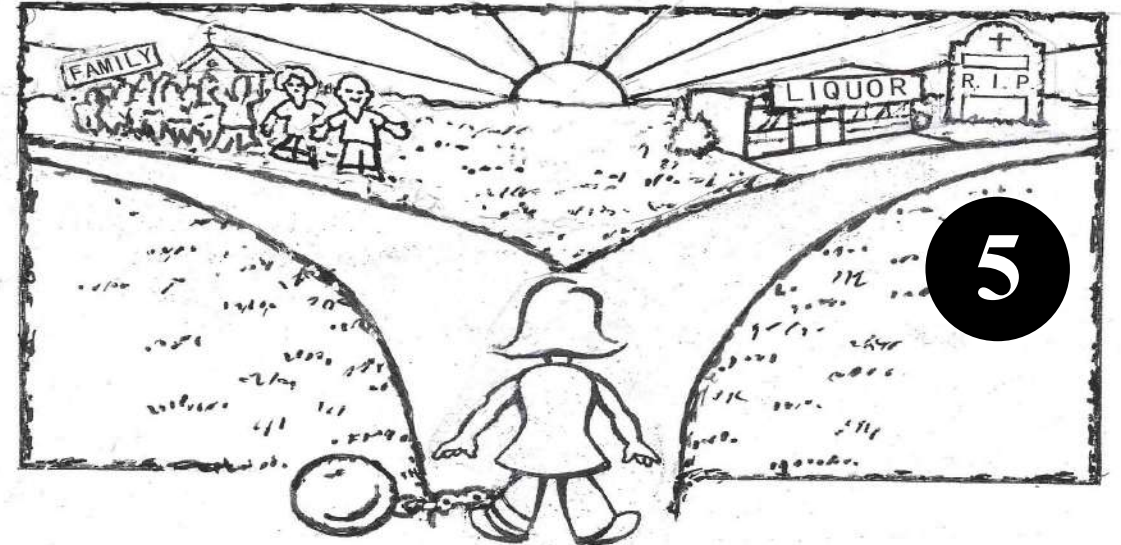
- 4- Could I end up like the person in the story?
- 5- Is "hope" enough or do I need something else?
- 6- Does God want me to have "hope"?

Honesty usually will give us a straight answer.

*"Although the world is full of
suffering, it is full also of the
overcoming of it."*

*Helen Keller
(20th Century writer)*

FINDING THE "WAY" TO RECOVERY



FREEDOM THROUGH HOPE

The definition of HOPE is:

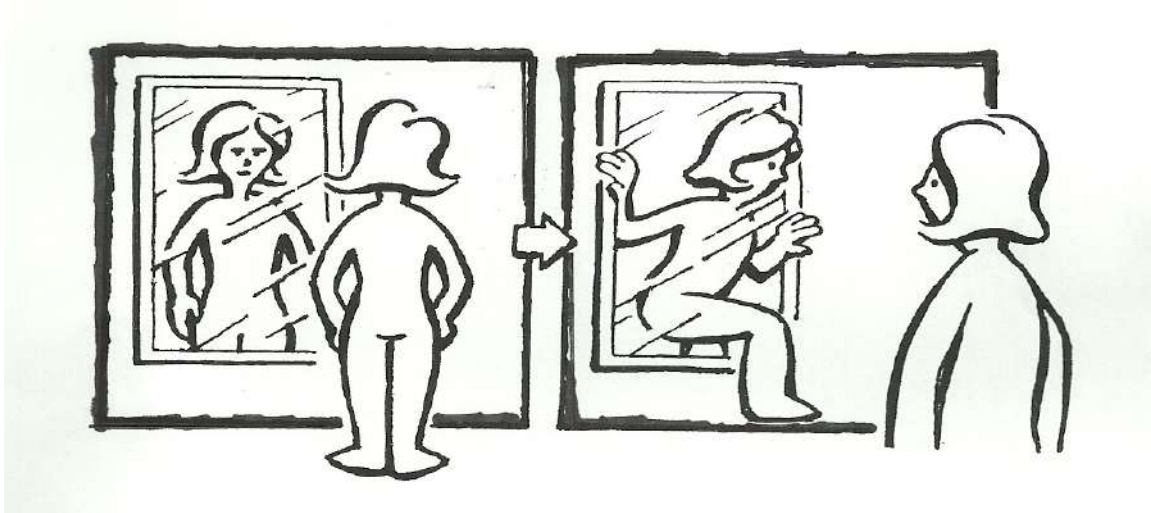
- *A feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.
- *A person or thing that may help or save someone.
- *Grounds for believing that something good may happen.

Hope is a spiritual principle related to Alcoholics Anonymous.

"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

After being honest and recognizing that we cannot get a ride from an addiction alone, the light of hope lights up. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. We can be hopeful, but we should accompany that hope with responsibility.

For us, just hope is useless. First we walk through the path of honesty and then we can work hard and do whatever it takes to get ahead.



THE ROAD TO HOPE

“Here I go again, I can’t handle another withdrawal. All my joints ache, I can’t stop sweating, my head is pounding and I can’t think straight, I feel so hopeless, I just want to die!”

All these words came to her mind as she paced her cell frantically, almost in tears as she realized what a mess her life was. She later said that she would’ve broken down and cried had nobody been in the cell with her. She said this is the point at which she turned to God.

She was brought up in the church as a youngster, but by the time she hit her mid- teens her entire family had stopped going to church. Her father became an alcoholic and was physically abusive to her mother. She turned to gang activity because that was her escape from the turmoil she was experiencing at home.

Despite her being disgusted with her father’s drinking, she herself turned to alcohol and drugs. Throughout the many years she was involved with the gang, she always felt something was missing and it wasn’t until this last withdrawal that she realized what she was missing.

As she silently cried out to God, she continued to pace the floor until she was taken out and placed in a single woman cell. That first night she got on her knees and asked God for a sign of hope.

A leper came to her (and kneeling down) begged her and said, “If you wish, you can make me clean” (MARK 1:40).

Let’s think about the story

- Have you ever felt that you lost hope in yourself?*
- Have you asked God for a sign of hope?*
- Has He given it to you?*
- Are you willing to embrace hope as you work to get out of addiction?*

SUGGESTIONS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT:

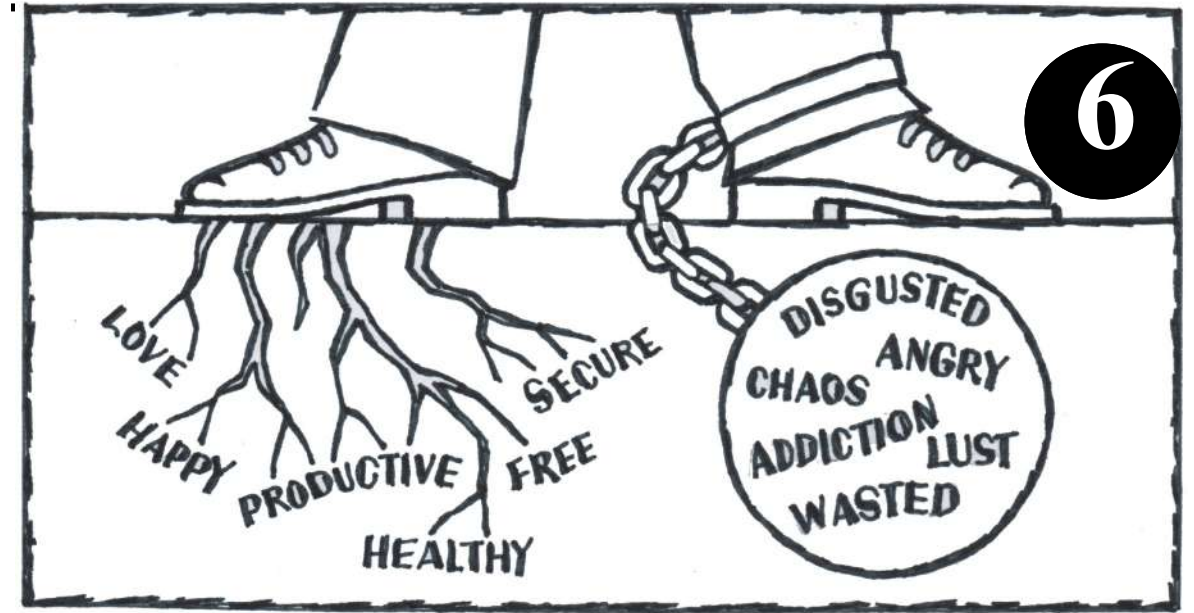
1- Do not be alone. Ask for help from people who have been through the same thing as you; people who know what you're talking about. At AA or NA meetings, members have been through what you are going through, and some are still going through it like you.

2- Regularly attend meetings. If after a while you don't feel good with the group, look for another group, but find a group that welcomes you and is willing to talk about solutions rather than problems.

3- Read the big book of AA, one page at a time, from the beginning. And ask your higher power for help. If you don't believe in God, believe in something. Find something that inspires you to believe. Example: Do you connect with nature? Look for that tree, which you admire so much for its beauty and make it your higher power. It doesn't matter what it is, but give yourself to something bigger than you. Read the AA Big Book, one page at a time.



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY



ARE YOU WILLING TO DO SOMETHING?

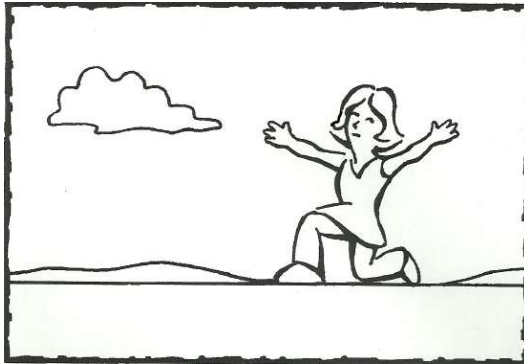
I've lived with my addiction for a while, it's gotten me nowhere, so I've thought at some point I can stop using drugs on my own, however I only lasted a little while sober.

I have already tried:

- Do it on my own
- Read self-care books
- Go to the gym, meditation walks,
- Pray
- Talk with friends to vent.

Quitting an addiction on your own, without seeking the help of a support group, will be very difficult. You may have already tried this in your life. Think about how many times you told yourself that you were going to quit.

If you're like most people with addiction problems, there are a lot of chances you've already been down that road several times. And if you're still trying this, that means it probably didn't work. How much more will you deceive yourself? How much more are you willing to suffer until asking for help? The day is today. As a friend says, "Life is 2 days and 3 have



"One day I woke up and had a very different feeling inside. I knew something had to happen. I knew that much. However, my mind took me to too many places at once. I WAS VERY CONFUSED. I decided to go to one of those AA meetings. It felt good, but my God, I couldn't relate to many of them. I thought internally, "My problem is bigger, my situation is very different. They won't understand me." Maybe if I just keep trying by myself, things will change and I'll be fine. Once again, I realized that I was going back to the same place in my head. Round and round looking for excuses. So I stayed in the meeting, although I wanted to run away.

Finally, I had the courage to approach someone who seemed older than me and a little more experienced. I could tell because when she spoke she didn't sound threatening or belittle anyone's words. So I asked her, "WHERE DO I BEGIN?" She looked at me and said: "Start by taking a seat, do you want a coffee?" After that, she asked my name and when was the last time I had used alcohol or drugs. I replied: a few days ago. Then she set out to describe what happens to the windshield of a car when you have an accident.

"When we spend our lives drinking or consuming drugs," she tells me in a soft voice, "we are blind and when we start the recovery process, we put on glasses that allow us to see or suddenly open the eyes that were closed. All that looks like shit now that we see it clearly, because it's crap. That's why we don't know where to start. It's very difficult to try to solve everything we see. At first, we want to solve everything quickly and at once. That's not possible."

"You have to start from the beginning," she says, "and my suggestion is that you listen with ears and an open mind."



GRATITUDE

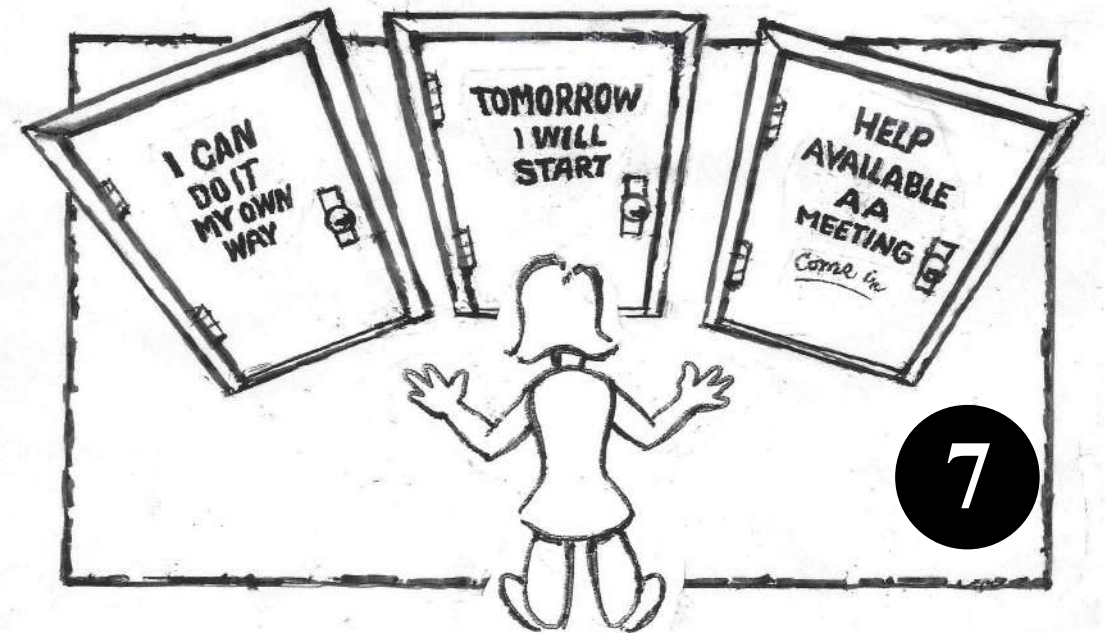
I remember when I arrived at the AA Group, and I saw around me the group of people much older than me, I felt uncomfortable, since I did not want to see myself as an alcoholic and addict. At first I thought of running away, but one of them told me that I was the most important person in that place. It was comforting, that made me feel special and welcome. But I still felt out of place, so I hid and covered myself with my jacket so they wouldn't see how ashamed I was.

When the meeting started I thought "Now they are going to start with the preaching, the scolding," but to my surprise, they only expressed their life experiences, their struggles, their ideas, their defeats and victories. When it was finally my turn to speak, I did so quietly. The people in the group listened to me carefully; there were no judgments, no scolding or blame, just empathetic looks. I felt liberated, like as a weight was lifted from my shoulders and someone else helped me carry it. I felt for the first time that I was not alone in this difficult tribulation of life.

At the end of the meeting we prayed together holding hands. We formed a circle and joined it in one voice and one feeling of gratitude. Their faces showed peace and joy. I realized that happiness was what I wanted for myself and God had brought me to the right place.



FINDING THE "WAY" TO RECOVERY



NO MORE EXCUSES

"I have been sober for some time, without trying a drop of alcohol, drugs or any substance. It hasn't been easy but I have followed the advice and suggestions of my friends on my addiction program."

SOME SUGGESTIONS WERE:

- Live one day at a time and be grateful.
- Read the AA or NA book.
- Talk to someone who is going through the same thing as you.
- Connect with your higher power.

THE CHALLENGES OF BEING PRESENT

"Everything was going very well until a few days ago that I suddenly received a letter from the court about my case and they told me that it's getting complicated and things are not clear. I know that I will have to pay for my actions, and I feel that the past haunts me. I don't know what to do, I feel overwhelmed. My children are upset with me and my lawyer doesn't answer my calls. My partner don't talk to me and ignore me because I don't drink or use anymore. I feel like I don't have anyone. I'm lonely. I thought that being sober would make everything better, but I feel angry with the current situation. I'm drowning and helpless, I want to numb this feeling of frustration with alcohol or drugs again."

On our path to sobriety we will face many challenges. Some of them we have already faced before but we didn't know how to handle them and we evaded them.

For example:

- Relationships (husband, children, parents, siblings)
- Decisions (financial, work related, debts, commitments)
- Social life (meetings with friends, family gatherings)
- Work (relationship with the boss, with colleagues, goals)
- Acceptance of others and acceptance of myself
- Past (memories, traumas, and emotions)

OTHER SISTERS IN JAIL WROTE:

"The past is gone, we will never get it back. However, we can bet on the future by learning to treat people better in the present. We should learn to be good to ourselves and forgive ourselves for the past mistakes. There is no point punishing ourselves over and over again for things we can no longer change" (Maria, resident at CIW).

Caroline, a resident at CCWF said: "It's very difficult to forget what has been done to us and what we have done to others. I find myself spinning in my head with the same thoughts over and over again and I tell myself, "ENOUGH!" If we can let go of the past, assuming the consequences of our actions, we will no longer feel that pain and we will be able to move towards a positive state of mind that allows us to have a second chance."

"Getting sober is not just about stopping alcohol and drugs, it's also about detoxifying yourself from anger, fears, insecurities and resentments. We need to be honest, assertive and realistic" (Esther, resident at CRDF).

I told my sponsor that I had a lot of bad ideas running through my head. Ideas that didn't let me move forward and tormented me. He told me: "Those thoughts that run through your head are like crows. They're going to be flying around you trying to catch something, it's up to you not to let them land on your head."



We all have two speakers in our heads, which one are we going to listen to more?

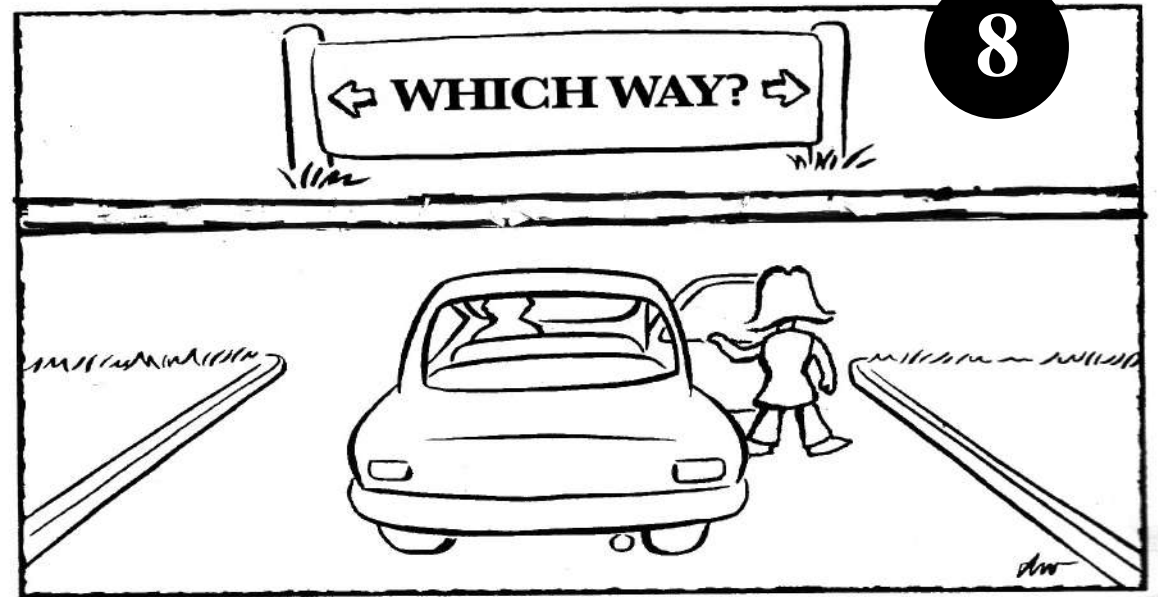
MY EXPERIENCE

One of the best things that happened to me was that I started to feel my own emotions and accept myself. When we are taken by an addiction everything changes. Our perception of others and ourselves changes, our behaving and the way we relate to the world in general also change. The worst is that we don't realize it and we believe that it's just a phase and we will overcome it when we want.

In AA everything is suggested. Nobody tells us what to do. The program only recommends trusting in a High Power and abandoning ourselves to God as we understand Him.



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY



CHOOSING THE RIGHT PATH

Choosing the right path is not easy. At first it can be blurry, you may even feel like you don't know how to walk that path. For too long we have taken the wrong path, doing things our own way, which usually was doing things the wrong way.

In folder #7 we were asked to choose a door and we have chosen the one on the right (*AA Meeting*). At first it was difficult because we felt vulnerable and sensitive. Certainly not ready to accept the truth.

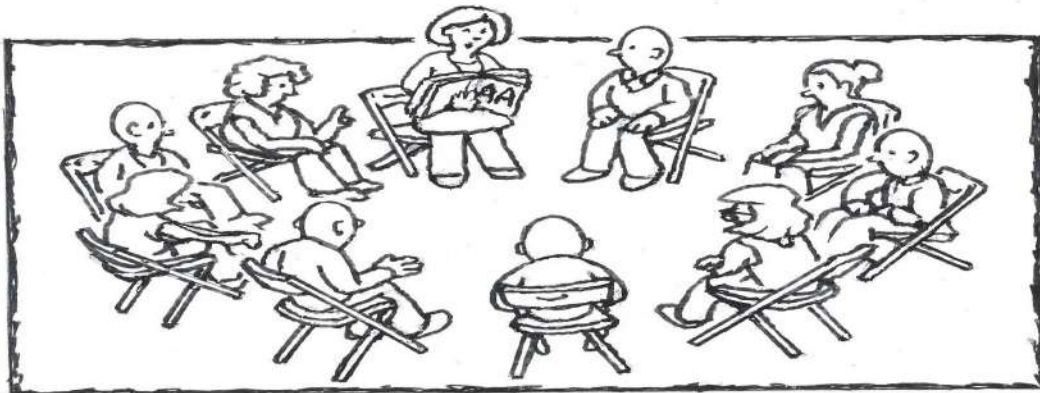
But as we have continued to return, as the group suggests, the path is beginning to become clearer each day.

MEMORIES

I was 9 years old when I tried alcohol for the first time. I remember being with a group of friends who were older than me (all minors) and they were drinking. One of them told me "try this, you'll like it." At first I said no, but at the insistence of all my friends I agreed. "If you want to be a real woman you have to drink alcohol," one of the girls in the group told me. I drank what they gave me, trying not to breathe so it would be lighter, but I remember feeling like my throat was burning. Soon we were all drinking, believing that now we were "real women." I wonder, how many times do other people influence us to take the wrong path?

SHARE WITH US

- 1- Are you willing to do whatever it takes to leave the addiction and get out of that life?
- 2- What was the hardest thing you experienced because of your addiction?
- 3- When did you realize that you had a problem with alcohol or substances?



A VISION FOR YOU

(TAKEN FROM THE AA BIG BOOK)

Our book is meant to be a suggestive only. We realize we know just a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to AA. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the woman who is still sick. The answer will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got.

See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is a Great Fact for us.

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and your fellows. Clean away the wreckage of your past.

Give freely of what you find and join our program. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny

Let's reflect

- 1- Have you ever felt disgusted with yourself?
- 2- What was your life like when you were in a bad place?

It's important that we use our imagination and at the same time ask ourselves serious questions. If we want to choose a better path for our lives and move forward, we need to first love ourselves. In AA, we learn that we cannot give what we don't have.

Is it possible to love myself and at the same time drink and use drugs until I feel like I'm not worth of anything?
Is that really self-love?

We need to learn how to throw away all our addictions in order to move forward and have the life we dream of, the life we want to have, without being prisoners of ourselves.

Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch; like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Was grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY



ON THE MOVE

*(Working the AA program showed this alcoholic how to get
from geographic to gratitude)*

Since we've already chosen to start on the right path, we suggest that you look at page 486 of the AA Big Book.

Thought my life had come to an end when I arrived at my first meeting of AA at twenty-eight years old. I had been drinking since my early years teens, and to my way of thinking, booze had been the answer to my problems, not the problem itself. Even I had to admit, though, that my life had gotten pretty bad and my options were quickly running out. In a moment of desperation, I agreed to go to one AA meeting.

It's easier to see now, as I look back on my drinking days, that from the very beginning alcohol had been part of nearly every disaster in my life. As a very young girl, perhaps ten or eleven years old, I had begun to steal drinks when my parents were not looking, or my friends and I would convince someone from the local high school to buy us some beer. Slowly, but very steadily, my problems began to grow from there.

Can I change a tire without the correct tools?

An old friend, with much more experience in addiction than me, gave me a "tool" to use when I have the urge to drink or use. At that moment I must ask myself with brutal honesty the following questions:

Do I want to drink? The answer is obviously "yes, I want to drink."
Can I drink? The answer is "of course I can, but what happens if I do?"

When I drink, what happens? Write it down

When I don't drink, what do I get? Write it down

After reading what I wrote, I decided to face the temporary urge of drinking or use because I can see what happens when I DON'T DRINK or I DON'T USE. Lastly, I thank God or my Higher Power for giving me the opportunity to make a choice. We know that other times we were faced with the same dilemma and we could not choose because we were prisoners of addiction.

From AA Daily Reflections Book

As we look back over our drinking problems, we must realize that our lives were a mess because we were a mess inside. The trouble was in us, not in life itself. Life itself was good enough, but we were looking at it the wrong way. We were at the bottom of a whiskey glass, and it was distorted. We could not see all the beauty and goodness and purpose in the world because our vision was blurred. We were in a house with one-way glass in the windows. People could see us but we could not look out and see them and see what life meant to them and should mean to us. We were blind then, but now we can see.

sure of the protection of God's grace.



Imagine that you are driving on the country side with a beautiful landscape and your windshield is very dirty and opaque. Can you see clearly where you are going? Can you enjoy the view and the drive? Now imagine that you are driving with a clean and clear windshield, is it possible for the opposite to happen?

What do you think?

[illegible][illegible]

A Non-Profit Organization

Let's start our conversation with what the AA Big Book says about our addiction.

(extract from AA Big Book)

1

This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed. We alcoholics are persons who have lost the ability to control our drinking.

We know that no real alcoholic ever recovered control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals -usually brief- were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization.

We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over many considerable period, we get worse, never better. We are like women or men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment, which will make alcoholics of our kind like other women or men.

We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances, there has been brief recovery, followed always by still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it evidently hasn't done so yet. (From Chapter #3 of AA Book)

LET’S REFLECT

- 1- Have you ever tried to stop your addiction? What happened?
- 2- What do you think about the line in the folder that compares addiction to losing a leg?

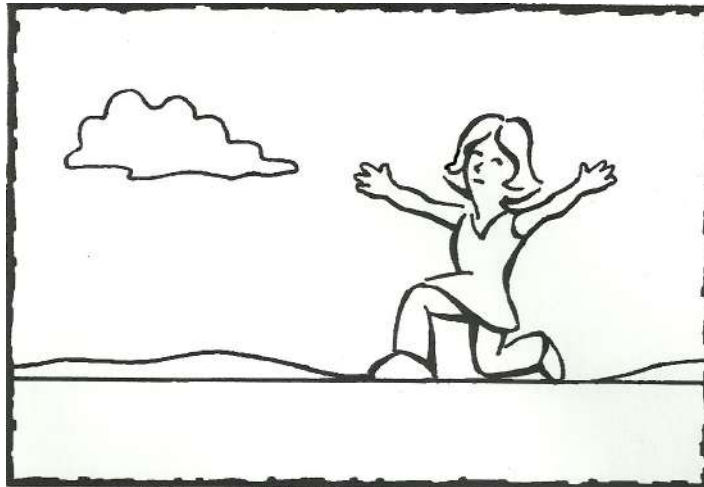
WHO IS AN ADDICT?

Chapter #1 of the Narcotics Anonymous book explains very well who an addict is.

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW! Our whole life and thinking was centered in drugs on one form or another, the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We lived to use and used to live. Very simply, an addict is a person whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions and death.

(Gospel Matthew 10:26)

Jesus said to the Twelve: "Fear no one. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted.



(Third step prayer of Narcotics Anonymous)

*Take my will and my life.
Guide me in my recovery.
Show me how to live.*

The AA Big Book Says Some Things About God

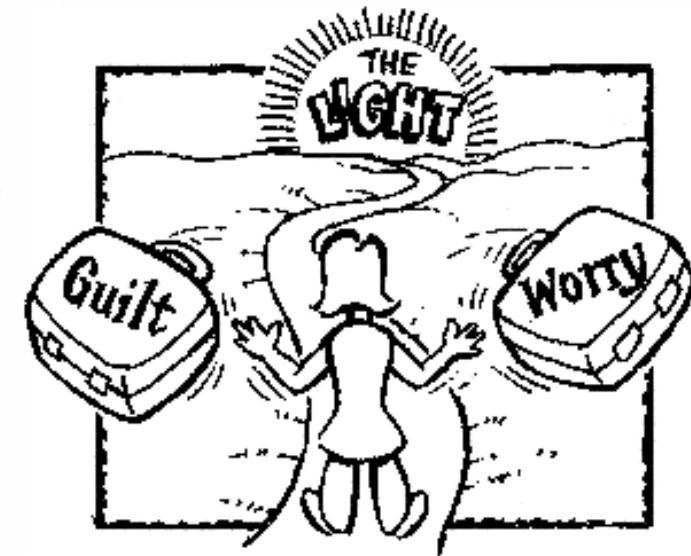
(extract from the AA Big Book)

We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn't do it. Avoid then, the deliberate manufacture of misery, but if trouble comes, cheerfully capitalize it as an opportunity to demonstrate His omnipotence.



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

11



GOD AS YOU UNDERSTAND HIM

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” Step 3 of Alcoholics Anonymous' twelve-Step program is based on a simple principle: Change your attitude toward life, and you can change your life.

Some of us feel uncomfortable talking about God. Many times as soon as we hear the word God we associate it with the Church or with religion.

Do you have any comment about this?

So maybe it would be good to ask ourselves a few questions first:

- 1- Do you believe in God or a Higher Power?
- 2- Are you able to differentiate between God and the idea you have of the Church or religion?
- 3- If I want to change, Am I willing to do whatever it takes?

ONE DAY AT THE TIME

One day, while the chaplain was doing his service at Men's Central Jail, an inmate called him and said, "Chaplain, do you remember me? We met two years ago and I had told you at that time that I didn't want anything to do with the Church or religion and I didn't even want to talk about God".

However, a year ago something happened, I really don't know what it was, but I felt the need to believe. I told myself, I have nothing to lose and guess what? My life began to change little by little because I began to feel that I wasn't alone. I took this awakening one day at a time and for a year I can feel how my life has more and more meaning. I have discovered a purpose for myself and with His help I'm happier now.

I want to thank the chaplains and the volunteers you for their visits, for insisting and always being present in this place where very few people want to be.

It's good to ask ourselves some questions about God

- 1- What kind of image did I have of God when I was a child?

- 2- What image did I have of God when I was a teenager?

- 3- Now that I'm older, what image do I have of God, what do I think about Him and why?

LET'S OPEN OUR MINDS TO BELIEVE!

At some point, we realized that we needed the help of some Power greater than our addiction. Our understanding of a Higher Power is up to us. No one will decide for us what that power is. We can call it the group, the program, or we can call it God. The only suggested guidelines are that this Power be loving, caring and greater than ourselves. We don't have to be religious to accept this idea. The point is that we open our minds to believe. We may have difficulty with this, but by keeping an open mind, sooner or later, we find the help we need.

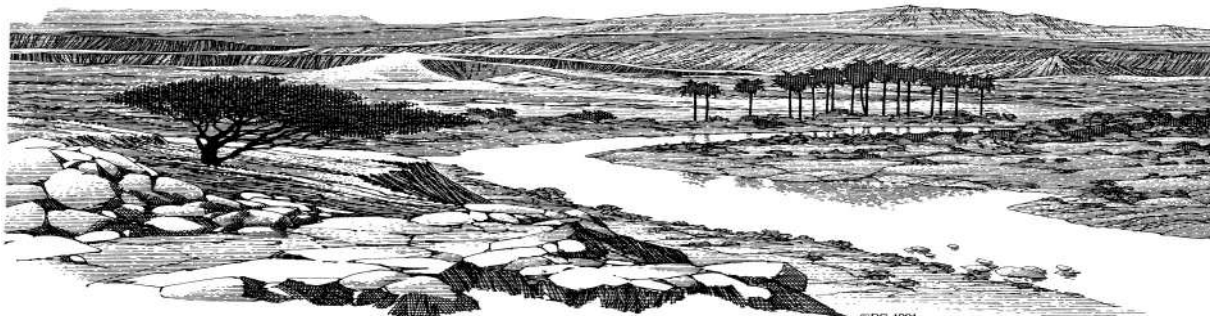
By now, we should have a good idea about what we should do.
Let's get ready to answer some questions and ideas.

1- I'm ready to do whatever has to be done to change my ways?

2- Can I do this by myself or do I'll need help from others?



**WE ARE NOT SAINTS. THE PRINCIPLES WE HAVE SET DOWN
ARE GUIDES TO PROGRESS. WE CLAIM SPIRITUAL PROGRESS
RATHER THAN SPIRITUAL PERFECTION.**



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY



SUGGESTIONS ONLY

The Twelfth Step of the Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book says that as a result of practicing all the steps, we have each found something called a spiritual awakening... AA.'s manner of making ready to receive this gift lies in the practice of the Twelve Steps in our program.

I remember my sponsor's answer when I told him that the steps were “suggested.” He replied that they are “suggested” in the same way that, if you were to jump out of an airplane with a parachute, it is “suggested” that you pull the ripcord to save your life. He pointed out that it was “suggested” I practice the Twelve Steps, if I wanted to save my life. So I try to remember daily that I have a whole program of recovery based on all Twelve of the “suggested” Steps. *(From the Daily Reflection Book)*

HOW IT WORKS

(EXTRACT FROM THE AA BIG BOOK)

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it – then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these, we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and through from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol – cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help, it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power – That One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.”

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a Program of Recovery:

(EXTRACT FROM AA BIG BOOK)

- 1- We admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2- Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3- Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
- 4- Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5- Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6- Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7- Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8- Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9- Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10- Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11- Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12- Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs