

Foreword

There are many versions of the 12 Steps. In fact, there are about as many versions as there are alcoholics in AA who use the program to get sober and to maintain their sobriety.

The founder of AA, Bill W, wrote:

We must remember that AA's Steps are suggestions only. A belief in them as they stand is not at all a requirement for membership among us. This liberty has made AA available to thousands who never would have tried at all, had we insisted on the Twelve Steps just as written.
(Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age)

In keeping with Bill's encouragement, agnostic groups in AA often create their own alternative 12 Steps, replacing religious words like ³God,² ³Him² and ²Power² (all capitalized in the Steps) with secular alternatives. Don W, the founder of Quad A Alcoholics Anonymous for Atheists and Agnostics (AAAA) said:

The first two As, for Alcoholics Anonymous, are far more important than the last two in AAAA, because a 12-step program will work for anybody who works it, regardless of religious belief, understanding or refusal to understand.

We are happy to present a sampling of versions of the Steps. The Steps adapted as need be can be an important tool in the process of recovery from alcoholism.

AA Agnostics of the San Francisco Bay Area

(This version can be found on the area agnostic AA website.)

- 1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2 Came to believe and to accept that we needed strengths beyond our awareness and resources to restore us to sanity.
- 3 Made a decision to entrust our will and our lives to the care of the collective wisdom and resources of those who have searched before us.
- 4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5 Admitted to ourselves without reservation, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6 Were ready to accept help in letting go of all our defects of character.
- 7 With humility and openness sought to eliminate 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 meditation to improve our spiritual awareness and our understanding of the AA

way of life and to discover the power to carry out that way of life.

12 Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Humanist Twelve Steps

(B. F. Skinner, 1972 Humanist of the Year Award Winner, and a researcher and writer at Harvard University, drafted these Steps.)

- 1 We accept the fact that all our efforts to stop drinking have failed.
- 2 We believe that we must turn elsewhere for help.
- 3 We turn to our fellow men and women, particularly those who have struggled with the same problem.
- 4 We have made a list of the situations in which we are most likely to drink.
- 5 We ask our friends to help us avoid those situations.
- 6 We are ready to accept the help they give us.
- 7 We honestly hope they will help.
- 8 We have made a list of the persons we have harmed and to whom we hope to make amends.
- 9 We shall do all we can to make amends, in any way that will not cause further harm.
- 10 We will continue to make such lists and revise them as needed.
- 11 We appreciate what our friends have done and are doing to help us.
- 12 We, in turn, are ready to help others who may come to us in the same way.

White Bison

(White Bison developed The Medicine Wheel, a culturally appropriate 12 Step program for Native American people. It uses a single word version of the Steps in which ³each of the 12 Steps is presented from the perspective of the value that it reflects.²)

- 1 Honesty
- 2 Hope
- 3 Faith
- 4 Courage
- 5 Integrity
- 6 Willingness
- 7 Humility
- 8 Forgiveness
- 9 Justice
- 10 Perseverance
- 11 Spiritual Awakening
- 12 Service

A Buddhist's Non-Theist 12 Steps

(These Steps were created by Bodhi, from Sydney, Australia.)

- 1 We admitted our addictive craving over alcohol, and recognized its consequences in our lives.
- 2 Came to believe that a power other than self could restore us to wholeness.
- 3 Made a decision to go for refuge to this other power as we understood it.
- 4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5 Admitted to ourselves and another human being the exact moral nature of our past.
- 6 Became entirely ready to work at transforming ourselves.
- 7 With the assistance of others and our own firm resolve, we transformed unskillful aspects of ourselves and cultivated positive ones.
- 8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed.
- 9 Made direct amends to such people where possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. In addition, made a conscientious effort to forgive all those who harmed us.
- 10 Continue to maintain awareness of our actions and motives, and when we acted unskillfully promptly admitted it.
- 11 Engaged through the practice of meditation to improve our conscious contact with our true selves, and seeking that beyond self. Also used prayer as a means to cultivate positive attitudes and states of mind.
- 12 Having gained spiritual insight as a result of these steps, we practice these principles in all areas of our lives and make this message available to others in need of recovery.

A Freethinker's Steps

(John L. got sober in February 1968 and at the time pledged: ³If I lived I would help AA re-write the Steps, to put them into good English.² In 2010 he wrote this alternative to the original 12 Steps.)

- 1 We admitted that we were alcoholics & that we suffered from an addiction which is invariably fatal unless arrested.
- 2 We hoped for recovery from our addiction.
- 3 We committed ourselves to lifelong abstinence, staying away from the first drink, a day at a time.
- 4 We joined a fellowship of recovering alcoholics, who help each other maintain sobriety.
- 5 We honestly evaluated our lives, acknowledging both our strengths and our weaknesses.
- 6 We did our best to build on our strengths and to overcome our weaknesses.

7 We got our lives in order < dealt with the wreckage of the past < made amends whenever feasible.

8 We strived to be in good health: We stopped smoking, exercised, got enough rest, and ate nutritious food.

9 We determined to live in the real world, here and now, whether pleasant or painful. We pledged allegiance to reason and evidence, rather than superstition and dogma.

10 We abstained from mind-altering drugs, including those prescribed by physicians.

11 We continued to share our experience, strength and hope with other recovering alcoholics.

12 We carried the message of sobriety to alcoholics who were still drinking.

The Twelve Steps of Self-Confirmation

(These alternative 12 Steps are taken from an article by Christine Le, Erik P. Ingvarson, and Richard C. Page which first was published in The Journal of Counseling & Development, Jul/Aug 1995 (Vol. 73 Issue 6, p. 603-609).

1 I realize I am not in control of my use.

2 I acknowledge that a spiritual awakening can help me to find a new direction.

3 I am ready to follow and stay true to the new path I have chosen.

4 I have the strength and courage to look within and to face whatever obstacles hinder my continued personal and spiritual development.

5 I commit to become fully aware of how my use hurt those around me.

6 I am changing my life and developing my human potential.

7 I am proud of my strength and ability to grow.

8 I will do all I can to make up for the ways I have hurt myself and others.

9 I will take direct action to help others in any way that I can.

10 I will strive to be self-aware and follow the new path I have chosen.

11 I will continue to develop my potential through helping others and strive to become fully conscious of myself and life around me.

12 I will continue to develop my own human potential and spirituality and will actively help others who cannot control their use of alcohol.

Afterword

As Bill W. once put it: ³The wording was, of course, quite optional, so long as we voiced the ideas without reservation.² (The Big Book, p. 63)