



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

I started drinking at 15. Up to age 35, I always drank until I was drunk; always sought it, rarely bought it. I had it when I had it and it was good. I didn't consider it a problem.

The next 10 years were fun. I was living in California, where they gave you little sips of wine everywhere you went. My husband and I made wonderful new friends, had great food and wine pairing parties where we drank till we were all drunk. I got a DUI during these years, but I was just having so much fun. I didn't consider drinking a problem then, either.

But the next 10 years caught me by surprise. Drinking wasn't fun anymore. When did I become a sloppy, embarrassing, sharp-tongued, old-lady drunk? And the last three years of my drinking were pure hell for me, for my friends, for my family, and especially for my husband.

In 2007, my husband left me after almost 40 years together. He simply had had enough. I drank for 100 days straight. I was going to drink until it killed the pain—or me. Then one night, sitting drunk in my dimly lit garage, I heard myself screaming, “God help me!” All of a sudden, I felt a calm. The next morning, on June 6, with the strength God had just given me, I walked through the doors of AA.

God gave me my sponsor on that first day too. It was so exciting. Someone was going to show me how to do this. Stopping drinking seemed so impossibly overwhelming. But now, through God and this woman, I found 1) the acceptance of my disease, 2) the awareness of how to remove this insanity and 3) the awakening to God as the answer. Working the Steps good and hard, I was amazed as I began to see some improvements in my life.

Then came Step Four. My sponsor and I tore through my life leaving no stone unturned. In discussing my darkest thoughts and actions, we listed the few good characteristics that I had left, and my many bad traits (like my self-image). We established triggers for bad behaviors, like patting my own hand when I felt aggravated, or clamping my lips when I was angry and wanted to lash out. I was stripped down to the depths of my soul.

In exposing my soft underbelly, I felt raw after Step Four. I really feared moving onto Step Five: Admitting the exact nature of my wrongs. In the “Twelve and Twelve,” it states that “Step Five is difficult but necessary to sobriety and peace of mind.” We “lose sense of isolation, receive forgiveness and give it; learn humility; gain honesty.” The “results are tranquility and consciousness of God. Oneness with God and man prepares us for the following Steps.”

I had written in my journal, “Step Five seems like it's going to be very difficult.” I wasn't sure what else I had to disclose of my moral wrongs and bad behaviors. I know I have an innate ability to rationalize wrongs and find excuses for hurtful actions. Actually, my usual excuse had become, “I was drunk.” So what more was there to disclose? In the course of doing my Step Five homework, I was reminded of many of my revolting and disgusting drunken episodes.

Then I read in the Big Book, “We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. ... We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this Step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator.” Then comes the wonderful promise: “We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience.” So, this Step then is an opportunity to know God better.

OK. I had thoroughly done my Step Five assignment. I felt ready and willing. I took a deep breath and faced my sponsor. First, she had me write a new “good trait/bad trait” list without looking at the first one from Step Four. Then we compared the two sets. I found that many of my bad traits were already greatly improved upon.

(Continued on Page Three)

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

An incident at a women's meeting brought the importance of Tradition Five to light for me. When the secretary asked if there were any AA announcements, a woman with a few years of sobriety announced that she had flyers for a women's retreat and that those interested could see her after the meeting. When she finished, a woman with loads of time in sobriety blurted out, "That's not an AA announcement!" The whole room went quiet. I noticed that the faces in the room revealed many emotions, but the most common was confusion.

At our next meeting, I talked with the secretary. She had called our central office about the validity of the statement and received contradictory responses. We truly did not know if announcing a retreat for women was AA or not.

A few days passed, and the question kept bouncing around in my thoughts. I decided to call Jane, who had spent most of her sobriety in and around district and area meetings. When I explained what had happened at the meeting, I heard her chuckle. She said that she could not tell me whether what the woman had said was right or wrong, but that she had a story that would help me to understand the situation and to make my own decision.

At her home group, there was a woman who made teddy bears. She decided one day that she had too many and so she brought them to a meeting to be given away during the raffle. (The raffle is a common event at most meetings in the Northeast and consists of people buying tickets to win Conference-approved AA literature and bumper stickers.) At the next business meeting for this group, the elders informed the woman that she could not contribute teddy bears to the raffle because only Conference-approved literature could be given away. There was a vote and it was decided that the teddy bears, no matter how cute they were, had to go. Even though the no's were a majority, my friend Jane felt it was neither a clear nor a good group conscience vote.

A few weeks passed and Jane went to the district meeting. The woman with the teddy bears and the others who had voted against the majority had brought their dilemma to the district. For some reason, the district felt this was a group issue and decided to let the group decide, which gave the woman and the others, in their minds, the okay to distribute teddy bears during the raffle.

So, the teddy bears were ready to be raffled at the next meeting. At this meeting was a man with some time sober who had come with a woman who was two days sober and at her very first AA meeting. The woman won the raffle (of course) and the man handed her a Big Book. She was not impressed and informed him that she wanted a teddy bear instead. The man told her that the teddy bear was not going to keep her sober. She insisted that she really wanted the teddy bear. The woman left the meeting with the teddy bear. She was never seen again, but the teddy bears still remain.

Jane's example helped me in understanding our Fifth Tradition. It was a simple message that I could bring back to my home group. From that point on, we have tried to be very careful what we include in our AA announcements and raffle.

When I came to AA, I did not know that drinking was my problem. A teddy bear might have seemed, in my sick mind, an easier, softer way to solve my problem. I could have been the woman who did not come back. We never truly know what newcomers will hear at their first few AA meetings that will help them to stay sober, but we can be responsible for what we make available to them, so that they can get the help they need to understand the disease of alcoholism.

Kathi A., Action, Maine

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The Lifeline: Purpose Statement

The Lifeline is the monthly newsletter of the St. Paul and Suburban Area Intergroup, Incorporated. It is about, by, and for groups and members of the A.A. Fellowship. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by either A.A. or Intergroup. We welcome articles on a Step, Tradition, or Concept, in addition to descriptions of personal experience. We also welcome cartoons and drawings expressing the wry side of our A.A. experience.

Please email your article to lifeline@aastpaul.org, or send it by regular mail to Lifeline Editor, St. Paul Intergroup, 608 Seventh Street West, St. Paul MN 55102. Materials or articles mailed to us cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Intergroup reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, language, length, and content that might violate A.A.'s Traditions, etc.

Step Five (Continued from Page One)

My sponsor then asked me to describe the worst image I had of myself. I told her that I was once an opinionated, viper-tongued, always right, know-it-all, angry, micromanaging shrew. We then talked about how hard I had already worked to change that person and we shoved her back into my past.

Then my sponsor and I locked eyes. She asked me, "Is there anything you omitted when we did Step Four?" I paused for a moment, my eyes never leaving her face and replied, "Absolutely not. There is nothing more." Then she said, "Donna, I have a gift for you. You just did Step Five." What a blessed release!

That's when a line from the Big Book caught my eye: "Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last." Free of alcohol. Free to find me. Oh, I knew there was much more work ahead, but Step Five had flung open my heart and my soul. It put me firmly on the path of being capable of growing stronger in the image of my Creator, who had given me this magnificent gift of sobriety. This Step showed me the amazing program that I was working, a program of honesty, humility and willingness. It was time to let the fears fall; time to completely trust God; time to let God continue his work; time for me to move toward his will for me. God said, "I will make you a blessing."

So, it's possible that the peace, confidence and serenity that I radiate can actually give others the desire to seek God. I want to set this example if I can. I want to be this person. I want to be a blessing. I love this sober life.

- Donna C., Fairfield, Calif.

Concept Five: Throughout our structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

Throughout our world service structure, a traditional "Right of Appel" ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.

How can this possibly be used my personal life is the question that first comes to mind here. Actually the answer is very simple.

The idea here is simply to ensure that all aspects are considered in making a decision. When a personal in a relationship with me – be it family member, fellow worker, fellow AA member or any other – makes a decision I think may not be the best, what do I do?

Simply, I present to them the possibility that there may have been aspects of the decision that were not fully considered. Careful to make sure the focus is on what may have been overlooked rather than pointing out any possible error. What is important is to focus on is ensuring the facts are all taken into account – not proving someone made a mistake or was wrong.

I have found that the vast majority of folks are more concerned about being heard, than getting their own way. Also, I find that once I have made a decision – and I am feeling somewhat powerful as the result – I am more open to hearing another point of view. So, when someone presents new information to me without attacking the decision itself, I can better consider it. Concept Five takes this all into account without ever actually mentioning it.

This is all about respect. When I respect you, the way I want to be respected – we all benefit!

- Member X

Notes From Your Office

It's been a busy month at the Intergroup Office. First we assisted our Board members Tom & Karen in putting together a very well attended Spring Fling, which was held at the Downtown Club facilities. From all we heard, folks enjoyed the meal, the speaker and the dance - it was a "triple-header" of an event!

On top of that, we are in the process of making some very significant operational changes in the office. The Board approved the purchase of new computers to replace our old ones, which were unable to keep up with the newest technology. This will result in us being able to "take it to the next level" as people often say. It will be "Intergroup 2.0!"

In the course of this upgrade, we have also taken our accounting system "to the cloud" in purchasing the Quickbooks Online. This will mean that we will always be utilizing the most recent version of Quickbooks and be able to benefit from the many improvement that are made to the software down the road.

If you drop by the office in the coming week(s), it will look different than before. We are moving things around to better set up the new equipment and provide a better workflow for the staff. Hopefully, this will result in a much better shopping experience for those folks who like to come in and browse a bit.

You may be reading this on you smart phone. If so, you already know that the Lifeline is now going to be available for your smart-phone. As time goes on we will be making improvement to the content and presentation of the Lifeline Mobile. You can also view this version on your desktop computer by downloading the Adobe app - which can be found here: <http://www.adobe.com/solutions/ebook/digital-editions/download.html>. This is a free reader that will work on either a Windows PC or Apple Mac. We hope you enjoy this effort to make your Intergroup more portable.

Thoughts From Your Board

Do the meetings you attend regularly send a representative to the monthly St. Paul Intergroup Representatives meeting? If not, I encourage you to volunteer. Every meeting listed in our directory is entitled to have a voice in how St. Paul Intergroup conducts its business. And while we generally have pretty good attendance, many groups are not represented.

If your group contributes money to St. Paul Intergroup, it is especially important that group members see how that money is spent. As a Rep, you would have the opportunity to report that kind of vital information back to your group.

I served as an Intergroup Rep for my home group for two years before I stood for a board position. I can say firsthand that being a Group Rep is a fun and rewarding AA service opportunity. The Intergroup Reps meet at 7:30 p.m., on the third Tuesday of each month at St. Stan's Church, 395 West Superior Street, St. Paul – not far from the St. Paul Intergroup office.

And if I haven't yet persuaded you to get involved, I'll add this: There's usually candy at the meeting. Join us!

Jenni S., Board Chair

UPCOMING A.A. EVENTS!!

Group and Area News

New Meeting: *The Fellow Traveler's* group meets Sundays 5:00PM at the Saint Anthony Park Lutheran Church, 2323 Como Avenue, Saint Paul, 55108. The meeting is Closed, Topic/Discussion, All-ages & Mixed.

New Meeting: *It's 7AM Somewhere* group meets Fridays 7:00AM in the basement of Claddagh Coffee Café at 459 West Seventh Street, Saint Paul, 55102. The meeting is Closed, Step, All-ages & Mixed.

New Meeting: *Break It Down Big Book* meets Wednesdays 6:30PM at the Faribault Alano, 217 Central Ave, Faribault, 55021. The meeting is Closed, Big Book, All-ages, Mixed & Handicap Accessible.

47th Annual Iron Range Get-Together "Contempt Prior to Investigation"

Sawmill Inn
2301 S. Pokegama Ave., Grand Rapids, MN 55744
Friday, May 5th - Sunday, May 7th
For More Information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/191800777986263>

Your News?

We invite you to share your AA news here!
Please send your items to lifeline@aastpaul.org.
We look forward to hearing from you.

PLEASE POST ON BULLETIN BOARD

"Willing To Go To Any Length"



**GOPHER STATE
ROUNDUP XLIV
MAY 26, 27 and 28, 2017**



A.A. with Al-Anon, Alateen Participation
www.gopherstateroundup.org

Activities and Accommodations at
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Highway 100 & 494, Bloomington, MN

MEETINGS • SPEAKERS • FELLOWSHIP • HOSPITALITY ROOMS • A.A. FILMS

REGISTRATION - \$17.00 Contribution Pre-Registration, \$20.00 Contribution On-Site (ages 13 & over) A.A., Al-Anon, or Alateen.

Credit cards are now accepted. Processing fees apply.
Visit www.gopherstateroundup.org for online registration by May 24th.
Onsite registration begins Friday, May 26th, at noon.

Registration badges provide admittance to all roundup activities and must be worn at all times.
Parking restrictions will be enforced.

Guaranteed Special Room Rates
Register early for the best rate. Details at

www.gopherstateroundup.org
or directly with DoubleTree by Hilton at 1-800-222-8733.
Mention Gopher State Roundup for special rate.

Gopher State Roundup is a special A.A. conference with Al-Anon participation.
Gopher State Roundup is self-supporting.
No contributions from A.A. groups are used to pay for this event.
Expenses such as hotel fees, travel & lodging for the speakers, and printed material are paid through registration fees.
No baskets are passed during this event.

SPEAKERS

FRIDAY, MAY 26
7:30 PM Matthew M. A.A., Burley, WA
10:00 PM Rose E., A.A., Brooksville, FL

SATURDAY, MAY 27
9:30 AM Bud S., Al-Anon, Deering, NH
11:30 AM Gregory T., A.A., New York, NY
2:00 PM Larcine G., Al-Anon, Hawthorne, CA
4:00 PM Speaker Panel
7:30 PM Mike A., A.A., Nashville, TN
10:00 PM April D., A.A., Annapolis, MD

SUNDAY, MAY 28
10:00 AM Jimmy D., A.A., Dallas, TX
ASL interpretation is provided for the meetings listed above.
CDs are available in the Grand Ballroom foyer.

St. Paul Intergroup 51st Anniversary! Open House

Saturday, June 10th
11:00 AM ~ 3:00 PM



Join us for
fellowship,
food, and fun!!

608 7th Street West
St. Paul, MN 55102
(Corner of Western & West 7th)

For More Info Call Us:
651-227-5502



Looking for a Service Opportunity?
Become a St. Paul Intergroup Night Owl!

Upcoming Night Owl Orientations:
Saturday, May 20th, June 17th, July 15th

Every *Third Saturday* from 10:00 - 11:00 AM

St. Paul Intergroup Office

608 Seventh Street West - St. Paul, MN 55102

To RSVP please call: 651-227-5502



St. Paul Area Intergroup Representatives' Meeting Minutes March 21st, 2017

Opened with the Serenity Prayer, introductions, and Jenni S. read the Primary Purpose of Intergroup.

Minutes from last month were reviewed, CJ motioned and Chris seconded, motion approved.

Treasurer's Report, – Matt R gave the report. Bank account is \$31,673 and prudent reserve is \$47,339. Liabilities decreased and receivables decreased. Total contributions are down, group contributions are down and office sales are up. Expenses are down. See Treasurer's Report for full details. Contact Matt at treasurer@aastpaul.org.

Office Report, Dennis – There has been a much welcomed influx of volunteers across various service opportunities. There is still a need for some volunteers in the midday and afternoon shifts. People can answer phones or can help with other office activities. Due to potential mailing issues the office is encouraging people to sign up to receive the LifeLine via email. They hope to have the e-book version available within next month or two. Contact the Office at manager@aastpaul.org.

Night Owl Report, Cheryl, The HOOTs report is now in the LifeLine. Night Owl is currently seeking a 3 new Night Owl Committee Members, at least one female. Requirements: 1+ year of sobriety, Night Owl Oriented/Experienced, attend quarterly meetings and enter rotation of carrying the Backup Phone. For those interested in this service opportunity contact Cheryl at NightOwl@aastpaul.org or leave a message at the intergroup office.

Website Report, Jonathan gave the report. 688 meetings and 278 groups total. Up 7 meetings and up 1 group. There are 12 service opportunities and 2 open Night Owl shifts per the website. Downtown Alano meetings continue to be updated. Seth gave a demonstration to the Board on the mobile version, it looks very promising.

Outreach Program, Carolyn M – Make sure meeting information matches what is listed on the website. Volunteers should encourage Intergroup/District participation. Refer to the Outreach Info Sheet for full instructions. For more information contact Carolyn M at outreach@aastpaul.org.

Update from the Board, Lesli D, The Board approved spending down the Prudent Reserve excess and purchasing updated POS computers/systems for the intergroup office. Contact the office for more information.

Liaison Reports: District 8 Mike C, Primarily have been working on agenda items for General Service Convention in April to take the Area Assembly; District 15, Julie, There are lots of new GSRs and participation, also working on GSC agenda items. "Service" spring workshop was success. ; District 19, Still doing outreach for participation, considering AA Movie-Night and Workshop.

Upcoming Intergroup Events – Spring Fling (April 1st) at Downtown Alano Club. 6pm Spaghetti dinner, 6:30pm speaker is John McD, with dance to follow. See flyer or intergroup website for full details.

Old Business: None

New Business: Gopher State Sr. Board Member Anne J reported on Gopher State. May 26-28th. Room specials still for \$99 while supplies last. Event has a 44 year tradition, averages 7-8,000 people. Registration can be done online. For more info see www.gopherstateroundup.org.

Group AA Announcements:

OMD 1st Fr 3/3 7pm potluck, speaker and medallion ceremony, 1221 Marshall Av. Speaker is Sev P.

St Paul Speaker Meeting 7pm Sunday Nights, Central Presbyterian Church at 500 Cedar St. Use backdoor.

1169 Sherburne - Big food and wild rice with Speaker. Monday March 25th at 7pm.

Suggestions for next month's agenda: None

Grapevine Report, C.J.; volunteer for April, Mark J.

Concept III review, Camille; volunteer for Concept IV for April, Guillermo

Mock Rep Report, Dan S.; volunteer for April, C.J.

Closed with the Responsibility Statement

Meetings Represented: A New Found Freedom, St. Paul; Como Park BB, Roseville; District 15; The Firing Line, Roseville; Hour of Power, St. Paul; Hole In The Doughnut, Roseville; Look To This Day, St. Paul; Maplewood Alano Groups, Maplewood; Midway, St. Paul; New Brighton Big Book; New Brighton, No Time Like the Present, Roseville; Outright Mental Defectives, St. Paul; Pocketing Our Pride, St. Paul; Problem & Solution, St. Paul; Rule 62 Step & Tradition, St. Paul; St. Paul Speaker Meeting, St. Paul; Students of Life, St. Paul; Summit Hill, St. Paul; Third Edition, St. Paul.

<u>2017 Steering Board:</u>		<u>Office Calls/Visitors—March 2017</u>	
Chair:	Jenni S.	Meeting information	89
Alternate Chair:	Lesli D.	Inventory/hours	36
Secretary:	Rob C.	12th Step calls	2
Treasurer:	Matt R.	Temporary sponsor	13
Alternate Treasurer:	Karen C.	Speaker request	33
Members-at- Large 2017:	J.D. & Carolyn M.	Special events	2
Members-at- Large 2018	Tom S. & Eric M.	Outside issues	10
Advisor to the Board:	Sandy K.	Info for professionals	0
Manager	Dennis B.	Administrative	84
		Other	53
		Total Calls	322
		Average Calls/Day	14.0
		Total Visitors	239
		Average Visitors/Day	8.9

MAY 2017 REPS' MEETING: Tuesday, MAY 16th @ 7:30 PM

SAINT STANISLAUS CHURCH

398 West Superior Street; St. Paul, MN 55102

**7th Tradition
Suggestions for Groups**

“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

The Conference-approved pamphlet: “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” offers the following suggestions for the distribution of group funds after group expenses have been paid:

50% St. Paul Intergroup
608 Seventh Street West
St. Paul, MN 55102

30% General Service Office
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

10% Southern MN Area 36
Area Assembly
P.O. Box 2812
Mpls., MN 55402

10% District Committee

Ramsey County:
District 8, P.O. Box 131523
St. Paul, MN 55113

Dakota County:
District 19, P.O. Box 1466
Burnsville, MN 55337

Washington County:
District 15, P.O. Box 181
Lake Elmo, MN 55042

SE Ramsey County:
District 26, P.O. Box 75980
St. Paul, MN 55175

MARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

Number of Group Contributors: 31
Total Group Contributions: \$4408
Number of Faithful Fivers: 11
Total from Faithful Fivers: \$245



District Meetings

District 8 (Ramsey Co.)
Fairview Community Center
1910 Co. Rd B, Rm 108
Roseville
3rd Wed., 7:30 PM

District 15 (Wash. Co.)
Christ Lutheran Church
11194 N. 36th St.
Lake Elmo
4th Mon., 7:00 PM

District 19 (Dakota Co.)
Rosemount Community Center
13885 South Robert Trail
Rosemount
2nd Wed., 7:00 PM

District 26 (SE Ramsey Co.)
Grace Lutheran Church
1730 Old Hudson Rd.
St. Paul
2nd Sun., 7:00PM
www.district26-area36.org



**Thanks to all the Groups that
contributed in March**

- Andover Day by Day
- Dakota Alano
- Day by Dei Saturday
- Element Group
- Fairview Riverside Group
- Fellowship Club AA
- Gratitude in Action
- Happy Hour Men's Meeting
- Happy, Joyous and Free - Mahtomedi
- Highland Park Groups
- Hole in the Doughnut Group
- Lake City Group
- Lindstrom Thursday 12x12
- Look to This Day
- Maplewood Groups
- Oakdale Woodbury Sun Group
- Rivertown BB Group-Hastings
- Rock Solid
- Rosemount Groups
- Roseville Centennial Group
- Saturday Morning PS Meeting
- Ship Of Fools Group
- Sisters of Serenity
- St. Croix Alano Relapse Prevention
- St. Paul Sun Night Speaker Meeting
- St. Stephen's Tuesday Group
- Summit Hill
- Uptown Club
- White Bear SAT AM Women's Group
- White Bear Wed AM Women's
- Woodbury Wed. Noon Group

Thanks to all of the FANTASTIC Office Volunteers who helped in March:

Allyson K., Annette H., Abby S., Bob P., Carol R., Chuck L.,
CJ M., Connie W., David M., Deb E., Don C., Ernest S.,
Frank D., Harry L., Henry O., Jeff K., Jimmy D., John D.,
John G., Kathleen S., Keith I., Lauren N., Lonnie A., Marc S.,
Mary Lou S., Mike M., Paul C., Pat W., Sammy
Sean N., Suzanne B., Ty K., Woody W.

Thanks to our AWESOME Night Owls too!



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

Six Sources of Trouble

From the January 1955 Grapevine

IN ONE OF our Western states, there is a mountain that is not often climbed. Any old veteran of parts thereabouts will give this reason: "The first part goes easy. But about one third of the way up, most of 'em turn around and come back. There's sheer walls and jagged rocks, deep crevices and poor footing. Right there, most folks quit. Odd thing, too. When you've passed that big hump, you've got it made. The rest is a climb, all right, but the worst is over."

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are like that mountain. There's a big hump on the way up--Step Five: "We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." Right here, some folks give up.

I must have a "Fifth Step face." As a counselor, I have often been asked to be the other human being referred to in this Step. And my datebook with its broken engagements is mute testimony that it is easy to approach this part of the mountain and then turn back.

In my work as a minister, I have seen good Fifth Steps and bad ones; long Fifth Steps and short ones; Fifth Steps scribbled on brown wrapping paper and those neatly typed with a secretary's perfection. In listening to men and women, young and old, some long in AA and some who tackled this part of the mountain before they were ready, I have noticed that there were always some things in common among those who were successful.

What are the secrets of a good Fifth Step? Let us take a look at the basic ingredients, then the mechanics, and finally the places where the going is roughest. The following is based entirely on my own experience and observations on the receiving end of the Fifth Step and is intended as a possible guide for those seeking suggestions on how to go about taking the Fifth Step.

Three Basic Ingredients

1. Belief in a forgiving God. Read the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15, Verses 11 to 24. Let it sink deep into your heart until you are convinced that God will forgive anything; that He is like a father who goes out each night to the end of the road looking for a boy to come home. When the boy comes, there will be no "I told you so" or "It's about time." There will be only rejoicing because you have come. No matter where you have been or what you have done, from out of "riotous living" or from feeding with the swine, your Heavenly Father loves you and wants you home. In my opinion, this concept of a forgiving God is needed for a thorough Fifth Step.
2. One must want to take it. Just as deciding one is powerless over alcohol is necessary in taking the First Step, one must be personally ready for Step Five. Do not take it because someone urges you. You must want it with a passion. Only that kind of desire will enable you to endure the anguish that goes with it. Only when you want it badly enough will you know the heaven that follows this particular hell. Before going further, I want to explain that as a nonalcoholic I have taken this Step myself, and I recommend it heartily for those who are not in AA. I have experienced the soul struggle that it requires. I know the humiliation that accompanies it. I also know the deep peace that follows in its wake.

(Continued Pg. 2)

Three Basic Ingredients (con't)

3. Take the Fourth Step: "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." This Step is a basic preliminary, and may be even rougher than Step Five.

Three Suggestions

1. Determine to make it thorough. We had two rooms in the old farmhouse that were never heated in winter. Most of us have a section like that. Maybe it's only a closet where we locked the door and threw the key away. But the monoxide fumes seep under the sill and poison our whole lives. Until you want to find all the keys and open all the locked chambers, you're not ready. Decide that you will make it complete.

2. Take plenty of time. One day, an enthusiastic new member of AA came rushing into my study and said, "I've just got twenty minutes before I'm due back to work, I'd like to take my Fifth Step." I did what you would have done. I explained that he had been twenty years getting into this and twenty minutes wasn't adequate. It may take six weeks, six months, or longer --take your time.

3. Write it out. Word for word, page for page, sentence after horrible sentence, put it all down. Experience has taught me that the best Fifth Steps are written down, and many of us who are sought out by AAs as counselors make it a rule to wait until the member has done this. I once participated in this Step with a woman who had forty-seven pages, single-spaced, on both sides of the paper. It is no coincidence, it seems to me, that she is today one of the most radiant women in our community. She got rid of all the blockages between herself and God.

Here are some reasons why the best results are obtained when it is written down:

- (a) More permanent effects. In my experience, those who take the Fifth Step this way have not had a slip again.
- (b) It can be added to. Double- or triple-space it. As you recall one old memory, another will raise its head to shake its gory locks and say, "Boo! Remember me?" This can be written between the lines.
- (c) It can be read out loud with the person whom you have chosen. This saves time for both of you. More important, it makes your story orderly and not a hodgepodge. And most important, you actually feel that you are getting it out of your system.
- (d) It helps you to see in black and white what's troubling you. The voice cannot be seen, but the written word can be clearly viewed.
- (e) It helps you to organize your problem and attach your troubles to particular incidents. Suppose, for instance, you worry a lot about money. Maybe just seeing in black and white the fact that you never had enough as a child will help you to realize that you're worrying about something in the past and not the present.
- (f) You can burn your paper or give it to your counselor for disposal. Thus, you feel that you get rid of your past and all the things that have been disturbing you.

(Continued pg. 3)

Six Sources of Trouble

Many people suppose that only those things they did wrong should enter into Fourth and Fifth Steps. This is a mistake, it seems to me, since myriad other factors go to make us what we are. Here are some general areas where you might find your number one inner enemy.

1. *Your early home life.* Did you love your parents, and did they love you? (Is it only coincidence that a large percentage of the alcoholics I have known are crosswise with one or the other of their parents?) Were you rejected? Spoiled? Sheltered? Shoved out on your own too soon? Do you carry ill will toward a brother or sister? Were you laughed at? Unduly punished? Put it all down in black and white. Your counselor will help you put the pieces together.

2. *Shock.* Did you have a bad scare at a tender age? Do you recall vividly some incident where you were sure you would be killed? Your insecurity may date back to a distant day when you suddenly thought all your world was falling apart. Write it out in great detail. The mere transfer from your harried soul to the paper will do you more good than you can imagine beforehand.

3. *Disappointment.* This is close kin to shock. Did you want something with all your heart, and then not get it? Was somebody else elected captain of the team or president of the class? Did somebody else get someone you longed to make yours? Perhaps this is the place where you decided the universe wasn't friendly and God loved somebody else more than you. Maybe those I-feel-sorry-for-me hours go back to this experience, or others like it.

4. *Hatred, resentment, grudge.* Make a list of those who have done you wrong and how you feel about them. Add to the list those whom you do not like, and why. Both religion and psychology stand by the view that you can't have the love of God flowing into your heart until the pipes from you to others have been cleared of rust and rubbish. No one has ever proved the opposite.

5. *Guilt complex.* Did you steal something back there in the long-gone years? Did you cheat in class? Did you hurt someone?

How about sex? Among nonalcoholics I meet in my work as counselor, I find that at least seventy-five percent of those who suffer from a guilt complex have either an imagined or a real sex sin in their background. With alcoholics--in my experience, let me stress--it's one hundred percent. I have never participated in the Fifth Step with anyone who didn't have some moral misdemeanors to relate.

You may attempt to laugh it off and treat it lightly. But we are all moral creatures, and there is something sacred in us, which, when tampered with, comes back one day to beat a haunting tattoo on the deep-toned drums of the soul.

This may be the hardest thing you ever did: Write it down. Don't be afraid. God, having created us, knows our frailty. He gave us our instincts. It would be against His very nature to equip us with driving impulses and not forgive when we have used them wrongly. Your counselor will help you here, and you will help yourself if you list them, one-two-three.

(Continued pg. 4)

Six Sources of Trouble (cont)

6. *Selfishness.* Are you number one on your agenda? Oddly enough, it may be two opposite ends of the same pole that made you that way. You may have had too much when you were little. Thus, you naturally thought that life was designed to please you. And when you fared forth on your own, you discovered that you were somebody special at home but just another struggler to everyone else. This made you bitter. You set out to please you, and that always leads to bitterness.

Or maybe you didn't have the things that all the other kids accepted as commonplace. Therefore, you decided that one day you would put yourself in a spot where you could really be nice to you. Thus, without realizing it, you became selfish.

Life is for service, not self-service, and when you see yourself on paper, you may discover a big flaw in your thinking.

There are many other areas of your background that will be revealing. Time and space will not permit listing them all. I have suggested a few of those most common. Take your time; be honest; write it all down in great detail.

When you have completed your inventory, make a date with the person you have chosen, and have it over as soon as possible. It's a good idea to call this person well ahead of time and ask him to save you plenty of time in his schedule.

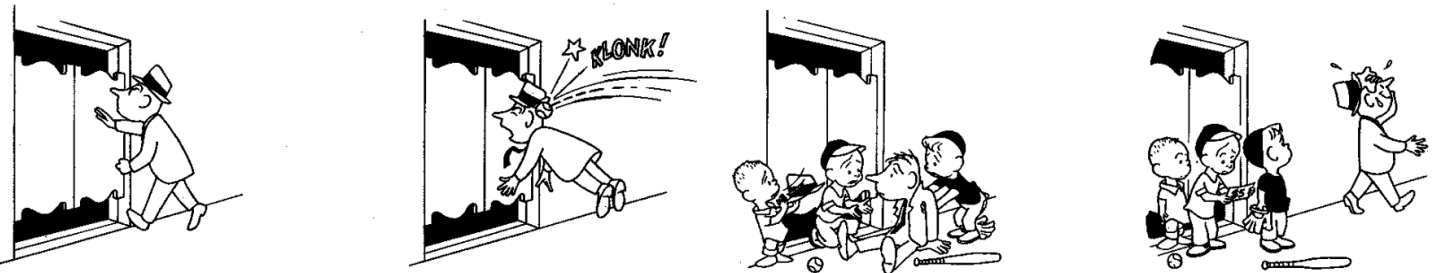
Select a listener you can trust. Maybe it's your doctor, your priest, your minister. Possibly it's a prominent businessman or someone nobody notices. It may be a person in a distant city whom you will never see again. Maybe it's just a good friend.

But whoever it is, believe in him completely. Have confidence that he can help you put the pieces together. You should also believe that he has enough of the love of God in his heart to share some of it with you. It also helps if your counselor has been over this part of the rocky pass ahead of you, although there are exceptions to this generalization.

Good climbing! It's a tough mountain, but the view from the top is worth it, once you get by the hump.

-- Dr. Charlie Shedd

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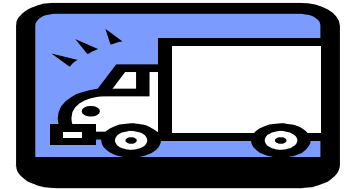


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