

“The Idiot’s Guide to the Twelve Steps (For Really Smart People)”

**Revised, Abridged and Adapted
For Compulsive Cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.)
Step One, Step Two and Step Three**

**This Guide is best used as part of
a Big Book Awakening Workshop,
Study Group or Guided Experience.**

For people who are hand-writing their answers: This guide is ideally printed on 8.5 x 11” (double-sided) paper that is hole-punched and then place in a 3-ringed binder, so that you may add additional writing and handouts later on. *Write as much as you need to.* Also, 2 blank pages have been deliberately placed inside of the PDF so that all of the pages fall properly in order.

For those who would rather type their answers directly into the workbook, this PDF has been created as a ‘form’ which means that you can click on the fields next the questions to type your responses directly into the document, and then print it later if you wish to. It is suggested to save the original template as a new document with a new name onto your computer (save-as).

**The Idiots Guide to The Twelve Steps (For Really Smart People)
Revised, Abridged and Adapted for Compulsive Cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.) © 2025
Step One, Step Two and Step Three**

This guide has been revised, abridged and adapted from the last known copy of the
"Idiots Guide to the Twelve Steps Revised 06/99 (for Really Smart People)"
Copyright 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 by Craig S of Phoenix, AZ.
Please support the <https://5a.org> to help continue their great work.

Credits for the original 'Circle-Triangle' Exercise as well as several questions pertaining to
the Preface and Foreword sections of the Big Book go to the San Diego Big Book Awakening,
Lee Ann, Pat & Tyla. Check out some great downloads: <https://www.bbaworks.com/downloads>.

We wish to acknowledge and thank the many Anonymous Twelve-Step Members, who directly or
indirectly shared their twelve-step experience in the form of exercises, insights and a variety of ways
of studying and working the steps out of the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* ©, as it was written.

Finally, a very special thank-you to everyone at <https://recoveredfrom.com> for having had the inspiration and
generosity of spirit to open up the Big Book Awakening Workshop process to clutterers* and other members who
suffer from a broad variety of compulsions, 'process addictions' and/or "-isms". Your experience, strength and hope
are 'near-and-dear' to us. We look forward to continuing to "trudge the Road of Happy Destiny" alongside of you.

This Question Guide is recommended for use in conjunction with the Big Book Awakening Workbook © by
Dan Sherman, as one method of studying and personally experiencing working the 12 Steps as outlined
in the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, in the same way that the 'First One Hundred' Alcoholics did.
For those of you who wish to begin working the Twelve Steps towards a Spiritual Experience in this
manner, in order to heal from Compulsive Acquiring, then Cluttering and Hoarding* (C.A.T.C.H.) –

We welcome you. You are no longer alone. There is hope.

(Everyone has permission to copy this but it is forbidden to sell this workbook for profit)

Introduction

This question guide has been abridged and adapted from the last known version of an original workbook by Craig S of Arizona, originally published back in June of 1999, entitled “The Idiots Guide to the Twelve Steps (for Really Smart People)”. The language has been minimally translated in terminology to the ‘process addiction’ of Compulsive Cluttering*, while maintaining most of the original references to alcohol, as a side-by-side comparison.

Throughout this workbook, the phrase ‘compulsive cluttering’, when starred, is used as an ‘umbrella term’ to encompass three distinct compulsions that work together and are progressive in nature – ***C**ompulsive **A**cquiring, then **C**luttering and **H**oarding (or ‘**C.A.T.C.H.**’ for short). The order of these compulsions is important to note, as it is the first compulsively acquired item that opens the ‘door for more’. Clutter cannot accumulate unless we compulsively acquire that *first* compulsive acquisition. For this reason, we substitute the phrase ‘abstinence from compulsive acquiring’ for the term ‘sobriety’ or the phrase ‘abstinence from drinking alcohol’.

Whether you are a ‘moderate’ acquirer, a ‘hard’ clutterer, or a ‘compulsive acquirer, then clutterer and hoarder (C.A.T.C.H.) *beyond human aid*’, we welcome you.

“If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any lengths to get it – then you are ready to take certain steps...”

[‘Big Book’ of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 58]

How to Begin

Intro to 'How It Works'

Are you ready?

Exercise: Willing to Go to Any Lengths Signature

- A. Do you have a desire to stop compulsively acquiring, then cluttering and hoarding (C.A.T.C.H.)?
- B. Are you willing to go to any lengths to recover? If so, then fill in the below:

FIRST NAME AND LAST INITIAL

START DATE

NOW GET YOUR BIG BOOK** AND SIGN YOUR NAME ON PAGE 58, THIRD PARAGRAPH AND DATE IT WITH THE START DATE, IF YOU ARE WILLING TO GO TO ANY LENGTHS.

Detailed Instructions:

This would be the same 'Big Book' of *Alcoholics Anonymous* that you will be using for your personal Translation and Transcription (TnT), ideally the *Alcoholics Anonymous* 4th edition, abridged (thin) large-print version.

- C. Go to the beginning of Chapter 5 on page 58, which is entitled, "*How it Works*".
 - 1) Read up to and including the "*three pertinent ideas*" (a) to (c) on page 61.
 - 2) Once you have finished reading this part, go back to the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs on page 58.
 - 3) Now re-read these two paragraphs as if "*The First One Hundred*" Alcoholics are speaking directly to You:

"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 thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely".

[Page 58, Paragraph 2 and 3]

- 4) If you are willing to go to any lengths, sign your name and start date in your new Big Book p. 58 (to the left of paragraph 3).

*** **Note:** It is important to ensure that **The Roman Numerals** of the 'Big Book' that you are using **match the exact pagination** that the current *Big Book Awakening Workbook* © has. If you are using the suggested *Alcoholics Anonymous* (4th Ed) large-print abridged © version for your transcription - see the following page for instructions on how to manually change the pages in your Big Book.

How to Begin

Preparing your new Big Book

Roman Numeral Repagination

Instructions: Change the Roman Numerals in your 'Big Book' to match your *Big Book Awakening Workbook* © by Dan Sherman.

YOUR BIG BOOK OF A.A.	YOUR BBA WORKBOOK
<p><i>Alcoholics Anonymous</i> © by Alcoholics Anonymous. (4th Ed) Large-Print Abridged Thin Version. You will personally Translate and Transcribe this. <u>Manually change the below in your Big Book.</u></p>	<p><i>Big Book Awakening Workbook</i> © by Dan Sherman. We will be referencing and working with this book throughout our Big Book Awakening process. These are the correct pages. <u>Leave these pages 'as-is'.</u></p>

CHAPTER HEADINGS	CHANGE THESE PAGES:	TO MATCH THESE ONES:
PREFACE	vii	xi
	viii	xii
FOREWORD TO FIRST EDITION	ix	xiii
	x	xiv
FOREWORD TO SECOND EDITION	xi	xv
	xii	xvi
	xiii	xvii
	xiv	xviii
	xv	xix
	xvi	xx
	xvii	xxi
	xviii	xxii
FOREWORD TO THIRD EDITION	xix	xxiii
FOREWORD TO FOURTH EDITION	xx	xxiv
	xxi	xxv
THE DOCTOR'S OPINION	xxii	xxvi
	xxiii	xxvii
	xxiv	xxviii
	xxv	xxix
	xxvi	xxx
	xxvii	xxxi
	xxviii	xxxii
	xxix	xxxiii
BILL'S STORY	Chapter 1 – Page 1	<i>no more corrections required</i>

General Information About Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.)

Title Page, Contents, Preface and Forewords

Pages: Title to xxiv

The Circle-Triangle Symbol (Former Logo of A.A.)

At the 20th Anniversary Convention of AA in St. Louis, MO. on July 1-3, 1955, Bill Wilson said the following:

"... we see a banner and that banner shows a circle which is AA circumscribing the world. Within it is a triangle. The base of the triangle is the foundation of recovery on which we stand. The left of the triangle symbolizes our unity, and the right of the triangle our arm of service. Such is the symbol of AA. I first saw it in Norway in 1950, but this symbol is not new with us. We have attributed a particular significance to it but in actuality its significance is very old ... may that symbol ever stand guard over the society of Alcoholics Anonymous."

This symbol is also an ancient spiritual symbol for wholeness of body, mind and spirit; or "Oneness".

Exercise: The Circle-Triangle.

Instructions: Look at the circle and triangle symbol and consider each of the 3 parts carefully.

Next, answer the questions on the following page. If you are a NEWCOMER, you can write "N/A" if any of it doesn't apply:

A. UNITY SIDE

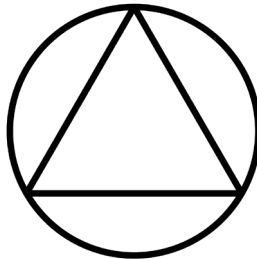
The Fellowship (The Body)

- a. How am I doing with my meetings?
- b. Do I go to enough meetings?
- c. Do I have a home group?
- d. Do I have a commitment at a meeting?
- e. Do I go to too many meetings?
- f. Do I get there early?
- g. Do I welcome new people at the meeting?
- h. Do I reach out?
- i. Do I help with set up or take down?

B. SERVICE SIDE

Service Work (The Spirit)

- a. How am I at working with others?
- b. Am I working with others?
- c. Am I taking them through the Big Book as I was?
- d. Is the way that I take people through the work effective?
- e. Do I share about the importance of working with others?
- f. Am I giving the people I work with enough of my time?
- g. Am I listening and explaining the process well?
- h. Do I have a commitment at a hospital or institution?
- i. Am I practicing the principles of the program?



C. RECOVERY SIDE

The Twelve Steps (The Mind)

- a. How am I doing at working my 12 steps?
- b. Am I actively going through all of the 12 steps?
- c. Did I complete a fearless and thorough inventory?
- d. Did I give everything away in Step 5 as suggested?
- e. Did I take steps 6 and 7?
- f. Did I make a complete list of amends?
- g. Have I finished all of my amends?
- h. Am I doing my step 10 on a daily basis?
- i. How is my daily practice of Step 11?

****Note:** Alcoholics Anonymous later made a decision to stop using the Circle-Triangle logo in order to avoid the outside controversy it could cause regarding protecting their copyright, as well as the exorbitant legal costs that could ensue. There was concern that this could become a costly venture (copyright infringement) that would take funds away from their primary purpose – which is to carry the message to other alcoholics who still suffer. On May 21, 1993, AA World Service released an unsigned document entitled: "Follow-up Statement Regarding Use of the Circle/Triangle Symbol." © AAWS In it, Alcoholics Anonymous World Service stated that "Alcoholics Anonymous will phase out the 'official' use of the circle and triangle symbol in and on its literature, letterheads and other material." This change ONLY affected A.A. materials subject to US copyright law, and did not, and does not apply to A.A. books and materials published in the UK or regions / countries that lay outside of this jurisdiction.

The Circle-Triangle Questions

- A. Look at the '**Circle and Triangle**' symbol and reflect upon the **Unity Side (The Body)**. This side represents **the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous** or any Twelve-step fellowship you may currently belong to for recovery from compulsive cluttering*. Answer all of the questions. If you are a NEWCOMER, you can write "N/A" (Not Applicable) if something doesn't apply to you.
- B. Look at the '**Circle and Triangle**' symbol and reflect upon the **Service Side (The Spirit)**. This side represents **the Service Work** of carrying the message of recovery to those who still suffer from alcoholism or compulsive cluttering*. Answer all of the questions. If you are a NEWCOMER, you can write "N/A" (Not Applicable) if something doesn't apply to you.
- C. Look at the '**Circle and Triangle**' symbol and reflect upon the **Recovery Side (The Mind)**. This side represents **the 12 Steps** of *Alcoholics Anonymous* or any of the Twelve Steps that have been adapted for recovery from compulsive cluttering*. Answer all of the questions. If you are a NEWCOMER, you can write "N/A" (Not Applicable) if something doesn't apply to you.

Final Considerations:

- D. Take one last look at the '**Circle and Triangle**' symbol on the former page.
- Why is the equilateral aspect of the triangle important? Does this symbol have any other meaning for me personally?
 - The promise of this symbol is that if action is taken in all three areas, I can be whole. What does that mean to me with regards to my own recovery from compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.)?
- E. In the **Foreword to the First Edition**, the first promise is how "*more than one hundred men and women have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body*". These same people were later known and referred to as "*The First One Hundred*" -- meaning that they were the very first 100 people who worked all 12 steps in the manner that you are about to now.
- Am I 'recovered' or am I 'recovering'? 'Recovered' from what? What is the difference?
 - Can I see how the experience, strength and hope from "*The First One Hundred*" might be applicable to me and my recovery from a process addiction?
 - b. Do I believe that I too can recover from a hopeless state of mind and body? [Page xiii., Paragraph 1]

Some Definitions that May be Helpful

Acquire (*Verb*): To get or obtain something.

Aversion (*Noun*): A feeling of strong dislike or unwillingness to do something.

Clutter (*Noun*): A lot of objects that are in a state of disorder or being untidy.

Clutter (*Verb*): To fill something in an untidy or badly organized way;

Compulsion (*Noun*): A very strong feeling of wanting to do something repeatedly that is difficult to control; a force that makes you do something. This can also be referred to as having a 'process addiction'.

Compulsive (*Adjective*): Doing something a lot and being unable to stop doing it; having a very strong desire to do something repeatedly.

Craving (*Noun*): 1. A strong feeling of wanting something. 2. A strong or uncontrollable desire.

Emotional Sobriety: 1. A person whose ideals are grounded in a power greater than themselves. 2. A person who relies on God.

Hoard (*Verb*):

1. The act of collecting large amounts of something and keeping it for yourself, often in a secret place. ***The grocery store shortages have been exacerbated by hoarding.***

2. A mental condition that makes someone want to keep a large number of things that are not needed or have no value. ***She hoarded dirty bottles, old newspapers, broken appliances, even plastic bags from cereal boxes.***

3. To collect a large supply of something, more than you need now, often because you think you will not be able to get it later. ***Many people hoarded food in wartime.***

-ism (*Noun*) [1939, *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 5th Edition*]: 1. An Abnormal condition from excess of a (*specified*) thing, as in alcohol-***ism***. 2. A distinctive doctrine, ideal, system or practice; -- usually disparaging

Mental (*Adjective*): Relating to the mind, or involving the process of thinking.

Obsession (*Noun*): 1. Something that you think about all the time. 2. The control of one's thoughts by a continuous powerful idea or feeling, or the idea of the feeling itself.

The First Step of *Alcoholics Anonymous*

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol -- that our lives had become unmanageable.

The 'Big Book' of *Alcoholics Anonymous* never tells us directly how to work the first two steps. In the portion of "How It Works" read at many meetings, we hear "Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas. That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives, that probably no human power could have relieved us of our alcoholism, and that God could and would if He were sought." [p. 58-60]

What is not read is the sentence which follows. "Being convinced, we were at Step Three." Convinced of what? "*Convinced of these three pertinent ideas.*" And how do we get convinced? *We read the description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and the personal experiences before and after*, as these are specifically designed to make these ideas clear. In the original manuscript, it said that if we were not convinced, "we ought to reread the [Big] book to this point or else throw it away."

So, we compare our experiences; the way we thought, felt, drank or compulsively cluttered* with the experiences of the people described in the Big Book, and that is how we take steps one and two. This may create a problem for the modern reader. The English of today is significantly different from that of 1939 when this book was first published. If you have ever tried to read Shakespeare, you are perhaps aware of the effect time may have upon language. Going through the Big Book in the way described here should help you overcome this language problem, and give you an understanding of the Big Book which is *reflected in your own experience*. You will begin to see the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* in a new light, and perhaps it will have real meaning in your own life today.

Much of this workbook consists of statements from the Big Book which have been turned into questions. We found it helpful to view the Big Book in this light rather than as a book of answers; the answers you will find only in your own experience, and within your own heart. For the sake of clarity, some questions are paraphrased rather than directly quoted. As you go through and answer these questions, avoid "one word" answers. If there is something you relate to, describe it, and ask yourself "what was my experience with this? "Did this happen to me? Did I feel like this? Think like this? Drink or Compulsively Acquire like this?" This is not a homework assignment where we try to get through it as quickly as we can with a minimum of effort. If you are really an alcoholic or a compulsive acquirer, then clutterer and hoarder (*C.A.T.C.H.) *beyond human aid*, having an understanding of the first step means the difference between life and death. Some of us thought we were "*only an alcoholic/addict*" or "*only a compulsive clutterer**", and later discovered that we were both. We ask you only to try to keep an open mind.

This workbook is not meant to replace the Big Book of 'Alcoholics Anonymous', it is meant to be used along with it. Read through the Big Book, as you answer each question. The authors hope you will find this way of working the steps as enlightening as we have. Because of the difficulty all of us have had in keeping an open mind, we began with this prayer:

"The Set Aside Prayer"

**"God please enable me to set aside everything I think I know
For an open mind and a new experience.
Help me see the Truth."**

The First Step

Part One - The Physical Allergy

There are three parts to Step One. The first part deals with the physical allergy. This means that after we take in the 'first sip' of alcohol into our bodies, or the 'first compulsively acquired item' into our homes, we lose control over how much we drink or acquire after that. Many of us have experienced this when we decided we were going to the bar for 'a couple of beers' or drop by the thrift store for quick visit to search for 'a few treasures', and we wound up staying all the way until closing time, demoralized. With regards to our compulsive acquiring, perhaps we decided we were going to stash away a few extra things "for an emergency," or "invest in some" low cost or free items to sell or give away later, and we were amazed when the sun rose the next morning to find a further accumulation of even *more* clutter consisting of items that we did not need, had no space for, and could not let go of.

Step One – Physical Allergy

“The Doctors Opinion”

Page xxv - xxxii

1. a. Are you the type of alcoholic or compulsive clutterer* (C.A.T.C.H.) who has failed completely with other methods of trying to stay permanently sober or abstinent? What have you tried?
Page xxv, Paragraph 5

2. Were you ever told you could not control your compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.) because you had some form of a mental disorder?
Page xxvi, Paragraph 2

3. Does the Doctor's theory that you have an allergy to compulsive acquiring explain why you cannot control how much you acquire once you start?
Page xxvi, Paragraph 3

4. a. When you take a compulsively acquired item into your home, is there a craving for more?
b. Has this craving also been accompanied with a sense of aversion to letting go of the acquired item or any of the accumulated clutter?
Page xxviii, Paragraph 1

5. a. Can you use the act of compulsive acquiring in any form at all without craving more?
b. Have you formed the habit of compulsive acquiring, and if so, can you break it on your own?
c. Have you lost your self-confidence?
d. Can you rely on any human power to save you?
e. Have your problems piled up on you and become astonishingly difficult to solve?
Page xxviii, Paragraph 1

6.
 - a. Was frothy emotional appeal enough to keep you abstinent permanently? [like someone begging you to stop]
 - b. If something can keep you 'clutter free' must it have depth and weight?
 - c. Do you think that sayings and advice such as "Just Say No" or "Just don't compulsively acquire, no matter what!" or "Gather experiences not things" or "Just let it go" is going to have enough depth and weight?

Page xxviii, Paragraph 2

7.
 - a. Did you compulsively acquire for the effect it produced in your body and how you felt while you were taking these items into your possession?
 - b. Was there any simultaneous effect that you also experienced, such as an unnatural or extreme attachment to these items?
 - c. Was the effect so great that after a time, even though you knew it was bad for you, you could not tell the true from the false? ["investing in" low cost or free to sell, going to the thrift store for "a few items", or buying "one more, just in case"]
 - d. Did your life seem the only normal one for you? [For example: The first time you overspent on your budget in order to acquire, didn't allow a plumber into your home to do much needed repairs, were threatened with eviction from your place of residence, got caught for shoplifting or stealing compulsive acquisitions you couldn't afford, or woke up in your bed when it was filled to the brim with clutter - by the twentieth time experiencing any of these examples - it's become 'normal'.]
 - e. Did you experience a "sense of ease and comfort" when you compulsively acquired and/or avoided letting clutter go?

Page xxviii, Paragraph 4 (through)

8.
 - a. Have you ever said to yourself or someone else, "I must stop," but you couldn't?
 - b. Have you ever tried to stop, or control your 'using' (i.e. compulsive acquiring) on your own?

Page xxix, Paragraph 2

9. Are you the type of compulsive clutterer* (C.A.T.C.H.) with whom the psychological approach; treatment centers, clutter removal services, counseling, therapy, etc. have failed? Page xxix, Paragraph 3
10. Did you only compulsively acquire items when things were going badly, like when you were under stress and needed to escape; or did you also compulsively acquire when things were going well? Page xxx, Paragraph 1
11. a. Do you believe the only solution for this physical allergy and bodily reaction of both craving and aversion is to refrain from to compulsive acquiring and never take the very first compulsively acquired item in?
b. Can you do that (stay abstinent from compulsive acquiring) on your own? Page xxx, Paragraph 5

Step One – Physical Allergy

Bill's Story

Questions: Pages 1-16

12. a. Did you ever see yourself as a leader? Earlier in your compulsive cluttering*, did you have aspirations and ambitions?
b. Did you ever imagine that you could become someone successful, managing "vast enterprises with utmost assurance?" Page 1, Paragraph 5
13. a. Did you ever feel you had to prove to the world that you were important? Did you have a drive to prove yourself to others?
b. Early on, did over-acquiring become an important and fun activity in your life? Page 3, Paragraph 1

14.
 - a. Over time, did your compulsive acquiring assume more serious proportions?
 - b. Did the warnings of your friends or family end up in arguments and fights?
 - c. Did you begin to compulsively acquire more and more in solitude? Did you start to 'hide' in your accumulated clutter?
 - d. Were there many unhappy scenes in your home? Did your loved ones become uncomfortable around you?
 - e. Did you begin to drink or compulsively acquire (or use) first thing in the morning? Page 3, Paragraph 2

15.
 - a. Did you become an unwelcome hanger on at your neighborhood garage sale? At the Thrift Store? At the Mall?
 - b. Were you ever caught combing the streets for free items on Garbage Day or stealing something that you could not afford?
Page 5, Top Paragraph

16.
 - a. Did your compulsive acquiring at some point cease to be a luxury and instead, became a necessity?
 - b. Did things gradually get worse, yet you still thought you could control the situation? Was your home starting to be unsafe?
Page 5, Paragraph 1

17.
 - a. Did your home get so bad that it became too much to handle? Was it difficult to keep clean? Did you experience squalor?
 - b. Did you lose or damage your apartment, home, car, or other possessions? Page 5, Paragraph 2

18.
 - a. Did you make a "fresh new start" by clearing out all of your clutter from a room; only to screw it up again by taking even more items in than you had before?
 - b. Did you ever decide to "quit for good"?
Page 5, Paragraph 4

19. a. Did this work (deciding to quit for good) or did you compulsively acquire again, even though you promised yourself you wouldn't? [making a resolution in the early morning vowing never to do this behavior again, yet by noon you were doing it]
b. Did you begin to wonder if you were crazy? Page 5, Paragraph 5

20. Were there periods of time when you stayed abstinent and controlled the acquiring, only to be followed by an even worse relapse? When? Page 5, Paragraph 6 (through)

21. a. Did you feel a sense of impending calamity, like something bad was always about to happen?
b. Did you use it as an excuse to compulsively acquire even more items? ['future-proofing' with things to keep yourself 'safe']
c. Did you use the feeling that compulsive acquiring gave you to put yourself into a state of oblivion during these times? Page 6, Paragraph 1

22. a. Has this, or did this, behavior go on for years?
b. Did you spend endless hours and even days in bed to avoid the whole situation? Did you think of suicide?
c. Did you try mixing your compulsive acquiring behavior with other addictive behaviors or substances just to cope?
d. Did you lose weight, stop eating or gain weight? Page 6, Paragraph 2 (through)

23. Did you do a detox, search the internet for answers, visit a treatment center, hire a decluttering expert or seek counseling? Page 7, Paragraph 1

24. a. Did you gain knowledge about yourself, learn about your compulsive acquiring 'triggers', or get in touch with your feelings?
b. Did "self knowledge" alone work, or did you compulsively acquire yet again? Page 7, Paragraph 2

25. a. Do you now realize that self-knowledge did not, and never will, keep you permanently abstinent and clutter-free?
b. Did you do another detox, visit another treatment center, or try counseling again in order to stop? How many times?
Page 7, Paragraph 3

26. a. Did you feel loneliness, despair and self pity?
b. Did you ever feel that compulsive acquiring then cluttering and hoarding (C.A.T.C.H.) was your master?
c. Did this scare you? Were you afraid? Did you deny this fear and suffer from constant anxiety?
d. Did this fear keep you abstinent, or did you compulsively acquire yet again? Page 8, Paragraph 2

27. a. Has your human willpower failed you? [Did you *really* decide to start compulsively acquiring again, or did you just convince yourself it was your decision so that you could feel like you were still in control and maintain that illusion?]
b. Are you ready to admit complete defeat? What meaning does this have for you?

Page 11 Paragraph 3

Step One – Physical Allergy

There is a Solution

Questions: Pages 17-23

28. a. Have you come to believe you suffer from an illness - one that affects you both physical and mentally?
b. Did your clutter and process addiction to cluttering* engulf the lives of all those around you that you cared about?
c. Did it bring misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad spouses and harsh judgements from parents?
d. If you can increase this list, how would you add to it? Page 18, Paragraph 1

Not everyone who drinks alcohol is an alcoholic, and not everyone who likes to acquire or has some clutter in their homes is a compulsive acquirer then clutter and hoarder (**C.A.T.C.H.**) *beyond human aid*.

This section of the Big Book deals with exactly what makes us different from the normal drinker or average acquirer. There are basically three types of people who drink or acquire. Which type best describes you?

Type 1

The Moderate Drinker | The Moderate Acquirer

We have all known people who could have a glass of wine with dinner and leave half of it on the table; or after a couple of drinks say something like, "Oh I'm starting to feel this, I'd better not have any more." In the same manner, there are also people who can purchase a bunch of items they bought at a mega-sale and freely walk away from the 'deals table', leaving the rest unpurchased. Then there were still others that could easily 'take or leave' that pile of free items that they found stashed on the side of the road, no matter how great the condition they were in. These types of drinkers and acquirers are also known as 'social drinkers' or 'social acquirers.' They can take it or leave it.

29. a. Do you have little trouble quitting entirely if given good reason?
 b. Can you take it or leave it alone?
 c. Does this describe you, or do you know people like this?
 d. Do you recognize yourself as being this type, either now or very early on in your drinking or cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.) career?

Page 20, Paragraph 5 and 6 (through)

Type 2

The Hard Drinker | The Hard Compulsive Clutterer*

There were those people too, who we drank or compulsively acquired with, who were able to keep up with us. They drank or acquired as much as we did, went out to purchase loads of items on sale, for free or for fun, just as we did, but something happened which caused them to stop or moderate this behavior on their own. Perhaps they got married, had a child, were threatened with eviction, or went back to school or the like. *They essentially grew out of it, while we continued to grow into it.* Though they may have drunk or compulsively acquired as much or more than we did, this type is very different from a 'real' alcoholic or a 'real' compulsive clutterer* (C.A.T.C.H.) *beyond human aid*. Given a good enough reason, this type can stop, and stay stopped for good.

30. a. If a doctor, psychiatrist, counselor, employer, judge or probation officer told you to stop for good, could you?
 b. If you fell in love, and he/she told you to stop cluttering* for good, or else they would leave you - could you?
 c. If you moved into a different place that was clear and completely clutter free, could you stop forever?
 d. Does this describe you, or do you know of people were able to stop for reasons like these?

Page 20, Paragraph 6 (through)

Type 3

The Real Alcoholic | The Real Compulsive Clutterer* (C.A.T.C.H.) *beyond human aid*

The third and final stage in this progression occurs when the drinker or compulsive clutterer* crosses over the line to becoming a 'real' alcoholic or a 'real' compulsive acquirer, then clutterer and hoarder (C.A.T.C.H.) *beyond human aid*. This means that despite being faced with very serious 'real-life' circumstances and 'dire ultimatums' such as the ones presented in the aforementioned section (Type 2), for these real alcoholics or real clutterers* (C.A.T.C.H) there is no human power - no loved ones, outside professionals, legal or clutter experts, or counselors that can help them stop using and stay stopped. When many of us realised that we had crossed that line and no longer had a choice in the matter, we were done trying to figure this out on our own. We had to have spiritual help.

31. a. Did you realize at some stage of your drinking or compulsive acquiring career that you had crossed over that line?
- b. Were you in denial (or, 'clutter blindness') when you reached this stage, despite the growing evidence to the contrary?

Page 21, Paragraph 1

Exercise: ① Translate the entire '*Common Observances*' paragraphs to your own experience with compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.).

Page 20, Paragraphs 3 and 4

Exercise: ① Translate the '*Dr. Jekyll / Mr. Hyde*' paragraphs to your own personal experience with compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.).

Page 21, Paragraph 2 (through)

Considerations re: The Dr. Jekyll / Mr. Hyde Exercise

- a. Did you do absurd, incredible, and tragic things while compulsively acquiring, then cluttering and hoarding?
- b. Were you a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde?
- c. Were you seldom mildly amused by the excitement of acquiring a few items, but more or less insanely high off of doing so?
- d. Was the person you became while you were using very different from who you were when you were abstinent; if so, how?
- e. Did you become dangerously anti-social as your clutter grew or experience 'trance-like' states as you continued to acquire?
- f. Did you have a knack for getting high, completely overwhelmed or 'zoned out' by over-acquiring at the worst possible of times?
- g. Are you incredibly selfish and dishonest with regards to your compulsively acquired items and accumulated clutter?
- h. Do you use your gifts to build up a bright future, only to screw it up by getting high off of compulsive acquiring yet again?
- i. Do you go to bed in a trance from over-acquiring, and wake up desperately seeking yet another item to add to the already cluttered hoard or collection?
- j. Did you stash clutter in various hoarded areas around your home, storage locker(s) or other places so that nobody would take notice, comment on, or confront you about the items that you have accumulated? Did it make your home inhabitable?
- k. How many storage lockers or locations do you have your clutter currently stored in? Did you squander your money on hefty storage or maintenance fees? How much money did you lose while you were continuing to over-acquire? Did the cost of using affect the other areas of your life where these funds could have been better allocated? If so which areas specifically?

l. Did you continue to keep all of your cluttered acquisitions to avoid experiencing the adverse feelings of letting them go? How?

m. Did you mix other compulsive/addictive behaviors with your compulsive cluttering (C.A.T.C.H.) just so that you could function?

n. Were you ever in a hospital or sanitorium as a result of your compulsive acquiring then cluttering and hoarding (C.A.T.C.H.)?

Page 21, Paragraph 2 (through)

32. Does your experience abundantly confirm that once you put any alcohol into your system or take in any compulsively acquired items into your possession, something happens which makes it virtually impossible for you to stop?

Page 22, Paragraph 4

33. Based upon your own experience, have you finally discovered your own truth?

- a. Do you have this physical allergy to alcohol or compulsive acquiring and do you pass into an altered state after using your [process] addiction where even the most powerful desire to stop or declutter has no effect?
- b. Have you found out and accepted which type of drinker or acquirer you are today?
- c. If you have not yet progressed to becoming a 'real' C.A.T.C.H., do you now know that this 'process addiction' is progressive in nature, and, just like with alcoholism, it will only get worse over time?
- d. Have you finally come to the conclusion that you are indeed a 'real alcoholic' or as they say, 'real C.A.T.C.H.' - Compulsive Acquirer, then Clutterer and Hoarder, *beyond human aid*? (Are you both?)

Page 23, Paragraph 4 (through)

The First Step

Part Two - The Mental Obsession

There is a Solution

Questions: Pages 23-29

The second part of Step One deals with the mental obsession. This simply means that no matter how bad it was the last time we got drunk from alcohol or high from compulsive acquiring, no matter how much we have to lose, no matter how much we want to quit forever; on our own unaided will; we will always drink or compulsively acquire again. Bill Wilson compares this to putting one's hand on a hot stove over and over again. It is not a matter of just "learning our lesson," if it were, wouldn't we have learned it long ago? This is the kind of lesson we never learn. We just keep doing it over and over again; until we die. Before you move on to the mental obsession, make sure you are absolutely clear on the physical allergy and how it manifests for a compulsive clutterer* (C.A.T.C.H.) in two ways: After we compulsively acquire that *very first item*, the allergy is activated in a physical craving for 'more' while simultaneously afflicting us with an acute physical aversion to letting go of any of the accumulated clutter that we have already acquired. Remember, this clear examination of our own mental obsession is not just about telling other people what we think they want to hear - it's about really becoming honest with yourself about what *you* have learned about *you* and *your condition*.

34. a. Having acknowledged that you cannot control the amount you compulsively acquire after the first item is in your possession, and do you agree that this is all beside the point if you never compulsively acquired in the first place?
b. Therefore, is it obvious that the main problem centers in your mind rather than in your body?
c. Describe how the mental obsession manifests for you personally.
d. Do you suffer from mental distortions as well – where your mind tells you all sorts of reasons why you can't and should not let go of any of your clutter? Describe these with some examples.

Page 23, Paragraph 1

35. Have you tried to assert your willpower to stay stopped? Did it work?

Page 23, Paragraph 3

36. a. Are you powerless over whether you will take the first compulsively acquired item in?
b. Have you lost control over staying stopped?

Page 23, Paragraph 4 (through)

37. a. Have you lost the power of choice over alcohol or compulsive acquiring?
b. Were you sometimes unable to remember the suffering and humiliation of what happened the last time you started to drink or compulsively acquire, even though you experienced shame when someone discovered just how 'sick' you were?
c. Are you without any mental defense against the first drink or compulsively acquired item?

Page 24, Paragraph 1

38. a. In the past, before you took the first compulsively acquired item in, did the knowledge of what might happen stop you?
b. Based on your own experience, is there any reason why "thinking through the first one" will ever work in the future?

Page 24, Paragraph 2

39. a. Do you think like this - meaning that you cannot seem to remember how bad it was the last time you used, or if you do remember, you end up convincing yourself that you can handle it this time?
b. Do you agree that this places you *beyond human aid*? Why?

Page 24, Paragraph 4 (through)

40. Do you believe anything less than a miracle (a spiritual experience) will save you? Page 25, Paragraph 2

41. Do you have any choice but to eventually die a compulsive acquirer then clutterer and hoarder's death or accept spiritual help?

Page 25, Paragraph 3

42. Do you think everything you have learned about yourself and your disease of compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.) *beyond human aid* so far will save you from another relapse?

Page 26, Paragraph 1

Step One – The Mental Obsession

More About Alcoholism

Questions: Pages 30-43

43. In the past, have you been unwilling to admit you are a real alcoholic or compulsive clutterer* (C.A.T.C.H.) *beyond human aid*, meaning that you could not control the amount you took in once you started, and then you could not *stay stopped* for good on your own power?
Page 30, Paragraph 1

44. a. Have you fully conceded to your innermost self that you are a real compulsive clutterer*? [i.e. a "real C.A.T.C.H."]?
b. Or, if you have discovered that you are, as of yet, only a 'social' or 'hard' clutterer - do you accept that this process addiction will eventually progress to the point where you will absolutely not be able to stop?
c. Do you think you might be at that point now?
d. What does the admission that you are a real alcoholic or real compulsive clutterer* (C.A.T.C.H.) mean to you?
Page 30, Paragraph 2

45. a. Based on your past experience, do you think you will ever be able to control how much you drink or acquire in the future?
b. Did you at times falsely feel like you were regaining your control?
c. Did you experience periods of times (usually brief) of abstinence, yet it always followed by even less control than before?
d. Did this lead in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization?
e. Were you so depressed about all of this that you couldn't leave your bed (much less your home) without concerted effort?
f. Based upon your past experience, unless some miracle happens, are you going to *stay sober* or abstinent?
Page 30, Paragraph 3

46. a. Have you tried long and hard enough to drink or acquire like normal people?
Page 31, Paragraph 1

Exercise: ① Translate the '*Methods We Have Tried*' paragraph to your experience with compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.).

Page 31, Paragraph 2

47. a. By gathering all of your will power, can you stop permanently?
b. If you still think you can stop, and if so, what are you basing this belief on? Page 32, Paragraph 2
48. Do you have any reservations, or any lurking notions whatsoever that someday you might be able to drink or acquire normally?
If so, then what are they? Page 33, Paragraph 1
49. a. When it comes to alcohol or your compulsive acquisitions, do you agree that you have lost your ability to think straight?
b. Have you had foolish ideas, justifications or alibis that easily pushed aside your common sense re: NOT drinking or taking compulsively acquired items into your home, and these sounded completely 'sane' to you? List the most compelling ones here.
c. Would you agree with the definition of this as "pure insanity?" Page 36, Paragraph 3 (through)

Exercise: ① Translate the *'The Jaywalker'* paragraphs to your personal experience with compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.).

Page 37, Paragraph 4 (through to)

Page 38, Paragraph 1 (inclusive)

50. a. When you read the “Jaywalker story” and apply it to your own drinking or compulsive cluttering* career does it fit exactly?
Where and how? Page 37, Paragraph 4
Page 38, Paragraph 2
51. Do you believe that you could stay stopped solely on the basis of self-knowledge, applying all of these things that you have learned so far about yourself and your disease of compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.) up to this point?
Page 39, Paragraph 1
52. Is it obvious to you that without spiritual help; the time and place **WILL** come when you **WILL** drink or compulsively acquire again, **NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU WANT TO STAY SOBER or ABSTINENT TODAY ?**
Page 41, Paragraph 2 (through)
53. Has what you have learned so far snuffed out the last bit of hope that you can do the job yourself? Why is this so important?
Page 42, Paragraph 1
54. a. Do you believe that at certain times you will have no effective mental defense against that first drink or compulsive acquisition? Some have likened this to entering a 'trance-like' state or simply a 'complete forgetting' of everything we knew.
b. Must your defense against the first drink or compulsive acquisition come from a Higher Power?
[See the 'summary of mental obsession' on page 19 of this Question Guide] Page 43, Paragraph 3

The First Step

Part Three - The Unmanageability of the Spirit

Step One – Unmanageability of the Spirit

We Agnostics

Questions: Pages 44-52

The third part of the First Step deals with the unmanageability of the spirit or what many people call “-isms.” This refers to the second half of Step One, which states that, “our lives have become unmanageable.” Why is it that no matter what the consequences, we always end up taking that first drink into our bodies or bringing that first compulsive acquisition into our homes?

Without something to take the place of drinking alcohol or being able to compulsively acquire more items in our lives, we are doomed. Many of us thought that if we could just stay off the booze or refrain from compulsive acquiring, and simply clear out all of our clutter, life would be wonderful; but we later discovered that this was just not so. Periods of abstinence from drinking or compulsive acquiring alone (without working the steps) may feel good for a while. But it’s much like peeing in your pants on a bitterly cold winter day; it feels nice and warm for a while, but when the cold wind blows once again it becomes obvious that this is not a long-term solution. We keep on doing the same behaviors that we know harm us, and ironically we eventually become so “restless, irritable and discontent” that after a time we can’t even imagine how getting drunk or high *could make us feel any worse!* Addiction is a disease of forgetting, and so we go on blindly picking up again, without any thought that “yes indeed, it can and does get worse”. In fact, a clutterer* once mused: *“The desire to acquire, makes the mood go higher. ‘Won’t let go to avoid feeling low. And so, it goes – the clutter grows.”*

We must find a way to “experience a sense of ease and comfort” WITHOUT drinking or adding even more compulsively acquired items to our existing clutter. We realized that the clutter was just a symptom of the deeper spiritual malady underneath. This “spiritual unmanageability” is what the other eleven steps treat. “When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically” [p. 64].

This part of Step One, unmanageability, has nothing to do with God. Instead, we realise that it is just us on our own power trying to run our own lives both during the times that we were drinking or acquiring but also, during the times when we were *not*.

55. a. Do you thoroughly understand the difference between the alcoholic or compulsive acquirer and people who just drink or acquire too much? What is the difference?
b. Do you believe you're suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer?

Page 44, Paragraph 1

56. Do you have any other alternatives besides eventually being doomed to an alcoholic or hoarder’s death or instead, living life on a spiritual basis?

Page 44, Paragraph 2

57. Have you faced the fact that you must find a spiritual basis of life - or else?

Page 44, Paragraph 3

58. a. Is a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life sufficient to overcome your alcoholism or compulsive cluttering (C.A.T.C.H.)?
 b. If it was, why did you not stop drinking or using a long time ago? Page 44, Paragraph 4 (through)
59. a. Have you ever wished to be morally or philosophically comforted?
 b. Have you ever willed these things with all of your might?
 c. Did you find that the needed power just wasn't there?
 d. Have you found that such codes and philosophies did not save you, no matter how hard you tried?
 Page 45, Top Paragraph
60. a. Is a lack of power your dilemma?
 b. Do you need have more power in your life ?
 c. Does it have to be a Power *greater than you*? Is this obvious? Why? Page 45, Paragraph 1

Step One

We Agnostics

The Bedevilments

What is a 'bedevilment'?

Though a seemingly religious and somewhat antiquated word, when we look at the actual meaning of the word '**bedevilment**' as it was meant at the time that Bill W wrote the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, we can start to understand its meaning in a non-religious manner, as it pertains to drinking or compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.) and the extreme pain, confusion, torment and suffering that results from living in an active addiction. Page 52, paragraph 2

From the Webster Collegiate Dictionary (5th Ed), printed in 1939:

(1939) **Definition of Bedevil (v)** – *the noun form of this is called a 'Bedevilment'* (n) 1. To control ... *as if* by devil; to bewitch.

2. To confuse utterly; to 'bemuddle'. 3. To drive to distraction; to torment. 4. To change so as to spoil; to corrupt.

(1939) **Definition of to Muddle (v)** - 1. To confuse; specifically with regards to. a) to cloud or fog, as one's brain.

b) to render stupid with liquor. c) to mix confusedly. d) to make a mess of; to bungle.

(1939) **Definition of Muddler (n)** – one who muddles and causes a confusion and/or a jumbled mess.

Summary

To sum up the First Step: If you are really an alcoholic or compulsive clutterer* (C.A.T.C.H.), *beyond human aid*, the only solution to the physical allergy is to never pick up the first drink or compulsively acquired item. We cannot however apply this solution because of the mental obsession, which always leads us back to picking up our addiction once again. Rather than giving us hope, the First Step is designed to utterly destroy whatever remaining hope we may have left that we can stay sober or abstinent without spiritual help. It means that for us, the war on alcohol and the war on clutter is over, and we lost. This is called surrender. In a very real way, the other eleven steps do the same thing for us slowly what drinking alcohol or acting out in our compulsive acquiring did for us quickly - they give us a sense of ease and comfort. Once we have a spiritual awakening as the result of working these steps, the mental obsession is removed. The Twelve Steps are like a recipe for a spiritual experience.

What Does Surrender Mean?

The 12 Steps as Ego Deflating Devices, excerpts of a letter from Psychiatrist Dr. Harry Tiebout M.D.

"A.A., still very much in its infancy, was celebrating a third or fourth anniversary of one of the groups. The speaker immediately preceding me told in detail of the efforts of his local group -- which consisted of two men -- to get him to dry up and become its third member. After several months of vain efforts on their part and repeated nose dives on his, the speaker went on to say: "Finally, I got cut down to size and have been sober ever since," a matter of some two or three years. When my turn came to speak, I used his phrase "cut down to size" as a text around which to weave my remarks. Before long, out of the corner of my eye, I became conscious of a disconcerting stare. It was coming from the previous speaker. It was perfectly clear: He was utterly amazed that he had said anything which made sense to a psychiatrist. The incident showed that two people, one approaching the matter clinically and the other relying on his own intuitive report of what had happened to him, both came up with exactly the same observation: the need for ego reduction. It is common knowledge that a return of the full-fledged ego can happen at any time. Years of sobriety are no insurance against its resurgence. No A.A.'s, regardless of their veteran status, can ever relax their guard against a reviving ego.

The function of surrender in A.A. is now clear. It produces that stopping by causing the individual to say, "I quit. I give up on my headstrong ways. I've learned my lesson." Very often for the first time in that individual's adult career, he has encountered the necessary discipline that halts him in his headlong pace. Actually, he is lucky to have within him the capacity to surrender. It is that which differentiates him from the wild animals. And this happens because we can surrender and truly feel, "Thy will, not mine, be done." Unfortunately, that ego will return unless the individual learns to accept a disciplined way of life, which means the tendency toward ego comeback is permanently checked. This is not news to A.A. members. They have learned that a single surrender is not enough. Under the wise leadership of the A.A. "founding fathers" the need for continued endeavor to maintain that miracle has been steadily stressed.

The Twelve Steps urge repeated inventories, not just one, and the Twelfth Step is in itself a routine reminder that one must work at preserving sobriety. Moreover, it is referred to as Twelfth Step work -- which is exactly what it is. By that time, the miracle is for the other person."

- Dr. Harry M. Tiebout, M.D.

The Second Step of *Alcoholics Anonymous*

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Exercise: The "10 Most Insane Things" I did while compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.) .

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Promises, Promises

Many of us searched for years for the answer to the question of "Why did I use?" Some of us found the answer the last place we ever thought to look: In the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. We did have to rephrase a few lines though.

(Thanks to Dan S. for the idea.)

The Twelve False Promises of Alcohol:

1. If we are painstaking about this phase of drinking alcohol, we will be amazed before we are half way through.
2. When drinking alcohol, we are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
3. When drinking alcohol, we will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
4. When drinking alcohol, we will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, when drinking alcohol, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
6. When drinking alcohol, that feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
7. When drinking alcohol, we will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
8. When drinking alcohol, self-seeking will slip away.
9. When drinking alcohol, our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
10. When drinking alcohol, fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
11. When drinking alcohol, we will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
12. We will suddenly realize that drinking alcohol was doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

(7) While compulsive acquiring, did you lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in your fellows?

(8) While compulsive acquiring, did self-seeking slip away?

(9) While compulsive acquiring, did your whole attitude and outlook upon life change?

(10) While compulsive acquiring, did fear of people and of economic insecurity leave you?

(11) While compulsive acquiring, did you intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle you?

(12) While compulsively acquiring items, did you suddenly realize that the feeling of taking the item(s) into your possession was doing for you what you could not do for yourself?

False Promises, a New Hope

The problem with the above false promises was that in the end, even though they clearly were lies, we continued to use blindly, as if somehow the next time we drank or compulsively acquired, the outcome would be different. Surely, this *next* acquisition would finally bring the relief of finding what we were so desperately searching for! Some members say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing, over and over again, expecting different results. A fellow once remarked, “using my [process] addiction to feel better is like taking a hammer to my head to get rid of my headache”. We became so tired of these lies and this devastating way of living. We had to find a new Higher Power, and work the Twelve Steps to experience a spiritual awakening.

Final Considerations regarding the real Promises of Recovery

Exercise: Read the Ninth Step Promises on the bottom of page 83 (through to) 84.

(1) Place the Bedevilmments side-by-side with the Ninth Step Promises. Can I see how they relate to one another?

(2) Consideration for a Daily Practice: Can I see now why it was highly recommended that I read pages 83-88 of the Big Book on a daily basis, even though I may not have worked those particular steps yet? Why? Have I been doing this? Why or Why not?

Step Two

We Agnostics Questions

Pages 44-55

61. a. When God is mentioned, does this reopen a subject that you thought you had neatly evaded or entirely ignored in the past?
b. Does the word God bring up a particular idea of Him which someone had tried to impress upon you during your childhood?
c. Did you reject this idea of God back then and did you think that meant that you had to abandon the God idea entirely?
d. Were you bothered with the thought that faith and dependence upon a power greater than yourself was somewhat weak and even cowardly? That you really shouldn't "need" a Higher Power? Page 45, Paragraph 3 (through)
62. Have you discovered that you do not need to consider another person's conception of God or a Higher Power?
Page 46, Paragraph 2
63. a. Do you have your own conception of God or a Higher Power?
b. Do you agree that this is all you need to commence your spiritual growth and to affect your first conscious relation with this Higher Power of your understanding?
Page 47, Paragraph 1
64. Do you now believe or are you even willing to believe, that there is a power greater than yourself? Why, or why not?
Page 47, Paragraph 2
65. a. Has even casual reference to spiritual matters made you bristle with antagonism?
b. Do you agree that this thinking has to be abandoned?
Page 48, Top Paragraph
66. a. Do you believe in and depend upon many things that are in your life for which there is good evidence, but no perfect proof?
b. Like what? (Give examples)
Page 48, Paragraph 3

67. a. Did you believe you already knew everything you needed to know about how to live your life successfully?
b. Wasn't this rather egotistical of you?

Page 49, Paragraph 1

68. a. Are you willing to lay aside any prejudice or bias that you may have, even against organized religion?
b. Do you believe that religious faiths have given purpose and direction to millions?
c. Have you made fun of other people's spiritual beliefs and practices?
d. Are you willing to keep an open mind about all spiritual terms – even the use of the word 'God'?
e. Can you openly explore the possibility of seeking and finding a Higher Power greater than yourself, that is personal to you?

Page 49, Paragraph 2

69. a. Did you use the shortcomings of a religious few as a basis to condemn them all?
b. Did you criticize them for being intolerant, all the while being intolerant of them yourself?

Page 50, Paragraph 1

70. In the past, have you stuck to the idea that self-sufficiency (i.e. living on your own power) would solve all of your problems?

Page 52, Paragraph 4

71. Do you believe that it is saner and more logical to have a belief in God or a Higher Power than not to? Why or why not?

Page 53, Paragraph 1

72. Faced with the First Step which is a self-imposed crisis that you cannot evade, are you now willing to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or He is nothing?

Page 53, Paragraph 2

Exercise: God is Nothing or God is Everything

Instructions:

- A. **Experience one entire day** as if God is Nothing.
- B. **Experience one entire day** as if God is Everything.
- C. **Notate your experiences throughout** by using a journal to jot your thoughts, feelings and experiences as they occur.

Note: *This is not an excuse to go out and use your addiction*, but rather, it is a mindful and experiential exercise that enables us to notice how differently life could be experienced in two distinctive ways – living our lives With or Without God (or a Higher Power of our own understanding).

For those of you who may already have a self proclaimed faith in a Higher Power but found that it did not help you stop drinking or compulsively acquiring, it is strongly suggested that you spend some time in prayer before either of these days occur. Use the 'Set-Aside Prayer' in order that you may have an open mind and a new experience with all of these things.

ONLY AFTER YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED THESE 2 DAYS FULLY, write about these areas of your life from the following (2) perspectives:

- 1) GOD is NOTHING – Ask yourself “What are my prospects for the future in this area of my life if God is nothing, and does not exist; if all that I can have happen is what I’ve already experienced in the past when I dealt with these things on my own power?”
- 2) GOD is EVERYTHING – “What are my prospects for the future in this area of my life if God is EVERYTHING, and does exist; and His power can and will help me to deal with them?”

A. Are you having trouble with personal relationships?

If God is nothing:

If God is everything:

B. Can you control your emotional nature?

If God is nothing:

If God is everything:

C. Are you prey to misery and depression?

If God is nothing:

If God is everything:

D. Can you earn a living?

If God is nothing:

If God is everything:

E. Do you have a feeling of uselessness?

If God is nothing:

If God is everything:

F. Are you full of fear?

If God is nothing:

If God is everything:

G. Are you unhappy?

If God is nothing:

If God is everything:

H. Do you seem unable to be of real help to other people?

If God is nothing:

If God is everything:

73. Do you believe that the answer to these problems lie inside rather than outside of yourself? Why or why not?

Page 52, Paragraph 2

74. a. Have your solutions been working in as far as solving the problems listed on the former pages? [a.k.a.'The Bedevilments']
b. Do you believe that the God idea might work, and are you willing to try it, despite your former reservations?

Page 52, Paragraph 3

75. If God either is or isn't, what is your choice to be?

Page 53, Paragraph 2

76. a. Have you worshiped people, sentiment, things, money, yourself, or with a better motive, the sunset, the sea or a flower?
b. When you loved something or somebody, how much did this have to do with pure reason?
c. Didn't these seemingly "unreasonable" feelings determine the course of your life?

Page 54, Paragraph 1

77. Do you agree that reason isn't everything?

Page 54, Paragraph 3

78. a. Do you agree, that deep down within every man, woman and child there is a fundamental idea of God or a Higher Power?

79. a. Are you willing to search fearlessly within your own heart to find God? Are you willing to believe your Higher Power is there?
b. Do you agree that it is only in your heart that God can be found?
c. Have you been able to find a Higher Power that can help you with your life, and more to the point -- your recovery from your process addiction of compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.)? Can you describe it and the kind of relationship that you have with it today? If this relationship isn't working, are you open to changing it? Page 55, Paragraph 2

The Third Step of Alcoholics Anonymous

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over the care of God, as we understood Him.

Go back and review the list of the '10 Most Insane Things' you ever did when you were drinking or compulsively cluttering* (on p.29), which you made at the beginning of Step 2. **The most insane thing** you ever did is probably not on this list, because **you did it while you were abstinent**. In all likelihood the most insane thing you ever did was this – knowing full well that the things on this list happened while you drank or compulsively acquired, then cluttered and hoarded (C.A.T.C.H.), you still made the decision to drink or use your process addiction once again; and, you made this decision when you were as sober and clear as you are right now.

Step Three

How It Works

Questions: Pages 58-63

80. Has the description of the alcoholic (or compulsive acquirer), the chapter "To the Agnostic" and your personal adventures before and after made clear these three pertinent ideas?
- That you are a compulsive acquirer, then clutter and hoarder (C.A.T.C.H.), *beyond human aid* and that you cannot manage your life both while you are active in your process addiction and also while you are abstinent from it?
 - That probably no human power can relieve your compulsive cluttering* (C.A.T.C.H.)?
 - That God can and will if He were sought? Page 60, Paragraph 2
81.
 - Are you convinced that your life, run on your own self will, can hardly be a success? [The first Requirement for Step Three]
 - Are you convinced that your romances, finances, friendships, marriage and career, run on your self will alone, can hardly be a success? Page 60, Paragraph 4
82. On that basis [running your life, on your will, in your own way] are you almost always in collision with something or somebody, *even though your motives may be good*? Page 60, Paragraph 4
83.
 - Have you tried to live by self-propulsion?
 - Are you like the actor who wants to run the whole show? Are you forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery, and the rest of the players in your own way? How so? Page 60, Paragraph 4

84. a. When life doesn't treat you right, do you decide to try and exert yourself more?
b. Admitting that you may be somewhat at fault, are you sure that other people are more to blame?
Page 61, Paragraph 1
85. Are you not really a self-seeker even when you are trying to be kind?
Page 61, Paragraph 1
86. Have you been a victim of the delusion that you can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if you could only get your life arranged in a certain way, to suit yourself?
Page 61, Paragraph 1
87. Are you not, even in your best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?
Page 61, Paragraph 1
88. Do you believe selfishness, self-centeredness is at the root of your troubles?
Page 62, Paragraph 1
89. Are you driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking and self-pity?
Page 62, Paragraph 1
90. Have you found that at sometime in the past, you have made decisions based on self, which later placed you in the position to be hurt?
Page 62, Paragraph 1
91. a. Do you believe your troubles are basically of your own making, and that they arise out of yourself?
b. Are you an example of "self-will run riot?"
c. If your problems are of your own making, why is this good news?
Page 62, Paragraph 2

92. a. Do you believe, above everything, that you must be rid of this selfishness or it will kill you?
b. Do you agree that you cannot do this on your own, without God's help? What have you tried in the past?

Page 62, Paragraph 2

93. a. Have you had moral and philosophical convictions galore?
b. Could you live up to them, even though you would have liked to?
c. Can you reduce your self-centeredness by wishing or trying really hard on your own power?
d. Do you have to have your Higher Power's help?

Page 62, Paragraph 2

94. a. Do you have to quit playing God?
b. Does "playing God" work for you?

Page 62, Paragraph 3

95. Do you agree that from now on in this drama of life, God's role is going to be the Director and your role is going to be an actor in His play? What is the meaning of this kind of relationship?

Page 62, Paragraph 3

96. Are you willing to trust that God will provide what you need, *if you keep close to your Higher Power and perform HP's work well?*

Page 63, Paragraph 1

97. a. Have you really thought about what this means before taking this step? Are you sure you are ready?
b. Are you at last willing to abandon yourself utterly to your Higher Power?

Page 63, Paragraph 2

Exercise: The following is taken from the Big Book, and phrased in the 1st person. **Read this out loud to a different person each day for a week. Then decide if:** a) It applies to you. b) You are ready to quit living like this. c) You are ready to living life on God's terms.

The first requirement for Step Three is that I be convinced that my life run on self-will, it can hardly be a success. On that basis I am almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though my motives are good. I try to live by self-propulsion. I am like an actor who wants to run the whole show; I am forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in my own way. If my arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as I wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including myself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful. In trying to make these arrangements I may sometimes be quite virtuous. I may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self-sacrificing. On the other hand, I may be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest. But, as with most humans, I am more likely to have varied traits.

What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. I begin to think life doesn't treat me right. I decide to exert myself more. I become, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit me. Admitting I may be somewhat at fault, I am sure that other people are more to blame. I become angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is my basic trouble? Am I not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Am I not a victim of the delusion that I can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if I only manage well? Is it not evident to all the rest of the players that these are the things I want? And do not my actions make each of them wish to retaliate, snatching all they can get out of the show? Am I not, even in my best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?

I am self-centered - ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays. I am like the retired businessman who lolls in the Florida sunshine in the winter complaining of the sad state of the nation; the minister who sighs over the sins of the twentieth century; politicians and reformers who are sure all would be Utopia if the rest of the world would only behave; the outlaw safe cracker who thinks society has wronged him; and the alcoholic or compulsive clutterer* who has lost all and is locked up. Whatever my protestations, am I not concerned with myself, my resentments, and my self-pity?

Selfishness - self-centeredness! That, I think, is the root of my troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, I step on the toes of my fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt me, seemingly without provocation, but I invariably find that at some time in the past I have made decisions based on self which later placed me in a position to be hurt.

So, my troubles, I think, are basically of my own making. They arise out of myself, and I am an extreme example of self-will run riot, though I usually don't think so. Above everything, I, as a compulsive clutterer* (C.A.T.C.H.) *beyond human aid*, must be rid of this selfishness. I must, or it will kill me! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. I had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but I could not live up to them even though I would have liked to. Neither could I reduce my self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on my own power. I have to have God's help.

This is the how and the why of it. First of all, I have to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, I will decide that hereafter in this drama of life, God is going to be my Director. He is the Principal; I am His agent. He is the Father, and I am His child. Most Good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which I will pass to freedom.

When I sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. I have a new Employer. Being all powerful, He will provide what I need, if I keep close to Him and perform His work well. Established on such a footing I'll become less and less interested myself, my little plans and designs. More and more, I will become interested in seeing what I can contribute to life. As I feel new power flow in, as I enjoy peace of mind, as I discover I can face life successfully, as I become conscious of His presence, I'll begin to lose my fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. I will be reborn.

I am now at Step Three. I said to my Maker, *as I understand Him: "God, I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"* I thought well before taking this step making sure I was ready; that I could at last abandon myself utterly to Him.

I found it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as my wife, best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as I expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, will be felt at once. **(Adapted for personal use from the Big Book, Ch 5. "How It Works", p. 60-63)**

98. Does this description fit you? How?

99. Are you convinced that if you continue to be propelled forward by running on your self-will alone, that your current life, job, relationships, marriage, friendships and anything else that is important to you will eventually fail? What does this mean to you today?

100. Ask yourself: With God's help, am I now willing to follow up this decision with the actions required of me in Steps 4 through 9?

If you are ready, say the Third Step Prayer (page 63)

"God, I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

Summary of Step Three

There is an old proverb from India which illustrates the point of the Third Step well. Two men were walking down an unpaved road. They were barefoot. The road was covered with small rocks which hurt their bare feet when they stepped on them. One of the men said to the other, "This journey would be much easier on our feet if this road was paved with leather." The wiser of the two men replied, "Yes, this is true, but we could get the same effect by wearing a pair of shoes." Alcoholics and compulsive clutterers* (C.A.T.C.H.) wish to pave the road with leather so that they don't need to wear shoes. The Twelve Steps are designed to *become* our shoes. These Steps help us change *ourselves* so that we are able to live freely in this world *as it actually is*, rather than continually trying to get world to change so that we can be safe and happy.

The following joke illustrates the rest of Step Three:

Question: Three bullfrogs are sitting on a log. One bullfrog makes a decision to jump in the pond. How many are left?

Answer: Three. The bullfrog only made a decision, *he hasn't done anything yet.*

The way we implement the decision we made in Step Three is to complete Steps Four through Nine.

Final Considerations

Both Craig S and Dan Sherman are no longer with us. Below are the final notes that Craig printed on the back of the original Idiot's Guide to the Twelve Steps (For Really Smart People) over 25 years ago. It has been updated with the current contact information for the Big Book Awakening Website. To learn more about the history of Big Book Awakening, see the lineage of carrying the message, and to hear a recorded talk by Dan S on the subject, please go to this link: <https://bigbookawakening.eu/bba-history>.

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Please note that studying and working the steps out of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous © using the Big Book Awakening process in a workshop or guided manner is not a replacement for regular attendance at our Twelve Step meetings. It is simply one way to work the Twelve Steps in the same way that the "First One Hundred" Alcoholics did, in order that we may experience a spiritual awakening that can solve our common problem.