



## STAYING SPIRITUALLY FIT

Bill W. considered each step to be a spiritual principle in and of itself. However, particularly in the 12 & 12, he outlined the spiritual principles behind each step. Some of them seem like common sense, but understanding going into the exercise that reading these principles and actually practicing them in your day-to-day lives are two entirely different things (and that the latter requires vigilance and will- ingness).

1. Honesty: Fairness and straight forwardness of conduct: ad- herence to the facts.
2. Hope: To expect with desire; something on which hopes are centered.
3. Faith: Complete confidence; belief and trust.
4. Courage: Firmness of mind and will in the face of extreme difficulty; mental or moral strength to withstand fear.
5. Integrity: The quality or state of being complete or undivid- ed; soundness.
6. Willingness: Prompt to act or respond; accepted and done of choice or without reluctance.
7. Humility: Not proud or haughty; not arrogant or assertive; a clear and concise understanding of what we are, followed by a sincere desire to become what we can be.
8. Love: Unselfish concern that freely accepts another in loyal- ty and seeks his good to hold dear.
9. Discipline: Training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character; to bring under control; to train or develop by instruction.
10. Patience and Perseverance: Steadfast despite opposition or adversity; able or willing to bear; to persist in an under- standing in spite of counter influences.
11. Awareness: Alive and alert; vigilance in observing.
12. Service: A helpful act; contribution to the welfare of others; useful labor that does not produce a tangible commodity.

Author Unknown

## STEP 11

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our con- scious contact with God as we understand Him, praying for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.

My name is Jeff. I am an alcoholic.

When I read Step 11 I always, always, breathe a sigh of relief. I have been given a gift of understanding, ever changing, but an understanding that I am connected and I am worthy of that connection.

From the beginning of my step work, like many, I jumped around looking for escape from the bondage of myself and some kind of peace. Step 11 along with the Promises of step 9 kept me coming back to meetings and finally opened me up to begin at the beginning and do the work required to help un- chain me from my narrow thinking. My Higher Power was there for me and I could access that relationship. I was allowed and worthy.

Like many people, I had grown up "churched". Went every Sunday. Even a few times during the week on special religious times. Yet I'd never known any conscious peace with my rela- tionship with a God. I'd been peaceful doing the rituals as a kid, but I'd always been afraid of what God was going to do to me for my childish curiosities. My family "left the church" when I was about 13. That was the age I found a magical sub- stance called alcohol. My new Higher Power. Throughout my teens, 20's and 30's I had my own Higher power, me and Alco- hol.

When I came to AA I was given a new doorway to walk through. After putting aside the booze and embracing the 12 Steps suggested to me as a way to peace and freedom, I truly began to pray in a different way. I began to pray less for mate- rial things or outcomes to life's situations, or how I wanted to feel and I began to pray more for the well-being of others. I began to slowly change from asking, through prayer, for my perceptions of how things should be in life to actually caring for other people's well-being. I began to love in a way that connected me to others. I became less selfish.

The word 'God' scared me less and I was less prejudice about God as I began to wake up. My sponsor(s) showed

Alcohol, Drugs, Sobriety, AA  
(reprinted from 12/19 newsletter)

It's 4:00 in the morning, dark and freezing. The car is going one hundred miles an hour and it's still not fast enough. Once we return home, we close the blinds, deadbolt the door, and shut down our phones to keep the "CIA" off our backs. We continue to pass the crack pipe back and forth along with a bottle of cheap bourbon. In other words, it's a typical night, or morning, or whatever, that's what's beside the point. That was then. This is now.

My first AA meeting wasn't really my first meeting. I suppose that makes as much sense as anything. I had been to AA meetings before, but something was different this time. Maybe it was the trembling and cold sweats, but I think it was more the overarching feeling that I had no idea what to do or where to go. Honestly I didn't think this would work either. For the first three weeks, it was not the most pleasant thing I've ever experienced. But through going to meetings on a daily basis and calling another person in the program regularly, it seemed to become manageable to the point where I thought I might want to live for a little while. With time, that slowly grew to these terrifying things we call emotions. Crying was something I hadn't experienced in years. Around that same time, I laughed - really belly-laughed - for the first time in a very long time. As more time has progressed, beautiful highs come, along with the occasional crashing low. But I imagine it as a graph zigzagging its way upwards, as long as I keep doing what I am doing.

Occasionally I wonder why I introduce myself at meetings as an addict and alcoholic instead of just an alcoholic. In my experience using, and in hearing about other people's using stories, I have come to believe that whether its pills, powders, liquor or beer, they all bring us to the same place. Matter of fact, a benzodiazepine (i.e. Valium, Xanax) act on the exact same brain receptors as alcohol does. But that is beside the point. The fact is that when we're without our vice of choice, we all end up being the same lunatics, no one more sane or insane than any other. My purpose in saying this is the belief that we are far more similar as human beings than we are different. When I start questioning whether I am unique, that is when I have to start reaching out to others more and diving into meetings with the same desperation I had when I was first withdrawing.

One thing that is very rare outside of the halls is the opportunity to meet and befriend people from all walks of life, whether it is different accents, clothing, interests, or income. However, the beauty is that for the most part, if you reach out for help in AA, you will receive it. Today, I look through my list of contacts (which my sponsor tells me I should use more . . .) and I see all kinds of people - bikers, hippies, artists, young people, old people - and they all sound pretty similar when they share from the heart. I can identify with all of them and know I'm not alone. I never thought of myself as someone who stereotypes until I was pleasantly surprised by those who I was certain

wouldn't understand. I learned I did judge others, and I was wrong.

The kindness that I have received and that I attempt to give away has caused my perception of the world to change. I am no longer running from the CIA, which is a nice by-product of sobriety . . . Seriously, I have felt connected with others more so than ever before. I've faced more fears in sobriety than I ever did while using the substances I used to ingest to try to relieve my fears. When I was using, I felt like my addiction was dragging me around to places I never wanted to go. In sobriety, I feel like my horizons are constantly expanding. I have been playing guitar for years but have grown more as a player in the past few months of sobriety than I ever did in the years before. Matter of fact, I played my first open mic recently, which is something I always wanted to do but was too scared to do when I was using. My reasoning for writing this article was to explain the differences between being an addict and being an alcoholic. But now I believe it is a line that is almost non-existent. The more important thing is the adventure a sober life brings regardless of what we looked like.



Alex

9/19/00 — 8/11/20

It has said that the most important thing on a tombstone is the hyphen between the date of birth and of death. That hyphen represents the life lived. Alex was fortunate to have found his way into the halls of Alcoholics Anonymous and felt the love of the fellowship. He tried to be of service and to adopt these principles. As a result, he was able to experience some sobriety and gratitude despite his struggles.

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### Editors Torial

I would like to express my gratitude to all the AA's, who will-ingly and humbly, contribute to the District 6 Newsletter. The guidance of a dear friend.

Being involved in structured service, for almost my entire years in Alcoholics Anonymous, I am finding this to be one of my more enjoyable experiences.

I am humbly reminded who is "Large and in Charge".



George , Your Editor





The Emmett Fox Corner  
With Michael J

"If we are painstaking about this phase of the process we will be amazed before we are halfway through." (Reprinted from The Big Book pages 83-84 with the permission of AA, World Services Inc.)

"Painstaking" is not a word that many alcoholics like to hear, but if we really want to become amazed, we are going to have to accept a painstaking approach to life. So what exactly is it that we have to be painstaking about? It is nothing less than directing the kind of thoughts we choose to entertain on a regular basis. Emmet Fox reminds us that:

"The most important of all factors in your life is the mental diet on which you live. It is the food which you furnish to your mind that determines the whole character of your life. It is the thoughts you allow yourself to think, the subjects that you allow your mind to dwell upon, which make you and your surroundings what they are. *"As thy days, so shall thy strength be"*, which, in modern language, may be translated as thy thoughts so shall thy life be. Everything in your life today is entirely conditioned by the thoughts and feelings which you have entertained in the past, by the habitual tone of your past thinking."

In much the same manner, Bill W urges us to keep a constant lookout for thoughts of selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. He tells us that when these crop up, we should ask God at once to remove them. And while it is true that we should always rely on God, that does not mean that we do not have a part to play in the "shepherding" of our thinking. Emmet Fox tells us that once we are able to consciously choose the thoughts that we allow ourselves to dwell upon, we will be in control of our lives. As with so many things in AA, this is a simple concept but definitely not an easy thing to do. We are all capable of making sporadic efforts from time to time to control our thoughts, but our thought streams can be so subtle and the impacts from outside so constant and varied, that it is hard to make very much progress. If we want to be successful in this practice our only chance is definitely to form a new habit of thought which can carry us through when we are preoccupied or off guard. Dr. Fox assures us that, if we are painstaking about the process, this new thought habit can definitely be acquired, and its foundation can be laid within a few days. As a start, we have to make a commitment to devote one week solely to the task of building a new habit of thought.

In Dr. Fox's words:

"For seven days you must not allow yourself to dwell for a single moment on any kind of negative thought. You must watch yourself for a whole week as a cat watches a mouse, and you must not under any pretense allow your mind to dwell on any thought that is not positive, constructive, optimistic or kind. This discipline will be so strenuous that you could not maintain it consciously for much more than a week, but I do not ask you to do so. A week will be enough, because by that time this

habit of thinking will begin to be established. Some extraordinary changes for the better will have come into your life, and these will encourage you enormously. The future will take care of itself. The new way of life will be so attractive and so much easier than the old way that you will find your mentality aligning itself almost automatically.

But the seven days are going to be strenuous. I would not have you enter upon this without counting the cost. Mere physical fasting would be child's play in comparison, even if you have a very good appetite. The most exhausting form of army gymnastics, combined with thirty mile route-marches, would be mild in comparison with this undertaking. But it is only for one week in your life, and it will definitely alter everything for the better. For the rest of your life here, for all eternity, in fact, things will be utterly different and inconceivably better than if you had not carried through this undertaking

Do not start it lightly. Think about it for a day or two before you begin. Then start in, and the grace of God go with you. You may start it any day in the week, and at any time in the day, first thing in the morning, or after breakfast, or after lunch, it does not matter, but once you do start you must go right through for the seven days. That is essential. The whole idea is to have seven days of unbroken mental discipline in order to get the mind definitely bent in a new direction once and for all. If you make a false start, or even if you go on well for two or three days and then for any reason "fall off" the diet, the thing to do is to drop the scheme altogether for several days, and then to start again afresh. There must be no jumping on and off, as it were. You remember that Rip Van Winkle in the play would take a solemn vow of teetotalism, and then promptly accept a drink from the first neighbor who offered him one, saying calmly: "I won't count this one."

Now what of those negative thoughts and conditions which it is impossible to avoid at the point where you are today? What of the ordinary troubles that you will have to meet in the office or at home? The answer is, that such things will not affect your diet provided you do not accept them, by fearing them, by believing them, by being indignant or sad about them, or by giving them any power at all. Any negative condition that duty compels you to handle will not affect your diet. Go to the office, or meet the cares at home, without allowing them to affect you (None of these things move me), and all will be well. Suppose that you are lunching with a friend who talks negatively—Do not try to shut him up or otherwise snub him. Let him talk, but do not accept what he says, and your diet will not be affected. Suppose that on coming home you are greeted with a lot of negative conversation—Do not preach a sermon, but simply do not accept it. It is your mental consent, remember, that constitutes your diet. Suppose you witness an accident or an act of injustice let us say—instead of reacting by accepting the appearance and responding with pity or indignation, refuse to accept the appearance at its face value; do anything that you can to right matters, give it the right thought, and let it go at that. You will still be on the diet.

Of course, it will be very helpful if you can take steps to avoid meeting during this week anyone who seems particularly likely

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Of course, it will be very helpful if you can take steps to avoid meeting during this week anyone who seems particularly likely to arouse the devil in you. People who get on your nerves, or rub you up the wrong way, or bore you, are better avoided while you are on the diet; but if it is not possible to avoid them, then you must take a little extra discipline—that is all.

I want to tell you that people often find that the starting of this diet seems et

to stir up all sorts of difficulties. It seems as though everything begins to go wrong at once. This may be disconcerting, but it is really a good sign. It means that things are moving; and is not that the very object we have in view? Suppose your whole world seems to rock on its foundations. Hold on steadily, let it rock, and when the rocking is over, the picture will have reassembled itself into something much nearer to your heart's desire.

The above point is vitally important and rather subtle. Do you not see that the very dwelling upon these difficulties is in itself a negative thought which has probably thrown you off the diet? The remedy is not, of course, to deny that your world is rocking in appearance, but to refuse to take the appearance for the reality. (Judge not according to appearances but judge righteous judgment.)

Keep your thought positive, optimistic, and kindly while the outer picture is rocking. Keep it so in spite of any appearances, and a glorious victory is certain. Every side of your life will radically alter for the better.

A closing word of caution Do not tell anyone else that you are on the diet, or that you intend to go on it. Keep this tremendous project strictly to yourself. Remember that your soul should be the Secret Place of the Most High. When you have come through the seven days successfully, and secured your demonstration, allow a reasonable time to elapse to establish the new mentality, and then tell the story to anyone else whom you think is likely to be helped by it.

"I never knew which came first, the thinking or the drinking. If I could only stop thinking, I wouldn't drink. If I could only stop drinking, maybe I wouldn't think."

(Reprinted from the Big Book Page 295, 4th edition, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)

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### **In the First Year of Sobriety**

#### **Silver Linings through Action and Fellowship**

My first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous was on April 12, 2019. Although I did not know it at the time, this was the day that put a pendulum into motion to completely change my life, allowing me to be slowly released from a life filled with feelings of despair and hopelessness, into a life filled with hope, purpose, and contentment. A friend, who was in the program, guided me to that Friday Night Bath Group meeting. When I walked into that church, my life was completely unmanageable, I was powerless over alcohol, and I had surrendered. I had tried so many ways to stop drinking alcohol and failed every

time. Throughout the meeting and after, people extended their hands and warm smiles to me and spoke of their experience, strength, and hope. I needed the very spark, giving me a glimmer of hope that I may finally be able to step in a different direction. When I left that meeting, I felt as though things might be ok for the first time in a very, very long time. I took with me a big book, lots of pamphlet literature about the program, and a list of meetings. I stumbled my way through the next few months, wanting desperately to stay sober, going to a few meetings a week, and trying to muster all MY willpower to stay away from a drink. After picking up a white chip and then one more, I began to realize that I needed more than just meetings and my will power if I were to have a real shot at staying sober. I began working with a sponsor, meeting with her every week, and she started teaching me more about the program and the steps. She helped me to understand the importance and meaning of one day at a time, willingness, acceptance, and rigorous honesty as a foundation for meaningful sobriety. As our work together moved forward, I began to attend meetings every day, became a Home Group member of that Friday Night Bath Group, and got a job in my home group stocking literature for the group.

Every misstep that I took and everything I have been honest about that I didn't want to be has been a silver lining that has enabled growth. Sometimes quickly, mostly slowly, but always a reminder that action is what makes the growth possible. Through working the steps, I started to believe that there is a power greater than myself that could restore me to sanity. When I started to take the suggestions given to me by my sponsor and other women in the program, I started to feel the magic happening. I began to believe with real conviction that there is a power greater than myself, that will guide me and will give me everything I need if I am just quiet enough to listen and resist the urge to take things over myself. The big book talks about a time in which we can be indifferent to a drink, that there will come a day where the obsession to drink is lifted. I cannot say when or where this happened, but for me today this rings true and it is a Miracle. It has been a little over a year since I have picked up a drink. I could never have dreamed it would be possible in those months leading up to that first meeting, a time when I had resigned myself that all my life would be was a life of loneliness, unworthiness, and hopelessness. The program of Alcoholics Anonymous has since woven a beautiful tapestry of living for me, through bits of advice given here, a smile given there, some reading of literature, and working the steps.

Although in-person meetings these days are sparse, I am grateful to still be able to be a part of the fellowship through online meetings and remaining connected with my sponsor and my Home Group. I have a box of literature that I had originally ordered to fill up the racks in our in-person meetings, and now have the privilege of sending to anyone who needs it. There are not enough words to adequately express my sincere gratitude to this program and all of the people who have passed so much on to me, who are now part of my life and recovery. can only hope that I will give back a fraction of what was given to



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me through the practice of the steps that I could have a relationship with my (HP) Higher Power, and in fact not lose myself but expand my life through spirituality. My intentions shifted to caring more about acceptance and less about me and how I thought life should go.

When meditation was proposed to me my first response was "I can't do that. I cannot sit still or not think. I am too important to be a bump on a mountain thinking "it" over."

My meditations were initially more like contemplations. My mind had never been quiet.

However, by simply contemplating on a situation, or an object, or music, or nature sounds, I began to have settled moments. That was foreign to me. Having any kind of mindfulness or simply quiet was foreign and a bit unnerving. No familiar chaos.

Through the initial practice of setting up time and a sacred space for me to contemplate, again through mostly listening to my surroundings, I began to have lapses in time. Many minutes would go by and I realized I was not thinking, planning, scheming, fantasizing, etc. I was at peace. Imagine that. Meditation was happening.

My relationships with my wife, my son, and my closest friends, all seemed easier. What had changed? They had not. I had. My perception of life was shifting from self-will to the will of my Higher Power. Things were lining up and all because I got quieter. Body, mind and Spirit got quieter. I am more peaceful.

Any excuses I could use to drink today are less potent because I have lightened the load by sharing my fears and concerns and I am able to listen. I now relish my quiet times.

My own perceptions are not the ultimate answer anymore.

For this, I am Grateful



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to me in the hopes of helping someone in need. I know I have only learned a little so far and look forward to a lifetime of continuing to learn, be a better person to those around me, and pass on what has been so freely given to me. You just never know how your words, tone of voice, quirky phrase, or a smile can completely change someone's life for the better. Then again, maybe that is truly the whole magic of it.

Michelle F  
Grateful member of Alcoholics Anonymous

**The 12 Concepts  
are a potpourri ~  
Bill W.**

Spiritual principles and the relationship to  
various service entities

**What a Concept!**

**Tuesdays  
September 8-  
October 13**  
Zoom room opens  
at 6:30p-  
Workshop 7p-8p

Meeting ID: 844 6755 1222  
Password: 188964

# At-A-Glance

**DISTRICT NEWS AND FINANCES**

**NOT AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME**

