

# 1

## Illustrated Steps Workshop Step One Readings

MOST OF US have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - More About Alcoholism - page 30

## 2

We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - The Doctor's Opinion - page xxviii

# 3

We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - More About Alcoholism - page 31

# 4

We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals - usually brief - were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - More About Alcoholism - page 30

# 5

Of course an alcoholic ought to be freed from his physical craving for liquor, and this often requires a definite hospital procedure, before psychological measures can be of maximum benefit.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition – The Doctor’s Opinion - page xxvii

## 6

Our first example is a friend we shall call Jim. This man has a charming wife and family. He inherited a lucrative automobile agency. He had a commendable World War record. He is a good salesman. Everybody likes him. He is an intelligent man, normal so far as we can see, except for a nervous disposition. He did no drinking until he was thirty-five. In a few years he became so violent when intoxicated that he had to be committed. On leaving the asylum he came into contact with us.

We told him what we knew of alcoholism and the answer we had found. He made a beginning. His family was re-assembled, and he began to work as a salesman for the business he had lost through drinking. All went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life. To his consternation, he found himself drunk half a dozen times in rapid succession. On each of these occasions we worked with him, reviewing carefully what had happened. He agreed he was a real alcoholic and in a serious condition. He knew he faced another trip to the asylum if he kept on. Moreover, he would lose his family for whom he had a deep affection.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - More About Alcoholism - page 35

# 7

"Suddenly the thought crossed my mind that if I were to put an ounce of whiskey in my milk it couldn't hurt me on a full stomach. I ordered a whiskey and poured it into the milk. I vaguely sensed I was not being any too smart, but felt reassured as I was taking the whiskey on a full stomach. The experiment went so well that I ordered another whiskey and poured it into more milk. That didn't seem to bother me so I tried another."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - More About Alcoholism page - 36

# 8

He had much knowledge about himself as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favour of the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk!

Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - More About Alcoholism page - 36



# 9

If anyone questions whether he has entered this dangerous area, let him try leaving liquor alone for one year. If he is a real alcoholic and very far advanced, there is scant chance of success. In the early days of our drinking we occasionally remained sober for a year or more, becoming serious drinkers again later. Though you may be able to stop for a considerable period, you may yet be a potential alcoholic. We think few, to whom this book will appeal, can stay dry anything like a year. Some will be drunk the day after making their resolutions; most of them within a few weeks.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - More About Alcoholism page - 34

# 10

Physically, I felt fine. Neither did I have any pressing problems or worries. My business came off well, I was pleased and knew my partners would be too. It was the end of a perfect day, not a cloud on the horizon.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - More About Alcoholism page - 41

# 11

"I went to my hotel and leisurely dressed for dinner. As I crossed the threshold of the dining room, the thought came to mind that it would be nice to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. That was all. Nothing more. I ordered a cocktail and my meal. Then I ordered another cocktail. After dinner I decided to take a walk. When I returned to the hotel it struck me a highball would be fine before going to bed, so I stepped into the bar and had one. I remember having several more that night and plenty next morning. I have a shadowy recollection of being in an airplane bound for New York and of finding a friendly taxicab driver at the landing field instead of my wife. The driver escorted me about for several days. I know little of where I went or what I said and did. Then came the hospital with unbearable mental and physical suffering.

"As soon as I regained my ability to think, I went carefully over that evening in Washington. Not only had I been off guard, I had made no fight whatever against the first drink. This time I had not thought of the consequences at all. <sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition - More About Alcoholism page - 41

# 12

The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defence against the first drink.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition – There Is A Solution page - 24