

BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 13 Jul 2012 07:17

“AA is a simple program for complicated people.”

—One of many AA mottos

Everything necessary to work the 12 steps is found in the book Alcoholics Anonymous (this program has been effective for millions of alcoholics since the 1930’s, and it has also been effective for many other addictions—including lust addiction). However, when reading this book on one’s own, it’s easy to overlook important facts, to miss underlying messages, and to over-complicate the simple plan of action. Also, due to our subjectivity, we can miss how the problems and solutions described in this book apply to us—even though they very well may.

Therefore, I am trying an experiment. I don’t know how well it will work in this form, but I thought it might be worth a try. I will simply post the Big-Book, little by little, and let it speak for itself (mostly). I will also draw attention to the ideas one might otherwise miss reading it on one’s own, help show how the problems and solutions described in this book apply to us, and clarify whatever actions are called for. Much of what I write is based, if loosely so, on what I gained through Duvid Chaim’s 12-step phone groups. I am also likely to share from my own experience and my own thoughts.

I hope to cover the first seven chapters (plus two preliminary chapters) of Alcoholics Anonymous, which explains all twelve steps. They are as follows:

- Foreword
- The Doctor’s Opinion
- I. Bill’s Story
- II. There Is A Solution
- III. More About Alcoholism
- IV. We Agnostics
- V. How It Works
- VI. Into Action
- VII. Working With Others

I will greatly appreciate comments and questions about this thread as it develops.

--Elyah

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD

Posted by LookingForwardToChange - 13 Jul 2012 14:42

Hi,

Thanks for the idea, But why wouldnt you do the White Book?

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 14 Jul 2012 18:57

[lookingforwardtochange wrote on 13 Jul 2012 14:42:](#)

Hi,

Thanks for the idea, But why wouldnt you do the White Book?

As helpful as the White Book is, the Big Book remains the main guide for how to do the steps.

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 15 Jul 2012 12:13

I would like to begin with a few readings that are commonly used at SA meetings:
(some of it may not apply to this format, but much of it still does)

NEWCOMER WELCOME STATEMENT

Many of us came to our first SA meeting frightened that we were losing control. We were afraid of seeing someone we knew. We were afraid to admit we had a problem. We were afraid to ask for help. And we were afraid we would fail to recover. Here at SA, we face these fears and begin our recovery journey.

SA is an anonymous fellowship. This means:

* The people we see here and what they say here, we let it stay here.

- * None of the sharing is talked about outside the meeting.
- * Anonymity provides the safety each of us needs as we reveal the parts of ourselves we have kept hidden. We recognize that regardless of our differences (gender, behaviors, or beliefs), we are all sexaholics recovering from the disease of sexaholism.

When we were growing up, we learned three rules: DON'T TALK, DON'T TRUST, and DON'T FEEL. In SA meetings we break those rules by speaking honestly about ourselves, and trusting that the group respects our willingness to be vulnerable. We dare to feel the feelings our sexual behavior medicated.

In SA meetings we do not cross talk, meaning that we avoid interrupting or speaking to others individually. We try to keep our comments generally addressed to everyone. We accept without comment what others say because IT IS TRUE FOR THEM. See what fits and leave the rest.

Many of us found it helpful to continue sharing outside the meetings.

- * We strongly encourage you to ask for phone numbers of other SA members.
- * We also suggest that you ask someone to be your sponsor.
- * A sponsor is a recovering person in the program who will guide you through the Twelve Steps.
- * Please stick around for a few minutes after the meeting and one of us will gladly discuss some of our other program details with you.

It is important to remember that recovery is PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION. Maintain as much honesty, openness, and willingness as you can while you apply the Twelve Steps to your life. You will begin to see promises of recovery fulfilled; sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if you work for them (AA, p.84)

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
 Posted by Eye.nonymous - 16 Jul 2012 15:11

THE SA PURPOSE

Sexaholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. There are no dues or fees for SA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. SA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help others to achieve sexual sobriety.

WHAT IS A SEXAHOLIC AND WHAT IS SEXUAL SOBRIETY?

We can only speak for ourselves. The specialized nature of Sexaholics Anonymous can best be understood in terms of what we call the sexaholic. The sexaholic has taken himself or herself out of the whole context of what is right or wrong. He or she has lost control, no longer has the power of choice, and is not free to stop. Lust has become an addiction. Our situation is like that of the alcoholic who can no longer tolerate alcohol and must stop drinking altogether but is hooked and cannot stop. So it is with the sexaholic, or sex drunk, who can no longer tolerate lust but cannot stop.

Thus, for the sexaholic, any form of sex with one's self or with partners other than the spouse is progressively addictive and destructive. We also see that lust is the driving force behind our sexual acting out, and true sobriety includes progressive victory over lust. These conclusions were forced upon us in the crucible of our experiences and recovery; we have no other options. But we have found that acceptance of these facts is the key to a happy and joyous freedom we could otherwise never know.

This will and should discourage many inquirers who admit to sexual obsession or compulsion but who simply want to control and enjoy it, much as the alcoholic would like to control and enjoy drinking. Until we had been driven to the point of despair, until we really wanted to stop but could not, we did not give ourselves to this program of recovery. Sexaholics Anonymous is for those who know they have no other option but to stop, and their own enlightened self-interest must tell them this.

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 17 Jul 2012 11:47

THE PROBLEM

Many of us felt inadequate, unworthy, alone, and afraid. Our insides never matched what we

saw on the outsides of others.

Early on, we came to feel disconnected — from parents, from peers, from ourselves. We tuned out with fantasy and masturbation. We plugged in by drinking in the pictures, the images, and pursuing the objects of our fantasies. We lusted and wanted to be lusted after.

We became true addicts: sex with self, promiscuity, adultery, dependency relationships, and more fantasy. We got it through the eyes; we bought it, we sold it, we traded it, we gave it away. We were addicted to the intrigue, the tease, the forbidden. The only way we knew to be free of it was to do it. "Please connect with me and make me whole!" we cried with outstretched arms. Lusting after the Big Fix, we gave away our power to others.

This produced guilt, self-hatred, remorse, emptiness, and pain, and we were driven ever inward, away from reality, away from love, lost inside ourselves.

Our habit made true intimacy impossible. We could never know real union with another because we were addicted to the unreal. We went for the "chemistry," the connection that had the magic, because it bypassed intimacy and true union. Fantasy corrupted the real; lust killed love.

First addicts, then love cripples, we took from others to fill up what was lacking in ourselves. Conning ourselves time and again that the next one would save us, we were really losing our lives.

THE SOLUTION

We saw that our problem was threefold: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Healing had to come about in all three.

The crucial change in attitude began when we admitted we were powerless, that our habit had us whipped. We came to meetings and withdrew from our habit. For some, this meant no sex

with themselves or others, including not getting into relationships. For others it also meant "drying out" and not having sex with the spouse for a time to recover from lust.

We discovered that we could stop, that not feeding the hunger didn't kill us, that sex was indeed optional. There was hope for freedom, and we began to feel alive. Encouraged to continue, we turned more and more away from our isolating obsession with sex and self and turned to God and others.

All this was scary. We couldn't see the path ahead, except that others had gone that way before. Each new step of surrender felt it would be off the edge into oblivion, but we took it. And instead of killing us, surrender was killing the obsession! We had stepped into the light, into a whole new way of life.

The fellowship gave us monitoring and support to keep us from being overwhelmed, a safe haven where we could finally face ourselves. Instead of covering our feelings with compulsive sex, we began exposing the roots of our spiritual emptiness and hunger. And the healing began.

As we faced our defects, we became willing to change; surrendering them broke the power they had over us. We began to be more comfortable with ourselves and others for the first time without our "drug."

Forgiving all who had injured us, and without injuring others, we tried to right our own wrongs. At each amends more of the dreadful load of guilt dropped from our shoulders, until we could lift our heads, look the world in the eye, and stand free.

We began practicing a positive sobriety, taking the actions of love to improve our relations with others. We were learning how to give; and the measure we gave was the measure we got back. We were finding what none of the substitutes had ever supplied. We were making the real Connection. We were home.

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)

Posted by obormottel - 17 Jul 2012 14:36

In any event, when I heard those readings in my first meeting I related right away and knew I was in the right place.

Is this, perhaps, the litmus test of whether SA is for you: if you identify with the problem, and willing to work for the solution. (and recognize that this is indeed the solution) then you're in the right place...
And after that whole introduction, you went with the White Book after all?

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 18 Jul 2012 14:21

FROM CHAPTER FIVE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

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.

Remember that we deal with lust — cunning, baffling, and powerful! Without help it is too much

for us. But there is One who has all power — that one is God. May you find Him now.

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon. Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted that we were powerless over lust — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

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

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection. Our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

(a) That we were sexaholics and could not manage our own lives.

(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our sexaholism.

(c) That God could and would if He were sought.

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by gibbor120 - 18 Jul 2012 16:39

Thanks Elyah for continuing to post great material!

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by LookingForwardToChange - 18 Jul 2012 18:19

Thanks and keep it going!

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 19 Jul 2012 11:45

This next piece from the White Book ought to do it for the preliminary readings:

A NOTE OF CAUTION

Here again we suggest that new-comers to Sexaholics Anonymous not reveal their sexual past to a spouse or family member who does not already know of it without careful consideration and a period of sexual sobriety, and even then, not without prior discussion with an SA sponsor or group. Typically, when we come into the program, we want to share our excitement with those closest to us and tell all right away. Such disclosures might injure our family or others and should be confined to the group of which we are a part until a wise course is indicated. Of course, if there is any chance we have put others in danger, we take immediate steps to try to correct that. Few things can so damage the possibility of healing in the family as a premature confession to spouse or family where sacred bonds and trust have been violated. Unwittingly, such confessions can be attempts on our part to dump our guilt, get back into good graces, or make just another show of willpower.

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by obormottel - 20 Jul 2012 00:49

I wish I knew this when, all excited, I ran to wife to spill the beans. Bad choice!

Heed the warning, fellas!

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 20 Jul 2012 07:22

I have put a lot of thought into the technical side of this. Here's what I will try to do:

1. I am basically going to underline key words and phrases in the Big Book.
2. I am going to add comments along the way.
The beginning of comments will be marked like this: *****COMMENT:**
And the end of comments will be marked again: *******
3. As much as possible, I will change references to alcoholism and drinking to sexaholism and lust. These changes from the original text will be noted inside square brackets. For example, [sexaholics] anonymous.
4. Make minor changes in consideration of the religious views of this forum.

If anyone has a clearer and simpler way to make these distinctions (without having to do a whole lot of text formatting), I'll be happy to hear suggestions. Please send me a PM about it.

Also, as we move further along there will be real work to be done. The exact details of how to do it in this forum will have to be figured out, but I would like to know who is committed to doing this work together when we get there. Feel free to either reply on this thread or contact me through PM.

--Elyah

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 20 Jul 2012 07:24

[SEXAHOLICS] ANONYMOUS

*****COMMENT: A new design for living.*****

The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from [Sexaholism]

*****COMMENT: It's enough if the only thing you gain from this program is--INCREASE YOUR AWARENESS OF YOUR PERCEPTIONS AND MOTIVES. Become more aware of what you are doing, why you are doing it, and where you are heading. For example: Did you pick aisle 5 in the grocery store because of the shortest line or because of the most attractive cashier?*****

FOREWARD TO FIRST EDITION (BB pg. ix)

We, of [Sexaholics] Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other [sexaholics] PRECISELY HOW WE HAVE RECOVERED is the main purpose of this book. For them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary. We think this account of our experiences will help everyone to better understand the [sexaholic]. Many do not comprehend that the [sexaholic] is a very sick person. And besides, we are sure that our way of living has its advantages for all.

COMMENT: Recovery means that we regain the freedom to choose. We won't have to act out anymore. Also, this book tells us "precisely how we have recovered"--specific directions that have worked for thousands and now millions of other addicts. The more closely you adhere to these directions, the more likely it is that you will have the same results.

It is important that we remain anonymous because we are too few, at present, to handle the overwhelming number of personal appeals which may result from this publication. Being mostly business or professional folk we could not well carry on our occupations in such an event. We would like it understood that our [sexaholic] work is an avocation.

When writing or speaking publicly about [sexaholism], we urge each of our Fellowship to omit his personal name, designating himself instead as "A member of [Sexaholics] Anonymous." Very earnestly we ask the press also, to observe this request, for otherwise we shall be greatly handicapped.

We are not an organization in the conventional sense of the word. There are no fees or dues whatsoever. The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop [lusting]. We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination, nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted.

COMMENT: Do you have an honest desire to stop lusting?

We shall be interested to hear from those who are getting results from this book, particularly from those who have commenced work with other [sexaholics]. We should like to be helpful to such cases.

Inquiry by scientific, medical, and religious societies will be welcomed.

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 21 Jul 2012 19:19

Before continuing, I wanted to take a moment for some emergency tools to tide you over until we get further along with the steps. This is a message that Duvid Chaim sends out early on in

the phone conference:

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I also wanted to respond to the Shipmate who was asking for an answer for "What can I do NOW before I slip?

So here are a few STEPS TO STAY CLEAN AND SOBER:

1) Always first: have a good long conversation with HaKodesh Borachu. He just wants to hear from you again. Maybe your "signal strength" got a little low. How many "bars" were you holding before the slip?

COMMENT: Lust is a signal to us that we have gotten out of touch with Hashem. We need to re-connect.

2) CHECK OUT YOUR GLASSES! Yes, what lenses are you looking thru when you view the Stuff of Life? The Dark lenses or the Bright lenses.

***COMMENT: Is your view of the world primarily self-centered or is it service oriented? Is it full of fear, or full of trust? Is it full of resentment, or full of acceptance? ***

3) Re-read some of your favorite excerpts from the Big Book and the notes you took.

4) REACH OUT - Talk to another member of our Chevra or make an effort to build the relationships with those around you. This is one of the best ways to get out of isolation and share your burden who knows what you're carrying.

*** COMMENT: You can also post on the forum, but the more real your communication is, the more healing it will be. ***

5) Be of Service to others or do a random act of Chesed. For your wife, kids, parents, Shul, Bikkur Cholim, etc.

6) Get back on the Group Call. It's a wonderful way to review the Program materials and to be of service to the newcomers.

*** COMMENT: Or, JOIN the group call! It will change your life.***

7) And most important of all, LOVE YOURSELF and realize what a success you are. And that you are NOT going to let anyone or anything pull you back. Remember, it's OK to make a mistake - just never say to yourself "I am a mistake."

8) Going Forward, stay Aware of your Perception and Motives.

Remind yourself that you ARE in Recovery and that IT'S ABOUT PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION!!

PS - I start my day with the following prayers and recite them through the day as I need:

Big Book Prayers

Beginning of Day Prayer (BB 86-87)

O God, direct my thinking, so that it may be divorced from Self-Pity and from dishonest and self-seeking motives. Let me make every decision and begin every action in You and continue it only through Your Inspiration. Throughout this day, show me the next step to take and to trust in Your Care of me and my problems. Free me from all self-will and self-sufficiency. Help me to neither seek nor pray for selfish ends.

3rd Step Prayer:

"God, I offer myself to You - to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your Love, and Your Way of life. May I do Your will always!". (BB p 63)

7th Step Prayer:

"My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding. Amen.". (BB pg 76)

PSS - Rabbi Pliskin writes the following about SETBACKS:

#764 Setbacks are Part of the Process

When you try to make peace, either for yourself or between two other people, expect setbacks. They are part of the process.

Many people are happy, even excited, to make peace when they see steady progress. Even if progress is slow, they are patient. But when they are faced with setbacks, they easily give up. When you realize that setbacks are an integral part of making progress, you realize that this is just another step that you have to make. It's like climbing a mountain path. The path doesn't always go straight up. At times it goes around the right and at times it goes around the left but the focus is on eventually getting to the destination. And therefore even if part of the path seems to be descending, it is a descent for the sake of ascent. This, too, is getting you closer to where you want to end up. (from Rabbi Zelig Pliskin's book: Harmony with Others, p.109, artscroll.com)

AND PLEASE REMEMBER - Keep coming back - because it works if you work it and you're worth it!!

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