

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 (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 20 Aug 2012 12:59

[ChaimCharlie wrote on 19 Aug 2012 20:35:](#)

The same help I so clearly need to prevent me from acting out, I need also in order not to get up angry at my wife, not to get impatient with my chavrusa, and to get up on time for davening in the morning!!!!!!!!!!!!

Exactly.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 20 Aug 2012 13:25

My wife and I abandoned ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of helping other [sexaholics] to a solution of their problems. It was fortunate, for my old business associates remained skeptical for a year and a half, during which I found little work. I was not too well at the time, and was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me back to [acting out]. I soon found that when all other measures failed, work with another [sexaholic] would save the day. Many times I have gone to my old hospital in despair. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. It is a design for living that works in rough going.

***COMMENT: Here we see that, "self-pity and resentment," are poison for us, driving us back to our drug of choice (there will be more about this later). Also, the twelve steps are not a self-help quick fix; they are a new design for living. ***

We commenced to make many fast friends and a fellowship has grown up among us of which it is a wonderful thing to feel a part. The joy of living we really have, even under pressure and difficulty. I have seen one hundred families set their feet in the path that really goes somewhere; have seen the most impossible domestic situations righted; feuds and bitterness of all sorts wiped out. I have seen men come out of asylums and resume a vital place in the lives of their families and communities. Business and professional men have regained their standing. There is scarcely any form of trouble and misery which has not been overcome among us. In one western city and its environs there are one thousand of us and our families. We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek. At these informal gatherings one may often see from 50 to 200 persons. We are growing in numbers and power.

***COMMENT: The focus in recover is not that our problems will go away (although many of them actually do). Rather, the focus is that we can feel joy in our lives, "even under pressure and difficulty." ***

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 21 Aug 2012 11:38

A [sexaholic] in [the throes of his obsession] is an unlovely creature. Our struggles with them are variously strenuous, comic, and tragic. One poor chap committed suicide in my home. He could not, or would not, see our way of life.

There is, however, a vast amount of fun about it all. I suppose some would be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity. But just underneath there is deadly earnestness. Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish.

Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia. We have it with us right here and now. Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 21 Aug 2012 11:39

Just a little announcement: I won't be around for a couple of weeks, so this thread is on hold until I'm back.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 11 Sep 2012 14:30

CHAPTER TWO: THERE IS A SOLUTION

We, of [Sexaholics] Anonymous, know one hundred men who were once just as hopeless as Bill. All have recovered. They have solved the [lust] problem.

We are average Americans. All sections of this country and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social, and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined.

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in BROTHERLY and HARMONIOUS action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from [sexaholism].

***COMMENT: The solution starts by participating in fellowship. ***

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 12 Sep 2012 12:55

An illness of this sort—and we have come to believe it an illness—involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can. If a person has cancer all are sorry for him and no one is angry or hurt. But not so with the [sexaholic] illness, for with it there goes annihilation of all the things worthwhile in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferer's. It brings misunderstanding fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives and parents—anyone can increase the list.

***COMMENT: It's easy to think, "I'm not hurting anybody else by looking at porn and masturbating." But, the worst part of addiction is that we're in our own world--disconnected from reality. We waste so much time, and while we do that we're unavailable to our wives, children, parents, friends, and anyone else who ought to be important to us. ***

We hope this volume will inform and comfort those who are, or who may be affected. They are many.

Highly competent psychiatrists who have dealt with us found it sometimes impossible to

persuade a [sexaholic] to discuss his situation without reserve. Strangely enough, wives, parents and intimate friends usually find us even more unapproachable than do the psychiatrist and the doctor.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 13 Sep 2012 11:44

But the ex-[sexaholic] who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another [sexaholic] in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished.

That the man who is making the approach has had the same difficulty, that he obviously knows what he is talking about, that his whole deportment shouts at the new prospect that he is a man with a real answer, that he has no attitude of holier than thou, nothing whatever except the sincere desire to be helpful; that there are no fees to pay, no axes to grind, no people to please, no lectures to be endured—these are the conditions we found most effective. After such an approach many take up their beds and walk again.

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

Posted by mifatfait - 13 Sep 2012 23:25

[Eye.nonymous wrote on 13 Sep 2012 11:44:](#)

But the ex-[sexaholic] who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another [sexaholic] in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished.

I guess that's why AA's tradition is to never be professional.

I really like this whole idea, you know, the whole concept of "beleifs" and all concepts in general, are so hard to change even the smallest bit, certainly to give up lifeblood like lust. But when he's coming from personal experience, when he's just telling a story, how can I close my heart to that?

(that's why the Pesach seder is in the form of a story, that's the only real way to enter inside a person)

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 14 Sep 2012 08:30

None of us makes a sole vocation of this work, nor do we think its effectiveness would be increased if we did. We feel that elimination of our [lusting] is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations, and affairs. All of us spend much of our spare time in the sort of effort which we are going to describe. A few are fortunate enough to be so situated that they can give nearly all of their time to the work.

*** COMMENT: Notice that recovery isn't over when we stop acting out; that's where it just begins. ***

If we keep on the way we are going there is little doubt that much good will result, but the surface of the problem would hardly be scratched. Those of us who live in large cities are overcome by the reflection that close by hundreds are dropping into oblivion every day. Many could recover if they had the opportunity we have enjoyed. How then shall we present that which has been so freely given us?

We have concluded to publish an anonymous volume setting forth the problem as we see it. We shall bring to the task our combined experience and knowledge. This should suggest a useful program for anyone concerned with a [lusting] problem.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 23 Sep 2012 14:35

Of necessity there will have to be discussion of matters medical, psychiatric, social, and religious. We are aware that these matters are, from their very nature, controversial. Nothing would please us so much as to write a book which would contain no basis for contention or argument. We shall do our utmost to achieve that ideal. Most of us sense that real tolerance of other people's shortcomings and viewpoints and a respect for their opinions are attitudes which make us more useful to others. Our very lives, as ex-[sexaholics], depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs.

*** COMMENT: This paragraph gives some guidelines for dealing with other people. To sum it up, "Keep your ego in check." ***

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 24 Sep 2012 13:46

You may already have asked yourself why it is that all of us became so very ill from [lusting]. Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. If you are a [sexaholic] who wants to get over it, you may already be asking—"What do I have to do?"

It is the purpose of this book to answer such questions SPECIFICALLY. We shall tell you what we have done. Before going into a detailed discussion, it may be well to summarize some points as we see them.

How many times people have said to us: "I can take it or leave it alone. Why can't he?" "Why don't you [just control yourself]?" "That fellow can't handle [the internet]." "Why don't you try [keeping your eyes down]?" "Lay off the hard stuff." "His will power must be weak." "He could stop if he wanted to." "She's such a sweet girl, I should think he'd stop for her." "The [therapist] told him that if he ever [acted out] again it would [ruin his marriage], but there he is all lit up again."

Now these are commonplace observations [regarding lust] which we hear all the time. Back of them is a world of ignorance and misunderstanding. We see that these expressions refer to people whose reactions are very different from ours.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 27 Sep 2012 09:04

Moderate [lusters] have little trouble in giving up [acting out] entirely if they have good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone.

Then we have a certain type of hard [luster]. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason—ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor-becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention.

***COMMENT: It is important to realize that there IS such a person who lusts heavily and acts out frequently, but is not actually an addict. He may be the person who has been struggling with lust his whole life, puts a filter on his computer, and after a difficult week or two he is cured forever--feeling almost no struggle with lust whatsoever anymore. Therefore, a word of caution is appropriate here, if you are such a person, don't start thinking, "If it was so easy for me, why isn't it so easy for everyone else?" But if you're not such a person, don't start thinking, "If it was so easy for him, why isn't it so easy for me?"

Another word of caution: it's better to mistake yourself for an addict and be in recovery rather than to mistake yourself as not being an addict and keep going downhill. ***

But what about the real [sexaholic]? He may start off as a moderate [luster]; he may or may not become a continuous hard [luster]; but at some stage of his [acting out] career he begins to lose all control of his [lust] consumption, once he starts to [lust].

Here is the fellow who has been puzzling you, especially in his lack of control. He does absurd, incredible, tragic things while [acting out]. He is a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He is seldom mildly intoxicated [with lust]. He is always more or less insanely drunk [with lust]. His disposition while [lusting] resembles his normal nature but little. He may be one of the finest fellows in the world. Yet let him [act out] for a day, and he frequently becomes disgustingly, and even dangerously antisocial. He has a positive genius for [action out] at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision must be made or engagement kept. He is often perfectly sensible and well balanced concerning everything except [lust], but in that respect is incredibly dishonest and selfish. He often possesses special abilities, skills, and aptitudes, and has a promising career ahead of him. He uses his gifts to build up a bright outlook for his family and himself, then pulls the structure down on his head by a senseless series of sprees....

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

Posted by mifatfait - 27 Sep 2012 15:51

[Eye.nonymous wrote on 27 Sep 2012 09:04:](#)

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Then we have a certain type of hard [luster]. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason—ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor-becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention.

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I think your comment goes the other way too. An addict doesn't necessarily have to be a hard luster, just as the hard luster isn't for sure an addict. I am most of the time able to somehow keep the addiction at bay, but I'm sure I'm addicted cause when I am truly tempted I have no control and can't stop myself.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 27 Sep 2012 20:35

[ChaimCharlie wrote on 27 Sep 2012 15:51:](#)

I think your comment goes the other way too. An addict doesn't necessarily have to be a hard luster, just as the hard luster isn't for sure an addict.

That's also true.

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