

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 - 08 Nov 2012 16:04

To be gravely affected, one does not necessarily have to [act out] a long time, nor take the quantities some of us have. This is particularly true of women.

Potential female [sexaholics] often turn into the real thing and are gone beyond recall in a few years. Certain [lusts], who would be greatly insulted if called [sexaholics], are astonished at their inability to stop. We, who are familiar with the symptoms, see large numbers of potential [sexaholics] among young people everywhere. But try and get them to see it!

As we look back, we feel we had gone on [acting out] many years beyond the point where we could quit on our will power. If anyone questions whether he has entered this dangerous area, let him try leaving [lust] alone for one year. If he is a real [sexaholic] and very far advanced, there is scant chance of success. In the early days of our [acting out] we occasionally remained sober for a year or more, becoming serious [sex addicts] again later. Though you may be able to stop for a considerable period, you may yet be a potential [sexaholic]. We think few, to whom this book will appeal, can stay [clean] anything like a year. Some will be [acting out] the day after making their resolutions; most of them within a few weeks.

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by Dov - 08 Nov 2012 17:39

Are we taking other peoples' inventories, here?

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 09 Nov 2012 10:25

[dov wrote on 08 Nov 2012 17:39:](#)

Are we taking other peoples' inventories, here?

What?

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

Posted by Dov - 09 Nov 2012 17:41

That last quote/post sounded to me like it was advocating criticism of the screwiness of *others* as a way to achieve recovery for ourselves. That's all. Maybe I misread it...

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 10 Nov 2012 19:12

[dov wrote on 09 Nov 2012 17:41:](#)

That last quote/post sounded to me like it was advocating criticism of the screwiness of *others* as a way to achieve recovery for ourselves. That's all. Maybe I misread it...

I think it's just meant to give a person a guage to figure out whether or not they, themselves, have a problem.

--Elyah

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

Posted by Dov - 13 Nov 2012 17:11

Makes sense. THanks.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 15 Nov 2012 13:54

For those who are unable to [lust] moderately the question is how to stop altogether. We are assuming, of course, that the reader desires to stop. Whether such a person can quit upon a non-spiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power to choose whether he will [act out] or not. Many of us felt that we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of [sexaholism] as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish.

How then shall we help our readers determine, to their own satisfaction, whether they are one of us? The experiment of quitting for a period of time will be helpful, but we think we can render an even greater service to [sexaholic] sufferers, and perhaps to the medical fraternity. So we shall describe some of the mental states that precede a relapse into [lusting], for obviously this is the crux of the problem.

***COMMENT: The above paragraph contains a key statement. At the beginning we said that, "To increase your awareness of your perceptions and motives," is a main goal of recovery. Here, the Big Book states that the CRUX OF THE PROBLEM is the MENTAL STATES THAT PRECEDE A RELAPSE. ***

What sort of thinking dominates a [sexaholic] who repeats time after time the desperate experiment of the first [lust hit]? Friends who have reasoned with him after a spree which has brought him to the point of divorce or bankruptcy are mystified when he walks directly into an [internet café]. Why does he? Of what is he thinking?

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 23 Nov 2012 08:40

***COMMENT: The following story is too difficult for me to adapt to sexaholism, so I'll leave it as-is. Nevertheless, see if you relate to it. ***

Jim's Story

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 drinking 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 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 deep affection.

Yet he got drunk again. We asked him to tell us exactly how it happened. This is his story: "I came to work on Tuesday morning. I remember I felt irritated that I had to be a salesman for a concern I once owned. I had a few words with the boss, but nothing serious. Then I decided to drive into the country and see one of my prospects for a car. On the way I felt hungry so I stopped at a roadside place where they have a bar. I had no intention of drinking. I just thought I would get a sandwich. I also had the notion that I might find a customer for a car at this place, which was familiar, for I had been going to it for years. I had eaten there many times during the months I was sober. I sat down at a table and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk. Still no thought of drinking. I ordered another sandwich and decided to have another glass of milk.

"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."

Thus started one more journey to the asylum for Jim. Here was the threat of commitment, the loss of family and position, to say nothing of that intense mental and physical suffering which drinking always caused him. HE HAD MUCH KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HIMSELF as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the FOOLISH IDEA he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk!

COMMENT: Self-knowledge doesn't work because it's in my mind—and you can't heal a sick mind with a sick mind.

Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity. How can such a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight, be called anything else?

You may think this an extreme case. To us it is not farfetched, for this kind of thinking has been characteristic of every single one of us. We have sometimes reflected more than Jim did upon

the consequences. But there was always the curious mental phenomenon, that parallel with our sound reasoning there inevitably ran some insanely trivial excuse for taking the first [lust hit]. Our sound reasoning failed to hold us in check. The insane idea won out. Next day we would ask ourselves, in all earnestness and sincerity, how it could have happened.

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

Posted by Dov - 25 Nov 2012 06:46

Precious. Do it all the time. It's good to be a work in real progress, and to have a straight code of sobriety, not a wish-washy definition.

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

Posted by mifatfait - 25 Nov 2012 07:13

My whiskey with milk is going to that vacation website that I know has pictures of women in bathing suits, just to check out if the site is proper for me to look at. Or taking a peek at the back of the bus where the women are, just to see how full the bus is today. Or convincing my wife to have sex with me, just cause I want to feel close to her.

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

Posted by Blind Beggar - 25 Nov 2012 08:22

Jim is my favourite character from the Big Book, not Fred. What's wrong with having 2 sandwiches if you're feeling hungry? I'll stop here to avoid triggering anybody.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 28 Nov 2012 15:37

In some circumstances we have gone out deliberately to [act out], feeling ourselves justified by nervousness, anger, worry, depression, jealousy or the like. But even in this type of beginning we are obliged to admit that our justification for a spree was insanely insufficient in the light of what always happened. We now see that when we began to [act out] deliberately, instead of casually, there was little serious or effective thought during the period of premeditation of what the terrific consequences might be.

***COMMENT: "Feeling ourselves justified." EGO fuels the RID (Restlessness, irritability, and discontent). ***

The Jaywalker

Our behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first [lust hit] as that of an individual with a passion, say, for jay-walking. He gets a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles. He enjoys himself a few years in spite of friendly warnings. Up to this point you would label him as a foolish chap having queer ideas of fun. Luck then deserts him and he is slightly injured several times in succession. You would expect him, if he were normal, to cut it out. Presently he is hit again and this time has a fractured skull. Within a week after leaving the hospital a fast-moving trolley car breaks his arm. He tells you he has decided to stop jay-walking for good, but in a few weeks he breaks both legs.

On through the years this conduct continues, accompanied by his continual promises to be careful or to keep off the streets altogether. Finally, he can no longer work, his wife gets a divorce, he is held up to ridicule. He tries every known means to get the jay-walking idea out of his head. He shuts himself up in an asylum, hoping to mend his ways. But the day he comes out he races in front of a fire engine, which breaks his back. Such a man would be crazy, wouldn't he?

You may think our illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? We, who have been through the wringer, have to admit if we substituted [sexaholism] for jaywalking, the illustration would fit us exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where [lust] has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It's strong language—but isn't it true?

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Re: BIG BOOK STUDY THREAD (or, The Twelve Steps Demystified)
Posted by Blind Beggar - 29 Nov 2012 09:57

Jim is my favorite but the Jaywalker is number 2. I am my own worst enemy sometimes.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 06 Dec 2012 13:16

Some of you are thinking: "Yes, what you tell us is true, but it doesn't fully apply. We admit we have some of these symptoms, but we have not gone to the extremes you fellows did, nor are we likely to, for we understand ourselves so well after what you have told us that such things cannot happen again. We have not lost everything in life through drinking and we certainly do not intend to. Thanks for the information."

That may be true of certain non-[sexaholic] people who, though [acting out] foolishly and heavily at the present time, are able to stop or moderate, because their brains and bodies have not been damaged as ours were. But the actual or potential [sexaholic], with hardly an exception, will be absolutely unable to stop [acting out] on the basis of self-knowledge. This is a point we wish to emphasize and re-emphasize, to smash home upon our [sexaholic] readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience. Let us take another illustration.

Fred's story

Fred is partner in a well known accounting firm. His income is good, he has a fine home, is happily married and the father of promising children of college age. He is so attractive a personality that he makes friends with everyone. If ever there was a successful business man, it is Fred. To all appearance he is a stable, well balanced individual. Yet, he is [sexaholic]. We first saw Fred about a year ago in a hospital where he had gone to recover from a bad case of jitters.

It was his first experience of this kind, and he was much ashamed of it. Far from admitting he was a [sexaholic], he told himself he came to the hospital to rest his nerves. The doctor intimated strongly that he might be worse than he realized. For a few days he was depressed about his condition. He made up his mind to quit [acting out] altogether. It never occurred to him that perhaps he could not do so, in spite of his character and standing. Fred would not believe himself an alcoholic, much less accept a spiritual remedy for his problem. We told him what we knew about [sexaholism]. He was interested and conceded that he had some of the symptoms, but he was a long way from admitting that he could do nothing about it himself. He was positive that this humiliating experience, plus the knowledge he had acquired, would keep him sober the rest of his life. Self-knowledge would fix it.

***COMMENT: Accepting this, that we are a sexaholic and that we need a spiritual remedy for our problem, is our road to recovery. Have you ever tried a spiritual remedy for any of your problems before? ***

We heard no more of Fred for a while. One day we were told that he was back in the hospital. This time he was quite shaky. He soon indicated he was anxious to see us. The story he told is most instructive for here was a chap absolutely convinced he had to stop [acting out], who had no excuse for [acting out], who exhibited splendid judgment and determination in all his other concerns, yet was flat on his back nevertheless.

Let him tell you about it:

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