

THE NIGHTCAP

Published Monthly By The Central Committee of
Alcoholics Anonymous in San Antonio. Address
All Communications to: P. O. Box 644,
San Antonio 6, Texas.

VOLUME FOUR

JUNE 1954

NUMBER NINE

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE TWELVE STEPS. Step No. 5.....

- Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.

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To those of you about to embark upon your Fifth Step, and those who have not yet done so, BLESSINGS ON YOU! Plunge in You are in for one of the most enlightening and rewarding experiences of your entire life.

To my knowledge, no survey has been conducted polling alcoholics who have put this Step on the bottom of their list, but it is probably an imposing one. Are you one? If so, delay no longer, because far from being something to dread, you will wonder why you procrastinated, once you do it. The release and the joy of being free from so many feelings of guilt, and the sense of exhilaration that accompanies this action cannot be described. It simply has to be experienced.

Once this is done, our progress is assured. Having admitted to God, ourselves and another human being the nature of our wrongs, we have cleared the deck for action. We have burned our bridges behind us -- we can't go back. However, that is not the most important aspect of this Step. It is designed primarily to assure our humility, our honesty, and the facing of reality. It enables us to "clean house," so to speak, to get rid of the clutter - clean up the attic. Having done this, we cannot conscientiously return to our former way of living. We are forced by the inherent good within us to
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THE TWELVE STEPS

Step One -- We admitted we were powerless over alcohol -- that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step Two -- Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three -- Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Step Four -- Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step Five -- Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step Six -- Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step Seven -- Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step Eight -- Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step Nine -- Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step Ten -- Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

Step Eleven -- Sought through prayer and medication to improve our conscious contact with God as
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JULY BIRTHDAYS

1954

2 Years: Robert T.A.; Lillian C.; F."Tim" M.; Lessie R.

3 Years: Audrey B.; G.W."Cliff" M.

4 Years: Robert K.C.; C.L."Cliff" H.; Capt. Joe C. A.

6 Years: Joe C.; Katherine O., M/Sgt W.E."Bill" S.; Wm. "Bill" O.

7 Years: Charlie U

8 Years: Claude R.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

1954

1 Year: Margie R.; Lee R., Jr.

2 Years: Betty A.

3 Years: Dick L.; Lavea McC.; James P. S.

5 Years: Ann S.; Benny V.

6 Years: Woodie A.

7 Years: Eddie L.; Carroll P.

8 Years: Boney Du.; Ann P.; Col. Orlo Q.

Drinking coffee was forbidden by an ancient dictator in Constantinople who thought that it stimulated thinking of the common people. The first offense brought a whipping; the second one brought death.

Correction does much, but encouragement does more. Encouragement after censure is as the sun after a shower.

- Goethe

WHERE ARE WE?

In the South Pacific a young navigator was making his first trip on a B-29. He had just qualified so the crewmen watched with interest as he added up figures, scanned a slide rule and used all the other abracadabra.

"Where are we now?" asked one of the crew.

The young navigator waved away the questioner, and continued figuring so long that the whole group became uneasy. Finally the pilot demanded to know what the position was.

"Captain," replied the navigator, "tell every man to remove his cap instantly."

"What in blazes for??"

"Well," said the navigator, "according to my figures, at this minute we are flying up the center aisle of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City."

LEARN FROM THE MISTAKES OF OTHERS --
YOU DON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE
THEM ALL YOURSELF.

Every member of Alcoholics Anonymous who values his sobriety has to learn one all important fundamental lesson which is: alcohol for him is taboo; there is no compromise; there is no such thing as just one drink. Quite a few of our younger members might harbor the thought they are going to lose popularity when they persist in refusing a drink; in any event, such popularity isn't even worth the price. When dealing with people who will not accept a determined and definite "no", then it is time to bow out without any lingering or looking back. We've got to learn the art of saying "no"; in saying it and meaning it..... then we shall be free to do vigorously what we ought and want to do.

- Cedar Rapids Newsletter

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reach higher and higher. Habit patterns and reactions which served us well in the past must be adjusted and changed. They no longer fit this new way of life.

There is something psychological about the Fifth Step that gives us humility. Having admitted our defects and past wrongs to another human being renders us vulnerable, which is good. Having bared our weaknesses we have rid ourselves of pretense and sham. Our defenses are down and we can no longer pretend to be what we are not. We become obligated to live up to the best within us.

Admitting these things heretofore has been impossible because of our false pride. In our distorted minds, this was a sign of weakness; but in fulfilling our obligation to ourselves, in compliance with the Fifth Step, we gain innumerable compensatory values. We gain a new kind of pride -- a feeling of true personal worth, self-respect, humility, honesty, freedom from the past, self-confidence, and a clean spiritual feeling. Fear is gone and, replacing it, comes the assurance that we shall never have to be afraid again. We are in harmony with our environment.

It has been the experience of many many alcoholics that selecting the right person with whom to take this Step is of the utmost importance. For this reason, I dare suggest - **NAY, ADVISE** - that you choose some individual outside of Alcoholics Anonymous. Newcomers in A. A. are fortunate in that a few trails have been blazed before them. Through "Trial and Error" it has been discovered that there are many non-alcoholics who have a deep feeling of sympathy and understanding of our program, as well as our disease, and once the A.A. member has arrived at the point of taking his Fifth Step he can select the individual in whom he has great confidence and who will be in a position to aid him immeasurably. These individuals are to be found amongst our doctors, lawyers, ministers, and counselors, and there are several valid reasons why they are to be preferred over A.A. members. Among these are:

- (a) Such individuals are accustomed to receiving confidences;
- (b) It is considerably easier to talk to some understanding person in this category;
- (c) The danger of such confidences being broken, and lives harmed, is removed;
- (d) They serve only in the capacity of a confidant and not a judge; and
- (e) Constructive advice and good counsel are received.

It is likely that this matter cannot be accomplished in just one session, so in selecting the individual to whom you are going for help, you should explain both the nature and the reason for this Step. It does not necessarily mean that our list of wrongs that we are to recite is so long, but merely to drop by someone's office on the chance that you might find them doodling and in an expansive mood for a ten minute

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we understood him praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.

Step Twelve -- Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and practice these principles in all our affairs.

..A.A..

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chat will not get the job done. None of us like that "brushed-off" feeling, least of all the super-super-sensitive alcoholic and once this delayed action is begun it is likely to assume flood-like proportions. Time, patience, and understanding on the part of the listener is extremely important and necessary; therefore, some preparation should be made on the part of both participants. This is not a matter to be taken lightly, if it is to have the desired effect.

No one can tell another person what to admit, or confess, but in trying to straighten out our lives we must remove, or bring into the open, those things which cause us to have feelings of guilt, shame, remorse, and make us feel unworthy. Oftentimes, when admitted to another person they seem trivial, unimportant, or even foolish; nevertheless, if they have proven to be a source of irritation, discomfort, or trouble, or cause our mind to wander back to them with regret, they should be discussed. It does not necessarily follow that some of these things that cause us disease are wrong. It could be our attitude about them that leads us to believe they are wrong. We may have developed a habit pattern that protected us in our earlier stages of development but does not now fit our way of life and thereby makes us uncomfortable. We need to discard it, but we do not know how. In trying to work ourselves out of the maze of maladjustments into which we have slipped we have all experienced this situation. We seek, or try, to explain our reaction, or our viewpoint, only to discover that we no longer feel that way, or react that way and the whole process is unnecessary. This only comes to light when we go to state our case. Such is the case with many of our embedded thoughts; our reactions often appear inconsequential, although they cause us difficulty. In talking about them we discover that we are only afflicted with human nature, and certainly have no "corner" on that market.

The following quotation, to me, embodies one of the profoundest of truths: "The sins of omission are far worse than the sins of commission." This applies to practically every aspect of our lives. It is especially applicable to alcoholics, I think, because of the fact that their families, friends and associates have suffered more from what they have left undone than from what they have done. This, of course, is not true in all instances, but the selfishness exhibited by the alcoholic in his relationships with other individuals; the failure to remember little pleasurable things, the lack of consideration, little acts left undone that might have made life more bearable; day after day, weeks running into weeks, months, and sometimes years; these leave a deeper hurt and a bigger scar than the occasional big blunder or misdeed of mountainous proportions. Somehow, some way, human beings muster the courage and stamina to withstand catastrophe, while the daily small petty irritations or omissions build a barrier to human relationships that is out of all proportion to the size of the fault itself, eventually destroying the whole emotional structure.

For the therapeutic effect that can be received from taking the Fifth Step in its entirety, and so that nothing be retained to trip us up at some later date, it would follow that this catharsis must be complete and thorough. It is the ONLY way that we have to get ourselves in balance, or get "levelled off": to get our thinking really straightened out. We might refer to it as an "unravelling" process. None of us anticipates with pleasure. We shrink from exposing ourselves to another human being. We fear the resultant pain, or suffering, as well as the embarrassment we feel is certain to follow. If we can approach this Step with the idea

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that we are giving ourselves a gift (which in reality we are), perhaps some of our previous concepts concerning the Fifth Step will disappear. We are seeking self-understanding and we alone will reap most of the benefits. We should approach this rehabilitation process with an open mind, for we are neither to be condemned, judged, nor condoned. If we can undertake this project in the light that we are going to get acquainted with an individual and that individual is ourselves, we may even anticipate the pleasure, rather than think of it as a most unpleasant ordeal. In essence, that is what is entailed. Heretofore, we have lacked sufficient courage to explore the dark tunnels through which we have passed. We have closed off these little airtight compartments of our mind and vowed never to open them again. We have buried our inner self; refused to recognize the existence of things we wish to forget, but this action has not solved our problems. The potential of our full personality is submerged with this action, and will remain so until such time as we give it release.

Too many alcoholics feel that an autopsy is being conducted over them while they look on and squirm. Let me assure you that such is not the case. Taking our Fifth Step with a counselor who is experienced and who understands human nature can be a pleasant, enjoyable and enlightening experience. In gaining greater insight into ourselves it does not mean that our past education and experience will not stand us in good stead. Most of all that we have learned is usable and workable, but we do need to discard the excess. There is nothing new or strange about this kind of therapy. It is sound, logical reasoning. The "gimmick" is in the doing, but....as in all of the previous Steps, we are allowed a choice.....our free will is left inviolate.

Taking the Fifth Step is a necessary part of our treatment, IF we are to attain serenity, or peace of mind, in so far as it possible.

Fortunately for the human race, the Omnipotent Power did not give us the gift to see ourselves as other people see us, and SO -- the help that we need must come from someone else. Finding that person and unburdening our thoughts and actions to him, and finding not only sympathy and understanding, but help too, is indeed a heartwarming experience. Once shared, our attitude toward other individuals who are ensnared can only be one of compassion. Having broken our own bonds we wish only to help others obtain the same freedom. Having nothing to conceal, we are free to develop all our resources, and enjoy the pursuit thereof. We are in full receipt of God's gift to us, and in His forgiveness and in communion with Him we grow.

If we keep in mind that we are the person who is most intolerant of our own shortcomings; that we are the harshest of judges and the most unforgiving of our past errors, and that in ridding ourselves of these things, we receive not only God's forgiveness but our own, then we will seek to hasten the day that we can look in the mirror and see a serene and smiling countenance reflect itself. Such are the compensations to be received from the Fifth Step.

Let me reiterate....plunge in.....and BLESS YOU.

- NEDRA M.

TRY TO MAKE AT LEAST ONE PERSON HAPPY each day, and then in ten years you have made three thousand, six hundred and fifty persons happy, or brightened a small town by your contribution to the fund of general enjoyment.

SOCRATES SAID: "The shortest and surest way to live with honor in the world is to be in reality what we would appear to be. All human virtues increase and strengthen themselves by the practice..of them.

