

Step-by-Step Guide for Sponsors

*A Companion to AA's Big Book
and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*

Step-by-Step Guide for Sponsors

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Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Step Two 27

"(We) Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

There Is a Solution: We become so very ill from drinking. We do absurd, incredible, tragic things while drinking. Why do we take the first drink? We cannot answer the alcoholic riddle. We were a baffled lot. We have lost the power of choice in drink. We believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We have been given "a design for living" that really works.

More about Alcoholism: We get worse, never better. We tried long and hard to drink like other people. We can quickly diagnose ourselves. We will never be immune to alcohol. We could no longer quit on our will power. We had a desire to stop drinking. We came up with insanely trivial excuses for taking the first drink. We have no effective mental defense against the first drink.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Step Three

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“(We) Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

We Agnostics: We must find a spiritual basis of life—or else. We discovered we did not need to consider another’s conception of God. When we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. Faced with alcoholic destruction, we became open minded on spiritual matters. We beg you to lay aside prejudice, even against organized religion. Let’s look at AA’s record. We had to stop doubting the power of God. We couldn’t duck the issue of faith. We had been living on faith and little else. We had been fooling ourselves.

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Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Step Four

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“(We) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

How It Works – part 2: We launched out on a course of vigorous action. We asked ourselves why we were angry. We had to be free of anger. We avoid retaliation and argument. We resolutely looked for our own mistakes.

How It Works – part 3: We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We commence to outgrow fear. We all have sex problems. Our sex powers are God-given and therefore good. God alone can judge our sex situation. We earnestly pray for the right ideal. We are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

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“(We) Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

Into Action – part 1: We usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. We are under constant fear and tension—that makes for more drinking. We must be entirely honest with somebody. When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We pocket our pride and go to it. We shall walk free at last.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Step Six

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“(We) Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

Into Action – part 2: We ask God to help us be willing.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Step Seven **87**

“(We) Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

Into Action – part 3: We are willing that God should have all of us, good and bad.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Step Eight **91**

“(We) Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

Into Action – part 4: We made our list when we took inventory.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Step Nine **99**

“(We) Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

Into Action – part 5: Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service. We stick to our own faults. We must lose our fear of creditors. We ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what. Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. Drinking has complicated sex relations in our homes. The spiritual life is not a theory—we have to live it. As God’s people we stand on our feet; we don’t crawl before anyone. We will be amazed before we are half way through.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Step Ten **109**

“(We) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

Into Action – part 6: We continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. We have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even alcohol. We have a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Step Eleven **115**

“(We) 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.”

Into Action – part 7: We shouldn’t be shy on the matter of prayer. When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. On awakening, we think about the twenty-four hours ahead. In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We ask especially for freedom from self-will. We sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers. We constantly remind ourselves that we are no longer running the show.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

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

Working with Others: Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives. How we introduce Step One to newcomers. How we introduce Step Two to newcomers. How we introduce Step Three to newcomers. Newcomers help us more than we help them. We never talk down to newcomers from any moral or spiritual hilltop. We have no monopoly on God, just an approach that worked for us. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing men who cannot or will not work with us. We encourage newcomers to trust in God and clean house. We encourage newcomers to work toward atmospheres of helpfulness and friendliness at home. We remind newcomers that our recovery is not dependent upon people; it is dependent upon our relationship with God. Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. Our job now is to be at the place where we may be of maximum helpfulness to others. We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking as an institution.

To Wives: Problem drinkers usually fall within one of four categories. How we approach the drinker who is showing lack of control. How we approach the drinker who wants to stop. How we approach the drinker who is in complete despair. We need to be patient with newcomers. Sometimes our sponsees relapse. We never, never try to arrange a man’s life so as to shield him from temptation. We had to learn these things the hard way.

The Family Afterward: We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into assets. We of Alcoholics Anonymous keep few skeletons in the closet. For us, material well-being always follows spiritual progress. Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knows no bounds. We have found nothing incompatible between a powerful spiritual experience and a life of sane and happy usefulness. We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We are miracles of mental health.

To Employers: We have imposed on the best of employers. If sponsees relapse, and we’re sure they do not want to stop drinking, we are not doing them favors by keeping them. Either we are dealing with alcoholics who can and will get well or we are not. We may need to encourage our sponsees to play once in a while. Our sponsees appreciate knowing we are not trying to run their lives. If sponsees relapse, yet we’re sure they do want to stop drinking, they should be afforded a second chance. Our sponsees should not expect to receive a disproportionate amount of our time and attention.

A Vision for You: The less people tolerated us, the more we withdrew from society, from life itself. We were unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it. In the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous we find release from care, boredom and worry. We know what it means to give of ourselves that others may survive and rediscover life. The age of miracles is still with us; our own recovery proves that! We have found something brand new in life. Aside from fellowship and sociability, the prime object of our meetings is to provide a time and place where new people might bring their problems. The things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to us. We realize we know only a little; God will constantly disclose more to us.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text

Purpose and Use of This Guide

This guide has been prepared not as a replacement for or interference to our basic texts – the Big Book and 12 and 12 – but as a companion for the ideas and directions presented there. As we read in the preface to the fourth edition of the Big Book:

Because this book has become the basic text for our Society and has helped such large numbers of alcoholic men and women to recovery, there exists strong sentiment against any radical changes made to it.

We have created this guide because we agree with these sentiments. The Big Book has been instrumental in helping literally millions of alcoholics find sobriety and recovery. That is nothing less than miraculous. Unfortunately time has been unkind to some of the vocabulary and many of the references in our basic text. However, we love those words and references. Let's not let that love interfere with the potential sobriety of our newest members, though. We believe we need the Big Book to be as accessible as possible to the next suffering alcoholic who looks to us for help and to the next sponsor who practices our Twelfth Step, trying to carry this message to more alcoholics with even newer sobriety. Expanded accessibility and helpfulness, especially to new sponsors, are our only intentions in the publication of this guide.

This isn't the first time in AA's history that we needed to refresh our approach by adding more guidance. As we read in the introduction to the 12 and 12:

Alcoholics Anonymous first published Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in 1953. Bill W., who along with Dr. Bob S. founded Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, wrote the book to share 18 years of collective experience within the Fellowship on how A.A. members recover, and how our society functions.

In recent years some members and friends of A.A. have asked if it would be wise to update the language, idioms, and historical references in the book to present a more contemporary image for the Fellowship. However, because the book has helped so many alcoholics find recovery, there exists strong sentiment within the Fellowship against any change to it. In fact, the 2002 General Service Conference discussed this issue and it was unanimously recommended that: "The text in the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, written by Bill W., remain as is, recognizing the Fellowship's feelings that Bill's writing be retained as originally published."

We hope that the collective spiritual experience of the A.A. pioneers captured in these pages continues to help alcoholics and friends of A.A. understand the principles of our program.

It's been more than 60 years since the 12 and 12 was published. Confusion about how to present the Steps to sponsees has built over time, and alcoholics can do great damage when confused. We are hopeful this guide might help repair damage already created and avoid more damage in the future.

Signals of the confusion we're referring to include the following, all are focused on approaches to working the Steps, and some are adapted from the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship":

- Sponsors behaving as if they were their sponsees' Higher Powers rather than helping their sponsees to develop and expand on their own relationships with God.
- Sponsors muddling Step work by mixing in non-AA literature rather than respecting the Traditions related to the carrying of the AA message through AA resources.
- Sponsors trying out their "bright ideas" or things they've heard in meetings (or in therapy or on TV) on their sponsees rather than limiting their recommendations to activities they have tried themselves or that are outlined in our literature.
- Sponsors requiring their sponsees to work the program exactly as the sponsors have worked it, or as they wish they had worked it, rather than meeting sponsees where they are and helping them to grow at a pace that fits their needs.
- Sponsors deeming AA meetings as good or bad, and AA members as sick or well, limiting their sponsees' exposure to viewpoints and interpretations of the AA program to opinions and approaches the sponsor approves of.
- Sponsors suggesting that sponsees keep an open mind while keeping their own minds firmly closed.
- Sponsors encouraging sponsees to work with other alcoholics before they've worked the Steps themselves. It's nearly impossible to carry a message you haven't received yet. There are many other ways for members to be helpful before they've worked the Steps.
- Sponsors taking their sponsees' inventories without being asked rather than helping them to uncover their own patterns and problems and shortcomings. It's uncomfortable to watch sponsees be stuck, but it is not the sponsor's job to relieve sponsees' suffering.
- Sponsors imposing personal views on their sponsees. These views can be on any number of topics unrelated to the purpose and scope of AA.
- Sponsors pretending to know all the answers, pretending to be right all the time.
- Sponsors providing professional services such as those offered by counselors, the legal, medical or social work communities, with and without the necessary education and experience to do so. Helping sponsees to access professional help if assistance outside the scope of AA is needed is encouraged; providing professional help directly is not.
- Sponsors overstating the importance of their own personalities and positions rather than helping sponsees learn to rely on the AA program, not on the sponsor. A sponsor well-grounded in the AA program will not be offended if the sponsee goes to other AA members for additional guidance or even decides to change sponsors.

Let's pause here for a moment to state the obvious:

If you are sponsoring and satisfied with the results – you and your sponsees are staying sober, growing spiritually, and enjoying happy sober lives – this guide is not intended for you. You might find some interesting information here, or possibly some different ways of looking at the Steps and our two text books. If what you're doing as a sponsor is working for you and others, though, no one is asking or suggesting that you make changes.

If you are not yet sponsoring, or are not satisfied with the results you're getting while working with others, this guide may be for you. If you've worked through the Steps one or more times already, yet would like a new experience, you might ask your sponsor if he or she would be willing to work through this guide with you. That experience, then, might be preparation for your own use of this guide with sponsees.

On the other hand, this guide is not an adequate substitute for a sponsor. Sponsoring ourselves is always a bad idea and always ineffective.

If you've decided that this guide may be helpful to you, let's now take a broad view of what's included. There are three distinct paths through the Steps presented here:

You could use this guide to work through the Steps via the Big Book, using the original approach created by the founders in the 1930s and studying the earliest history of AA as you go.

You could work through the Steps via the 12 and 12, using a question-based format, with questions taken from our 1950s text and related questions to deepen the discussion with sponsees, expanding their understanding and acceptance of each Step.

You could combine both approaches.

The combined approach maximizes the benefits of both the Big Book and 12 and 12, including:

Big Book approach

Some benefits – The Big Book has provided the tools of sobriety for millions of alcoholics; most of us believe the first 164 pages were divinely inspired; there is much of AA's earliest history included in these pages; most of us believe there is no greater source of accuracy about the alcoholic mind and behavior as the descriptions provided by the pioneers of AA; the simplicity and firmness of the directions provided are miraculous.

12 and 12 approach

Some benefits – The 12 and 12 was created specifically to broaden and deepen the understanding of the Twelve Steps as first written in the Big Book, guiding not only newcomers, but mid-timers and old-timers, too; focusing on the question throughout the text allows sponsees to uncover their own truths, with the guidance of their sponsors.

There are challenges to both approaches, too. For instance:

Big Book approach

Some challenges – Much of the language is antiquated; some of the writing is sexist, ageist, and dismissive of atheists, agnostics and non-theistic believers; the information provided is no longer self-explanatory, a sponsor must be knowledgeable about the contents, history, and vocabulary in order for this approach to work well; depending on how it's presented, this approach can be relatively rigid; whether intentionally or unintentionally, some sponsors use this approach to dominate discussions and interactions with their sponsees.

12 and 12 approach

Some challenges – The questions can become repetitive, which is helpful to the process but may feel tedious at times; some of the language is antiquated here, too; because of the more practical, day-to-day nature of the directions provided, the sense of wonder and awe at God's presence and attention to us, as found in the Big Book, is often not found here.

We believe combining these two approaches leads to deeper understanding and acceptance of the Steps for both sponsor and sponsee, maximizes benefits, and minimizes challenges.

If you decide not to use the combined approach, you can easily bypass the parts of this guide that you don't need. Each chapter is broken up into the following sections:

- ✓ Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee for current Step
- ✓ Preparatory homework for your sponsee for current Step
- ✓ When you meet – suggestions for getting the discussion started, anticipated number and length of meetings to complete current Step
- ✓ When sharing your own experiences of this Step – suggestions for talking points on the current Step
- Reading from the Big Book – often more than one part (includes additional sponsee assignments when necessary, such as specific formats for the Fourth and Eighth Steps)
- Questions from the 12 and 12 text – sometimes more than one part
- ✓ Wrap-up questions for current Step
- ✓ Final questions for current Step
- ✓ Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee for next Step
- ✓ Preparatory homework for your sponsee for next Step

If you've decided to take the combined approach you would use all sections. For the Big Book approach, you would simply skip the 12 and 12 sections. For the 12 and 12 approach, you would simply skip the Big Book sections. See the "o" bullets on previous page for where these sections appear.

The biggest difference between these approaches, on a practical basis, is the time commitment. Most of us meet with our sponsees regularly, often weekly, for a specified amount of time, such as 60 or 90 minutes. (Longer meetings are almost always better for Fifth Steps and sometimes better for reviewing Eighth Step lists.) We make progress together one sponsorship meeting at a time. All three approaches presented here – Big Book, 12 and 12, and combined – support regular sponsorship meetings and anticipated numbers of meetings for each Step are listed on the first page of each chapter. On average:

The Big Book approach will take approximately 25 sponsorship meetings.

The 12 and 12 approach will take approximately 20 sponsorship meetings.

The combined approach will take approximately 40 sponsorship meetings.

Each estimate includes a thorough reading and study of the source material and a complete path through the work of AA's Twelve Steps to recovery from alcoholism. The combined approach offers a firmer foundation and a wider viewpoint and takes advantage of some economies of scale.

All three approaches may require more meetings than estimated depending on the length of the Fourth and Eighth Step work done by your sponsee and how you choose to handle some of the other Step discussions and processes. Sponsoring someone through the Steps is usually not a casual commitment; it is a life-saving mission. The miracle, and the reason AA works so well for so many of us, is that sometimes it's our sponsee's life we're saving, and sometimes it's our own.

To minimize preparation time for sponsors between sponsorship meetings, wherever possible we have included complete instructions for each suggested sponsorship meeting within each Step and chapter. That does mean there is a lot of repetition, which is meant to be helpful, but may become annoying. For best results, we suggest you skim through the relevant Step and chapter before every meeting with your sponsee, noting what you want to cover during the upcoming meeting, reminding yourself of previous discussions, and preparing for what's to come in the weeks immediately ahead.

You might want to bring this guide with you to sponsorship meetings, noting things that worked well or badly as you go. Or you and your sponsee might both have copies, using this guide as a workbook. Like everything else presented in this guide, how you approach use of the guide itself is completely up to you.

When reading the Big Book together, you may especially want to focus on the Big Book excerpts included here, and the headings we have provided. Please note that we have copied the excerpts verbatim and in italics, leaving spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization intact. Most of the headings in the Big Book sections are amended text elements; some are simply summaries of the text below them.

Wherever we have left something out of the text, we have designated skipped text with ellipses (...). It was never our intention to include the entire Big Book in this guide, nor do we think that would be helpful. Most skipped text is repetitive rather than expansive, blatantly sexist (by today's standards), or made up of details and personal stories that would likely be helpful to some sponsees but not to most. We have made no edits to the text in an effort to modernize it, or to change it in any other way. This does mean that most references to alcoholics are made toward men and use masculine pronouns, based on the primary alcoholic population in the 1930s.

We have, by design, re-directed the suggestions in the chapters "To Wives," "The Family Afterward," and "To Employers" to members as they work the Twelfth Step, especially members who are new sponsors. Like the other Big Book excerpts, we have made no changes to the text. We have simply left out the statements and questions which were specifically directed at wives, families, and employers. Less those details, we believe there is much immediately useful guidance for both sponsors and sponsees in these three chapters. You'll need to take a look at Step Twelve in this guide to see what we mean.

We have taken much more liberty with the excerpts from the 12 and 12, in which we have freely re-phrased questions to make them personally meaningful to individual sponsees, and in which we have re-phrased statements as questions for the same purpose. Despite these adaptations, we have listed the questions from the 12 and 12 in italics and with page numbers. It will be easy for you and your sponsee to see how we sourced the questions in the 12 and 12 section of this guide. The optional related questions, on the other hand, are less directly derived. Some are re-phrased from statements in the 12 and 12 chapter text, and some are more original free form.

If you're ready to sponsor, or to work the steps yourself, and you'll be using this guide as you do so, we are glad. As you prepare to begin working with others, or to try a more structured approach to sponsoring, beginning with the next page, we leave you with our founders' thoughts on sponsorship:

From "Bill's Story" (pg 15):

...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 drink, but I soon found that when all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic 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.

From "Doctor Bob's Nightmare" (pgs 180-181):

I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

- 1. Sense of duty.*
- 2. It is a pleasure.*
- 3. Because in so doing I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.*
- 4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.*

Before Getting Started on the Steps

We find it helpful to create clear expectations with sponsees before getting started on the Steps.

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read the pamphlet “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship.”

Read the preface and all four forwards in the Big Book.

Read the introduction and forward in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Aside from obtaining and reading the materials above, there is no homework for this first meeting.

When you meet:

It’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief. The main purpose of this time is for your sponsee to grow more and more comfortable in disclosing information to you. There may be opportunities to offer practical support, based on your own experiences, but that should not become the focus of your meetings.

The purpose of this first meeting is to discuss commitments and expectations early in the relationship, avoiding pitfalls that might arise later. An in-depth review of the pamphlet “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” will be helpful, focusing specifically on the bulleted job description for sponsors on pages 13 and 14. You will also discuss the other assigned reading, with some suggestions for focused topics included later in this chapter.

Generously sharing your experience, strength, and hope is what this is all about.

You will likely need only **one 60-90 minute sponsorship meeting** together to complete this preparation for working the Steps together.

“Questions and Answers on Sponsorship”:

Ask your sponsee for any questions or concerns about what he or she read in the pamphlet “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” and share your own experiences relevant to what you have read. Next ask your sponsee to read the bulleted job description from pages 13-15 of the pamphlet and review them in as much detail as you think is necessary, specifying your level of commitment and experience with each of the points on the list. As explained in the last paragraph of this section in the pamphlet, this is also a good time to encourage your sponsee to immediately begin establishing many AA relationships to ensure that his or her needs for sober support will be met.

What does a sponsor do and not do? (from pages 13-15)

- A sponsor does everything possible, within the limits of personal experience and knowledge, to help the sponsee get sober and stay sober through the AA program.
- Shows by present example and drinking history what AA has meant in the sponsor’s life.
- Encourages and helps the sponsee to attend a variety of AA meetings — to get a number of viewpoints and interpretations of the AA program.
- Suggests keeping an open mind about AA if the sponsee isn’t sure at first whether he or she is an alcoholic.
- Introduces the sponsee to other members.
- Sees that the sponsee is aware of AA literature, in particular the Big Book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and Grapevine, *As Bill Sees It*, *Living Sober*, and suitable pamphlets.
- Is available to the sponsee when the latter has special problems.
- Goes over the meaning of the Twelve Steps, and emphasizes their importance.
- Urges the sponsee to join in group activities as soon as possible.
- Impresses upon the sponsee the importance of all our Traditions.
- Tries to give the sponsee some picture of the scope of AA, beyond the group, and directs attention to AA literature about the history of the Fellowship, the Three Legacies, the service structure, and the worldwide availability of AA — wherever the sponsee may go.
- Explains the program to relatives of the alcoholic, if this appears to be useful, and tells them about Al-Anon Family Groups and Alateen.
- Quickly admits, “I don’t know” when that is the case, and helps the sponsee find a good source of information.

- The sponsor encourages the sponsee to work with other alcoholics as soon as possible, and sometimes begins by taking the sponsee along on Twelfth Step calls.
- Never takes the sponsee's inventory except when asked.
- Never tries to impose personal views on the sponsee. A good sponsor who is an atheist does not try to persuade a religious sponsee to abandon faith, nor does a religious sponsor argue theological matters with an agnostic sponsee.
- Does not pretend to know all the answers, and does not keep up a pretense of being right all the time.
- An AA sponsor does not offer professional services such as those provided by counselors, the legal, medical or social work communities, but may sometimes help the sponsee to access professional help if assistance outside the scope of AA is needed.

The sponsor underscores the fact that it is the AA recovery program — not the sponsor's personality or position — that is important. Thus, the sponsee learns to rely on the AA program, not on the sponsor. A sponsor well-grounded in the AA program will not be offended if the sponsee goes to other AA members for additional guidance or even decides to change sponsors.

Each sponsorship relationship includes commitments and expectations for the sponsee, too. This is a good time to establish your sponsee's commitment to his or her own recovery. You might use a similar bulleted list as the one shown above from the sponsorship pamphlet:

What does a sponsee do and not do?

- A sponsee does everything possible, with the help of the sponsor and group and Higher Power, to get sober and stay sober through the AA program.
- Shares, on an ongoing basis, what AA means in his or her life; this may take the form of a regular sharing of a gratitude list.
- Attends a variety of AA meetings — to get a number of viewpoints and interpretations of the AA program — with a minimum attendance commitment (most of us find it helpful to go to a meeting every day when we're new, sometimes more than one each day).
- Follows the HOW of the program — honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to listen.
- Establishes relationships with other members, avoiding overdependence on the sponsor.
- Completes all reading assignments from AA literature — in particular the *Big Book* and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* — and develops an awareness of other AA publications such as the *Grapevine*, *As Bill Sees It*, *Living Sober*, and suitable pamphlets.

- Is willing to turn to the sponsor when the sponsee has special problems rather than “suffering in silence” or trying to “figure it out” on one’s own.
- Is committed to working all of the Twelve Steps with the sponsor; a re-commitment to the rest of the Steps will be part of Step Three.
- Joins in group activities as soon as possible.
- Recognizes the importance of all our Traditions and attends business meetings to deepen his or her understanding of how our groups function.
- Is open to understanding the scope of AA, beyond the group, and gives attention to AA literature about the history of the Fellowship, the Three Legacies, the service structure, and the worldwide availability of AA — wherever the sponsee may go.
- Invites the sponsor to explain the program to relatives, if this appears to be useful, and to tell them about Al-Anon Family Groups and Alateen.
- Quickly accepts, “I don’t know” as a response from the sponsor, when that is the case, and accepts help from the sponsor in finding a good source of information.
- Accepts encouragement from the sponsor to work with other alcoholics as soon as possible, and sometimes begins by going along on Twelfth Step calls.
- Occasionally (or possibly regularly) asks the sponsor for help in recognizing what the sponsee is contributing to recurring difficulties and ongoing negative experiences.
- Does not waste time and energy arguing or debating personal views with the sponsor. It is in no way helpful for sponsees to argue theological matters with their sponsors.
- Avoids attitudes characterized by black-and-white, all-or-nothing, good-and-evil thinking. The main point here is to be flexible and open-minded. Healthy recovery is built on acceptance and gratitude for the gray areas of life.
- Does not expect an AA sponsor to offer professional services such as those provided by counselors, the legal, medical or social work communities, but may sometimes ask for help to access professional help if assistance outside the scope of AA is needed.

You may wish to ask individual sponsees for specific commitments based on both their drinking and sobriety histories. And you may have specific expectations based on your own needs and experiences. Discuss both the general and specific as openly and fully as possible at this point, including when, where, and how often you’ll meet to work the Steps together.

Reading from the Big Book:

Ask your sponsee to read the preface and all four forwards aloud from the Big Book (pages xi-xxiv) and then discuss it together, reviewing concerns and answering questions. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, establishing the value of working together for both the sponsor and sponsee:

Bill's realization (page xvi):

Prior to his journey to Akron, the broker has worked hard with many alcoholics on the theory that only an alcoholic could help an alcoholic, but he had succeeded only in keeping sober himself. The broker had gone to Akron on a business venture which had collapsed, leaving him greatly in fear that he might start drinking again. He suddenly realized that in order to save himself he must carry his message to another alcoholic. That alcoholic turned out to be the Akron physician.

Dr. Bob's willingness (pages xvi-xvii):

The physician had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma but had failed. But when the broker gave him Dr. Silkworth's description of alcoholism and its hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady with a willingness he had never before been able to muster. He sobered, never to drink again up to the moment of his death in 1950. This seemed to prove that one alcoholic could affect another as no nonalcoholic could. It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery.

Recovery begins... (page xxii):

In spite of the great increase in the size and span of the Fellowship, at its core it remains simple and personal. Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength, and hope.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

The questions from the text of the forward in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are listed below. The related questions are for use in personalizing the reading, expanding your sponsee's understanding of the Step, and deepening the discussion between sponsor and sponsee.

Why is it, they ask, that in A.A. no member can be set in personal authority over another, that nothing like a central government can anywhere be seen?

Related questions:

Are you comfortable in the meetings?

Do you trust the other alcoholics you're meeting there?

Do you trust the members who are leading the groups you're attending?

How can a set of traditional principles, having no legal force at all, hold the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in unity and effectiveness?

Related questions:

Do you have any questions about the Traditions or Concepts at this point?

Do you understand why we put so much emphasis on recovery, unity, and service?

Wrap-up questions:

In this guide, there are wrap-up questions culled from the last page or two of the Step just covered in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. In this case, you'll simply review what you've just discussed.

- 1) Do you have any remaining questions about how we'll approach working together?
- 2) Are you committed to working the Steps together, to completing the reading and writing assignments as we go, and to showing up when and where you say you will?
- 3) Are you committed to expanding your AA community and involvement?

Final questions for preparation to work the Steps:

Do you have any other questions before we get to work? Are you ready to get started on Step One?

Step One – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read the “The Doctor’s Opinion” and “Bill’s Story” (chapter 1) in the Big Book.

Read Step One in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step One – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step One in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to provide an answer – in writing – every time you see a question mark. (There are eight question marks in this chapter.) At this point, this direction may feel nebulous to your sponsee. Directions will grow clearer as your sponsee makes progress through the Steps.

Step One

“We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read the “The Doctor’s Opinion” and “Bill’s Story” (chapter 1) in the Big Book.

Read Step One in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step One in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to provide an answer – in writing – every time you see a question mark. (There are eight question marks in this chapter.) At this point, this direction may feel nebulous to your sponsee. Directions will grow clearer as your sponsee makes progress through the Steps.

When you meet:

It’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief. The main purpose of this time is for your sponsee to grow more and more comfortable in disclosing information to you. There may be opportunities to offer practical support, based on your own experiences, but that should not become the focus of your meetings.

You will likely need **three 60-90 minute sponsorship meetings** together – the first two to do the readings and discussions from the two chapters in the Big Book and the third to read and answer the questions from the 12 and 12 – to complete Step One.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share relevant details of our own drinking histories. We suggest that sponsees focus on the similarities rather than the differences, and we offer them the opportunity to identify with our own stories. We share about our early and ongoing experiences of being sponsored, the value of those relationships, and our own personal and ongoing growth. We share of the value in listening and sharing in meetings. We share about our use of the one day at a time approach to sobriety. We share about the simplicity of the 12-step path, and our confidence in the program to get and keep alcoholics sober. We share about how we use the First Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of the fellowship.

Reading from the Big Book – part 1:

Ask your sponsee to read “The Doctor’s Opinion” (pages xxv-xxxii) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts:

The allergy concept (page xxviii):

We believe ... 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. ... In nearly all cases, their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves if they are to re-create their lives.

The need for a psychic change (pages xxviii-xxix):

Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable, and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.

On the other hand—and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules.

The need for abstinence (page xxx):

All these, and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence.

Reading from the Big Book – part 2:

For best results, you'll again find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. You might also want to ask if your sponsee has had any experiences since the last time you met that helped him or her better understand AA's definition of powerlessness and unmanageability.

Next ask your sponsee to read "Bill's Story" (chapter 1) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts:

Dawning awareness (page 5):

Liquor ceased to be a luxury; it became a necessity. ... Nevertheless, I still thought I could control the situation, and there were periods of sobriety. ... Gradually things got worse. ... I woke up. This had to be stopped. I saw I could not take so much as one drink. I was through forever. ... This time I meant business. ... Shortly afterward I came home drunk. There had been no fight. Where had been my high resolve? I simply didn't know. It hadn't even come to mind. Someone had pushed a drink my way, and I had taken it. Was I crazy? I began to wonder, for such an appalling lack of perspective seemed near being just that.

A period of relapse (pages 6-7):

The remorse, horror and hopelessness of the next morning are unforgettable. The courage to do battle was not there. My brain raced uncontrollably and there was a terrible sense of impending calamity. ... Should I kill myself? No—not now. Then a mental fog settled down. Gin would fix that. So two bottles, and—oblivion.

The mind and body are marvelous mechanisms, for mine endured this agony two more years. ... Then came the night when the physical and mental torture was so hellish I feared I would burst through my window, sash and all. ... People feared for my sanity. So did I.

Surely this was the answer—self-knowledge (pages 7-8):

But it was not, for the frightful day came when I drank once more. ... This was the finish, the curtain, it seemed to me. ... It was a devastating blow to my pride. I, who had thought so well of myself and my abilities, of my capacity to surmount obstacles, was cornered at last. Now I was to plunge into the dark, joining that endless procession of sots who had gone on before.

No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master.

How dark it is before the dawn! (page 8):

In reality that was the end of my last debauch. I was soon to be catapulted into what I like to call the fourth dimension of existence. I was to know happiness, peace, and usefulness, in a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes.

But my friend sat before me... (pages 11-12):

...and he made the point-blank declaration that God had done for him what he could not do for himself. His human will had failed. Doctors had announced him incurable. Society was about to lock him up. Like myself, he had admitted complete defeat. Then he had, in effect, been raised from the dead, suddenly taken from the scrap heap to a level of life better than the best he had ever known!

Had this power originated in him? Obviously it had not. There had been no more power in him than there was in me at that minute; and this was none at all.

That floored me. It began to look as though religious people were right after all. Here was something at work in a human heart which had done the impossible. My ideas about miracles were drastically revised right then. Never mind the musty past; here sat a miracle directly across the kitchen table. He shouted great tidings.

I saw that my friend was much more than inwardly reorganized. He was on a different footing. His roots grasped a new soil.

A preview of Step Two (page 12):

It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!

Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want Him enough. At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

A peek into Steps Three and Four (page 13):

There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

You'll again find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. You might also want to ask if your sponsee has had any experiences since the last time you met that helped him or her better understand AA's definition of powerlessness and unmanageability.

Next ask your sponsee to read Step One in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step. Then, when you're both ready, move on to the questions below. For Step One, you would have asked your sponsee to write out the answers. Don't get bogged down in your sponsee's resistance, though. The writing is helpful; the discussion is imperative.

The questions from the text of Step One in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are listed below. The related questions are for use in personalizing the reading, expanding your sponsee's understanding of the Step, and deepening the discussion between sponsor and sponsee.

Whether the writing assignment was completed or not, begin at the first question and work through to the last, integrating the related questions and adding your own whenever that would facilitate your sponsee's understanding and acceptance of the Step. Ask for much more than limited "yes" or "no" responses. Read each question aloud to your sponsee, referencing the page number for context, add more information or interpretations when you think it's necessary, and offer your own answers to some of the questions, too. Generously sharing your experience, strength, and hope is what this is all about.

Page 21 – *Who cares to admit complete defeat?*

Related questions:

Are you willing to admit complete defeat? If no, why not?

Page 23 – *Since Step One requires an admission that our lives have become unmanageable how could people such as these (young people) take this Step?*

Related questions:

Is there anything special or unique about you or your life that will not allow you to take Step One?

Page 23 – *To the doubters we could say, “Perhaps you’re not an alcoholic after all. Why don’t you try some more controlled drinking, bearing in mind meanwhile what we have told you about alcoholism?”*

Related questions:

Do you still doubt that you are an alcoholic? If yes, why?

Do you need to try more controlled drinking? If yes, when?

Page 24 – *Why all this insistence that every AA must hit bottom first?*

Related questions:

Have you hit bottom? If no, how will you know when you have hit bottom?

Page 24 – *Who wishes to be rigorously honest and tolerant?*

Related questions:

Are you willing to be rigorously honest and tolerant? If no, why not?

Page 24 – *Who wants to confess his faults to another and make restitution for harm done?*

Related questions:

Are you willing to confess your faults to another? If no, why not?

Are you willing to make restitution for harm done? If no, why not?

Page 24 – *Who cares anything about a Higher Power, let alone meditation and prayer?*

Related questions:

Are you willing to care about a Higher Power? If no, why not?

Are you willing to care about meditation and prayer? If no, why not?

Page 24 – *Who wants to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry AA’s message to the next sufferer?*

Related questions:

Are you willing to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry AA’s message to the next sufferer? If no, why not?

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from the last paragraph of Step One in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee has completed this Step, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) Have you discovered the fatal nature of your situation?
- 2) Have you become as open-minded to conviction and as willing to listen as the dying can be?
- 3) Do you stand ready to do anything which will lift the merciless obsession from you?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no” go back to the beginning of this chapter and start again. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step One (for now):

Do you believe you’ve completed Step One? Are you ready to go on to Step Two?

Step Two – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read “There Is a Solution” (chapter 2) and “More about Alcoholism” (chapter 3) in the Big Book.

Read Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Two – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are six question marks in this chapter.) Beginning with this chapter, suggest that your sponsee re-word or re-phrase the questions to be more personal to him or her. (The questions from the text included in the following chapters in this guide have been adapted in this way.) These directions may still feel vague; clarity will come with experience and progress.

Step Two

“(We) Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read “There Is a Solution” (chapter 2) and “More about Alcoholism” (chapter 3) in the Big Book.

Read Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are six question marks in this chapter.) Beginning with this chapter, suggest that your sponsee re-word or re-phrase the questions to be more personal to him or her. (The questions from the text included in this and all following chapters in this guide have been adapted in this way.) These directions may still feel vague; clarity will come with experience and progress.

When you meet:

It’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief. The main purpose of this time is for your sponsee to grow more and more comfortable in disclosing information to you. There may be opportunities to offer practical support, based on your own experiences, but that should not become the focus of your meetings.

You will likely need **three 60-90 minute sponsorship meetings** together – the first two to do the readings and discussions from the two chapters in the Big Book and the third to read and answer the questions from the 12 and 12 – to complete Step Two.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share relevant details of our own early spiritual discoveries. We suggest that sponsees focus on the possibility of a Higher Power rather than the impossibility, and we offer them the opportunity to identify with our own stories. We share about our early and ongoing experiences of relating to a Higher Power, the value of that relationship, and our own spiritual growth. We share of what the restoration of sanity, especially related to alcohol, has meant in our lives. We share about how we use the Second Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of the spiritual path in AA.

Reading from the Big Book – part 1:

Ask your sponsee to read “There Is a Solution” (chapter 2) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, acknowledging that we are including in our discussion here another look at Step One in order to deepen and clarify our definitions of sanity and insanity as they apply to Step Two:

We become so very ill from drinking (page 20):

You may already have asked yourself why it is that all of us became so very ill from drinking. 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 an alcoholic 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.

We do absurd, incredible, tragic things while drinking (pages 21-22):

He may start off as a moderate drinker; he may or may not become a continuous hard drinker; but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink.

... He does absurd, incredible, tragic things while drinking. He is a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He is seldom mildly intoxicated. He is always more or less insanely drunk. His disposition while drinking resembles his normal nature but little. He may be one of the finest fellows in the world. Yet let him drink for a day, and he frequently becomes disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social. He has a positive genius for getting tight 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 liquor, but in that respect he 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, and then pulls the structure down on his head by a senseless series of sprees. He is the fellow who goes to bed so intoxicated he ought to sleep the clock around. Yet early next morning he searches madly for the bottle he misplaced the night before.

Why do we take the first drink? (page 22):

If hundreds of experiences have shown him that one drink means another debacle with all its attendant suffering and humiliation, why is it he takes that one drink? Why can't he stay on the water wagon? What has become of the common sense and will power that he still sometimes displays with respect to other matters?

We cannot answer the alcoholic riddle (pages 22-23):

Opinions vary considerably as to why the alcoholic reacts differently from normal people. We are not sure why, once a certain point is reached, little can be done for him. We cannot answer the riddle.

We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink, as he may do for months or years, he reacts much like other men. We are equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this.

These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.

We were a baffled lot (page 23):

Once in a while he may tell the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is usually that he has no more idea why he took that first drink than you have. Some drinkers have excuses with which they are satisfied part of the time. But in their hearts they really do not know why they do it. Once this malady has a real hold, they are a baffled lot. There is the obsession that somehow, someday, they will beat the game. But they often suspect they are down for the count.

We have lost the power of choice in drink (pages 23-24):

The tragic truth is that if the man be a real alcoholic ... he has lost control. At a certain point in the drinking of every alcoholic, he passes into a state where the most powerful desire to stop drinking is of absolutely no avail. This tragic situation has already arrived in practically every case long before it is suspected.

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 defense against the first drink.

The almost certain consequences that follow taking even a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind to deter us. If these thoughts occur, they are hazy and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove.

The alcoholic may say to himself in the most casual way, "It won't burn me this time, so here's how!" Or perhaps he doesn't think at all.

We believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution (page 25):

... So many want to stop but cannot.

There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence which we had not even dreamed.

The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do for ourselves.

If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help. This we did because we honestly wanted to, and were willing to make the effort.

We have been given "a design for living" that really works (page 28):

...What seemed at first a flimsy reed, has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of God. A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, "a design for living" that really works.

...We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try.

Be sure to read and discuss Appendix II – "Spiritual Experience" – on pages 567-568 in the Big Book as part of this section and step.

Reading from the Big Book – part 2:

For best results, you'll again find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. You might also want to ask if your sponsee has had any experiences since the last time you met that helped him or her better understand AA's definition of sanity or our focus on belief in a Higher Power.

Next ask your sponsee to read "More about Alcoholism" (chapter 3) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, acknowledging that we are here taking another look at Step One in order to deepen and clarify our definitions of sanity and insanity as they apply to Step Two:

We get worse, never better (pages 30-31):

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.

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.

We are like men who lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of our kind like other men. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.

We tried long and hard to drink like other people (pages 31):

Despite all we can say, many who are real alcoholics are not going to believe they are in that class. By every form of self-deception and experimentation, they will try to prove themselves exceptions to the rule, therefore nonalcoholic. If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right-about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him. Heaven knows, we have tried hard enough and long enough to drink like other people!

Here are some of the methods we have tried: Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums—we could increase the list ad infinitum.

We can quickly diagnose ourselves (pages 31-32):

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.

Though there is no way of proving it, we believe that early in our drinking careers most of us could have stopped drinking. But the difficulty is that few alcoholics have enough desire to stop while there is yet time.

We will never be immune to alcohol (page 33):

Most of us have believed that if we remain sober for a long stretch, we could thereafter drink normally. ... But ... We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: “Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.” Commencing to drink after a period of sobriety, we are in a short time as bad as ever. If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol.

We could no longer quit on our will power (page 34):

As we look back, we feel we had gone on drinking 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 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.

We had a desire to stop drinking (page 34):

For those who are unable to drink 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 nonspiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power to choose whether he will drink 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 alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or wish.

We came up with insanely trivial excuses for taking the first drink (page 37):

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 drink. 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.

In some circumstances we have gone out deliberately to get drunk, 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 drinking deliberately, instead of casually, there was little serious or effective thought during the period of premeditation of what the terrific consequences might be.

We have no effective mental defense against the first drink (page 43):

The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

For best results, you'll again find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. You might also want to ask if your sponsee has had any experiences since the last time you met that helped him or her better understand AA's definition of sanity or our focus on belief in a Higher Power.

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Two in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step. Then, when you're both ready, move on to the questions below. For Step Two, you would have only asked your sponsee to write out the answers if the two of you agreed it would be helpful. Either way, don't get bogged down in your sponsee's resistance. The writing is helpful; the discussion is imperative.

The questions from the text of Step Two in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are listed below. The related questions are for use in personalizing the reading, expanding your sponsee's understanding of the Step, and deepening the discussion between sponsor and sponsee.

Whether the writing assignment was completed or not, begin at the first question and work through to the last, integrating the related questions and adding your own whenever that would facilitate your sponsee's understanding and acceptance of the Step. Ask for much more than limited "yes" or "no" responses. Read each question aloud to your sponsee, referencing the page number for context, add more information or interpretations when you think it's necessary, and offer your own answers to some of the questions, too. Generously sharing your experience, strength, and hope is what this is all about.

Page 25 – ...We have become convinced that we are alcoholics and that our lives are unmanageable. ... We're also convinced that none but a Higher Power can remove our obsession. ... Where do we go from here?

Related questions:

Have you been reduced to a state of absolute helplessness?

Are you now convinced that only a Higher Power can remove your obsession?

Page 25 – How we do cherish the thought that man, risen so majestically from a single cell in the primordial ooze, is the spearhead of evolution and therefore the only god that his universe knows! Must we renounce all this to save ourselves?

Related questions:

Are you finding a conflict between your spiritual or scientific beliefs and AA?

Do you fear that AA is asking you to renounce your spiritual or scientific beliefs?

Page 26 – *It's no doubt a fact that AA is full of people who once believed as you do (whatever you now believe). The question is: Just how, in these circumstances, does a fellow "take it easy"?*

Related questions:

Are you hearing your story – of alcoholism and of spirituality – in AA meetings?

Are you having trouble "taking it easy" at this point in your sobriety?

Page 28 – *Consider next the plight of those who once had faith, but have lost it. There will be those who have drifted into indifference, those filled with self-sufficiency who have cut themselves off, those who have become prejudiced against religion, and those who are downright defiant because God has failed to fulfill their demands. Can AA experience tell all these they may still find a faith that works?*

Related questions:

Do you relate to any of the descriptions above?

Are you open to finding a faith that works?

Are you willing to make the necessary effort?

Page 29 – *Why should we be bothered with theological abstractions and religious duties, or with the state of our souls here or hereafter?*

Related questions:

Are you still feeling resistance to a sober life built on faith in a Higher Power?

Are you overly-concerned with, and fearful about, your future?

Pages 31-32 – *Now let's take the guy full of faith, but still reeking of alcohol. ... Valiantly he tries to fight alcohol, imploring God's help, but the help doesn't come. What, then, can be the matter?*

Related questions:

Do you relate to this experience – unanswered prayers for relief from alcoholism?

Are you open to the idea that God simply can't hear prayers that are in conflict with our actions (in this case praying for sobriety while continuing to drink)?

Are you willing to match your actions with your prayers?

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from the last paragraph of Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee has completed this Step, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) Do you believe that all of us – even agnostics, atheists, and former believers – can stand together on Step Two?
- 2) Do you believe that true humility and an open mind are the path to faith?
- 3) Are you finding assurance in AA meetings that God will restore you to sanity if you rightly relate yourself to Him?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no” go back to the beginning of this chapter and start again. If you receive “no” answers to these questions on the second attempt, go back to the beginning of the previous chapter. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step Two (for now):

Do you believe you’ve completed Step Two? Are you ready to go on to Step Three?

Step Three – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read “We Agnostics” (chapter 4) and pages 58-63 from “How It Works” (chapter 5) in the Big Book.

NOTE: Some members may disagree with our placement of “We Agnostics” in relation to Step Three. Upon review of the excerpts in the next chapter, though, we think you’ll agree that this chapter in the Big Book is only partially concerned with coming to believe. Most of its content is focused on how we might understand God, from wherever our spiritual starting point may be.

Read Step Three in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Three – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Three in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are ten question marks in this chapter.) As in Step Two, questions should be re-worded or re-phrased as necessary to be more personal to you and your sponsee. By this time, these directions will begin feeling clearer to both of you.

Step Three

“(We) Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read “We Agnostics” (chapter 4) and pages 58-63 from “How It Works” (chapter 5) in the Big Book.

NOTE: Some members may disagree with our placement of “We Agnostics” in relation to Step Three. Upon review of the excerpts in this chapter, though, we think you’ll agree that this chapter in the Big Book is only partially concerned with coming to believe. Most of its content is focused on how we might understand God, from wherever our spiritual starting point may be.

Read Step Three in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Three in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are ten question marks in this chapter.) As in Step Two, questions should be re-worded or re-phrased as necessary to be more personal to you and your sponsee. By this time, these directions will begin feeling clearer to both of you.

When you meet:

It’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief. The main purpose of this time is for your sponsee to grow more and more comfortable in disclosing information to you. There may be opportunities to offer practical support, based on your own experiences, but that should not become the focus of your meetings.

You will likely need **three 60-90 minute sponsorship meetings** together – the first two to do the readings and discussions from the two chapters in the Big Book and the third to read and answer the questions from the 12 and 12 – to complete Step Three.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share relevant details of our own surrender to the care and protection of our Higher Power, at first through a commitment to sobriety and to working all the remaining Steps. We suggest that sponsees think of Step One as a clear understanding of the problem, Step Two as a clear understanding of the solution being offered by AA, and Step Three as the decision between those two. We share about our own spiritual growth, including our own evolving understanding of God. We share of what faith in the care and protection of our Higher Power has meant in our lives. We share about how we use the Third Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of our relationships with God in AA.

Reading from the Big Book – part 1:

Ask your sponsee to read “We Agnostics” (chapter 4) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope.

You may wish to focus on these excerpts, acknowledging that we are including in our discussion here another look at Step Two in order to deepen and clarify our relationship with and understanding of God, especially as they apply to Step Three:

We must find a spiritual basis of life—or else (page 44):

We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic. If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.

To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as he is means disaster, especially if he is an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to an alcoholic death are not always easy alternatives to face.

But it isn't so difficult. About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type. At first some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true alcoholics. But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life—or else. Perhaps it is going to be that way with you. But cheer up, something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics. Our experience shows that you need not be disconcerted.

We discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God (page 46):

... We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.

Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps. We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men.

When we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God (page 47):

Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere. So we used our own conception, however limited it was.

We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. “Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?” As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built. (Please be sure to read Appendix II on “Spiritual Experience.”)

Faced with alcoholic destruction, we became open minded on spiritual matters (pages 47-48):

Besides a seeming inability to accept much on faith, we often found ourselves handicapped by obstinacy, sensitiveness, and unreasoning prejudice. Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things made us bristle with antagonism. This sort of thinking has to be abandoned. Though some of us resisted, we found no great difficulty in casting aside such feelings. Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect alcohol was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process; we hope no one else will be prejudiced for as long as some of us were.

We beg you to lay aside prejudice, even against organized religion (pages 49-50):

We have learned that whatever the human frailties of various faiths may be, those faiths have given purpose and direction to millions. People of faith have a logical idea of what life is all about. Actually, we used to have no reasonable conception whatever. We used to amuse ourselves by cynically dissecting spiritual beliefs and practices when we might have observed that many spiritually-minded persons of all races, colors, and creeds were demonstrating a degree of stability, happiness and usefulness which we should have sought ourselves.

Instead, we looked at the human defects of these people, and sometimes used their shortcomings as a basis of wholesale condemnation. We talked of intolerance, while we were intolerant ourselves. We missed the reality and the beauty of the forest because we were diverted by the ugliness of some of its trees. We never gave the spiritual side of life a fair hearing.

Let's look at AA's record (pages 50-51):

In our personal stories you will find a wide variation in the way each teller approaches and conceives of the Power which is greater than himself. Whether we agree with a particular approach or conception seems to make little difference. Experience has taught us that these are matters about which, for our purpose, we need not be worried. They are questions for each individual to settle for himself.

On one proposition, however, these men and women, are strikingly agreed. Every one of them has gained access to, and believes in, a Power greater than himself. This Power has in each case accomplished the miraculous, the humanly impossible. As a celebrated American statesman put it, "Let's look at the record."

Here are thousands of men and women, worldly indeed. They flatly declare that since they have come to believe in a Power greater than themselves, to take a certain attitude toward that Power, and to do certain simple things, there has been a revolutionary change in their way of living and thinking. In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of the total failure of their human resources, they found that a new power, peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them. This happened soon after they wholeheartedly met a few simple requirements. Once confused and baffled by the seeming futility of existence, they show the underlying reasons why they were making heavy going of life. Leaving aside the drink question, they tell why living was so unsatisfactory. They show how the change came over them. When many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith.

We had to stop doubting the power of God (page 52):

... Is not our age characterized by the ease with which we discard old ideas for new, by the complete readiness with which we throw away the theory or gadget which not work for something new which does?

We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn't apply to our human problems this same readiness to change our point of view. We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn't make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people—was not a basic solution of these bedevilmments more important...? Of course it was.

When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did.

We couldn't duck the issue of faith (page 53):

When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?

Arrived at this point, we were squarely confronted with the question of faith. We couldn't duck the issue. Some of us had already walked far over the Bridge of Reason toward the desired shore of faith. The outlines and the promise of the New Land had brought luster to tired eyes and fresh courage to flagging spirits. Friendly hands had stretched out in welcome. We were grateful that Reason had brought us so far. But somehow we couldn't quite step ashore. Perhaps we had been leaning too heavily on Reason that last mile and we did not like to lose our support.

That was natural, but let us think a little more closely. Without knowing it, had we not been brought to where we stood by a certain kind of faith?

We had been living on faith and little else (page 54):

... Had we not variously worshipped people, sentiment, things, money, and ourselves? And then, with a better motive, had we not worshipfully beheld the sunset, the sea, or a flower? Who of us had not loved something or somebody? How much did these feelings, these loves, these worships, have to do with pure reason? Little or nothing, we saw at last. Were not these things the tissue out of which our lives were constructed? Did not these feelings, after all, determine the course of our existence? It was impossible to say we had no capacity for faith, or love, or worship. In one form or another we had been living by faith and little else.

We had been fooling ourselves (page 55):

... for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there. For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself.

We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.

We can only clear the ground a bit. If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway. With this attitude you cannot fail. The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you.

Reading from the Big Book – part 2:

For best results, you'll again find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. You might also want to ask if your sponsee has had any experiences since the last time you met that helped him or her better understand AA's wide-open approach and acceptance of each individual member's belief in and understanding of a Higher Power.

Next ask your sponsee to read the first part of "How It Works" (chapter 5, pages 58-63) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts:

We stood at the turning point (pages 59-60):

... If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any lengths 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 have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for most of 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.

We had to have God's help (page 62):

Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help.

We had to quit playing God (pages 62-63):

First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are his children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.

We could at last abandon ourselves to God, as we understood Him (page 63):

Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him: "God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!" We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.

You, or your sponsee, or both, may feel resistance to the religious implications of the language used in this prayer. Don't let that be an obstacle for either of you. Change the words if necessary; just be careful not to lose the meaning behind them. The best help you can offer your sponsee at this point is to discuss this prayer, and its meaning, one phrase at a time, describing exactly how you interpret this prayer and when you use it. Then suggest that your sponsee say this prayer – or something like it – aloud at least once a day, more often if it's helpful, as he or she works through the next several Steps.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

For best results, you'll again find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. You might also want to ask if your sponsee has had any experiences since the last time you met that helped him or her better understand AA's wide-open approach and acceptance of each individual member's belief in and understanding of a Higher Power.

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Three in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step. Then, when you're both ready, move on to the questions below. For Step Three, you would have only asked your sponsee to write out the answers if the two of you agreed it would be helpful. Either way, don't get bogged down in your sponsee's resistance. The writing is helpful; the discussion is imperative.

Whether the writing assignment was completed or not, begin at the first question and work through to the last, integrating the related questions and adding your own whenever that would facilitate your sponsee's understanding and acceptance of the Step. Ask for much more than limited "yes" or "no" responses. Read each question aloud to your sponsee, referencing the page number for context, add more information or interpretations when you think it's necessary, and offer your own answers to some of the questions, too. Generously sharing your experience, strength, and hope is what this is all about.

Page 34 – *Just how and by what specific means shall we be able to let God (into our lives)?*

Related questions:

Have you had the experience of having faith, but keeping God out of your life?

Are you willing to have a new experience of God?

Page 35 – *Exactly how can we turn our wills and lives over to the care of whatever God we think there is?*

Related questions:

Does this Step look impossible to you?

Are you willing to try again and again to turn your will and life over to God?

Page 35 – *Isn't it true that in all matters touching upon alcohol, each of us (every man and woman who has joined AA and intends to stick) has decided to turn his or her life over to the care, protection, and guidance of Alcoholics Anonymous?*

Related questions:

Are you still committed to sticking with AA and to working the rest of the Steps?

Have you begun to trust the care, protection, and guidance of AA?

Are you willing to feel the same trust toward God?

Page 35 – *Any willing newcomer feels sure AA is the only safe harbor for the foundering vessel he has become. Now if this is not turning one's will and life over to a newfound Providence, then what is it?*

Related questions:

Do you feel safe in AA meetings and with AA members?

Does that feeling of safety reach into the rest of your life?

Do you feel as if you were guided to AA by your Higher Power?

Page 36 – *Instinct cries out: "...Nothing is going to turn me into a nonentity. If I keep turning my life and my will over to the care of Something or Somebody else, what will become of me?"*

Related questions:

Are you concerned with losing your independence?

Are you willing to view dependence on God as a means to greater independence?

Page 37 – *This brave philosophy, wherein each man plays God, sounds good in the speaking, but it still has to meet the acid test: how well does it actually work?*

Related questions:

Have you been satisfied with the results of self-sufficiency and self-will?

Are you willing to accept guidance that will likely create better results for you?

Page 38 – *Would we (alcoholics) be able to take discipline, stand up under stress, and endure monotony and misery?*

Related questions:

Are discipline, stress, monotony, and misery problems for you at work or at home?

Are these problems grave enough that you might drink over them?

Are you willing to try turning them over to God for help and guidance?

Page 38 – *Would the kind of dependence we have learned in AA carry us through?*

Related questions:

Have you seen examples of God's care and protection in the lives of our fellow AA members?

Are there any reasons you think God would be any less caring or protective toward you?

Page 39 – *So how, exactly, can the willing person continue to turn his will and his life over to the Higher Power?*

Related questions:

Have you become convinced that you have more problems than alcohol, and that you cannot solve them on your own power?

Do these problems make you unhappy and threaten your sobriety?

Are you willing to try turning them over to God for help and guidance?

Page 39 – *And how shall we ever straighten out those awful jams that cost us the affection of our families and separated us from them?*

Related questions:

Are remorse and guilt, bitterness, and financial insecurity problems for you?

What other bridges have you burned during your active alcoholism?

Are you willing to trust God to help and guide you as you overcome all of these and many other problems, too?

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from pages 39-41 of Step Three in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. This is a rare instance where detailed correct answers are provided in the text.

- 1) What are the much-desired results that continuous action on the remaining Steps as a way of life will bring us? **Answer:** Permanent sobriety and a contented, useful life. (pgs 39-40)
- 2) When do we begin to use our will rightly? **Answer:** When we try to make our will conform with God's will. (pg 40)
- 3) How do we begin the practice of Step 3? **Answer:** In all times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in the stillness simply say the Serenity Prayer. (pgs 40-41)

It's unlikely that your sponsee will come up with these answers immediately; your gentle guidance in pointing the answers out in the 12 and 12 text will be helpful. If your sponsee cannot or will not agree with the answers above go back to the beginning of this chapter and start again. If the answers are still unacceptable on the second attempt, go back to the beginning of the previous chapter, and so on. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step Three (for now):

Do you believe you've completed Step Three? Are you ready to go on to Step Four?

Step Four – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read pages 63-71 from "How It Works" (chapter 5) in the Big Book.

NOTE: Re-reading page 63 is intentional, reminding both you and your sponsee that you are not doing this Step work in isolation. The Higher Power will be guiding both of you through this and the remaining Steps if you are both practicing Step Three.

Read Step Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Four – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answers – but not yet writing those answers down – every time you see a question mark. (There are thirty-one question marks in this chapter.) You may ask your sponsee to write answers to the questions during the third meeting on Step Four, or you may just ask the questions as part of your sponsee's Fifth Step. You'll have an opportunity to decide that as you work on Step Four with your sponsee.

Step Four

“(We) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read pages 63-71 from “How It Works” (chapter 5) in the Big Book.

NOTE: Re-reading page 63 is intentional, reminding both you and your sponsee that you are not doing this Step work in isolation. The Higher Power will be guiding both of you through this and the remaining Steps if you are both practicing Step Three.

Read Step Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answers – but not yet writing those answers down – every time you see a question mark. (There are thirty-one question marks in this chapter.) You may ask your sponsee to write answers to the questions during the third meeting on Step Four, or you may just ask the questions as part of your sponsee’s Fifth Step. You’ll have an opportunity to decide that as you work on Step Four with your sponsee.

When you meet:

As you’re aware by this point, it’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief.

You will likely need **three 60-90 minute sponsorship meetings** together – the first two to do the readings and discussions from the Big Book and the third to read and answer the preparatory questions from the 12 and 12 – to complete the part of Step Four that you do together. Of course, the real work of Step Four is for your sponsee to do the writing during the weeks between your meetings.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share relevant discoveries from our own personal inventories using the Fourth Step. We suggest sponsees think of Step Four simply as preparation for the long discussion to come in Step Five. We share about our early and ongoing experiences of resistance to following directions, and the relief that comes from letting go of resistance and taking suggested action. We share that we consider Step Four a move toward awareness, similar to but much deeper than Step One. We share about how we use the Fourth Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of the inventory process in AA.

Reading from the Big Book – part 1:

Ask your sponsee to read the second part of “How It Works” (chapter 5, pages 63-71) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. For this meeting, you will want to focus on the resentments inventory and the importance of finding freedom from anger. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, which include almost the entirety of what your sponsee has just read about resentments:

We launched out on a course of vigorous action (pages 63-64):

...the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions. Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory.

We asked ourselves why we were angry (pages 64-66):

Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were “burned up.”

On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?

NOTE: Sample formats for a four-part, five-column inventory are interspersed on the following pages. You are encouraged to make copies for your sponsee.

We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished we considered it carefully. The first thing apparent was that this world and its people were often quite wrong. To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed sore. Sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got. As in war, the victor only seemed to win. Our moments of triumph were short-lived.

We had to be free of anger (page 66):

It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while. But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returned and we drank again. And with us, to drink is to die.

If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of normal men, but for alcoholics these things are poison.

We turned back to the list, for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than alcohol.

We avoid retaliation and argument (pages 66-67):

This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."

We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.

We resolutely looked for our own mistakes (page 67):

Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.

Here is a sample **resentments inventory** format. You are encouraged to make copies for your sponsee.

I'm resentful at: (Include all people, institutions, and principles with whom you are angry)	The cause: (What happened?)	Affects my: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Financial security ▪ Ambitions ▪ Personal relations ▪ Sex relations ▪ Pride 	Was I _____? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selfish ▪ Dishonest ▪ Self-seeking ▪ Fearful ▪ Inconsiderate 	What wrongs, character defects, shortcomings, instincts gone astray, and harmful patterns are revealed in this situation?

Reading from the Big Book – part 2:

For best results, you'll again find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. There are often other problems – sex, sugar, shopping, etc. – that may come to the forefront, especially but not only, while your sponsee is working Steps Four through Nine. This brief check in time will allow you to share your experience, strength, and hope related to other symptoms of our alcoholic disease. You will also want to ask if your sponsee has made progress on his or her resentments inventory, and if he or she has any questions so far.

Next ask your sponsee to read the last part of “How It Works” (chapter 5, bottom of page 67 through the end of the chapter) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. For this meeting, you will want to focus on the fears and sex inventories, plus the early list of miscellaneous harms, and the importance of finding freedom from fear and shame. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, which include almost the entirety of what your sponsee has just read aloud:

We reviewed our fears thoroughly (pages 67-68):

This short word (“fear”) somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn’t deserve. But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling? Sometimes we think fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble.

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn’t go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn’t fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.

We commence to outgrow fear (page 68):

Perhaps there is a better way—we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.

We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.

Here is a sample **fears inventory** format. You are encouraged to make copies for your sponsee.

I'm fearful of: (Include all people, institutions, and principles about which you feel fear)	The cause: (Why do I have this fear? Is this an example of failed self-reliance?)	Affects my: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Financial security ▪ Ambitions ▪ Personal relations ▪ Sex relations ▪ Pride 	Was I _____? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selfish ▪ Dishonest ▪ Self-seeking ▪ Inconsiderate 	What wrongs, character defects, shortcomings, instincts gone astray, and harmful patterns are revealed in this situation?

We all have sex problems (pages 68-69):

Now about sex. Many of us needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes—absurd extremes, perhaps. ... We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?

We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

Our sex powers are God-given and therefore good (page 70):

In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to the test—was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.

Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.

God alone can judge our sex situation (pages 69-70):

Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice.

Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so. But this is only a half-truth. It depends on us and on our motives. If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience.

We earnestly pray for the right ideal (page 70):

To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.

Here is a sample **sex inventory** format. You are encouraged to make copies for your sponsee.

Who have I hurt with my sex conduct? (Include all people you may have harmed in this way)	What happened?	Affects my: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Financial security ▪ Ambitions ▪ Personal relations ▪ Sex relations ▪ Pride 	Was I _____? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selfish ▪ Dishonest ▪ Self-seeking ▪ Fearful ▪ Inconsiderate 	What wrongs, character defects, shortcomings, instincts gone astray, and harmful patterns are revealed in this situation?

We are willing to straighten out the past if we can (pages 70-71):

If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

... We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him. If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself.

Here is a sample **miscellaneous harms inventory** format. You are encouraged to make copies for your sponsee.

Who else have I hurt with my conduct? (Include all other people you may have harmed in the course of your life thus far)	What happened?	Affects my: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Financial security ▪ Ambitions ▪ Personal relations ▪ Sex relations ▪ Pride 	Was I _____? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selfish ▪ Dishonest ▪ Self-seeking ▪ Fearful ▪ Inconsiderate 	What wrongs, character defects, shortcomings, instincts gone astray, and harmful patterns are revealed in this situation?

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

For best results, you'll again find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. There are often other problems – sex, sugar, shopping, etc. – that may come to the forefront, especially but not only, while your sponsee is working Steps Four through Nine. This brief checkin time will allow you to share your experience, strength, and hope related to other symptoms of our alcoholic disease. You will also want to ask if your sponsee has completed the resentments inventory, gotten started on his or her remaining inventories – fears, sex, and miscellaneous harms – and if he or she has any new questions so far.

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Four in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step. Then, when you're both ready, move on to the questions below. For Step Four, you will only review the preparatory questions in detail. You should talk *about* the Fourth Step questions with your sponsee this week, but neither of you needs to answer them yet.

Read each preparatory question aloud to your sponsee, add more information or interpretations when you think it's necessary, and offer your own answers to the questions, too. Generously sharing your experience, strength, and hope is what this is all about.

Page 45 – *If we were pretty nice people all along, except for our drinking, what need is there for a moral inventory now that we are sober?*

Related questions:

Have you had these thoughts, that sobriety should be enough without taking personal inventory?

If yes, are you willing to ignore those thoughts and take inventory anyway?

Page 50 – *Now willing to commence the search for your own defects, you may ask, “Just how do I go about this? How do I take inventory of myself?”*

Related questions:

Do you have any unanswered questions about your resentments, fears, sex, and miscellaneous harms inventories?

The last paragraph that we just read in Step Four in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* suggested writing out the questions posed there – related to our instincts for sex, security, and society – and our answers to them. Would you be willing and able to complete this last writing assignment, along with finishing up your inventories from the Big Book, in the time between now and when we start your Fifth Step?

At this point you need only talk about the Fourth Step questions with your sponsee, ensuring that he or she knows where to find them in the 12 and 12. Here's how the questions break down:

Questions about sex – 11 questions on pages 50 and 51

Questions about financial security – 11 questions on page 51

Questions about emotional security – 4 questions on page 52

More questions about financial security – 3 questions on page 52

Your sponsee, especially if working the Steps for the first time, may not be up to writing out the answers to these questions. Use your best judgment. It may be enough to let your sponsee know that you'll be asking every one of these questions as part of the Fifth Step, just as you asked all of the 12 and 12 questions for Steps One through Three, usually over the course of two meetings. Writing the answers to the questions may be an activity best left for your sponsee's next trip through the Steps.

Additionally, there are several statements about twisted relationships with family, friends, and society at large on page 53 that many of us find it helpful to re-phrase as questions. You'll probably want to ask these questions just before wrapping up the Fifth Step, but you don't need to ask your sponsee to write out these answers unless you think it would be helpful.

Do I insist upon dominating the people I know, or depend upon them far too much?

Do I lean too heavily on people, making incessant demands?

Do I habitually try to manipulate others to my own willful desires?

Do I try to struggle to the top of the heap, or to hide underneath it?

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from page 54 of Step Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee is ready to complete this Step, the answers to all three questions will be "Yes."

- 1) Are you willing for thoroughness to be your watchword as you complete your inventory?
- 2) Are you willing for your inventory to be an aid to clear thinking and honest appraisal?
- 3) Are you completely ready to move forward?

If any of your sponsee's answers to these questions are "no," ask how you can help them move forward. Some sponsees are terrified as they approach the Fifth Step. Remind them of the work completed in Steps One through Three and that they are under the care and protection of a Higher Power.

Final questions for Step Four (for now):

Are you committed to completing your Fourth Step inventory before our next meeting? Are you completely ready to go on to Step Five?

Now it's time to schedule your sponsee's Fifth Step. The main thing to be aware of is that the Fifth Step will often take a significant amount of time to complete depending on the depth of the inventory work your sponsee has written, the level of interaction in your discussions together, the amount of time you both have available to meet, and the sense of urgency you both feel to protect your sponsee's sobriety. There are many approaches, including these examples:

Many sponsors schedule a full day (six to eight hours) together, and then schedule additional days, one day at a time, until the sponsee's Fifth Step is completed.

Some, but not many, sponsors stay with the same 60-90 minute sponsorship meetings, allowing the Fifth Step to take as long as it takes. Because of the urgent nature of the Fifth Step, this may be dangerous for the sponsee.

Some sponsors break the Fifth Step down into the same three components as described above – resentments inventory; fears, sex, and miscellaneous harms inventories; questions from the 12 and 12 (usually in two sessions) – allowing specified lengths of time for each (usually three or four hours per meeting) and then helping the sponsee to stay focused and on topic.

You will also want to plan for a Fifth Step wrap-up meeting in which you'll follow-up on the directions given in the Big Book and ask the questions from Step Five in the 12 and 12.

Step Five – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read pages 72-75 from chapter six, "Into Action," in the Big Book.

Read Step Five in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Five – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Complete work on the four-part inventory from the Big Book – resentments, fears, sex, and miscellaneous harms.

Re-read Step Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to provide an answer – in writing – every time you see a question mark. (There are twenty-eight Fourth Step questions in this chapter, plus one statement on page 52 phrased as "I can ask myself...".) For best results, give your sponsee one week to complete this last writing assignment. If your sponsee isn't ready to complete his or her inventory, there will never be enough time. If your sponsee is ready, a week is plenty of time.

Step Five

“(We) Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read pages 72-75 from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Five in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Complete work on the four-part inventory from the Big Book – resentments, fears, sex, and miscellaneous harms.

Re-read Step Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to provide an answer – in writing – every time you see a question mark. (There are twenty-eight Fourth Step questions in this chapter, plus one statement on page 52 phrased as “I can ask myself...”) For best results, give your sponsee one week to complete this last writing assignment. If your sponsee isn’t ready to complete his or her inventory, there will never be enough time. If your sponsee is ready, a week is plenty of time.

When you meet (to get started on Step Five):

As you’re aware by this point, it’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief.

You will likely need **at least five 3-4 hour sponsorship meetings** together – the first two for your sponsee to share his or her four-part inventory from the Big Book (resentments inventory; fears, sex, and miscellaneous harms inventories), the third and fourth for your sponsee to answer the Step Four questions from the 12 and 12, and the fifth to answer the Step Five questions from the 12 and 12 – to complete Step Five.

The length and number of meetings necessary will depend on the depth of the inventory work your sponsee has written, the level of interaction in your discussions together, the amount of time you both have available to meet, and the sense of urgency you both feel to protect your sponsee’s sobriety.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share relevant details that have been uncovered during our own Fifth Steps. We share about our experiences with the Fifth Step promises (pg 75). We share about how we use the Fifth Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of freely sharing our pasts in AA, both in meetings and with our sponsees. But mostly we listen; the focus of these Fifth Step meetings should be on our sponsee.

Four-part inventory from the Big Book – part 1:

Next ask your sponsee to read the first part of “Into Action” (chapter 6, pages 72-75) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. At the beginning of this meeting, you will be laying the groundwork for all of the Fifth Step meetings to follow. To get started, you may wish to focus on these excerpts, which include almost the entirety of what your sponsee has just read.

We usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient (page 72):

We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path. We have admitted certain defects; we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is: we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects.

This is perhaps difficult—especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further.

If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking (pages 72-73):

We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story.

We are under constant fear and tension—that makes for more drinking (page 73):

More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He is very much the actor. To the outer world he presents his stage character. This is the one he likes his fellows to see. He wants to enjoy a certain reputation, but knows in his heart he doesn't deserve it.

The inconsistency is made worse by the things he does on his sprees. Coming to his senses, he is revolted at certain episodes he vaguely remembers. These memories are a nightmare. He trembles to think someone might have observed him. As fast as he can, he pushes these memories far inside himself. He hopes they will never see the light of day. He is under constant fear and tension—that makes for more drinking.

We must be entirely honest with somebody (pages 73-75):

...if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step.

... We search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend. ... We have no right to save our skin at another person's expense. Such parts of our story we tell to someone who will understand, yet be unaffected. The rule is we must be hard on ourself, but always considerate of others.

... We are very anxious that we talk to the right person. It is important that he be able to keep a confidence; that he fully understand and approve what we are driving at; that he will not try to change our plan.

When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time (page 75):

We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.

Many of us believe the real work of the Fifth Step is in making the decision to share our inventory with our sponsor, especially after we have written our personal inventories and know what we have to share. So, at this point, it is important to discuss your sponsee's selection with him or her. Part of that discussion is asking if anyone else was considered for the honor of this confidence. Another part of the discussion is to ask for any unresolved reservations. This need only take a few minutes, but it's important that your sponsee has actively (versus passively) chosen to take this step with you.

Next ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud (every time you meet on this Step):

We pocket our pride and go to it (page 75):

... illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone in perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

When finished reading this the first time, share your experiences with this Step and with these promises. Each time you meet to hear your sponsee’s inventory, have him or her read the above and ask for ongoing updates regarding the manifestation of these Fifth Step promises in his or her life. Few sponsees begin to feel the feelings described immediately. For most, the shift happens during the course of their Fifth Step – however long that may take to complete. Help them to recognize the shift in their attitude and feelings.

Then, when you’re both ready, move on to your sponsee’s **resentments inventory:**

<p>I’m resentful at: (Include all people, institutions, and principles with whom you are angry)</p>	<p>The cause: (What happened?)</p>	<p>Affects my:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Financial security ▪ Ambitions ▪ Personal relations ▪ Sex relations ▪ Pride 	<p>Was I _____?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selfish ▪ Dishonest ▪ Self-seeking ▪ Fearful ▪ Inconsiderate 	<p>What wrongs, character defects, shortcomings, instincts gone astray, and harmful patterns are revealed in this situation?</p>
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Your primary role here is to listen carefully to your sponsee’s responses, asking for more information and offering additional questions when you think it would be helpful. Generously sharing your non-judgmental presence and attention is what your role in this particular Step is all about. Sharing your experience, strength, and hope is secondary, yet never hesitate to offer it if you think it will help your sponsee.

You may find it helpful to take notes as you listen, specifically jotting down recurring patterns and behaviors as you hear them. Let your sponsee know ahead of time that the notes are his or hers. You will want to review your notes with and give them to your sponsee at the end of each meeting. When reviewing your notes together, you should help your sponsee uncover two or three primary “character defects” which your sponsee can focus on as he or she makes progress through the rest of the Steps.

Four-part inventory from the Big Book – parts 2-4:

For best results, you'll find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. There are often other problems – sex, sugar, shopping, etc. – that may come to the forefront, especially but not only, while your sponsee is working Steps Four through Nine. This brief checkin time will allow you to share your experience, strength, and hope related to other symptoms of our alcoholic disease.

Next ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, "Into Action," in the Big Book aloud (every time you meet on this Step):

We pocket our pride and go to it (page 75):

... illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone in perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

Each time you meet to hear your sponsee's inventory, have him or her read the above and ask for ongoing updates regarding the manifestation of these Fifth Step promises in his or her life. Few sponsees begin to feel the feelings described immediately. For most, the shift happens during the course of their Fifth Step – however long that may take to complete. Help them to recognize the shift in their attitude and feelings.

Then, when you're both ready, move on to your sponsee's **fears inventory**:

I'm fearful of:	The cause:	Affects my:	Was I _____?	What wrongs, character defects, shortcomings, instincts gone astray, and harmful patterns are revealed in this situation?
(Include all people, institutions, and principles about which you feel fear)	(Why do I have this fear? Is this an example of failed self-reliance?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Self-esteem▪ Financial security▪ Ambitions▪ Personal relations▪ Sex relations▪ Pride	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Selfish▪ Dishonest▪ Self-seeking▪ Inconsiderate	

As with the resentments inventory, your primary role here is to listen carefully to your sponsee's responses, asking for more information and offering additional questions when you think it would be helpful. Generously sharing your non-judgmental presence and attention is what your role in this particular Step is all about. Sharing your experience, strength, and hope is secondary, yet never hesitate to offer it if you think it will help your sponsee.

Again, you may find it helpful to take notes as you listen, specifically jotting down recurring patterns and behaviors as you hear them. Let your sponsee know ahead of time that the notes are his or hers. You will want to review your notes with and give them to your sponsee at the end of each meeting. When reviewing your notes together, you should help your sponsee uncover two or three primary “character defects” which your sponsee can focus on as he or she makes progress through the rest of the Steps.

Next, move on to your sponsee’s **sex inventory**:

<p>Who have I hurt with my sex conduct?</p> <p>(Include all people you may have harmed in this way)</p>	<p>What happened?</p>	<p>Affects my:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Financial security ▪ Ambitions ▪ Personal relations ▪ Sex relations ▪ Pride 	<p>Was I _____?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selfish ▪ Dishonest ▪ Self-seeking ▪ Fearful ▪ Inconsiderate 	<p>What wrongs, character defects, shortcomings, instincts gone astray, and harmful patterns are revealed in this situation?</p>
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It’s a good idea to pause for a moment before going on. If this second Fifth Step meeting has gone long already, or if either or both of you are feeling exhausted by the work you’ve just done, stopping for the day may be a good idea. You can start the next meeting with the miscellaneous harms inventory and then go on to the questions from the 12 and 12.

For purposes of this guide, we’re assuming that you’ll go on to the miscellaneous harms inventory now, but use your best judgment. Stopping now and starting again next time you meet may be best for you and your sponsee.

Next, move on to your sponsee’s **miscellaneous harms inventory**:

<p>Who else have I hurt with my conduct?</p> <p>(Include all other people you may have harmed in the course of your life thus far)</p>	<p>What happened?</p>	<p>Affects my:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Financial security ▪ Ambitions ▪ Personal relations ▪ Sex relations ▪ Pride 	<p>Was I _____?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selfish ▪ Dishonest ▪ Self-seeking ▪ Fearful ▪ Inconsiderate 	<p>What wrongs, character defects, shortcomings, instincts gone astray, and harmful patterns are revealed in this situation?</p>
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Questions from the 12 and 12 text – Fourth Step – part 1:

For best results, you'll find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. There are often other problems – sex, sugar, shopping, etc. – that may come to the forefront, especially but not only, while your sponsee is working Steps Four through Nine. This brief check in time will allow you to share your experience, strength, and hope related to other symptoms of our alcoholic disease.

Next ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud (every time you meet on this Step):

We pocket our pride and go to it (page 75):

... illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone in perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

Each time you meet to hear your sponsee's inventory, have him or her read the above and ask for ongoing updates regarding the manifestation of these Fifth Step promises in his or her life. Few sponsees begin to feel the feelings described immediately. For most, the shift happens during the course of their Fifth Step – however long that may take to complete. Help them to recognize the shift in their attitude and feelings.

Then, when you're both ready, move on to the inventory questions from the text of Step Four in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* which are listed below, broken down into several focused sections. Like the previous chapters, there are related questions for use in personalizing the reading, expanding your sponsee's understanding of the Step, and deepening the discussion between sponsor and sponsee. For this Step, they are gathered nearer the end of this chapter.

Whether the writing assignment was completed or not, begin at the first question and work through to the last, adding your own questions whenever that would facilitate your sponsee's understanding and acceptance of the Step. Ask for much more than limited “yes” or “no” responses. Read each question aloud to your sponsee, referencing the page number for context, add more information or interpretations when you think it's necessary, and offer your own answers to some of the questions, too.

Questions about sex:

Page 50 – *When, and how, and in just what instances did my selfish pursuit of the sex relation damage other people and me?*

Page 50 – *What people were hurt, and how badly?*

Page 50 – *Did I spoil my marriage and injure my family?*

Page 50 – *Did I jeopardize my standing in the community?*

Page 50 – *Just how did I react to these situations at the same time?*

Page 50 – *Did I burn with a guilt that nothing could extinguish?*

Page 50 – *Or did I insist that I was the pursued and not the pursuer, and thus absolve myself?*

Pages 50-51 – *How have I reacted to frustration in sexual matters?*

Page 51 – *When denied, did I become vengeful or depressed?*

Page 51 – *Did I take it out on other people?*

Page 51 – *If there was rejection or coldness at home, did I use this as a reason for promiscuity?*

Questions about financial security:

Page 51 – *In addition to my drinking problem, what character defects contributed to my financial instability?*

Page 51 – *Did fear and inferiority about my fitness for my job destroy my confidence and fill me with conflict?*

Page 51 – *Did I try to cover up those feelings of inadequacy by bluffing, cheating, lying, or evading responsibility?*

Page 51 – *Or by griping that others failed to recognize my truly exceptional abilities?*

Page 51 – *Did I overvalue myself and play the big shot?*

Page 51 – *Did I have such unprincipled ambition that I double-crossed and undercut my associates?*

Page 51 – *Was I extravagant?*

Page 51 – *Did I recklessly borrow money, caring little whether it was repaid or not?*

Page 51 – *Was I a pinchpenny, refusing to support my family properly?*

Page 51 – *Did I cut corners financially?*

Page 51 – *What about the “quick money” deals, the stock market, and the races?*

Questions from the 12 and 12 text – Fourth Step – part 2:

For best results, you'll find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. There are often other problems – sex, sugar, shopping, etc. – that may come to the forefront, especially but not only, while your sponsee is working Steps Four through Nine. This brief check in time will allow you to share your experience, strength, and hope related to other symptoms of our alcoholic disease.

Next ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud (every time you meet on this Step):

We pocket our pride and go to it (page 75):

... illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone in perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

Each time you meet to hear your sponsee's inventory, have him or her read the above and ask for ongoing updates regarding the manifestation of these Fifth Step promises in his or her life. Few sponsees begin to feel the feelings described immediately. For most, the shift happens during the course of their Fifth Step – however long that may take to complete. Help them to recognize the shift in their attitude and feelings.

Then, when you're both ready, move on to the inventory questions from the text of Step Four in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* which are listed below, broken down into several focused sections. Like the previous chapters, there are related questions for use in personalizing the reading, expanding your sponsee's understanding of the Step, and deepening the discussion between sponsor and sponsee. For this Step, they are gathered nearer the end of this chapter.

Whether the writing assignment was completed or not, begin at the first question and work through to the last, adding your own questions whenever that would facilitate your sponsee's understanding and acceptance of the Step. Ask for much more than limited “yes” or “no” responses. Read each question aloud to your sponsee, referencing the page number for context, add more information or interpretations when you think it's necessary, and offer your own answers to some of the questions, too.

Questions about emotional security:

Page 52 – *Looking at both past and present, what sex situations have caused me anxiety, bitterness, frustration, or depression?*

Page 52 – *Appraising each situation fairly, can I see where I have been at fault?*

Page 52 – *Did these perplexities beset me because of selfishness or unreasonable demands?*

Page 52 – *Or, if my disturbance was seemingly caused by others, why do I lack the ability to accept conditions I cannot change?*

More questions about financial security:

Page 52 – *To what extent have my own mistakes fed my growing anxieties?*

Page 52 – *And if the actions of others are part of the cause, what can I do about that?*

Page 52 – *If I am unable to change the present state of affairs, am I willing to take the measures necessary to shape my life to conditions as they are?*

Questions about twisted relationships with family, friends, and society at large (re-phrased from statements in the text):

Page 53 – *Do I insist upon dominating the people I know, or depend upon them far too much?*

Page 53 – *Do I lean too heavily on people, making incessant demands?*

Page 53 – *Do I habitually try to manipulate others to my own willful desires?*

Page 53 – *Do I try to struggle to the top of the heap, or to hide underneath it?*

Questions to ensure completeness of inventory (relates back to Big Book):

Do you have any resentments that you have not yet shared?

Do you have any fears that you have not yet shared?

Do you have any sexual secrets that you have not yet shared?

Have you caused any miscellaneous harms to others that you have not yet shared?

This is the end of your sponsee's sharing of his or her inventory. You still have one more separate meeting to wrap-up Step Five. It's time now, though, to congratulate your sponsee on having made this progress and to give some very clear directions to be accomplished before your next meeting.

Next ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, "Into Action," in the Big Book aloud:

We shall walk free at last (page 75):

Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking the Big Book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

Let your sponsee know that this action is necessary to complete Step Five and is imperative before moving on. Ask your sponsee to follow this hour alone – ideally on the same day – by attending an AA meeting and sharing his or her experience of having taken the Fifth Step. Let your sponsee know that this sharing will be his or her first real contribution to carrying the message that we are working the Steps and that anyone can do the same, regardless of the amount of time they've been sober or any other potential excuses for avoiding or delaying this spiritual work we do together.

Now remind your sponsee that you still have one more separate meeting to wrap-up Step Five. (See next page for preparation suggestions.)

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee (before you meet to wrap-up Step Five):

Read pages 72-75 from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Five in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee (before you meet to wrap-up Step Five):

Re-read Step Five in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing only if your sponsee enjoys writing as part of their process for change – every time you see a question mark. (There are six question marks in this chapter.) As in previous chapters, many of the questions have been slightly re-worded or re-phrased to be more personal to you and your sponsee. By this time, these directions will be absolutely clear to both of you.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text – Fifth Step:

For best results, you'll again find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. You might also want to ask if your sponsee has had any memories or awarenesses since the last time you met that need to be disclosed as part of Step Five.

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Five in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step. Then, when you're both ready, move on to the questions below. For Step Five, you would have only asked your sponsee to write out the answers if the two of you agreed it would be helpful.

Begin at the first question and work through to the last, integrating the related questions and adding your own whenever that would facilitate your sponsee's understanding and acceptance of the Step. Ask for much more than limited "yes" or "no" responses. Read each question aloud to your sponsee, referencing the page number for context, add more information or interpretations when you think it's necessary, and offer your own answers to some of the questions, too. Generously sharing your experience, strength, and hope is what this is all about.

Although the questions in the text suppose that the reader has not yet taken Step Five, they are usually much more helpful in reviewing Step Five in hindsight, and that's how they should be perceived below.

Page 57 – What have you received from Step Five?

Related questions:

Do you feel rid of the terrible sense of isolation and the torture of loneliness?

Have you begun to feel true kinship with others and with God?

Do you now inwardly know that you can receive forgiveness and give it, too?

Page 59 – Are you sure that you aren't still self-deceived?

Related questions:

Have you begun to have clear recognition of what and who you really are?

Do you have a sincere desire to become what you could be?

Page 59 – *Are you certain that you have made a true catalog of your defects and have really admitted them, even to yourself?*

Related questions:

Are you still bothered by fear, self-pity, and hurt feelings?

Have you allowed guilt and remorse to dramatize and exaggerate your shortcomings?

Have you allowed anger and hurt pride to hide some of your defects while you blame others for them?

Page 59 – *Why can't "God as we understand Him" tell us where we are astray?*

Related questions:

Before taking the Fifth Step, had you set foot on the road to straight thinking, solid honesty, and genuine humility?

Having taken the Fifth Step, are you on that road now?

Was it by discussing yourself, holding back nothing, and being willing to take advice and to accept direction that got you headed in this new direction?

Page 59 – *Why don't we make our admissions to God directly?*

Related questions:

Before taking the Fifth Step, did the idea of being alone with God seem far less embarrassing than facing up to another person?

Having taken the Fifth Step, are you far less embarrassed around other people?

Page 59 – *Why do we need to bring anyone else into this?*

Related questions:

Before taking the Fifth Step, were the responses to your prayers for help and guidance frequently characterized by rationalization and wishful thinking?

Having taken the Fifth Step, is the guidance you receive – especially guidance you receive through others – much clearer now?

It's again time to congratulate your sponsee on having made this progress and to follow-up on the directions from your previous meeting.

For the last time on this round of the Steps, ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, "Into Action," in the Big Book aloud:

We pocket our pride and go to it (page 75):

... illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone in perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

Once more, ask for an update regarding the manifestation of these promises in his or her life. It would be very surprising to find that most, if not all, of these promises had not come to pass for your sponsee. If that is the case, ask your sponsee if there is anything he or she has not shared with you, yet needs to.

If these promises have not yet come true, it may also be that your sponsee did not follow the directions you provided at the end of your previous meeting. Next ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, "Into Action," in the Big Book aloud:

We shall walk free at last (page 75):

Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking the Big Book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

Remind your sponsee that this action is necessary to complete Step Five and is imperative before moving on. Ask your sponsee to describe his or her experience during this hour alone and of sharing his or her experience of having taken the Fifth Step. Once again, share your experience of the first time you took the Fifth Step and experiences you've had in repeating this Step. (This is the perfect time to remind your sponsee that most of us take the Steps over and over again during our sober lives, rather than taking them just once.)

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from the last paragraph of Step Five in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee has completed this Step, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) Have you had the feeling – through Step Five – of being at one with God and man?
- 2) Do you now have a resting place – within yourself – where you can find peace?
- 3) Are you now ready to take the rest of the Steps toward a full and meaningful sobriety?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no,” ask how you can help them move forward. Only if your sponsee is not ready to go on, again ask if there is anything he or she has not shared with you, yet needs to. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step Five (for now):

Do you believe you’ve completed Step Five? Are you ready to go on to Step Six?

Step Six – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read first paragraph on page 76 from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Six in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Six – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Six in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing only if your sponsee enjoys writing as part of their process for change – every time you see a question mark. (There are eleven question marks in this chapter.)

Step Six

“(We) Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read first paragraph on page 76 from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Six in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Six in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing only if your sponsee enjoys writing as part of their process for change – every time you see a question mark. (There are eleven question marks in this chapter.)

When you meet:

As you’re aware by this point, it’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief.

You will likely need **one 60-90 minute sponsorship meeting** together to get your sponsee started on Step Six, however you will likely return to Step Six many times as your sponsee takes the remaining Steps.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share about the physical part of letting go, of unclenching our fists and unfolding our arms. We share about applying this physical act of letting go when thinking of our character defects (and our resentments and regrets) in terms of both our past and present. We share about the definition of letting go as giving something to God – often with words as simple as, “I give this to you, God.” – and shifting our focus and energy toward something else. We share of the many other things on which we can focus our attention, more positive things, things for which we can feel gratitude. We share the similarities between Step Three and Step Six. Just as we hadn’t fully taken Step Three until we’d started Step Four, we’ll know we’ve taken Step Six when we begin Step Seven (and mean it). We share about how we use the Sixth Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of readiness for defect removal in AA.

Reading from the Big Book:

Ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud:

We shall walk free at last (page 75):

Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking the Big Book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

Ask your sponsee one last time if he or she has left anything undisclosed or undone related to the first five Steps. Ask if he or she has begun to experience the sense that permanent sobriety and a contented, useful life (the much-desired results of taking the Steps as agreed during Step Three) are within reach.

Next ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud:

We ask God to help us be willing (page 76):

If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all—every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

Ask your sponsee to share any concerns or objections that arise and help your sponsee to resolve those concerns and objections. Share more of your experience of the first time you took the Sixth Step and experiences you’ve had in repeating this Step. (This is another perfect time to remind your sponsee that most of us take the Steps over and over again during our sober lives, rather than taking them just once.)

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Six in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step.

The questions from the text of Step Two in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are listed below. By this point, you know exactly what to do with these and the related questions.

Page 64 – *Having been granted a perfect release from alcoholism, why then shouldn't we be able to achieve by the same means a perfect release from every other difficulty or defect?*

Related questions:

Do you believe that you had to “become entirely ready” to have your mania for alcohol removed from your life before God could remove it?

Do you believe the same is true of your character defects and other problems?

Page 65 – *The key words “entirely ready” underline the fact that we want to aim at the very best we know or can learn. How many of us have this degree of willingness?*

Related questions:

Knowing perfection is impossible, can you be content with patient improvement?

Are there any character defects which you are unwilling to give up now or ever?

Page 66 – *We who have escaped these extremes – being so proud that one's scorned as a braggart, so greedy that one's labeled a thief, angry enough to murder, lustful enough to rape, gluttonous enough to ruin one's health, agonized by the chronic pain of envy, or paralyzed by sloth – are apt to congratulate ourselves. Yet can we?*

Related questions:

Do you have any of these defects at these rock-bottom levels?

Have you overcome any of these shortcomings either in or before recovery?

Page 66 – *After all, hasn't it been self-interest, pure and simple, that has enabled most of us to escape?*

Related questions:

What are the payoffs for you in letting go of your character defects?

What are the payoffs in keeping them?

Page 66 – *Not much spiritual effort is involved in avoiding excesses which will bring us punishment anyway. But when we face up to the less violent aspects of these very same defects, then where do we stand?*

Related questions:

Do you still enjoy any of your character defects?

Are you willing to see if you might enjoy their absence even more?

Page 66 – *Who, for example, doesn't like to feel just a little superior to the next fellow, or even quite a lot superior?*

Related questions:

Do you like to feel superior to others?

What does that do for you? What problems does it cause?

Page 66 – *Isn't it true that we like to let greed masquerade as ambition?*

Related questions:

Do you ever feel that you're greedy or overly ambitious?

What does that do for you? What problems does it cause?

Pages 66-67 – *To think of liking lust seems impossible. But how many men and women speak love with their lips, and believe what they say, so that they can hide lust in a dark corner of their minds?*

Related questions:

Do you spend much time on romantic or sexual fantasies?

What does that do for you? What problems does it cause?

Page 67 – *We live in a world riddled with envy. From this defect we must surely get a warped yet definite satisfaction. Else why would we consume such great amounts of time wishing for what we have not, rather than working for it, or angrily looking for attributes we shall never have, instead of adjusting to the fact and accepting it?*

Related questions:

Do you spend much time on fantasies of wealth and delusions of grandeur?

What does that do for you? What problems does it cause?

Are there elements of your reality that you simply refuse to accept?

Page 68 – *Many will at once ask, “How can we accept the entire implication of Step Six? Why that is perfection!”*

Related questions:

Knowing perfection is impossible, can you be satisfied with working toward perfect ideals?

Have you made progress on approaching the Steps, and life itself, with a more open mind?

Are you willing to walk toward perfection even if you never get there?

Page 68 – *We shall need to raise our eyes toward perfection, and be ready to walk in that direction. It will seldom matter how haltingly we walk. The only question will be “Are we ready?”*

Related questions:

Are you willing to walk toward perfection even if you never get there?

Once more, are there any character defects which you are unwilling to give up now or ever?

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from the last paragraph of Step Six in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee has made a good start on this Step, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) Are you willing to aim toward perfection, with your mind open to the grace of God?
- 2) Do you understand that “delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be fatal”?
- 3) Are you now ready to abandon your limited objectives and to move toward God’s will for you?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no” go back to the beginning of this chapter and start again. If you receive “no” answers to these questions on the second attempt, go back to the beginning of the previous chapter, and so on. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step Six (for now):

Do you believe you’ve made a good start on Step Six? Are you ready to go on to Step Seven?

Step Seven – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read second paragraph on page 76 from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Seven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Seven – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Seven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing only if your sponsee enjoys writing as part of their process for change – every time you see a question mark. (There is only one question mark in this chapter.)

Step Seven

“(We) Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read second paragraph on page 76 from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Seven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Re-read Step Seven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing only if your sponsee enjoys writing as part of their process for change – every time you see a question mark. (There is only one question mark in this chapter.)

When you meet:

As you’re aware by this point, it’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief. You might also want to ask if your sponsee has had any opportunities to practice Step Six since the last time you met.

You will likely need **one 60-90 minute sponsorship meeting** together to get your sponsee started on Step Seven, however you will likely return to Step Seven many times as your sponsee takes the remaining Steps.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share about the answer to our Seventh Step prayers coming not as a divine miracle of instantaneous removals of our character defects, but as a divine gift of many surprising and wonderful opportunities to practice something new in place of our old behaviors. We share about the fun of seeing changes in our own most deep-seated responses and reactions to life. We share of the value in laughing at and forgiving ourselves for being who we’ve been so that we can become who we might become. We share about our desires to be useful in the world and to have God direct our thinking and actions throughout each day. We share about the power of the Seventh Step prayer and the resulting opportunities for change that bring us so much more happiness than we can possibly imagine at this point on the Twelve-Step path. We share about how we use the Seventh Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of humbly relating to God in and through AA.

Reading from the Big Book:

Ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud:

We ask God to help us be willing (page 76):

If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all—every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

Ask your sponsee to share experiences of applying Step Six. Ask for specific examples of successes and failures in letting go of character defects and problematic patterns. Ask your sponsee if he or she is now ready to directly ask God for help in letting go. Next ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud:

We are willing that God should have all of us, good and bad (page 76):

When ready, we say something like this: “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.” We have then completed Step Seven.

Ask your sponsee to share any concerns or objections that arise and help your sponsee to resolve those concerns and objections. Share more of your experience of the first time you took the Seventh Step and experiences you’ve had in repeating this Step. (This is another perfect time to remind your sponsee that most of us take the Steps over and over again during our sober lives, rather than taking them just once.)

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Seven in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step.

The single question from the text of Step Seven in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is listed below. By this point, you know what to do with this and the related questions.

Page 73 – We will want to be rid of some of these defects, but in some instances this will appear to be an impossible job from which we recoil. And we cling with a passionate persistence to others which are just as disturbing to our equilibrium, because we still enjoy them too much. How can we possibly summon the resolution and the willingness to be rid of such overwhelming compulsions and desires?

Related questions:

With drinking out of the way, how do you respond to success and failure now?

Do you now see that character-building and spiritual values have to come first, and that material satisfactions are not the purpose of living?

Have you begun to make honesty, tolerance, and true love of man and God your daily basis of living?

Have you found the desire to seek and do God's will?

Have you reluctantly come to grips with those serious character flaws that made a problem drinker of you in the first place, flaws which must be dealt with to prevent a retreat into alcoholism once again?

Have you gained some measure of release from your more devastating handicaps?

Have you begun to enjoy moments in which you have something like real peace of mind?

Has humility now begun to lead to serenity for you?

Have you begun to fear pain less, and to desire humility more than ever?

Have you now placed God first, allowing yourself to ask for and accept God's help, not just in emergencies, but always?

Have you begun to live at peace with yourself and with your fellows?

Do you now feel assured that the grace of God can do for you what you cannot do for yourself?

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from page 76 of Step Seven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee has made a good start on this Step, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) Do you now clearly see that you have been making unreasonable demands upon yourself, upon others, and upon God?
- 2) Do you believe that the difference between a demand and a simple request is plain to anyone?
- 3) You have found enough humility to enable you to ... find freedom from alcohol. Have you also found hope that God can and will remove any other problem you could possibly have?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no” go back to the beginning of this chapter and start again. If you receive “no” answers to these questions on the second attempt, go back to the beginning of the previous chapter, and so on. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step Seven (for now):

Do you believe you’ve made a good start on Step Seven? Are you ready to go on to Step Eight?

Step Eight – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read third paragraph on page 76 from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Eight in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Eight – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Make sure that you have your Fourth Step inventory available; you will need it as you begin your Eighth Step list. Bring the inventory to sponsorship meetings on the Eighth Step.

Re-read Step Eight in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are seven question marks in this chapter.)

Step Eight

“(We) Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read third paragraph on page 76 from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Eight in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Make sure that you have your Fourth Step inventory available; you will need it as you begin your Eighth Step list. Bring the inventory to sponsorship meetings on the Eighth Step.

Re-read Step Eight in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are seven question marks in this chapter.)

When you meet:

As you’re aware by this point, it’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief.

You will likely need **two 60-90 minute sponsorship meeting** together – the first to do the reading and discussion from the Big Book and the second to read and answer the questions from the 12 and 12 – to complete the part of Step Eight that you do together. Of course, the real work of Step Eight is for your sponsee to do the writing during the weeks between your meetings.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share about the path to forgiveness, both of ourselves and of others, found in the Eighth Step. We share about setting aside our defenses, and resentments about harms done to us, to focus solely on the harms we have done to others. We share of the value in making the list, and getting a broader look at our patterns and behaviors, before beginning to make amends. We share about our experience in breaking free of isolation and re-joining the wider world as we stopped feeling the need to keep the harms we’d done secret. We share about how we use the Eighth Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of making our lists and sharing our progress in AA meetings.

Reading from the Big Book:

Ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud:

We are willing that God should have all of us, good and bad (page 76):

When ready, we say something like this: “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.” We have then completed Step Seven.

Ask your sponsee to share experiences of applying Steps Six and Seven. Ask for specific examples of successes and failures in allowing character defects and problematic patterns to change into more positive approaches to living sober. Ask your sponsee if he or she is now ready to begin cleaning up the past. Next ask your sponsee to read the following paragraph from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud:

We made our list when we took inventory (page 76):

Now we need more action, without which we find that “Faith without works is dead.” Let’s look at Steps Eight and Nine. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.

Ask your sponsee to share any concerns or objections that arise and help your sponsee to resolve those concerns and objections. Share more of your experience of the first time you took the Eighth Step and experiences you’ve had in repeating this Step. (This is another perfect time to remind your sponsee that most of us take the Steps over and over again during our sober lives, rather than taking them just once.)

Ask your sponsee to bring out his or her Fourth Step inventory. Use the first several entries to help your sponsee understand how to turn the inventory into a harms list. A sample format for a four-column harms list is on the next page. You are encouraged to make copies for your sponsee.

Ask your sponsee to complete transfer of details from his or her inventory – all four parts, resentments, fears, sex, and miscellaneous harms – to the harms list before the next time you meet.

Here is a sample **harms list** format. You are encouraged to make copies for your sponsee.

I harmed: (Include all people, groups, and institutions listed on your Fourth Step inventory to whom you have done harm)	What I did: (be specific)	What I think I should do to make amends: (base this on your understanding of what's suggested in our AA literature, and then be open to guidance)	What I will do to make amends after discussing this situation with my sponsor: (ask questions, share concerns, and be clear about the actions you're committing to take)

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

As you're aware by this point, it's helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief.

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Eight in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step.

The questions from the text of Step Eight in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, along with optional related questions, are listed below:

Page 78 – ...it is usually a fact that our behavior when drinking has aggravated the defects of others. We've repeatedly strained the patience of our best friends to a snapping point, and have brought out the very worst in those who didn't think much of us to begin with. In many instances we are really dealing with fellow sufferers, people whose woes we've increased. If we are now about to ask forgiveness for ourselves, why shouldn't we start out by forgiving them, one and all?

Related questions:

Are you interested in developing the best possible relations with every human being you know?

Are you ready for the fascinating adventure of learning how to live in the greatest peace, partnership, and brotherhood with all men and women, of whatever description?

Page 79 – ...the prospect of actually visiting or even writing the people we had harmed now overwhelmed us, especially when we remembered in what poor favor we stood with most of them. There were cases, too, where we had damaged others who were still happily unaware of being hurt. Why, we cried, shouldn't bygones be bygones?

Related questions:

Are you willing to backtrack and to make an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage you have left in your wake?

Are you willing to redouble your efforts to see how many people you have hurt, and in what ways?

Related questions:

Is the prospect of visiting or writing the people you've harmed overwhelming you, especially when you consider how poorly they must think of you already?

Are you especially concerned about approaching people you have harmed who are still happily unaware of being hurt?

Page 79 – *Some of us ... clung to the claim that when drinking we never hurt anybody but ourselves. Our families didn't suffer ... our business associates didn't suffer ... our reputations hadn't suffered ... What real harm, therefore, had we done?*

Related questions:

Are you willing to see that this attitude is the end result of purposeful forgetting?

Are you clear on the difference between amends and apologies?

Are you ready to uncover instances in which the harms you've done to others have not been great, but the emotional harm you've done to yourself has been?

Do you not yet see that avoiding taking responsibility for harms you've done may have seriously discolored your personality and altered your life for the worse?

Page 80 – *We might next ask ourselves what we mean when we say that we "harmed" other people. What kinds of "harm" do people do one another, anyway?*

Related questions:

Have you had a bad temper, arousing anger in others?

Have you lied or cheated, depriving others not only of their worldly goods, but of their emotional security and peace of mind, too?

Have you acted in ways that have caused others to become contemptuous and vengeful?

Has your sex conduct been selfish, causing jealousy, misery, and a strong desire to retaliate?

Page 81 – *What happens when we try to dominate the whole family (or the workplace), either by a rule of iron or by a constant outpouring of minute directions for just how their lives should be lived from hour to hour?*

Related questions:

Have you been miserly, irresponsible, callous, or cold at home or at work?

Have you been irritable, critical, impatient, and humorless?

Have you lavished attention upon one member of your family or workplace, neglecting the others?

Page 81 – *What happens when we wallow in depression, self-pity oozing from every pore, and inflict that upon those about us?*

Related questions:

Have your behaviors as a practicing alcoholic made the lives of others difficult or even unbearable?

Having taken responsibility for your most obvious character defects and shortcomings in the previous steps, have you commenced to ransack memory for the people you have harmed through these behaviors and patterns?

Have you pretty easily made a list of the people nearby and most deeply harmed?

Are you now willing to walk back through your life, year by year, as far as memory will reach, constructing a long list of people who have, to some extent or other, been affected?

Are you ready to ponder and weigh each instance carefully, holding yourself to the course of admitting the things *you* have done wrong?

Ask your sponsee if he or she has completed transfer of details from his or her inventory – all four parts, resentments, fears, sex, and miscellaneous harms – to the harms list since the last time you met. If yes, congratulate your sponsee on moving forward. If no, ask what interfered with work on Step Eight.

Next help your sponsee to begin walking backward through his or her life, adding the names of people he or she has harmed, but who were not yet listed during Step Four. Another copy of the format for a four-column harms list, with only the description of the first column changed, is on the next page.

Ask your sponsee to begin the more open-ended harms lists before the next time you meet. The overlap of Steps Eight and Nine are intentional. The next set of reading assignments, and your related discussions, will suggest many types of harm that your sponsee may not have considered or listed yet.

Here is a sample **harms list** format. You are encouraged to make copies for your sponsee.

I harmed: (Include all people, groups, and institutions you remember harming as you look back through your life)	What I did: (be specific)	What I think I should do to make amends: (base this on your understanding of what's suggested in our AA literature, and then be open to guidance)	What I will do to make amends after discussing this situation with my sponsor: (ask questions, share concerns, and be clear about the actions you're committing to take)

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from page 82 of Step Eight in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee is ready to complete this Step, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) Can you forgive the wrongs done to you, real and imagined?
- 2) Can you avoid extreme judgments, both of yourself and of others involved?
- 3) Can you avoid exaggeration of your defects and of other people’s?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no,” ask how you can help them move forward. Some sponsees are terrified as they approach the Ninth Step. Remind them of the work completed in Steps One through Seven and that they are under the care, protection, and guidance of a Higher Power.

Final questions for Step Eight (for now):

Are you committed to completing your Eighth Step lists over the next couple weeks? Are you completely ready to go on to Step Nine?

Step Nine – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read from the middle of page 76 to the middle of page 84 in chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Nine in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Nine – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Continue working on your Eighth Step harms lists. Bring the lists to sponsorship meetings on the Ninth Step.

Re-read Step Nine in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are four question marks in this chapter.)

Step Nine

“(We) Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read from the middle of page 76 to the middle of page 84 in chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Nine in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Continue working on Eighth Step harms lists. Bring the lists to sponsorship meetings on the Ninth Step.

Re-read Step Nine in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are four question marks in this chapter.)

When you meet:

As you’re aware by this point, it’s helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief. You might also want to ask if your sponsee has made progress on his or her harms lists since the last time you met.

You will likely need **at least four 60-90 minute sponsorship meetings** together – the first to do the reading and discussion from the Big Book; the second to read and answer the questions from the 12 and 12 and to review your sponsee’s harm lists; and at least two meetings focused on reviewing your sponsee’s actions in making amends – to complete the part of Step Nine that you do together. Of course, the real work is for your sponsee to make amends during the weeks between your meetings.

The number of meetings necessary will depend on the depth of the amends preparation your sponsee has written, the pace that your sponsee takes in making amends, the availability of resources (often financial) to make amends with, and the willingness of those harmed to accept your sponsee’s amends.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share relevant details from our own Ninth Step amends. We share about our experiences with the Ninth Step promises (pgs 83-84). We share which of those promises are most meaningful to us and why. We share about the importance of having a thorough list of harms done so that we know when we are “halfway through.” We share about how we use the Ninth Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of making our amends and sharing our progress in AA meetings.

Reading from the Big Book:

Next ask your sponsee to read the middle part of “Into Action” (chapter 6, middle of page 76 to the middle of page 84) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, which include almost the entirety of what your sponsee has just read:

We made our list when we took inventory (page 76):

Now we need more action, without which we find that “Faith without works is dead.” Let’s look at Steps Eight and Nine. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.

Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service (pages 76-77):

Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of business acquaintances and friends we have hurt, we may feel diffident about going to some of them on a spiritual basis. Let us be reassured. To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach. We might prejudice them. At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us. It is seldom wise to approach an individual, who still smarts from our injustice to him, and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But our man is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. He is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.

We don’t use this as an excuse for shying away from the subject of God. When it will serve any good purpose, we are willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense. The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. It may be he has done us more harm than we have done him and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.

We stick to our own faults (pages 77-78):

Under no conditions do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply we tell him that we will never get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell him what he should do. His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.

In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens. Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own fault, so feuds of years' standing melt away in an hour. Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well. Occasionally, they will offer assistance. It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam.

We must lose our fear of creditors (page 78):

Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our drinking; they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our alcoholism on the theory it may cause financial harm. Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can let these people know we are sorry. Our drinking has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them.

We ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what (pages 78-79):

Perhaps we have committed a criminal offense which might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities. We may be short in our accounts and unable to make good. We have already admitted this in confidence to another person, but we are sure we would be imprisoned or lose our job if it were known. Maybe it's only a petty offense such as padding the expense account. Most of us have done that sort of thing. Maybe we are divorced, and have remarried but haven't kept up the alimony to number one. She is indignant about it, and has a warrant out for our arrest. That's a common form of trouble, too.

Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.

Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent (pages 79-80):

Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit. ... Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink.

Drinking has complicated sex relations in our homes (pages 80-82):

The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, alcoholics are fundamentally much worse than other people. But drinking does complicate sex relations in the home. ... Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. ... Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let by-gones be by-gones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind. Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion—jealousy. Good generalship may decide that the problem be attacked on the flank rather than risk face-to-face combat.

The spiritual life is not a theory—we have to live it (pages 82-83):

The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough. He is like the farmer who came up out of his cyclone cellar to find his home ruined. To his wife, he remarked, "Don't see anything the matter here, Ma. Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowin'?"

Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.

The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it. Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we think we ought not to urge them. We should not talk incessantly to them about spiritual matters. They will change in time. Our behavior will convince them more than our words. We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone.

As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone (page 83):

There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone.

We will be amazed before we are half way through (pages 83-84):

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

As you're wrapping up this meeting, ask your sponsee to complete work on his or her harms lists before your next meeting. You'll want to let your sponsee know that you'll be reviewing the lists together – in a discussion similar to the Fifth Step – and planning your sponsee's amends at your next meeting.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

As you're aware by this point, it's helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief.

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Nine in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step.

The questions from the text of Step Nine in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, along with optional related questions, are listed below:

Page 86 – Suppose, for instance, that we have drunk up a good chunk of our firm's money, whether by "borrowing" or on a heavily padded expense account. Suppose that this may continue to go undetected, if we say nothing. Do we instantly confess our irregularities to the firm, in the practical certainty that we will be fired and become unemployable?

Related questions:

Before considering the making of significant amends, like the one described, do you feel confident that your sobriety is firmly in place?

Do you have faith in God and AA to help you through any difficulties that may arise as you make amends?

Page 86 – Are we going to be so rigidly righteous about making amends that we don't care what happens to the family and home?

Related questions:

Do you agree that there are cases in which making amends might cause new harms?

Are there cases on your own list which might cause additional harm if you go through with making amends?

Page 86 – Or do we first consult those who are to be gravely affected?

Related questions:

Do you agree that we must be sure to remember that we cannot buy our own peace of mind at the expense of others?

Are there cases on your own list which might require consulting others before you can make amends?

Pages 86-87 – *Do we lay the matter before our sponsor or spiritual advisor, earnestly asking God’s help and guidance—meanwhile resolving to do the right thing when it becomes clear, cost what it may?*

Related questions:

Are you open to being helped toward good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage, and prudence—the qualities we need when we take Step Nine?

Are there cases on your own list in which fear may be suggesting that you should delay or avoid making amends?

Next ask your sponsee if this discussion has reminded him or her of anyone that needs to be added to their Eighth Step lists. If yes, have your sponsee take a few minutes to add details now. If no, ask if your sponsee’s harm lists are complete. If no, ask if your sponsee needs more time. If yes, ask if your sponsee is ready to get started on Step Nine.

Then, when you’re both ready, move on to your sponsee’s **harms lists**:

<p>I harmed: (Include all people, groups, and institutions listed on your Fourth Step inventory to whom you have done harm)</p>	<p>What I did: (be specific)</p>	<p>What I think I should do to make amends: (base this on your understanding of what’s suggested in our AA literature, and then be open to guidance)</p>	<p>What I will do to make amends after discussing this situation with my sponsor: (ask questions, share concerns, and be clear about the actions you’re committing to take)</p>
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<p>I harmed: (Include all people, groups, and institutions you remember harming as you look back through your life)</p>	<p>What I did: (be specific)</p>	<p>What I think I should do to make amends: (base this on your understanding of what’s suggested in our AA literature, and then be open to guidance)</p>	<p>What I will do to make amends after discussing this situation with my sponsor: (ask questions, share concerns, and be clear about the actions you’re committing to take)</p>
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Let your sponsee know that you’ll be planning amends today and that your next two meetings (or more if necessary) will be focused on follow-up discussions. You’ll want to maintain Step Nine as the topic for your sponsorship meetings until your sponsee has made at least half of the amends on his or her list.

Your primary role here is to guide your sponsee toward good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage, and prudence—the qualities we need when we take Step Nine. You will need to help your sponsee develop firm plans of action for making amends; think clarity rather than vagueness, and specifics rather than generalities. You'll want to help your sponsee plan out as many details as possible before approaching those they've harmed. The five Ws of journalism and research are helpful:

Who has actually been harmed in each situation described?

Sometimes the harms we've done affect more people than we can understand before discussing the details with our sponsors. Sometimes we assign the harm to one person when we're really just avoiding making contact with someone else.

What actions will your sponsee take in order to make each amend?

You will likely find patterns in the harms done by your sponsee and can help define similar amends for similar harms as you go. It's better not to begin with pre-conceived notions of how your sponsee should repair damage done. It's more helpful for you to have an open mind and share your own experiences to help your sponsee overcome his or her fears and objections.

When will each amend take place?

Ask your sponsee to be specific, set deadlines, and make commitments. You will be asking for follow-up details over the next several meetings. Ask your sponsee to be accountable to you as practice for accountability in other areas of his or her life.

Where will each amend take place?

This includes the discussion of when letters and phone calls are acceptable for making amends, which is rarely, of course. Some sponsees will need to plan trips to hometowns and other cities they've lived in previously. You can help make realistic plans with clear dates and measurable intentions for completion of the related amends.

Why is your sponsee making each amend?

There are many good reasons for making amends and a few bad reasons. Most of the good reasons are focused on long-term sobriety and reparation of harms done; most of the bad reasons are focused on some form of selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, or fear. You can help your sponsee weed out the good from the bad.

Some people listed on your sponsee's harms list do not need to be contacted, because the amends might cause more harm, to either your sponsee or the person listed. Some people will not accept your sponsee's amends or even their request for contact. You can help your sponsee find other ways to make amends; scheduling or forcing a confrontation, no matter how well-intended, is not always the correct course of action.

Follow-up on Ninth Step amends – at least two meetings (possibly more):

For best results, you'll find it helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety. As mentioned before, there are often other problems – sex, sugar, shopping, etc. – that may come to the forefront, especially but not only, while your sponsee is working Steps Four through Nine. This brief checkin time will allow you to share your experience, strength, and hope related to other symptoms of our alcoholic disease.

Next ask your sponsee to read the following from chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book aloud:

We will be amazed before we are half way through (pages 83-84):

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

Each time you meet to hear your sponsee's Ninth Step follow-up, have him or her read the above and then ask for ongoing updates regarding the manifestation of these Ninth Step promises in his or her life. Most sponsees begin to feel the feelings described during their Ninth Step – most often near the middle, however long that may take to reach. Help them to recognize the shift in their attitude and feelings.

Then, when you're both ready, move on to a focused discussion of the work your sponsee had done on his or her Ninth Step since the last time you met. There is no wrong or right way to do this. As with the Fifth Step, your primary role here is to listen carefully to details provided by your sponsee, asking for more information and offering additional questions when you think it would be helpful.

Delays and avoidance on the Ninth Step are normal. Sharing your experience, strength, and hope of overcoming your own resistance will be a huge help. Generously sharing your patience, especially if your sponsee does grow defiant or rebellious, will be helpful for both of you.

You'll want to maintain Step Nine as the topic for your sponsorship meetings until your sponsee has made at least half of the amends on his or her list. Once you've reached the halfway point, assuming the Ninth Step activity has slowed, you'll want to move on to Step 10, while continuing to ask for Ninth Step follow-up at the beginning of each meeting.

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from page 87 of Step Nine in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee is committed to completing this Step, no matter how long that may take, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) Are you completely willing to make amends as fast and as far as may be possible in any given set of conditions?
- 2) (If there are any amends you think should be delayed), are you absolutely sure that you are not delaying because you are afraid?
- 3) Are you ready to take the full consequences of your past acts and to take responsibility for the well-being of others at the same time?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no,” ask how you can help them move forward. Only if your sponsee is not ready to go on, ask if there is anything he or she has not shared with you, yet needs to. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step Nine (for now):

Are you at least halfway through your Step Nine amends? Are you ready to get started on Step Ten, while continuing to make amends until you’ve completed them all?

Step Ten – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read from the middle of page 84 to the end of page 85 in chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Ten in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Ten – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Continue working on Ninth Step amends. Be prepared to share details of your amends as you continue sponsorship meetings on the remaining Steps.

Re-read Step Ten in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are eight question marks in this chapter.)

Step Ten

“(We) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read from the middle of page 84 to the end of page 85 in chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Ten in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Continue working on Ninth Step amends. Be prepared to share details of your amends as you continue sponsorship meetings on the remaining Steps.

Re-read Step Ten in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are eight question marks in this chapter.)

When you meet:

It’s still helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief. You will also want to ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met, which may take up half of your time together at this point.

You will likely need **at least two 60-90 minute sponsorship meetings** together – the first to do the reading and discussion from the Big Book and the second to read and answer the questions from the 12 and 12 – to get your sponsee started on Step Ten, however you will return to Step Ten over and over as you continue to work together.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share the value of our newfound power to pause before reacting when difficult situations arise, which many of us first learn while working Step Ten. We share about our experiences with the Tenth Step promises (pgs 84-85). We share the various ways we take our own inventories – such as spot checks when disturbed, end of day, and progress updates since our most recent return to Steps One through Nine. We share the value of being able to go to bed at night with a clear conscience. We share how we have learned to see not only our negative attributes, but also our positive characteristics. We share the importance of disclosing what we find in our inventories with our sponsors and with others who can help and encourage us toward better actions. We share how we use the Tenth Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of taking our own inventories and sharing our progress in AA meetings.

Reading from the Big Book:

Next ask your sponsee to read the relevant part of “Into Action” (chapter 6, middle of page 84 to the end of page 85) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, which include all of what your sponsee has just read:

We continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear (page 84):

This thought brings us to Step Ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.

We have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even alcohol (pages 84-85):

For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had had been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.

We have a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition (page 85):

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities. “How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done.” These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.

Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

It's still helpful to spend a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but keep it brief. You will also want to ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met, which may take up half of your time together at this point.

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Ten in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step.

The questions from the text of Step Ten in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, along with optional related questions, are listed below:

Page 88 – *Then comes the acid test: can we stay sober, keep in emotional balance, and live to good purpose under all conditions?*

Related questions:

Are you beginning to make self-searching a regular habit?

Are you able to admit and accept what you find when you take inventory?

Do you patiently and persistently try to correct what is wrong?

Page 89 – *Aren't these practices joy-killers as well as time-consumers?*

Related questions:

Are you beginning to experience the adventure of a new life?

Does taking your own inventory help you to avoid negative emotions and emotional hangovers?

Is taking your own inventory useful in making peace with yourself and in building confidence that tomorrow's challenges can be met as they come?

Page 89 – *Must AA's spend most of their waking hours drearily rehashing their sins of omission and commission?*

Related questions:

Are you finding what you're uncovering in your inventory interesting?

Does the time you spend in self-examination contribute to making the rest of your day better and happier?

Page 90 – *It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us. If somebody hurts us and we are sore, we are in the wrong also. But are there no exceptions to this rule?*

Related questions:

In times of disturbance, are you willing to look for your own part in creating the situation before looking for anyone else's part, no matter what?

Are you willing to admit when the fault is yours?

Are you willing to forgive when the fault is someone else's?

Page 90 – *What about “justifiable” anger?*

Related questions:

Have you ever been successful in separating justified from unjustified anger?

Are you willing to risk relapse as a likely result of justifying your anger?

Page 90 – *If somebody cheats us, aren't we entitled to be mad?*

Related questions:

When you feel cheated, whether it's true or not, are you able to remain fair-minded and tolerant?

When feeling cheated, do you allow yourself to act hastily or rashly?

Page 90 – *Can't we be properly angry with self-righteous folk?*

Related questions:

Are you trying and succeeding at “restraint of tongue and pen”?

Are you successfully avoiding criticism and arguments with others?

Do you ever sulk or silently scorn others out of pride or vengefulness?

Related questions:

Have you had any troubles with “big-shot-ism” lately?

Are you still making unreasonable demands on others?

Have you begun to use courtesy, kindness, justice, and love as bridges to harmony with others?

Do still have trouble with prideful, angry, jealous, anxious, or fearful motives?

When you act on these motives, do you try to do better, ask God for help, and make amends when necessary?

Are you having any trouble with justification of your own bad conduct?

Do you notice yourself sometimes hiding bad motives under good ones?

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from page 95 of Step Ten in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee has made a good start on this Step, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) When you consider your day, are you able to notice things you’ve done well?
- 2) Are you able to search your heart with neither fear nor pride?
- 3) Are you able to thank God for the blessings you have received and sleep in good conscience?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no” go back to the beginning of this chapter and start again. If you receive “no” answers to these questions on the second attempt, go back to the beginning of the previous chapter, and so on. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step Ten (for now):

Do you believe you’ve made a good start on Step Ten? Are you ready to get started on Step Eleven?

Step Eleven – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read from the end of page 85 through page 88 in chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Eleven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Eleven – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Continue working on Ninth Step amends (if necessary). Be prepared to share details of your amends and your experiences with Step Ten as you continue sponsorship meetings on the remaining Steps.

Re-read Step Eleven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are eleven question marks in this chapter.)

Step Eleven

“(We) 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.”

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read from the end of page 85 through page 88 in chapter six, “Into Action,” in the Big Book.

Read Step Eleven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Continue working on Ninth Step amends (if necessary). Be prepared to share details of your amends and your experiences with Step Ten as you continue sponsorship meetings on the remaining Steps.

Re-read Step Eleven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are eleven question marks in this chapter.)

When you meet:

By this point you’ll enjoy spending a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but still keep it brief. If still necessary, you will want to ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met. Offering gentle pressure to get Step Nine completed soon would likely be helpful at this point. You will also want to ask your sponsee to describe any recent experiences he or she has had with the Tenth Step.

You will likely need **at least two 60-90 minute sponsorship meetings** together – the first to do the reading and discussion from the Big Book and the second to read and answer the questions from the 12 and 12 – to get your sponsee started on Step Eleven, however you will return to Step Eleven over and over as you continue to work together.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share what conscious contact with our Higher Power feels like and how it has evolved over time. We share about the various practices that have helped us grow closer to God. We share the value of trusting our Higher Power to be present and available to us, in good times and bad. We share how we have learned to depend on God in a healthy and responsible way. We share the importance of inviting God into our lives over and over during the course of every day. We share how we use the Eleventh Step in our lives today. We share about the “we” of sharing our spiritual progress in AA meetings.

Reading from the Big Book:

Next ask your sponsee to read the last part of “Into Action” (chapter 6, end of page 85 through page 88) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, which include all of what your sponsee has just read:

We shouldn't be shy on the matter of prayer (pages 85-86):

Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it. It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day (page 86):

Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.

On awakening, we think about the twenty-four hours ahead (page 86):

We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest, or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.

In thinking about our day we may face indecision (pages 86-87):

We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.

We ask especially for freedom from self-will (page 87):

We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why.

We sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers (page 87):

If circumstances warrant, we ask our wives or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also. If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minister, or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.

We constantly remind ourselves that we are no longer running the show (pages 87-88):

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done." We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.

It works—it really does.

We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.

But this is not all. There is action and more action. "Faith without works is dead." The next chapter is entirely devoted to Step Twelve.

At this point, if your sponsee does not yet have a prayer or set of prayers that he or she says daily, it would be helpful to suggest one. Most of us suggest whatever prayers we are currently using ourselves or prayers we have had good experiences with in the past. A popular recommendation is the use of the prayers in the Big Book aligned with Steps Three, Seven, and Ten:

3rd Step Prayer (page 63):

“God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!”

7th Step Prayer (page 76):

“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.”

10th Step Prayer (page 85):

“How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done.”

As mentioned in Step Three, you, or your sponsee, or both, may feel resistance to the religious implications of the language used in this prayer. Don't let that be an obstacle for either of you. Change the words if necessary; just be careful not to lose the meaning behind them. The best help you can offer your sponsee at this point is to discuss these prayers, and their meanings, one phrase at a time, describing exactly how you interpret these prayers and when you use them. Then suggest that your sponsee say these prayers – or something like them – aloud at least once a day, more often if it's helpful, as he or she practices Step Eleven and begins work on Step Twelve.

Whether your sponsee agrees to use these prayers or others, including prayers from specific religions if that matches your sponsee's experience and desire, you will want to ask him or her for a commitment to pray daily using the same words, at the same time, in the same place (whenever possible). In this way, he or she is practicing the discipline described in the Big Book and can see his or her relationship with God develop, usually quickly. There is a lot of work, and many sponsorship meetings ahead, related to Step Twelve. You will find it helpful to ask your sponsee to share Tenth and Eleventh Step experiences with you every time you meet.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text:

By this point you'll enjoy spending a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but still keep it brief. If still necessary, you will want to ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met. Offering gentle pressure to get Step Nine completed soon would likely be helpful at this point. You will also want to ask your sponsee to describe any recent experiences he or she has had with the Tenth and Eleventh Steps.

Next ask your sponsee to read Step Eleven in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aloud. When finished, ask your sponsee for general questions and comments on the text, and offer your own comments and experiences with this Step.

The questions from the text of Step Eleven in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, along with optional related questions, are listed below:

Pages 96-97 – We well remember how something deep inside us kept rebelling against the idea of bowing before any God. Many of us had strong logic, too, which “proved” there was no God whatever. What about all the accidents, sickness, cruelty, and injustice in the world?

Related questions:

Do you consider yourself atheist or agnostic at this point?

If yes, is AA enough of a higher power to meet your spiritual needs and to safeguard your sobriety?

Page 97 – What about all those unhappy lives which were the direct result of unfortunate birth and uncontrollable circumstances?

Related questions:

Do you think lack of fairness and justice reflects more heavily upon man or God?

How do you reconcile unhappiness and misfortune with your spiritual beliefs?

Page 98 – But first of all we shall want sunlight; nothing much can grow in the dark. Meditation is our step out into the sun. How, then, shall we meditate?

Related questions:

Have you read any books or taken any classes on meditation practices?

Did you have, and have you returned to, religious practices that you gave up during your years of drinking?

Pages 98-99 – *It is hoped that every AA who has a religious connection which emphasizes meditation will return to the practice of that devotion as never before. But what about the rest of us who, less fortunate, don't even know how to begin?*

Related questions:

Are you familiar with the prayer in the 12 and 12, which we often discuss when discussing Step Eleven?

Do you have any other prayers or mantras or inspirational quotes upon which you would like to practice contemplation?

Page 100 – *“Shucks!” says somebody. “This is nonsense. It isn't practical.” When such thoughts break in, we might recall, a little ruefully, how much store we used to set by imagination as it tried to create reality out of bottles. Yes, we reveled in that sort of thinking, didn't we?*

Related questions:

Were fantasies a large part of your thinking while still drinking?

Did any of your fantasies lead you to action or did they remain fantasies?

Page 100 – *And though sober nowadays, don't we often try to do much the same thing?*

Related questions:

Are fantasies still a large part of your thinking now?

Do your fantasies lead you to action now?

Page 101 – *First of all, the creator of the prayer wanted to become a “channel.” Then he asked for the grace to bring love, forgiveness, harmony, truth, faith, hope, light, and joy to every human being he could. Next came the expression of an aspiration and a hope for himself. He hoped, God willing, that he might be able to find some of these treasures, too. This he would try to do by what he called self-forgetting. What did he mean by “self-forgetting,” and how did he propose to accomplish that?*

Related questions:

Are you beginning to find more value in giving than in receiving?

More value in understanding than in being understood?

More value in forgiving than in being forgiven?

Page 102 – *Now, what of prayer?*

Related questions:

Do you pray? Every day? What do you say in your prayers?

Page 102 – *Prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God—and in this sense it includes meditation. How may we go about it?*

Related questions:

What kinds of requests do you make in your prayers?

Do you qualify your prayers with a request that they be answered only if they are aligned with God’s will?

Page 102 – *And how does it fit in with meditation?*

Related questions:

Do you pray throughout the day, overcoming your distractions and bringing yourself back to your spiritual foundation?

In times of emotional disturbance, do you pray to restore your balance?

Do you find prayer helpful in freeing you from anger, fear, frustration, and misunderstandings?

Page 103 – *Of course, it is reasonable and understandable that the question is often asked: “Why can’t we take a specific and troubling dilemma straight to God, and in prayer secure from Him sure and definite answers to our requests?”*

Related questions:

Do you receive clear and immediate answers to your prayers?

Are you sure those answers are coming from God and not from your own mind?

Do you pray for specific outcomes when praying for others?

Do you sense that prayer is contributing to your growth, especially in terms of inner strength, wisdom, and peace of mind?

Have you stopped making demands of God? If not, are you willing to stop?

Have your own difficulties led you to greater faith in God?

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from the last paragraph of Step Eleven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee has made a good start on this Step, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) Have you begun to see truth, justice, and love as the real priorities of life?
- 2) Do you believe that God lovingly watches over you?
- 3) Do you believe that when you turn to God, all will be well with you?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no” go back to the beginning of this chapter and start again. If you receive “no” answers to these questions on the second attempt, go back to the beginning of the previous chapter, and so on. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step Eleven (for now):

Do you believe you’ve made a good start on Step Eleven? Are you ready to get started on Step Twelve?

Step Twelve – Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read “Working with Others” (chapter 7), “To Wives” (chapter 8), “The Family Afterward,” (chapter 9), “To Employers,” (chapter 10), and “A Vision for You” (chapter 11) in the Big Book. Don’t rush, though, it will take several meetings to complete these readings together.

Read Step Twelve in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Step Twelve – Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Continue working on Ninth Step amends (if necessary). Be prepared to share details of your amends and your experiences with Steps Ten and Eleven as you continue sponsorship meetings on Step Twelve.

Re-read Step Twelve in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are twenty-three question marks in this chapter.)

Step Twelve

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

Preparatory reading for both you and your sponsee:

Read “Working with Others” (chapter 7), “To Wives” (chapter 8), “The Family Afterward,” (chapter 9), “To Employers,” (chapter 10), and “A Vision for You” (chapter 11) in the Big Book. Don’t rush, though, it will take several meetings to complete these readings together.

Read Step Twelve in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

Preparatory homework for your sponsee:

Continue working on Ninth Step amends (if necessary). Be prepared to share details of your amends and your experiences with Steps Ten and Eleven as you continue sponsorship meetings on Step Twelve.

Re-read Step Twelve in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pausing to consider the answer – in writing if that would be helpful – every time you see a question mark. (There are twenty-three question marks in this chapter.)

When you meet:

By this point you’ll enjoy spending a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but still keep it brief. If still applicable, ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met. If your sponsee appears to be delaying some Step Nine amends purposely, ask him or her what you can do to help regain momentum. You will also want to ask your sponsee to describe any recent experiences with the Tenth and Eleventh Steps.

You will likely need **seven 60-90 minute sponsorship meetings** together – the first five to do the readings and discussions from the Big Book and the next two to read and answer the questions from the 12 and 12 – to get your sponsee started on Step Twelve. Of course, the real work will be for your sponsee to expand his or her efforts at sponsorship and service.

When sharing your own experiences of this Step:

Many of us share about the sense of sober and spiritual confidence we felt by the time we reached Step Twelve. We share about our early attempts at sponsorship. We share how we balance sponsorship and service and home and work and other parts of our lives. We share the ongoing benefits we receive from being a sponsor and from being sponsored. We share how we “practice these principles in all our affairs” today. We share about the “we” of regular ongoing attendance and participation at AA meetings.

Reading from the Big Book – part 1:

Ask your sponsee to read “Working with Others” (chapter 7) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, which are more extensive for this chapter than for any other:

Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives (page 89):

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

How we introduce Step One to newcomers (pages 91-92):

See your man alone, if possible. At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell him enough about your drinking habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage him to speak of himself. If he wishes to talk, let him do so. You will thus get a better idea of how you ought to proceed. If he is not communicative, give him a sketch of your drinking career up to the time you quit. But say nothing, for the moment of how that was accomplished. If he is in a serious mood dwell on the troubles liquor has caused you, being careful not to moralize or lecture. If his mood is light, tell him humorous stories of your escapades. Get him to tell some of his.

When he sees you know all about the drinking game, commence to describe yourself as an alcoholic. Tell him how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give him an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show him the mental twist which leads to the first drink of a spree. We suggest you do this as we have done it in the chapter on alcoholism. If he is alcoholic, he will understand you at once. He will match your mental inconsistencies with some of his own.

If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady. Show him, from your own experience, how the queer mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will power. Don't, at this stage, refer to this book, unless he has seen it and wishes to discuss it. And be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion. If he sticks to the idea that he can still control his drinking, tell him that possibly he can—if he is not too alcoholic. But insist that if he is severely afflicted, there may be little chance he can recover by himself.

How we introduce Step Two to newcomers (pages 92-93):

Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal malady. Talk about the conditions of body and mind which accompany it. Keep his attention focused mainly on your personal experience. Explain that many are doomed who never realize their predicament. Doctors are rightly loath to tell alcoholic patients the whole story unless it will serve some good purpose. But you may talk to him about the hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a solution. You will soon have your friend admitting he has many, if not all, of the traits of the alcoholic. If his own doctor is willing to tell him that he is an alcoholic, so much the better. Even though your protégé may not have entirely admitted his condition, he has become very curious to know how you got well. Let him ask you that question, if he will. Tell him exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely. If the man be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that he does not have to agree with your conception of God. He can choose any conception he likes, provided it makes sense to him. The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.

How we introduce Step Three to newcomers (pages 93-94):

Your prospect may belong to a religious denomination. His religious education and training may be far superior to yours. In that case he is going to wonder how you can add anything to what he already knows. But he will be curious to learn why his convictions have not worked and why yours seem to work so well. He may be an example of the truth that faith alone is insufficient. To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action. Let him see that you are not there to instruct him in religion. Admit that he probably knows more about it than you do, but call to his attention the fact that however deep his faith and knowledge, he could not have applied it or he would not drink. Perhaps your story will help him see where he has failed to practice the very precepts he knows so well. We represent no particular faith or denomination. We are dealing only with general principles common to most denominations.

Newcomers help us more than we help them (page 94):

Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to him. It is important for him to realize that your attempt to pass this on to him plays a vital part in your own recovery. Actually, he may be helping you more than you are helping him. Make it plain he is under no obligation to you, that you hope only that he will try to help other alcoholics when he escapes his own difficulties. Suggest how important it is that he place the welfare of other people ahead of his own. Make it clear that he is not under pressure, that he needn't see you again if he doesn't want to. You should not be offended if he wants to call it off, for he has helped you more than you have helped him. If your talk has been sane, quiet and full of human understanding, you have perhaps made a friend. Maybe you have disturbed him about the question of alcoholism. That is all to the good. The more hopeless he feels, the better. He will be more likely to follow your suggestions.

We never talk down to newcomers from any moral or spiritual hilltop (pages 94-95):

Your candidate may give reasons why he need not follow all of the program. He may rebel at the thought of a drastic housecleaning which requires discussion with other people. Do not contradict such views. Tell him you once felt as he does, but you doubt whether you would have made much progress had you not taken action. On your first visit tell him about the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. If he shows interest, lend him your copy of this book.

Unless your friend wants to talk further about himself, do not wear out your welcome. Give him a chance to think it over. ... You will be most successful with alcoholics if you do not exhibit any passion for crusade or reform. Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection. Show him how they worked with you. Offer him friendship and fellowship. Tell him that if he wants to get well you will do anything to help.

We have no monopoly on God, just an approach that worked for us (page 95):

If he is not interested in your solution, if he expects you to act only as a banker for his financial difficulties or a nurse for his sprees, you may have to drop him until he changes his mind. This he may do after he gets hurt some more.

If he is sincerely interested and wants to see you again, ask him to read this book in the interval. After doing that, he must decide for himself whether he wants to go on. He should be pushed or prodded by you, his wife, or his friends. If he is to find God, the desire must come from within.

If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us. But point out that we alcoholics have much in common and that you would like, in any case, to be friendly. Let it go at that.

We find it a waste of time to keep chasing men who cannot or will not work with us (page 96):

Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy. One of our Fellowship failed entirely with his first half dozen prospects. He often says that if he had continued to work on them, he might have deprived many others, who have since recovered, of their chance.

Helping others is the foundation stone of our recovery (page 97):

A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights' sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic wives and relatives, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums, hospitals, jails and asylums. Your telephone may jangle at any time of the day or night.

We encourage newcomers to trust in God and clean house (pages 97-98):

For the type of alcoholic who is able and willing to get well, little charity, in the ordinary sense of the word, is needed or wanted. The men who cry for money and shelter before conquering alcohol, are on the wrong track. Yet we do go to great extremes to provide each other with these very things, when such action is warranted. This may seem inconsistent, but we think it is not.

It is not the matter of giving that is in question, but when and how to give. That often makes the difference between failure and success. The minute we put our work on a service plan, the alcoholic commences to rely upon our assistance rather than upon God. He clamors for more of this or that, claiming he cannot master alcohol until his material needs are cared for. Nonsense. Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job—wife or no wife—we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God.

Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house.

We encourage newcomers to work toward atmospheres of helpfulness and friendliness at home (page 98-99):

Now, the domestic problem: There may be divorce, separation, or just strained relations. When your prospect has made such reparation as he can to his family, and has thoroughly explained to them the new principles by which he is living, he should proceed to put those principles into action at home. That is, if he is lucky enough to have a home. Though his family be at fault in many respects, he should not be concerned about that. He should concentrate on his own spiritual demonstration. Argument and fault-finding are to be avoided like the plague. In many homes this is a difficult thing to do, but it must be done if any results are to be expected. If persisted in for a few months, the effect on a man's family is sure to be great. The most incompatible people discover they have a basis upon which they can meet. Little by little the family may see their own defects and admit them. These can then be discussed in an atmosphere of helpfulness and friendliness.

We remind newcomers that our recovery is not dependent upon people; it is dependent upon our relationship with God (pages 99-100):

After they have seen tangible results, the family will perhaps want to go along. These things will come to pass naturally and in good time provided, however, the alcoholic continues to demonstrate that he can be sober, considerate, and helpful, regardless of what anyone says or does. Of course, we all fall much below this standard many times. But we must try to repair the damage immediately lest we pay the penalty by a spree.

If there be divorce or separation, there should be no undue haste for the couple to get together. ... If their old relationship is to be resumed it must be on a better basis, since the former did not work. This means a new attitude and spirit all around. Sometimes it is to the best interests of all concerned that a couple remain apart. Obviously, no rule can be laid down. ... When the time for living together has come, it will be apparent to both parties.

... Remind the prospect that his recovery is not dependent upon people. It is dependent upon his relationship with God. We have seen men get well whose families have not returned at all. We have seen others slip when the family came back to soon.

Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!

Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do (pages 100-101):

People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so.

We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, still has an alcoholic mind; there is something the matter with his spiritual status. His only chance for sobriety would be some place like the Greenland Ice Cap, and even there an Eskimo might turn up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything! ...

In our belief any scheme of combating alcoholism which proposes to shield the sick man from temptation is doomed to failure. If the alcoholic tries to shield himself he may succeed for a time, but he usually winds up with a bigger explosion than ever. We have tried these methods. These attempts to do the impossible have always failed.

Our job now is to be at the place where we may be of maximum helpfulness to others (pages 101-102):

So our rule is not to avoid a place where there is drinking, if we have a legitimate reason for being there. That includes bars, nightclubs, dances, receptions, weddings, even plain ordinary whoopee parties. To a person who has had experience with an alcoholic, this may seem like tempting Providence, but it isn't.

You will note that we made an important qualification. Therefore, ask yourself on each occasion, "Have I any good social, business, or personal reason for going to this place? Or am I expecting to steal a little vicarious pleasure from the atmosphere of such places?" If you answer these questions satisfactorily, you need have no apprehension. Go or stay away, whichever seems best. But be sure you are on solid spiritual ground before you start and that your motive in going is thoroughly good. Do not think of what you will get out of the occasion. Think of what you can bring to it. But if you are shaky, you had better work with another alcoholic instead!

Why sit with a long face in places where there is drinking, sighing about the good old days. If it is a happy occasion, try to increase the pleasure of those there; if a business occasion, go and attend to your business enthusiastically. If you are with a person who wants to eat in a bar, by all means go along. Let your friends know they not to change their habits on our account. At a proper time and place explain to all your friends why alcohol disagrees with you. If you do this thoroughly, few people will ask you to drink. While you were drinking, you were withdrawing from life little by little. Now you are getting back into the social life of this world. Don't start to withdraw again just because your friends drink liquor.

Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.

We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking as an institution (page 103):

Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every new alcoholic looks for this spirit among us and is immensely relieved when he finds we are not witch-burners. A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it.

Some day we hope that Alcoholics Anonymous will help the public to a better realization of the gravity of the alcoholic problem, but we shall be of little use if our attitude is one of bitterness or hostility. Drinkers will not stand for it.

After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We have to!

Reading from the Big Book – part 2:

By this point you'll enjoy spending a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but still keep it brief. If still applicable, ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met. If your sponsee appears to be delaying some Step Nine amends purposely, ask him or her what you can do to help regain momentum. You would also ask your sponsee to describe any recent experiences with the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Steps.

Ask your sponsee to read “To Wives” (chapter 8) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, applying the concepts and guidance to your sponsee and yourself, specifically as it relates to working with others:

Problem drinkers usually fall within one of four categories (pages 108-110):

One: Heavy drinker. His drinking may be constant or it may be heavy only on certain occasions. Perhaps he spends too much money for liquor. It may be slowing him up mentally and physically, but he does not see it. Sometimes he is a source of embarrassment...to his friends. He is positive he can handle his liquor, that it does him no harm, that drinking is necessary in his business. He would probably be insulted if he were called an alcoholic. This world is full of people like him. Some will moderate or stop altogether, and some will not. Of those who keep on, a good number will become true alcoholics after a while.

Two: Showing lack of control...unable to stay on the water wagon even when he wants to. He often gets entirely out of hand when drinking. He admits this is true, but is positive that he will do better. He has begun to try...various means of moderating or staying dry. Maybe he is beginning to lose his friends. His business may suffer somewhat. He is worried at times, and is becoming aware that he cannot drink like other people. He sometimes drinks in the morning and through the day also, to hold his nervousness in check. He is remorseful after serious drinking bouts and...wants to stop. But when he gets over the spree, he begins to think once more how he can drink moderately next time. We think this person is in danger. These are the earmarks of a real alcoholic. Perhaps he can still tend to business fairly well. He has by no means ruined everything. As we say among ourselves, “He wants to want to stop.”

Three: ... Though once like number two he became worse. His friends have slipped away, his home is a near-wreck and he cannot hold a position. ... He admits he cannot drink like other people, but does not see why. He clings to the notion that he will yet find a way to do so. He may have come to the point where he desperately wants to stop but cannot. His case presents additional questions which we shall try to answer... You can be quite hopeful of a situation like this.

Four: Complete despair. He has been placed in one institution after another. He is violent, or appears definitely insane when drunk. Sometimes he drinks on the way home from the hospital. Perhaps he has had delirium tremens. ... This picture may not be as dark as it looks. Many...were just as far gone. Yet they got well.

How we approach the drinker who is showing lack of control (pages 112-113):

...after his next binge, ask him if he would really like to get over drinking for good. Do not ask that he do it for...anyone else. Just would he like to?

The chances are he would. Show him your copy of this book and tell him what you have found out about alcoholism. Show him that as alcoholics, the writers of the book understand. Tell him some of the interesting stories you have read. If you think he will be shy of a spiritual remedy, ask him to look at the chapter on alcoholism. Then perhaps he will be interested enough to continue.

If he is enthusiastic your cooperation will mean a great deal. If he is lukewarm or thinks he is not an alcoholic, we suggest you leave him alone. Avoid urging him to follow our program. The seed has been planted in his mind. He knows that thousands of men, much like himself, have recovered. But don't remind him of this after he has been drinking, for he may be angry. Sooner or later, you are likely to find him reading the book once more. Wait until repeated stumbling convinces him he must act, for the more you hurry him the longer his recovery may be delayed.

How we approach the drinker who wants to stop (page 113):

...you may be in luck. Being certain he wants to stop, you can go to him with this volume as joyfully as though you had struck oil. He may not share your enthusiasm, but he is practically sure to read the book and he may go for the program at once. If he does not, you will probably not have long to wait. Again, you should not crowd him. Let him decide for himself. Cheerfully see him through more sprees. Talk about his condition or this book only when he raises the issue. ...someone outside the family...can urge action without arousing hostility. ...your chances are good at this stage.

How we approach the drinker who is in complete despair (pages 113-114):

You would suppose that men in the fourth classification would be quite hopeless, but that is not so. Many of Alcoholics Anonymous were like that. Everybody had given them up. Defeat seemed certain. Yet often such men had spectacular and powerful recoveries.

There are exceptions. Some men have been so impaired by alcohol that they cannot stop. Sometimes there are cases where alcoholism is complicated by other disorders. ...give him a chance to try our method, unless the doctor thinks his mental condition too abnormal or dangerous. We make this recommendation with some confidence. For years we have been working with alcoholics committed to institutions. ...AA has released thousands of alcoholics from asylums and hospitals of every kind. The majority have never returned. The power of God goes deep!

We need to be patient with newcomers (page 118):

He wants to make good. Yet you must not expect too much. His ways of thinking and doing are the habits of years. Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords. Show these things in yourself and they will be reflected back to you from him. Live and let live is the rule. If you both show a willingness to remedy your own defects, there be little need to criticize each other.

Sometimes our sponsees relapse (page 120):

If you are satisfied he really wants to get over drinking, you need not be alarmed. Though it is infinitely better that he have no relapse at all, as has been true with many of our men, it is by no means a bad thing in some cases. ...see at once that he must redouble his spiritual activities if he expects to survive. You need not remind him of his spiritual deficiency—he will know of it. Cheer him up and ask him how you can be still more helpful.

We never, never try to arrange a man's life so as to shield him from temptation (page 120):

The slightest disposition on your part to guide his appointments or his affairs so he will not be tempted will be noticed. Make him feel absolutely free to come and go as he likes. This is important. If he gets drunk, don't blame yourself. God has either removed...liquor problem or He has not. If not, it had better be found out right away. Then you...can get right down to fundamentals. If a repetition is to be prevented, place the problem, along with everything else, in God's hands.

We had to learn these things the hard way (page 121):

We realize that we have been giving you much direction and advice. We may have seemed to lecture. If that is so we are sorry, for we ourselves don't always care for people who lecture us. But what we have related is based upon experience, some of it painful. We had to learn these things the hard way. That is why we are anxious that you understand, and that you avoid these unnecessary difficulties.

Reading from the Big Book – part 3:

By this point you'll enjoy spending a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but still keep it brief. If still applicable, ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met. If your sponsee appears to be delaying some Step Nine amends purposely, ask him or her what you can do to help regain momentum. You would also ask your sponsee to describe any recent experiences with the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Steps.

Ask your sponsee to read “The Family Afterward” (chapter 9) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, applying the guidance to your sponsee and yourself, specifically as it relates to working with others:

We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into assets (pages 123-124):

The drinking career of almost every alcoholic has been marked by escapades, funny, humiliating, shameful or tragic. The first impulse will be to bury these skeletons in a dark closet and padlock the door. ... We think that such a view is self-centered and in direct conflict with the new way of living.

Henry Ford once made a wise remark to the effect that experience is the thing of supreme value in life. That is true only if one is willing to turn the past to good account. We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into assets. The alcoholic's past thus becomes the principle asset...and frequently it is almost the only one!

...Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worthwhile to us now. Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have—the key to life and happiness for others. With it you can avert death and misery for them.

We of Alcoholics Anonymous keep few skeletons in the closet (page 125):

Everyone knows about the others' alcoholic troubles. This is a condition which, in ordinary life, would produce untold grief; there might be scandalous gossip, laughter at the expense of other people, and a tendency to take advantage of intimate information. Among us, these are rare occurrences. We do talk about each other a great deal, but we almost invariably temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance.

Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve. We find it better, when possible, to stick to our own stories. A man may criticize or laugh at himself and it will affect others favorably, but criticism or ridicule coming from another often produces the contrary effect. ... We alcoholics are sensitive people. It takes some of us a long time to outgrow that serious handicap.

For us, material well-being always follows spiritual progress (pages 125-127):

Many alcoholics are enthusiasts. They run to extremes. At the beginning of recovery a man will take, as a rule, one of two directions. He may either plunge into a frantic attempt to get on his feet in business, or he may be so enthralled by his new life that he talks or thinks of little else. In either case certain...problems will arise. With these we have had experience galore.

We think it dangerous if he rushes headlong at his economic problem. ... He can scarcely square the account in his lifetime. But he must see the danger of over-concentration on financial success. Although financial recovery is on the way for many of us, we found we could not place money first. For us, material well-being always followed spiritual progress; it never preceded.

Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knows no bounds (pages 128-130):

Assume on the other hand...a stirring spiritual experience. Overnight, as it were, he is a different man. He becomes a religious enthusiast. He is unable to focus on anything else. ... There is talk about spiritual matters morning, noon and night.

... We have indulged in spiritual intoxication. Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knew no bounds. ... For a time he may try to hug the new treasure to himself. He may not see at once that he has barely scratched a limitless lode which will pay dividends only if he mines it for the rest of his life and insists on giving away the entire product.

...it is well to let him go as far as he likes in helping other alcoholics. During those first days of convalescence, this will do more to insure his sobriety than anything else. ...will be on a firmer foundation than the man who is placing business or professional success ahead of spiritual development. He will be less likely to drink again, and anything is preferable to that.

We have found nothing incompatible between a powerful spiritual experience and a life of sane and happy usefulness (page 130):

Those of us who have spent much time in the world of spiritual make-believe have eventually seen the childishness of it. This dream world has been replaced by a great sense of purpose, accompanied by a growing consciousness of the power of God in our lives. We have come to believe He would like us to keep our heads in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth. That is where our fellow travelers are, and that is where our work must be done. These are the realities for us. We have found nothing incompatible between a powerful spiritual experience and a life of sane and happy usefulness.

We are non-denominational people (pages 131-132):

Alcoholics who have derided religious people will be helped by such contacts. Being possessed of a spiritual experience, the alcoholic will find he has much in common with these people, though he may differ with them on many matters. If he does not argue about religion, he will make new friends and is sure to find new avenues of usefulness and pleasure. He...can be a bright spot in such congregations. He may bring new hope and new courage to many a priest, minister, or rabbi, who gives his all to minister to our troubled world. We intend the foregoing as a helpful suggestion only. So far as we are concerned, there is nothing obligatory about it. As non-denominational people, we cannot make up others' minds for them. Each individual should consult his own conscience.

We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free (pages 132-133):

We have been speaking to you of serious, sometimes tragic things. We have been dealing with alcohol in its worst aspect. But we aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life. We try not to indulge in cynicism over the state of the nations, nor do we carry the world's troubles on our shoulders. When we see a man sinking into the mire that is alcoholism, we give him first aid and place what we have at his disposal. For his sake, we do recount and almost relive the horrors of our past. But those of us who have tried to shoulder the entire burden and trouble of others fine we are soon overcome by them.

So we think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness. Outsiders are sometimes shocked when we burst into merriment over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past. But why shouldn't we laugh? We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others.

Everybody knows that those in bad health, and those who seldom play, do not laugh much. So...play together or separately, as much as...circumstances warrant. We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn't do it. Avoid then, the deliberate manufacture of misery, but if trouble comes, cheerfully capitalize it as an opportunity to demonstrate His omnipotence.

We are miracles of mental health (page 133):

Now about health: A body badly burned by alcohol does not often recover overnight nor do twisted thinking and depression vanish in a twinkling. We are convinced that a spiritual mode of living is a most powerful health restorative. We, who have recovered from serious drinking, are miracles of mental health. But we have seen remarkable transformations in our bodies. ... But this does not mean that we disregard human health measures. God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors, psychologists, and practitioners of various kinds. ... Their services are often indispensable in treating a newcomer and in following his case afterward.

Reading from the Big Book – part 4:

By this point you'll enjoy spending a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but still keep it brief. If still applicable, ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met. If your sponsee appears to be delaying some Step Nine amends purposely, ask him or her what you can do to help regain momentum. You would also ask your sponsee to describe any recent experiences with the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Steps.

Ask your sponsee to read “To Employers” (chapter 10) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts, applying the concepts and guidance to your sponsee and yourself, specifically as it relates to working with others:

We have imposed on the best of employers (pages 137-138):

...the alcoholic has often seemed a fool of the first magnitude. Because of the employee's special ability, or of his own strong personal attachment to him, the employer has sometimes kept such a man at work long beyond a reasonable period. Some employers have tried every known remedy. ... And we, who have imposed on the best of employers, can scarcely blame them if they have been short with us.

If sponsees relapse, and we're sure they do not want to stop drinking, we are not doing them favors by keeping them (pages 140-141):

... When drinking, or getting over a bout, an alcoholic, sometimes the model of honesty when normal, will do incredible things. Afterward, his revulsion will be terrible. Nearly always, these antics indicate nothing more than temporary conditions.

This is not to say that all alcoholics are honest and upright when drinking. Of course that isn't so, and such people often may impose on you. Seeing your attempt to understand and help, some men will try to take advantage of your kindness. If you are sure your man does not want to stop, he may as well be discharged, the sooner the better. You are not doing him a favor by keeping him on. Firing such an individual may prove a blessing to him. It may be just the jolt he needs....

But there are many men who want to stop, and with them you can go far. Your understanding treatment of their cases will pay dividends.

Perhaps you have such a man in mind. He wants to quit drinking and you want to help him... You now know more about alcoholism. You can see that he is mentally and physically sick. You are willing to overlook his past performances.

Either we are dealing with alcoholics who can and will get well or we are not (pages 142):

Next he can be assured that you do not intend to lecture, moralize, or condemn; that if this was done formerly, it was because of misunderstanding. If possible express a lack of hard feeling toward him. At this point, it might be well to explain alcoholism, the illness. Say that you believe he is a gravely ill person, with this qualification—being perhaps fatally ill, does he want to get well? You ask, because many alcoholics, being warped and drugged, do not want to quit. But does he? Will he take every necessary step, submit to anything to get well, to stop drinking forever?

If he says yes, does he really mean it, or down inside does he think he is fooling you, and that after rest and treatment he will be able to get away with a few drinks now and then? We believe a man should be thoroughly probed on these points. Be satisfied he is not deceiving himself or you.

Whether you mention this book is a matter for your discretion. If he temporizes and still thinks he can ever drink again, even beer, he might as well be discharged after the next bender which, if an alcoholic, he is almost certain to have. He should understand that emphatically. Either you are dealing with a man who can and will get well or you are not. If not, why waste time with him? This may seem severe, but it is usually the best course.

After satisfying yourself that your man wants to recover and that he will go to any extreme to do so, you may suggest a definite course of action. ...

We may need to encourage our sponsees to play once in a while (page 146):

As a class, alcoholics are energetic people. They work hard and they play hard. Your man should be on his mettle to make good. Being somewhat weakened, and faced with physical and mental readjustment to a life which knows no alcohol, he may overdo. You may have to curb his desire to work sixteen hours a day. You may need to encourage him to play once in a while. He may wish to do a lot for other alcoholics and something of the sort may come up during business hours. A reasonable amount of latitude will be helpful. This work is necessary to maintain his sobriety.

Our sponsees appreciate knowing we are not trying to run their lives (pages 146-147):

Your man may be trusted. Long experience with alcoholic excuses naturally arouses suspicion. ...you might jump to the conclusion he is drunk. If he is, and is still trying to recover, he will tell you about it... For he knows he must be honest if he would live at all. He will appreciate knowing you are not bothering your head about him, that you are not suspicious nor are you trying to run his life so he will be shielded from temptation to drink. If he is conscientiously following the program of recovery he can go anywhere...

If sponsees relapse, yet we're sure they do want to stop drinking, they should be afforded a second chance (pages 147-148):

In case he does stumble, even once, you will have to decide whether to let him go. If you are sure he doesn't mean business, there is no doubt you should discharge him. If, on the contrary, you are sure he is doing his utmost, you may wish to give him another chance. But you should feel under no obligation to keep him on, for your obligation has been well discharged already.

... If he wants to stop, he should be afforded a real chance. If he cannot or does not want to stop, he should be discharged. The exceptions are few.

We think this method of approach will accomplish several things. It will permit the rehabilitation of good men. At the same time you will feel no reluctance to rid yourself of those who cannot or will not stop.

Our sponsees should not expect to receive a disproportionate amount of our time and attention (pages 149-150):

It is not to be expected that an alcoholic...will receive a disproportionate amount of time and attention. He should not be made a favorite. The right kind of man, the kind who recovers, will not want this sort of thing. He will not impose. Far from it. He will work like the devil and thank you to his dying day.

...But why not? They have a new attitude, and they have been saved from a living death. ...enjoyed every moment spent in getting them straightened out.

Reading from the Big Book – part 5:

By this point you'll enjoy spending a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but still keep it brief. If still applicable, ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met. If your sponsee appears to be delaying some Step Nine amends purposely, ask him or her what you can do to help regain momentum. You would also ask your sponsee to describe any recent experiences with the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Steps.

Ask your sponsee to read “A Vision for You” (chapter 11) aloud from the Big Book and then discuss it together, sharing your experience, strength, and hope. You may wish to focus on these excerpts:

The less people tolerated us, the more we withdrew from society, from life itself (page 151):

For most normal folks, drinking means conviviality, companionship and colorful imagination.

It means release from care, boredom and worry. It is joyous intimacy with friends and a feeling that life is good. But not so with us in those last days of heavy drinking. The old pleasures were gone. They were but memories. Never could we recapture the great moments of the past. There was an insistent yearning to enjoy life as we once did and a heartbreaking obsession that some new miracle of control would enable us to do it. There was always one more attempt—and one more failure.

The less people tolerated us, the more we withdrew from society, from life itself. As we became subjects of King Alcohol, shivering denizens of his mad realm, the chilling vapor that is loneliness settle down. It thickened, ever becoming blacker. Some of us sought out sordid places, hoping to find understanding companionship and approval. Momentarily we did—then would come oblivion and the awful awakening to face the hideous Four Horsemen—Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair. Unhappy drinkers who read this page will understand!

We were unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it (pages 151-152):

Now and then a serious drinker, being dry at the moment says, “I don't miss it at all. Feel better. Work better. Having a better time.” As ex-problem drinkers, we smile at such a sally. We know our friend is like a boy whistling in the dark to keep up his spirits. He fools himself. Inwardly he would give anything to take half a dozen drinks and get away with them. He will presently try the old game again, for he isn't happy about his sobriety. He cannot picture life without alcohol. Some day he will be unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it. Then he will know loneliness such as few do. He will be at the jumping-off place. He will wish for the end.

In the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous we find release from care, boredom and worry (page 152):

We have shown how we got out from under. You say, "Yes, I'm willing. But am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum, like some righteous people I see? I know I must get along without liquor, but how can I? Have you a sufficient substitute?"

Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom and worry. Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at least. The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead. Thus we find the fellowship, and so will you.

We know what it means to give of ourselves that others may survive and rediscover life (pages 152-153):

"How is that to come about?" you ask. "Where am I to find these people?"

You are going to meet these new friends in your own community. ... High and low, rich and poor... Among them you will make lifelong friends. You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties, for you will escape disaster together and you will commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey. Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

The age of miracles is still with us; our own recovery proves that! (page 153):

It may seem incredible that these men are to become happy, respected, and useful once more. How can they rise out of such misery, bad repute and hopelessness? The practical answer is that since these things have happened among us, they can happen with you. Should you wish them above all else, and be willing to make use of our experiences, we are sure they will come. The age of miracles is still with us. Our own recovery proves that!

We have found something brand new in life (page 159):

These men had found something brand new in life. Though they knew they must help other alcoholics if they would remain sober, that motive became secondary. It was transcended by the happiness they found in giving themselves for others. They shared their homes, their slender resources, and gladly devoted their spare hours to fellow-sufferers. They were willing, by day or night, to place a new man in the hospital and visit him afterward. They grew in numbers. They experienced a few distressing failures, but in those cases they made an effort to bring the man's family into a spiritual way of living, thus relieving much worry and suffering.

Aside from fellowship and sociability, the prime object of our meetings is to provide a time and place where new people might bring their problems (pages 159-161):

... Seeing much of each other, scarce an evening passed that someone's home did not shelter a little gathering of men and women, happy in their release, and constantly thinking how they might present their discovery to some newcomer. In addition to these casual get-togethers, it became customary to set apart one night a week for a meeting to be attended by anyone and everyone interested in a spiritual way of life. Aside from fellowship and sociability, the prime object was to provide a time and place where new people might bring their problems. ...

The very practical approach to...problems, the absence of intolerance of any kind, the informality, the genuine democracy, the uncanny understanding which these people had were irresistible. He and his wife would leave elated by the thought of what they could now do for some stricken acquaintance and his family. They knew they had a host of new friends; it seemed that they had known these strangers always. They had seen miracles...

The things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to us (page 161):

But life among Alcoholics Anonymous is more than attending gatherings and visiting hospitals. Cleaning up old scrapes, helping to settle family differences, explaining the disinherited son to his irate parents, lending money and securing jobs for each other, when justified—these are everyday occurrences. No one is too discredited or has sunk too low to be welcomed cordially—if he means business. Social distinctions, petty rivalries and jealousies—these are laughed out of countenance. Being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and reunited under one God, with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others, the things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to them. How could they?

We realize we know only a little; God will constantly disclose more to us (page 164):

Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

May God bless you and keep you—until then.

Questions from the 12 and 12 text – part 1:

By this point you'll enjoy spending a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee check in with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but still keep it brief. If still applicable, ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met. If your sponsee appears to be delaying some Step Nine amends purposely, ask him or her what you can do to help regain momentum. You would also ask your sponsee to describe any recent experiences with the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Steps.

Because the chapter is so long, and because there are so many questions in the text, it's usually best to focus this meeting primarily on the reading, answering only the first two questions. The rest of the questions can be answered and discussed the next time you meet.

The first two questions from the text of Step Twelve in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, along with optional related questions, are listed below:

Pages 106 – *What do we mean when we talk about a “spiritual awakening”?*

Related questions:

Have you become able to do, feel, and believe more than was possible for you before working the Steps?

Do you feel that you are now on a spiritual path that is going somewhere?

Do you find yourself in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love which you had thought yourself incapable?

Page 109 – *... we could predict that the doubter who ... still considered his well-loved AA group the higher power, would presently love God and call him by name. Now, what about the rest of the Twelfth Step?*

Related questions:

Do you sense that you are standing at the edge of new mysteries, joys, and experiences of which you had never even dreamed?

Are you still regularly attending AA meetings, not only to receive something yourself but also to give reassurance and support?

Are you being of service in your group...beyond your group...outside of AA?

Questions from the 12 and 12 text – part 2:

By this point you'll enjoy spending a few minutes – 5-10 – letting your sponsee checkin with you on various aspects of his or her sobriety, but still keep it brief. If still applicable, ask your sponsee about progress on his or her amends since the last time you met. If your sponsee appears to be delaying some Step Nine amends purposely, ask him or her what you can do to help regain momentum. You would also ask your sponsee to describe any recent experiences with the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Steps.

Then, when you're both ready, move on to the questions from the text of Step Twelve in Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* which are listed below, broken down into several focused sections. Like the previous chapters, there are related questions for use in personalizing the reading, expanding your sponsee's understanding of the Step, and deepening the discussion between sponsor and sponsee. For this Step, they are gathered nearer the end of this chapter.

Questions about practicing these principles in all our affairs:

Page 111 – *Now comes the biggest question yet. What about the practice of these principles in all our affairs?*

Page 111 – *Can we love the whole pattern of living as eagerly as we do the small segment of it we discover when we try to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety?*

Pages 111-112 – *Can we bring the same spirit of love and tolerance into our sometimes deranged family lives that we bring to our AA group?*

Page 112 – *Can we have the same kind of confidence and faith in these people who have been infected and sometimes crippled by our own illness that we have in our sponsors?*

Page 112 – *Can we actually carry the AA spirit into our daily work?*

Page 112 – *Can we meet our newly recognized responsibilities to the world at large?*

Page 112 – *Can we bring new purpose and devotion to the religion of our choice?*

Page 112 – *Can we find a new joy of living in trying to do something about all these things?*

Questions about practicing these principles while living “life on life’s terms”:

Page 112 – *How shall we come to terms with seeming failure or success?*

Page 112 – *Can we now accept and adjust to either without despair or pride?*

Page 112 – *Can we accept poverty, sickness, loneliness, and bereavement with courage and serenity?*

Page 112 – *Can we steadfastly content ourselves with the humbler, yet sometimes more durable, satisfactions when the brighter, more glittering achievements are denied us?*

Questions about practicing these principles in times of difficulty:

Page 113 – *Then perhaps life, as it has a way of doing, suddenly hands us a great big lump that we can’t begin to swallow, let alone digest. ... What then?*

Page 113 – *Have we alcoholics in AA got, or can we get, the resources to meet the same calamities which come to so many?*

Page 113 – *These were problems of life which we could never face up to. Can we now, with the help of God as we understand Him, handle them as well and as bravely as our nonalcoholic friends often do?*

Page 113 – *Can we transform our calamities into assets, sources of growth and comfort to ourselves and those about us?*

Questions about practicing these principles in and out of intimate relationships:

Page 117 – *Nearly every sound human being experiences, at some time in life, a compelling desire to find a mate of the opposite sex with whom the fullest possible union can be made—spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical. ... So our question will be this: How, despite our ignorance, compulsion, and self-will, will we avoid continuing to misuse this gift for our own destruction?*

Page 119 – *AA has many single alcoholics who wish to marry and are in a position to do so. Some marry fellow AAs. How do those relationships turn out?*

Page 120 – *And what can be said of many AA members who, for a variety of reasons, cannot have a family life?*

Page 120 – *At first many of these feel, lonely, hurt, and left out as they witness so much domestic happiness about them. If they cannot have this kind of happiness, can AA offer them satisfactions of similar worth and durability?*

Question about practicing these principles as we look toward the future:

Page 121 – *The spectacle of years of waste threw us into panic. There simply wouldn't be time, we thought, to rebuild our shattered fortunes. How could we ever take care of those awful debts, possess a decent home, educate the kids, and put something by for old age?*

Related questions:

Have you seen monotony, pain, and even calamity turned to good use by those who keep on trying to practice AA's Twelve Steps?

Do you have the ability, by God's grace, to take your troubles in stride and to turn them into demonstrations of faith?

Have your desires for emotional security and wealth, for personal prestige and power, for romance, and for family satisfactions been tempered and redirected?

Are you willing to place spiritual growth first, before everything else in your life?

Have you stopped trying to play God, dominating others and running their lives?

Have you stopped being over-dependent on the people around you, insisting that people protect and take care of you or that the world owes you a living?

Have you begun to develop the sense of being in partnership or brotherhood with all those around you?

Have you begun to give constantly of yourself without demand for repayment?

Have you discovered that the best possible source of emotional stability is God?

Can you now cheerfully perform humble labor without worrying about tomorrow?

Is money gradually becoming your servant and not your master?

Is money becoming a means of exchanging love and service with others?

Have you found that freedom from fear is more important than freedom from want?

Can you now see and accept reality?

Are you willing to stay right-sized?

Have you begun to find freedom from childishness, emotional sensitivity, and grandiosity?

Do you now define true ambition as the deep desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God?

Wrap-up questions:

Wrap-up questions from page 125 of Step Twelve in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are below. If your sponsee has made a good start on this Step, the answers to all three questions will be “Yes.”

- 1) Have you found a way up and out (of active alcoholism), and do you wish to share your knowledge of that way with all who can use it?
- 2) Have you begun to get right with yourself, and with the world about you, and with God?
- 3) Right action is the key to good living. Have you begun to experience the joy of good living?

If any of your sponsee’s answers to these questions are “no” go back to the beginning of this chapter and start again. If you receive “no” answers to these questions on the second attempt, go back to the beginning of the previous chapter, and so on. Some sponsees require much repetition as they work through the Steps.

Final questions for Step Twelve (for now):

Do you believe you’ve made a good start on Step Twelve? Would continuing to meet regularly be helpful? If yes, how would you like to focus our time together going forward – sponsorship, service, Traditions (and then Concepts), a deeper read of the Big Book, reading the Big Book stories, etc?

What's Next?

Many of us find it helpful to continue meeting with our sponsees regularly, even after they've completed the Steps (for now).

If you've recently completed the Twelve Steps with either your sponsee, you have probably made much spiritual progress. That progress is entirely reliable. Every time we work all of the Twelve Steps, with our sponsors or with our sponsees: we deepen our awareness of our powerlessness and unmanageability, related to alcohol and many other problems, never forgetting the bottoms we have reached, both before coming to AA and after; we move further and further from alcoholic insanity; we deepen our commitment to AA and to a life lived under God's care and protection; we face ourselves and our behaviors fearlessly and share what we find with God and our fellows; we more readily let go of our old behaviors and practice new behaviors, growing in humility as a result; we continue to take responsibility for and to clean up our past mistakes; we see ourselves more clearly, both good and bad; we improve our conscious contact with God; and, as a result, we gain a new and deeper spiritual awakening. We can take these Steps over and over for the rest of our lives, receiving all of the gifts listed above and so much more, and many of us do just that.

As your sponsees experience a new spiritual awakening as described in the Twelfth Step, they should next spend as much time and energy as they are able focused on carrying the message and practicing the principles. They'll know when it's time to work the Steps again. They may find themselves once again powerless, not over alcohol, but over something that they can fit into the space where the word "alcohol" is in the First Step. That powerlessness and the unmanageability that comes with it will lead them right back to Step One. Because of the work they've just done, they will likely trust the process of the Steps, even if they trust nothing else. In the meantime, most of us prefer to maintain ongoing relationships with our sponsees, avoiding being contacted only when they're in crisis. Below are suggestions for working with sponsees who are actively living Steps Ten through Twelve.

On the other hand, not all sponsors are open to the details presented below, preferring to work with newcomers exclusively or to offer guidance only in the actual work of the Steps. If that's your preference, just make that clear to your sponsee and ensure that he or she knows it's not personal.

If you and your sponsee do continue meeting beyond Step Twelve, it's often helpful to maintain structured meetings on a consistent basis. To this end, many of us continue to meet with our sponsees weekly and to have a pre-arranged focus for our meetings. As mentioned at the end of Step Twelve, some of these focuses include:

Sponsorship – This often takes the form of taking a deeper read of the Big Book together, this time discussing how your sponsee will carry the message to others. It's also often helpful for new sponsors to immerse themselves in the other literature published by AA, including books and pamphlets, plus the Grapevine. Some sponsees may need encouragement to find and work with sponsees of their own. No one is more suited to offer them this encouragement than you are.

Service – This often takes the form of moving on to a study of the Traditions (and then the Concepts), with emphases on AA’s history and how we function as a worldwide organization. The chapters on the Traditions in the 12 and 12 can be approached in the same question-based approach as the Steps, ideally personalizing the questions so that your sponsee can apply the Traditions to his or her own life. It’s also helpful for new sponsors to read the biographies of our founders, published by AA, and the other service-related books and pamphlets. Some sponsees may need encouragement to find service positions outside of their groups. No one is more suited to offer them this encouragement than you are.

Sobriety and fellowship – This sometimes takes the form of the sponsor and sponsee, who enjoy each other’s company, doing any number of sober activities together: reading the Big Book stories, attending meetings and sober events, doing service at the group and beyond, etc. One benefit in this approach is that some of us have difficulty socializing and making friends in sobriety, even after many years; knowing our sponsor will be participating in the same activities we are is a relief and a pleasure. One risk is that the relationship will become mostly friendship, with little sponsoring taking place. Knowing the difference between sponsorship and friendship is important, and we all need sponsors.

The main thing, of course, is to stay sober, no matter what. We would love to say that no one ever relapses after working the Steps, but that’s simply not true. In order to stay sober in the long-term, ideally for the rest of our lives, we find that we must stay engaged. We have many AA resources to help us. The main ones have been described above and throughout this guide. To reiterate, they are: Steps, sponsorship, service, meetings, literature, and Higher Power – not necessarily in that order. Most of us who gain and maintain long-term sobriety use two or more of these tools every day, one day at a time.

We now come to the end of this guide. We leave you with the very same words that end the Big Book:

We realize we know only a little; God will constantly disclose more to us (page 164):

Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

May God bless you and keep you—until then.