

**An Unpopular Guide
to the**

**Four Elements
of Peace**

**Finding peace
in our various 12-Step programs**

**by
Several Program Members**

2AGJLTw/owhom

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I speak only of my experience: all else is untrue.

Kabir (fifteenth century Sufi poet)

Right here and now, watch for fear. Consent to having it removed. Tell someone else about your fear. Put things right if you've done harm, and then think about somebody other than yourself.

When the fear has gone, let your intuition suggest what you should do ... right here and now.

*Summary of Steps 10 and 11,
origin unknown*

I can't. Something can. I think I'll let it.

*Alternative version of the "ABC,"
Page 60, AA Big Book*

Four Elements of Peace

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1.

A few notes before we begin

This little booklet is about the four elements of peace – true peace – in our various 12-Step programs. These are:

- Learning how to have our fear removed.
- Determining what we should do then, and finding the power to do it.
- Developing a relationship with an inner resource which can make these things happen.
- Learning to live in the here and now.

Using this booklet

Our booklet is not going to be very useful unless *you* are able to get some benefit from it. As with all the *Unpopular Guides*, we suggest you take what you need and leave the rest behind. To help you with this, from time to time we've inserted questions you might want to ask yourself about the material you've just read. Answering these questions is of course entirely optional.

Our booklet is not very long, but we don't want to waste your time! Every so often, we stop for what we call an "Interruption," to help you decide whether you need to read any further.

The words "Right here and right now"

We use different versions of the phrase "Right here and right now." Sometimes it appears as "here and now," or "right here and now," depending on which sounds best.

Page references

All page references are to the second edition of the Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous* unless otherwise noted. (The page numbers are identical in more recent editions of the Big Book.)

An important note

Finally, please read carefully the important note on the next page.

PLEASE READ THIS

Our use of the word “resource”

In our discussions, we use phrases such as “resource,” “unexpected inner resource,” or “inner resource” where other members of 12-Step fellowships may use “God,” “Higher Power,” “God as we understand God,” and similar wording.

There is a reason that we chose to do this, and later in our booklet we explain what that reason is. In the meantime, though, when we use phrases like “unexpected inner resource” or “inner resource,” you should feel free to substitute your own choice of words or phrases.

2.

Our practice each day, briefly

What we do each day

This booklet carries the title *Four Elements of Peace*. We – the creators of this booklet – combine these four elements into our own daily practice of recovery. By “daily,” we mean that we do certain things at least once a day, and some of them throughout the day.

What our practice brings us

Our daily practice is based very closely on pages 84-88, and on certain other pages, from the basic text of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), usually known as the Big Book. Our routine use of this daily practice has brought us a sense of peace which we could not have imagined when we were active addicts. In addition, that sense of peace seems to become deeper and deeper as we continue our daily practice.

Our daily practice

We ask ourselves if we are afraid. If we are, we ask or we allow some inner resource to remove that fear. If the fear remains, we talk to another person about it. If we’ve harmed anyone because of our fear, we put things right. Then we think about someone we can help. (This is what the AA Big Book suggests about Step 10.)

If we are not sure what to do at any point, we allow that inner resource or sixth sense or intuitive voice to suggest what we should do right there and then, and to give us the strength to do it. (This is part of the Big Book’s description of Step 11.) At least once during the day, we set aside a quiet time. (This is also suggested in the Big Book’s treatment of Step 11.)

Finally, we remind ourselves throughout the day that we can only live in the “right here, right now.”

We offer a more detailed description of each part of our daily practice later in this booklet.

First Interruption:

Do you need to read any further?

You may be wondering why we've started this booklet with a summary of our daily practice.

Here is the reason:

You may already have all you need

If you yourself are following this daily practice, or something very much like it, then probably you will already have begun to experience peace for yourself. And if this is true, perhaps you don't really need to read any further.

We can assure you, from our own decades of this daily practice, that any peace you may already have experienced can only grow and deepen. That is what has happened for us, whether we encounter happiness or sadness, friendship or loneliness, health or illness, as long as we continue our practice.

The purpose of the "Interruptions" in this booklet

We wrote this booklet as a guide to finding peace in our various 12-Step programs. As we said a few moments ago, from time to time, we've inserted these Interruptions. They allow us to ask you this: Have you read enough to help you find the peace we are talking about?

We'd obviously like it if you decide to read this entire booklet. But we'd like it a lot more if – at any point – you start or intensify your own practice and find that peace for yourself.

Do you want to read more?

If you do choose to read on, we talk next about the Promises in the AA Big Book and their close connection with the experience of peace.

3.

Peace and the Promises

What is peace?

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous gives us an excellent overview of peace. It takes the form of the well-known Promises, which are found on pages 83-84 of the Big Book.

Here they are:

- 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 on 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 [some inner resource] is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

If we “get” the Promises, do we keep them?

The Big Book says that these Promises “will always materialize if we work for them” (page 84). The “work” referred to seems to be doing Steps 4-9. So “[i]f we are painstaking about this phase of our development” (page 83) – in other words, if we do a thorough job of Steps 4-9 – these Promises will start to be fulfilled.

So are these Promises things that we “get” and then keep? Or do they seem to come and go?

Just a “taster”

The answer is that they come and go. In particular, while we are still working Steps 4-9, we may only get a glimpse or a taste of them. Some of the Promises may be *starting* to materialize, but they don't always stay very long. As the Big Book says, “They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly” (page 84).

Any member of any 12-Step program who has experienced these Promises will confirm that they come and go, particularly at first. The happiness and freedom mentioned in the Promises may disappear. We may start brooding over the past again. Serenity and peace may seem to be unavailable. It can feel as though our experience isn't benefiting anyone. We may start to feel self-pity. Selfishness can return. Once more, we may be thinking only of our personal agendas. Our whole attitude and outlook on life can go back to the way it used to be. We start to be afraid of people and of money problems. Our intuition may fail us. And we may lose any sense of any inner resource doing anything for us at all.

But if we follow the simple practice that we just summarized in our booklet, the Promises do return. More and more often, we experience the peace that the Promises offer.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

Which Promises have come true for us? Do they come and go, or have some of them become an ongoing part of our recovery? Which Promises have not materialized at all for us?

The “fake” Promises

There is a problem that we can create for ourselves here: thinking that the Promises can somehow be “permanent.” The result can be that we mistakenly start hoping or believing that we'll always be able to live in this pink cloud of happiness and freedom; that we'll never regret the past again, and we'll never want to shut the door on it; that we'll always be serene and peaceful; that telling others about our experience will always benefit them; that we'll never feel self-pity or think that we're useless; that we'll never be selfish again, and we'll always find other people to be interesting; that self-seeking will never return; that this new attitude and outlook will stay with us for ever; that pretty much everybody will

like us, and we'll always have enough money; that our intuition will never fail us; and that we will always know that some resource or other is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

These are the “fake” Promises. They are mythical. As we said a moment ago, the *real* Promises can come and go. We may have them, and then they may go away.

What is *not* promised

There is a second potential problem associated with the Promises. We can be misled into believing they offer something that they *don't*.

There are certain things that are not mentioned at all in the “real” Promises. And as we progress in our recovery, it can become clear that some of the things we value the most, things that we believe we really *need*, are missing from the Promises.

For example, most of us think that we must have the support and companionship of family, relatives, and friends. We need to believe that our family and our friends are going to be healthy, protected, and safe. But the Promises make no mention of these things.

Most of us think that we need money, whether from savings, or investments, or working, just to *live*. But the Promises offer no guarantee of money or even a job. In fact, they don't appear to offer any kind of worldly security at all, to us or to anyone else.

There may be plenty of other similar things that we want or even think that we need ... and that don't appear anywhere in the Promises.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

What things do we think we need that are *not* offered by the Promises? Is it possible for us to be at peace without those things?

What *is* promised

What the Promises *do* offer is freedom from the *fear* surrounding these things that we think we need. They don't promise financial security, but they do promise freedom from the *fear* of financial *insecurity*, right here and now. They don't promise happy and secure relationships with family

and friends, but they do promise freedom from the *fear* associated with those relationships, right here and now. They don't promise any guarantees about the past, the present, or the future, but they do promise freedom from the *fear* of the past, the present, and the future.

And – once our fear is removed or lessened – they also promise the knowledge of what we should do, right here and now; and they promise us the power to do it, right here and now. These things are the focus of the last two Promises.

The earlier Promises are realized as we do Steps 4-9 and Step 10. The last two Promises point forward to our practice of Step 11.

If, therefore, you're reading this booklet because you're hoping to discover how to get whatever you *want*, then sadly we are unable to help you. If, on the other hand, you are hoping to discover how to be at peace *regardless* of whether you get whatever you want, our booklet may be of some use to you.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

How many of our present problems are actually fear-based? What would our lives look like if we didn't have those fears?

What actually happens as we work Steps 4-9

These six Steps – Steps 4-9 – have one main purpose, which is to rid us of the burden of our past. Bill W. regarded this as being so important that half of his Twelve Steps are dedicated to it. Not only did he think that getting rid of this burden was important: it was also a priority. Dealing with our past is the first thing we do after Steps 1, 2, and 3. Dealing with our past is the first *concrete action* we take in our recovery.

These six Steps resolve two issues connected to our past

There are two issues that these six Steps take care of.

The first is our *fear* of the past. That fear must be dealt with, as Bill W. makes clear when talking about Step 5: “These memories [of the past] are a nightmare ... [the alcoholic] 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” (page 73). Steps 4, 5, 6, and 7 are intended to remove that fear.

How is this done? We list the fears we have and have had, whether or not we have any resentments associated with them (Step 4). We discuss with our inner resource and with another person “the exact *nature* of our wrongs” – in other words, the recurring fears that made us act the way we did (Step 5). And in Steps 6 and 7 we turn to that inner resource and ask or allow it to remove those fears – the fears that are and were the source of our “defects of character.” As the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* says on page 76, “The chief activator of our defects of character is self-centered fear.” If the fear is removed right here and now, the defects will also be removed right here and now.

The second issue that is taken care of in Steps 4-9 is correcting, wherever possible, the damage that has resulted from our fear-driven behavior. Our inner resource helps us to remember those who we have harmed, and suggests where we can make amends without causing further damage to them. Then we seek out the people we harmed and make whatever amends that our inner resource may suggest. This is the purpose of Steps 8 and 9.

Together, these six Steps take away our fear of the past (Steps 4-7), and show us what to do as our fear of the past is being removed (Steps 8 and 9).

What does the life of recovery look like after Steps 4-9?

The Promises are already “being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly” (page 84) as we work Steps 4-9.

And they continue to become a bigger and bigger part of our lives. They are the result of adopting a “way of living” based on the ongoing practice of Steps 10 and 11.

If we think for a moment, we’ll see that Step 10 is simply a compressed version of Steps 4-9. So if practicing Steps 4-9 began to make the Promises come true, it follows that practicing Step 10 means the Promises will continue to be fulfilled more and more often in more and more areas of our lives, and we will increasingly find ourselves at peace.

Perhaps the greatest of the Promises is *We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace*. To be at peace in every part of our lives, regardless of poverty or wealth, illness or health, failure or success, sadness or happiness is not only to understand the message of recovery but to *become* that message. And when we *become* the message, only then can we transmit to others the peace that we increasingly experience ourselves, because “obviously [we] cannot transmit something [we] haven’t got” (page 164).

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

If we’ve already worked Steps 4-9, have our fears of the past been removed? Have we accepted that the practice of Step 10 is just a simple short version of Steps 4-9? How do we feel about making Steps 10 and 11 an ongoing practice? Are we willing to do that, or do we feel that we can manage all right without doing them?

Something to think about

We mentioned this just a moment ago, but it’s worth repeating:

Most of the Promises are about the results of having our fear removed – in other words, the peace that results from working Steps 4-9 (and then Step 10). But the last two Promises look forward to Step 11, and the deepening peace that comes from our growing relationship with our inner resource.

You may like to read over the Promises again and see if you agree. We’ll be saying more about this a little later in our booklet.

Second Interruption: Have you read enough?

So far, we have described our practice for you. And we've suggested that if you're already pursuing that practice, or something similar to it, you actually have all you need to find peace and to realize it increasingly in all areas of your life.

We've talked at some length about the Promises of the Big Book. We've seen what we do in order to realize them. We've seen that they can "come and go," particularly at first. And we've seen how they can be fulfilled in our lives more and more often, if we practice Steps 10 and 11 as a "way of living."

We've suggested that the greatest Promise is this: *We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.* If your own practice is beginning to bring you peace, it may be that you have all you need, and you may decide therefore not to read any further.

If this hasn't begun to happen for you, though, it may be because of overlooking an important element of peace, one which we have already hinted at. It is the idea of living our lives "right here and right now," rather than brooding on the past or worrying about the future.

This business of living in the "right here, right now" can take some getting used to. But we believe it to be *vital*. It actually affects the other three elements directly, as we shall see. And finding true peace in our recovery is, in our experience, very difficult unless we understand that we can only be at peace right here and right now.

Closely related to the business of living "right here and right now" is the nature of our relationship with the "inner resource" that we spoke of earlier.

So we – the authors of this booklet – focus on *four* elements or components of peace in our daily practice:

- The practice of Step 10.

- The practice of Step 11.
- The practice of developing our relationship with our “inner resource,” which is also part of Step 11.
- The practice of living “right here and now,” perhaps the least understood aspect or element of peace.

We talk about each of these practices next. We are going to suggest that:

- Step 10 removes or reduces fear. When fear is removed, acceptance follows automatically. Basic peace is the continuing experience of that acceptance, the acceptance that comes when our fear is taken away.
- Step 11 deepens our peace. When we do Step 10, our fear is removed or lessened, but we may still be unsure as to what we should do. Step 11 shows us how to find out what we should do and offers us the power to do it. When we are without fear, when we know what to do, and when we have the power to do it, then we are indeed at peace.
- Our “inner resource” is what takes away our fear. Our inner resource also suggests what we should do and gives us the power to do it. So real peace comes entirely from that inner resource.
- Our fear can only be removed or reduced right now. Here and now are the only time and place that we can determine what we should do right here and now, and get the power to do it. Right here and right now are the only time and place that we can experience or encounter our unique inner resource. So it’s only possible for us to experience true peace right here, right now.

4.

Four elements of peace

How we find peace

Once more, then: It seems that there are *four* elements that together bring peace in our 12-Step programs.

We show them here in a different order, beginning with our experience of “right here and right now.” We deal with this first, because we find that members of 12-Step programs often have more difficulty with this element than with the other three.

- We need to **live as much as we can in the “right here and right now.”** After all, the only time we can experience peace is right here, right now. We can’t experience it five minutes from now, or a month ago.
- We need for **our fear to be removed, or at least to be reduced,** right here and right now. The only time we can feel fear is right here, right now. So it makes sense that our fear can only be removed or reduced right here and now. This starts to happen as a result of our working Steps 4-9, and continues to happen as we work Step 10.
- We need **to know what to do, and how to find the power to do it,** right here and now. The only time we can take action is right here, right now. We can’t take action tomorrow or a year ago. So we need to know how to act here and now, and this starts to happen as we work Step 11.
- We need a ***relationship with some sort of “resource”*** which will remove or reduce our fear, show us what to do, and give us the power to do it. Whatever that “resource” may be, the only time we can access it or have a relationship with it is right here and right now. That’s the only time we can have a relationship with anyone or anything – right here and now. Developing and deepening this relationship is also part of Step 11.

So when we talk about finding peace, we are not talking about finding peace for ever and ever. We are talking about finding peace right here

and now. That's the only time we can experience peace. We remember that, if we are hoping or expecting that we'll always have peace all the time, it's because we're focusing on the "fake" Promises rather than the real ones.

What about Step 12 and working with others? Isn't that just as important as the four things we just talked about?

We – the creators of this booklet – believe that if our fear is removed right here and now by some sort of resource, then that same resource will show us how to carry our message to others, and guide us towards practicing “these principles in all our affairs.”

We believe that Step 12, unlike the previous eleven Steps, is *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*. In other words, the first eleven Steps suggest what we should do – they are a *prescription*. But Step 12 is a *description*: it tells us what will automatically happen if we do the previous Steps – particularly Steps 10 and 11, and Step 11 most of all.

If we work Steps 10 and 11, then we'll know what we should do, and carrying this message to others and practicing these principles in all our affairs will happen all by itself. Step 10 removes our fear. Step 11 offers suggestions what to do and the power to do it. Step 12 consists simply of ... doing it.

Can these four elements of peace be found in the Big Book?

Yes, they can, but we have to look for them. So now we'll see what the AA Big Book says about each of these elements of peace.

Some words in our quotes from the Big Book are *in italics*. We have added these italics to highlight important words in each quote.

5.

What the Big Book says about Right here, right now

What the Big Book says about “right here, right now”

The Big Book only uses the phrase “right here and now” once in its first 164 pages. But on several other occasions, it suggests that our daily practice should be a constant one – not something we do once or twice, but “right here and right now.”

Here’s what the Big Book says:

- **Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia [peace]. We have it with us *right here and now* (page 16).**
This comes in the last paragraph of Bill W.’s own story. The next (and final) sentence of his story includes the word “peace.”
- **This thought brings us to Step 10, which suggests we *continue* to take personal inventory and *continue* to set right any new mistakes as we cleaned up the past. 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 (page 84).**
The word *continue* or some variation of it occurs four times in this paragraph.
- **What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition ... [in] *all of our activities* These are thoughts which must go with us *constantly* (page 85).**
Our Step 10 practice is something we use in everything we do, all the time.
- **We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried [asking for inspiration, an intuitive thought or decision] for a while. [This practice] gradually *becomes a***

working part of the mind (page 86).

Finding out what to do right here and now, using Step 11, can become a constant practice.

- ***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*** (page 86).

Admitting that our lives are unmanageable by us (Step 1), and asking for help, is something we do frequently.

If we're facing difficulties right here and now, our practice is available to us right here and now. At any point in our lives, we can do a few simple things to have our fear removed or reduced, to determine what we should do right then and there, and to get the power to do it.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

Did we already know that the Big Book places such an emphasis on the continuing practice of Steps 10 and 11? Do we actively do these Steps? If we don't do them, might it be a good idea to start doing them? If we *do* do them, how often do we do them? Does it look as though it might be useful to do them more often? What do we think Bill W. means when he says that "we have [peace] with us right here and now"?

6.

What the Big Book says about Dealing with fear

What the Big Book says about fear and how to deal with it

Now that we have seen what the Big Book says about the importance of living in the “right here and right now,” we’ll look at what it says about fear and dealing with fear.

We’ll begin by reminding ourselves of the link between dealing with fear, and living in the “right here, right now.”

When do we feel afraid?

The only time we ever feel afraid is right here and right now. It may be true that we think we’re afraid of something that may happen in – say – a week. But even if we think we’re afraid of something in the future, we’re feeling the fear right here and now, not at some time in the future.

Similarly, we may be worried about something that happened in the past. But even if it’s true that something in the past is making us afraid, we’re feeling that fear right here and now.

So if we’re afraid, then we’re afraid right here and now. And so what we need is something to remove or reduce that fear right here and now – not ten minutes from now or three years ago, but right here and now.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

Are we afraid of anything, large or small, right now? If we’re afraid of something in the past or the future, can we see that the fear is happening right here and now?

Now we’ll see what the Big Book says about all this.

- **We reviewed our fears thoroughly *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* (page 68).**

Some members of 12-Step programs claim that this paragraph says self-reliance doesn't work. But if we read it more carefully, we see that this is not quite true. The paragraph says that sometimes self-reliance *does* work.

However, if we are afraid right here and now, it's a sign that self-reliance may be failing us. If that's the case, then we need to depend on something other than self-reliance to remove or reduce our fear.

- **We ask [that resource] to *remove our fear* ...** (page 68).
Whatever that inner resource may be, we depend on it to remove our fear, right here and now. When self-reliance fails us, this is the only option that seems to work for us.
- **[We] continue to *watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear*. When these crop up, we ask [that resource] 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** (page 84).
This is the first part of our simple practice. This can take several minutes, or it can take less than a minute. In the next part of our booklet, we describe exactly how we do this.

Selfishness, dishonesty, and resentment are the three main symptoms of fear. Some people call them defects of character. When self-reliance is failing us, one or more of these symptoms usually shows up in our behavior. They are warning signs that we are afraid, and if we are afraid then our fear can only be removed by that inner resource.

- **When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. *Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?*** (page 86)
Here is the suggestion that we repeat this Step 10 practice at the end of the day.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

How much do we depend on self-reliance? How many things do we handle, or try to handle, using self-reliance? Is there anything which we're trying to deal with using that self-reliance, but that still makes us afraid? Might it be a good idea to try Step 10 instead?

7.

What the Big Book says about Determining what to do, and finding the power to do it

Once our fear has been removed or lessened (by doing Steps 4-9 on our past, or by doing Step 10 if we've done Steps 4-9), we may be uncertain as to what we should do, and how to find the strength to do it. This is dealt with by Step 11, but there are important references to it in other parts of the Big Book.

The Big Book gives specific suggestions about what we should do, right here and right now, once Step 10 has removed or lessened our fear:

- **I was to test my thinking by the new [inner resource] within. *Common sense would thus become uncommon sense* (page 13).** This comes from Bill's own story. When we are discovering what we should do, an intuitive thought from our inner resource is more important than so-called common sense.
- **We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us** (page 84). This is the first of the two variants of the word *intuition* in the Big Book. Intuition is one of the ways that our inner resource "talks" to us.
- **We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense** (page 85). This "vital sixth sense" is the inspiration or intuition that comes from our inner resource and guides our actions.
- **On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask [our inner resource] 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 ...** (page 86).

We use whatever inner resource we depend on to direct our thinking. Provided we've done this, it's all right to use our brains.

- **[W]e may face indecision Here we ask [our inner resource] for *inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle* (page 86).**

One of the most important parts of the Big Book. We depend on that inner resource for intuitive help. We don't struggle because we're no longer afraid: we've already used Step 10 to deal with any fear we may have.

- **[Following this practice] gradually becomes a working part of the mind [We] find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. *We come to rely upon it* (page 87).**

If our fear has been removed, then turning routinely to our inner resource for guidance starts to become habitual.

- **[We ask] 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 As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and *ask for the right thought or action* (page 87).**

Finding out what we should do in each situation, and getting the power to deal with each situation, is a constant practice which we do "right here and right now."

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

How many of these Step 11 suggestions from the Big Book do we use several times a day? Once a day? Sometimes? Never? If we are "fac[ing] indecision," how are we supposed to "relax and take it easy"? Might it be a good idea to do Step 10 before we do Step 11? Why? What is it that Step 10 does for us that Step 11 might not do? What is it that Step 11 does for us that Step 10 might not do?

8.

What the Big Book says about The “unsuspected inner resource”

The AA Big Book has plenty to say about “God” (around 130 references in the first 164 pages), “God as you understand Him/God” (five references) and “Higher Power” (just two references).

We also find the terms *Creator; Father of Light; Creative Intelligence; Spirit of the Universe; Universal Mind; Spirit of Nature; Great Reality; Presence of Infinite Power and Love; Maker; Director; Principal; Father; Employer; Friend.*

An entire chapter is devoted to persuading “We Agnostics” (pages 44-57) of the existence of “God.”

You will already have seen that we – the creators of this booklet – have preferred to use the terms “resource” or “inner resource” or variations of these terms, where many members of 12-Step programs would use the word “God” or one of Bill W.’s other terms. Why do we prefer words like “unsuspected inner resource”?

Those of us who have religious beliefs

If we count ourselves among the “more religious members” (page 568) of our various 12-Step programs, then we probably have no trouble with the idea of “God” being at the root of our recovery, or with the persistent use of the word “God” throughout the first 164 pages of the Big Book.

A personal conception of God

But there is some evidence that Bill W. himself was not entirely at ease with the word. On page 47 he says, “When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God.” And on page 93, he says, “If the [prospective member of AA] be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that *he does not have to agree with your conception of God* There is no use arousing any prejudice he may have against certain theological terms and conceptions”

Let's compare what Bill W. says here to what some leaders of religious faiths or denominations might say. By contrast with Bill W., some leaders might object if their members were to say that they each have their own conception of God. Those leaders might well point out to their members that a particular conception of God is part of the definition of their faith. If people agree with the conception of God offered or even defined by that faith, they may become members of that faith; if they don't, then there may be some question whether they can be members.

So Bill W.'s statements may not necessarily be talking about a *religious* God. They are certainly broader than statements we typically hear from many religious people.

Members of 12-Step programs tend to have a broader view of "God"

We sometimes meet new or more evangelistic members in our 12-Step programs who have problems accepting that other members may not share their religious beliefs about God. We may ourselves be religious. But however deep our own religious beliefs may be, becoming a member of a 12-Step program means we accept that our fellow members may have a different or even much more flexible conception of God than us.

Most of us have no difficulties accepting other members' personal conception of God. In fact, it would probably be fair to say that "religious" members of 12-Step programs tend to have a broader view of God than their religious friends who are not in a 12-Step program.

The problem can be the very word "God"

However, this talk of "your own conception of God" in the AA Big Book may still not be broad enough for some people. For various reasons, their conception of God can be of something at best unpleasant and quite possibly even terrifying or horrifying.

For those of us who are members of some religion or other, but have been able to come to terms with our 12-Step program's broader view of God, it can be easy to underestimate the extent to which some prospective members are simply "allergic" to the *very word* "God." We can have difficulty understanding that these members may have been exposed in their lives to religious abuse of various kinds, both in families

and in communities – abuse all too often justified by remarks which include the word “God.”

And the percentage of people in general who *do* have difficulty with any conception of God has increased since the Big Book first appeared. People in the West who identify as “religious” represent a smaller proportion of the general population with each passing decade.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

Do we identify ourselves as religious? If we do, how do we feel about other people in our fellowship who have a different religion or denomination from us? Who have no religion at all? If we don't identify ourselves as religious, how do we feel about fellow-members who do? Do we use the word “God” in meetings? Or do we prefer “Higher Power”? Do we feel that without God there is no 12-Step program? How would we feel if we were in a meeting where everyone else was an atheist or agnostic? Why would we feel that way? How would we feel if we were in a meeting where everyone else was a Christian? Where everyone else was a Moslem? Why?

Let's go back to what we need

So let's try a different approach to this matter. Let's put aside for a moment the matter of what this “God” may or may not be. Let's go back to the beginning of this booklet and remind ourselves of the four elements or aspects of peace in our 12-Step programs, and what we need from them in order to be at peace.

We said earlier that we need four things to be at peace. We need a way of having our fear removed. We need to know what to do and we need the power to do it. We need these things right here and now. And we need some resource or other that can make these things possible for us, right here and now.

You will also remember we agreed that these are *all* that we need to be at peace. This is what the Promises of the Big Book offer. You'll recall that we might think we need or want many other things, but we also saw that the Promises made no mention of them. The Promises don't talk about guarantees of personal success, health, wealth, or security. They talk about being at peace with whatever life may bring us.

The unsuspected inner resource

Earlier in our booklet, we suggested that we need some sort of resource which will take away our fears, show us what to do, and allow us to live in the “here and now.” Two years after the appearance of the AA Big Book, Bill W. added an appendix about this element or aspect of peace, and the name he gave to that element or aspect was “resource.” To quote him in full, he called it “an unsuspected inner resource.”

Here is what he says about this unsuspected inner resource:

- **With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves** (page 567).

The first point to notice is that these members are said to have *tapped* this resource. In other words, they are finding or discovering something they already possessed.

The second point is that this resource is *unsuspected*. These members already possessed it, but they weren't aware that they possessed it.

The third point is that this resource is *inner* – it's actually within them. It's something that's a part of what they already are.

- **Most of our experiences [of this unsuspected inner resource] ... develop slowly over a period of time** (page 567). Most of these experiences are *not* “sudden or spectacular upheavals.” Most of them are *not* experiences of “an immediate and overwhelming ‘God-consciousness’ followed by a vast change in feeling and outlook.” They “develop ... over time.” They are a natural result of working Steps 4-9 of our 12-Step programs.
- **Quite often friends ... are aware of the difference long before [the recovering addict] is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by**

himself alone (page 567).

These recovering members realize that something *has already happened* to them, just from working Steps 4-9. Looking back, they realize that they have had these experiences, but in the main they have been undramatic, and these members may not even have been aware of them. But their friends – and eventually those recovering members themselves – start to see that they are not the people they used to be.

- **What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self discipline** (page 567).

During these “few months,” what have these members been doing? Almost certainly, they have been working on Steps 4-9. And – as we have seen – when we work Steps 4-9, we learn how to remove our fear of the past, and the Promises start to materialize.

- **Our more religious members call [these experiences] “God-consciousness”** (page 568).

Religious members of 12-Step programs may link their experience of this unsuspected inner resource with their faith.

By contrast, other members – those with a nominal faith, or those with no religious beliefs at all – simply come to experience an inner resource that their ongoing recovery has made available to them, a resource which can remove their fear and show them what to do, right here and now.

The “resource” we need to be at peace

What Bill W. seems to be saying here is this:

Regardless of whether we may have any religious belief, the collective experience of the first couple of thousand members of AA* suggested that working Steps 4-9 makes available to us an inner resource which can remove our fear and suggest what we should do, right here and now, often through intuition or inspiration of some kind.

* AA membership at the beginning of 1941 was estimated at 2,000. This was when the Spiritual Experience appendix was added.

If we are religious, we may choose to identify that resource as some form of a God or other divinity. But identifying what the resource is may not matter to some of us. Or we may choose to regard this resource as some part of our consciousness which only becomes apparent and available to us when we start to work Steps 4-9 and then continue to practice Steps 10 and 11: in other words, a “built-in” resource that we can use only when our fear has been removed.

Whatever that resource may be, and whether or not we choose to link it to any new or pre-existing religious belief, it can remove our fear right here and now, suggest what we should do right here and now, and give us the power to do it right here and now. This is the resource that can bring us peace, and we have already seen that peace is ultimately what our 12-Step programs offer.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

This part of our booklet maintains that we need some inner resource that will remove our fear, suggest what we should do, and give us the power to do it, right here and now, regardless of what we think that inner resource is. How do those of us who identify as religious feel about this? How do those of us who are *not* particularly religious feel about this? Is this all we need? Do we need more than this? If so, what?

A relationship with that “inner” resource

There is an interesting warning about religious belief in Chapter 8: “Working with Others”:

Your prospect may belong to a religious denomination. His religious education and training may be far superior to yours But he will be curious to learn why his own convictions have not worked and why yours seem to work so well 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 (page 93).

If we have been sober or abstinent in our 12-Step program for any length of time, we will probably have heard some newcomer say of Steps 2 and 3, “Oh, I have no problem with the idea of a God or Higher Power. I have been a practicing member of [insert name of religion here] for [insert number of years here].”

Those of us who regard ourselves as religious will be able to see that Bill W.’s use of the word *inner* is implying much more than the mere belief in, acceptance of, or external practice of our faith. He is talking about the ongoing, moment-by-moment experience of an *intimate* relationship with some resource which is *inside us* and is in some way a *part of us*. His emphasis on “right here and now,” and on the constant nature of our practice, suggest that our active awareness of this resource and our ongoing interaction with it are fundamental to finding and experiencing any real peace.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

Is the “ongoing ... experience of an intimate relationship with some resource” necessary for those of us who identify as religious? If so, why? If not, why not? How is it that people with a sincere religious faith and practice end up in 12-Step programs? Can those of us who are agnostic or even atheistic have this “ongoing ... experience of an intimate relationship”? If so, how? If not, why not?

We agnostics ... and particularly we atheists

So most of us – if we wish to be truly at peace in our recovery – have to engage with this resource *within* us. And this is where those of us who are agnostics and atheists in our various 12-Step programs may have an advantage over those of us who see ourselves as religious.

We agnostics, and particularly we atheists, may not feel the need to link this unsuspected inner resource to any belief at all. As atheists and agnostics, we simply *experience* it as we work, first Steps 4-9, and then Steps 10 and 11. It's a resource, a resource which was unsuspected to begin with, a resource within us, a sort of built-in fear-remover, action-suggester, and action-empowerer which – for us atheists and agnostics – need have no religious connection. We encounter it solely as a result of our practice. The experiences that Appendix II in the Big Book calls

“spiritual” happen for us atheists and agnostics every time we practice Steps 10 and 11.

It may be useful to ask ourselves ...

Is there still something else that we want, beyond the peace that comes from the removing of our fear, knowing what to do, and having the strength to do it, right here and now? If there is something else that we want, and if we view ourselves as religious, what is that “something else”? Will our religion bring us that “something else”? If there is something else that we want, and if we are *non*-religious, what is that “something else”? How will we get it?

More about the unsuspected inner resource

We say more about this unsuspected inner resource later in our booklet. For right now, though, we hope that you understand why we have chosen to use the term “resource” throughout our booklet, rather than one of the many terms that Bill W. uses in the first 164 pages of the Big Book.

We believe that, regardless of whether we consider ourselves to be religious, “spiritual,” or neither of those things, all of us members of 12-Step programs can experience and fully engage with this unsuspected inner resource through our daily practice, and find peace as a natural result.

9.

Putting together what the Big Book says

Let's now take what the Big Book says about each of the four elements or aspects of peace and summarize them as simply as we can. Then we'll see if we can put them all together.

Right here and right now

As we've seen, the Big Book believes that "Utopia" or peace is to be found right here and now ... and *only* right here and now. That means practicing being aware of our fears, large and small, right here and now. It means asking or allowing our inner resource, right here and now, to take away the fear we have right here and now. It means finding out from that inner resource, right here and now, what we should do right here and now, and finding the power to do it right here and now.

Having our fear removed

Sometimes we're aware of our fear. Indeed, sometimes we're *very* aware of being afraid. But often we're not. So the Big Book suggests that we *watch* for fear, by doing Step 10 often.

Sometimes we use self-reliance to handle the situations that are troubling us. Self-reliance may sometimes work, but if our fears persist that's a sign that self-reliance is failing us. Trying then to resolve those fears with self-reliance only leads to more fear. At these times, asking our inner resource to remove them can be the *only* thing that works.

Finding out what to do, and getting the power to do it

Once our fear has been removed or reduced, we can ask that inner resource what we should do and for the power to do it. The "answer" often comes to us in the form of intuition or inspiration, not infrequently right out of the blue, and this can happen throughout the day if we continue our practice throughout the day. Meditation (and prayer if we are religious) seems to make much easier this business of determining what we should do and finding the strength to do it.

The unsuspected inner resource

Some members of 12-Step programs are religious, and identify this “unsuspected inner resource” as that entity which is the focus of their particular religion. Less religious or non-religious members find this resource as a natural result of working Steps 4-9.

Whether or not we see this resource as being a religious entity or simply some sort of internal faculty, the Big Book is suggesting that it can remove our fear, suggest what we should do, and give us the ability to do it. Religious members believe they know exactly what that entity is. Less religious or non-religious members are content to know that, whatever this inner resource may be, it *works*.

Putting it all together

Now we’ll describe as briefly as we can how we find peace in our 12-Step recovery programs, using what we’ve just read in the Big Book.

It is only possible to be at peace right here and now. To be at peace right here and now, we need for any fear that we may have right here and now, large or small, to be removed or lessened (Step 10). Then we need to be shown what to do right here and now, and to find the power to do it (Step 11). We have an inner resource which can offer these things, but it can only do so right here and now. So the more often we do this practice, briefly or at length, the more frequent those periods of peace become, and the longer they last.

Why does this work?

We say more about this later in our booklet, but here is a summary.

The result of the removal of our fear in Step 10 is *acceptance*. There is a lot of talk about acceptance in our 12-Step meetings, but there’s not much said about how we get it.

Our experience suggests that acceptance is simply the absence of fear. If we are no longer afraid of a situation, then we have accepted it. We may not particularly like the situation, in fact we may dislike it very much, but nevertheless we have accepted it. If we haven’t accepted it, that means that we are still afraid in some way. So it’s back to Step 10,

because acceptance is the absence of fear – nothing more and nothing less – and acceptance is the key to peace.

If we have accepted fully this particular moment, then we can determine what to do now, and find the power to do it, in Step 11. When we do Step 11, we find some resource prompting us – usually through an intuitive thought or some kind of inspiration – about what we should do, right then and there. We “know” what to do.

It's important to understand that this “prompting” may not be related in any way to the situation we were afraid of. If we are trying to use Step 11 to figure out what to do *about a particular “problem,”* then we may still be afraid in some way, and once more it's back to Step 10. We are not looking for solutions to our so-called “problems.” We are looking to have our fear removed, right here and now, and then determining what we should do, right here and now.

Another way to look at fear, acceptance, and peace

If you like, peace is really the individual experiences of acceptance over an extended period of time. We can't always be unafraid, we can't always be in acceptance, and so we certainly can't always be at peace. But increasingly we can practice Steps 10 and 11. Then we can deal with any fear we may be experiencing right here and now, and find out what to do, right here and now. And increasingly we will know or experience peace.

It can look something like this:

fear + the practice of Step 10 = acceptance

acceptance + acceptance + acceptance + ... = peace

peace + the practice of Step 11 = more, deeper, and longer-lasting peace

Third Interruption: Happy with your practice?

Some people in 12-Step programs, and particularly some members of AA, are known as “Big Book thumpers.” (One of the authors of this booklet is something of a thumper.) For these thumpers, if it isn’t in the Big Book then it’s probably not true. So we have just spent some time showing that what we have to say about finding peace *is* in the Big Book.

Whether you’re a thumper or not, we hope that, by this point in our booklet, you have adopted a practice of Steps 10 and 11 that is bringing you peace, or at least starting to bring you peace. Or it may be that you didn’t practice Steps 10 and 11 before you began to read our booklet, but you’ve become convinced that this is something you want to make a part of your life.

If this is the case, then you may well choose not to read any further, because – as we’ve already said several times – we believe the constant, simple practice of Steps 10 and 11 will increasingly bring you the peace that is offered by the Promises.

On the other hand, you may be confused by the outline of the practice found in pages 84-88 of the Big Book. Perhaps you have tried to do what those pages suggest, and for some reason they just haven’t worked for you. Or you may be one of those people who only feels secure when they are offered plenty of detail about working Steps 10 and 11.

That is why the next part of our booklet describes in detail *our* practice – that is, the practice that we, the authors of this booklet, actually follow.

10.

Our daily practice in more detail

At the start of this booklet, we wrote briefly about our daily practice. This practice incorporates all the four elements that can bring us peace. Now we describe that practice in more detail.

We are not offering this description of our practice because we think you should do exactly what we do. We offer it to help you decide for yourself what your *individual* practice should look like. Sometimes we, the creators of this booklet, practice in a group, and in that group we all do the same thing together. But when we practice by ourselves, our *individual* practices can vary.

Our experience has shown us that using this practice constantly will always bring peace. We believe that – once we have worked the first nine Steps of our 12-Step program – following this practice is *all we need* to bring peace. Why? Because it was only when we adopted this practice that we found real peace – a peace which is increasingly a part of our lives.

Where we find this practice

Our practice uses the treatment of Steps 10 and 11 in the Big Book. You can find that information on pages 84 to 88. It's also based on periods of quiet time or meditation, and living to the best of our ability in the here and now.

Steps 10 and 11

If you belong to a 12-Step fellowship other than AA, your fellowship may well have its own treatment of Steps 10 and 11. So you may be thinking you could read that instead of looking in the AA Big Book.

However, it is our experience that the Big Book's suggestions for working these two Steps are unique. As far as we are aware, they are not found in the basic texts of other fellowships. They are not even found in AA's own *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

We are not saying that we think that these other books aren't useful. Each of us must determine for ourselves how useful those books might be. We are merely saying we believe that *our* practice, the simple practice which we have found brings us peace, is to be found only in the AA Big Book.

Now we'll describe our practice.

A summary of our practice of Steps 10 and 11

We do two things:

- We ask for, or we allow, our fear to be removed, right here and now (Step 10). This is described in the Big Book (page 84, paragraph 3, sentences 7 to 12).
- We ask for guidance as to what we should do right here and now, and for the strength to do it right here and now (Step 11). This too is described in the Big Book (page 86, paragraph 3 to page 88, paragraph 3).

Having our fear removed (Step 10)

Here is how we have our fear removed, or reduced:

We *watch* for fear. When it comes up, we ask or allow some inner resource or other to *remove* it.

If that doesn't lessen the fear, we *discuss* it with someone else.*

If the discussion doesn't lessen the fear, we ask ourselves if we owe an *amends*, and if we do we make it as quickly as we can.

If making amends or planning to do so doesn't lessen the fear, then we *think of someone we can help*.

If turning our thoughts to someone else doesn't lessen the fear, we do this exercise again.

* The Big Book uses the word *discuss[ion]* with a distinctive meaning. It does *not* mean an exchange of views or opinions, criticism, or the giving of advice. For more information, see page 78 of this booklet.

Finally, we ask ourselves if we now feel *love, or at least a little tolerance*, for the people we have thought about in this exercise. If we don't, we may want to repeat it.

Finding out what we should do now, and finding the strength to do it (Step 11)

When our fear has been removed, or considerably reduced, we can look to our inner resource for what we should do right now, and for the strength to do it. These suggestions tend to come intuitively: because we are now unafraid, we often seem to know what we should do, right here and now (and *only* right here and now).

Short version of Steps 10 and 11 (less than a minute)

Here is a four-line version of Steps 10 and 11 which we can use at any time throughout the day. It's the "Right here, right now" version. We say this (or something like it):

*Right here, right now,
I am (anxious, edgy, worried, concerned, afraid, etc.): please
take away my fear.
Show me what to do, and give me the power to do it,
Right here, right now.*

If we're religious, we can use this as a prayer. But many of us are not religious, so we may treat it as a mantra, or a sort of affirmation.

Alternatively, people who are not religious may prefer this version:

*Right here, right now,
I am (anxious, edgy, worried, concerned, afraid, etc.): I consent
to my fear being removed.
I'm open to what I should do, and being given the power to do it,
Right here, right now.*

Ways that we use the "Right here, right now" version

We can say this over and over if we like. Some of us say it several times a day. Some of us say it over and over in one session, particularly if we are very afraid. Then we may need several repetitions.

Some of us break in down into parts. For example, if we are very distracted, we may just say the first part over and over: *Right here, right now*, to bring us back to the present.

If we are very afraid, we may say over and over *I am afraid: please take away my fear* or *I consent to my fear being removed*.

If we are very uncertain about what we should do, we may say over and over *Show me what to do, and give me the power to do it*, or *I'm open to what I should do, and being given the power to do it*.

However we may use these four lines, the focus of them is the inner resource we discussed earlier.

Doing our practice of Steps 10 and 11 alone

Some of us set aside time in the morning and/or the evening to do Steps 10 and 11. It can take just a couple of minutes, or it can be lengthier.

Some people “discuss” their Step 10 fears by writing them down, and sending what they’ve written to a friend in the fellowship. We imagine this may be helpful to those people, although the Big Book makes no mention of this practice and we – the authors – don’t do it.

Doing our practice of Steps 10 and 11 with another person

Some of us do Step 10 and sometimes Step 11 as well, in a one-on-one meeting – that is, with one other person. If it’s at all possible, this should be someone who has a similar practice to ours *and who will not offer us any advice*. We say more about this business of advice later on.

For us, it’s usually best to do this with someone face-to-face. But obviously this isn’t always possible. So we may make a phone call or, if that’s not possible, send a text or email.

Doing our practice of Steps 10 and 11 in a group

Some of us do Steps 10 and 11 in a group. We, the creators of this booklet, do this in a private face-to-face or online meeting.

Step 11 is often done using meditation. There are 12-Step meditation groups all over the world, and we may choose to use them as part of our practice.

Practicing Step 10 in a group can be less simple. As we just said, we do practice Step 10 as a group, but it's a "closed" group and we know one another well. We say more about this later on.

Our basic practice remains a solo practice

Even if we do these two Steps with others, our practice is at root something we do alone. We never know when we are going to be afraid. When we do get afraid, we need to do some version of our practice right then and there. We, the authors, may meet one-on-one or in groups fairly often, but our basic practice is done alone once, twice, or several times a day.

All we need

We've already said this, but we think it's so important that we want to say it again.

If you are following this daily practice, or some practice very much like it, then you really don't need to read any further in our booklet. We'd like to think that you *will* read more of it. But our experience has shown us that this practice is all we need, and we suspect you may find that it can be – perhaps it already is – all that you need.

This practice removes our fear, right here and now. It lets us determine what we should do, right here and now. Above all, it draws us increasingly closer to that inner resource, the resource that removes our fear and shows us what to do.

An intimate relationship with that inner resource

But this practice does more than draw us closer to that inner resource.

We believe that our practice actually *is* a relationship with that resource. *To follow this practice, to do Step 10 and Step 11, is to have a continuing spiritual experience, right here and right now.*

And the result is that we automatically find we are doing Step 12, carrying our message to others and practicing the principles of our 12-Step program in all our affairs.

One practice, four elements

So here in our practice are all four of those elements of peace: dealing with fear, finding out what we should do and getting the strength to do it, all based on a relationship with our inner resource, right here and right now.

Fourth Interruption: Ready to go and practice, or ...?

We think that, by this point, we have offered most of what we can say about the four elements of peace in our respective 12-Step programs.

We've seen how the Promises offer peace, and we've talked about how those Promises can start to manifest themselves to some degree as we work Steps 4-9. We've traced in the Big Book those passages that specifically talk about the practice of Steps 10 and 11 and the peace that can result from that practice. We've talked about the unsuspected inner resource and discussed living in the right here and right now. And we've told you about *our* practice – not because we think that you should follow our practice, but because you may find something there that might be useful in your own practice.

So you may prefer to practice rather than read any further. After all, an ounce of practice is worth more than a pound of booklets (including this one).

But you may be one of those people who like to argue about this practice. Perhaps you don't have any practice of this kind, and you may even think you don't really need one, but you'd like to argue about it anyway. Or perhaps you do have a practice but you still like to argue about it. (We, the writers of this booklet, do this quite often.)

If this is the case, the next part of our booklet is for you. It's a series of FAQs (frequently asked questions) on each of the four elements of peace and – for those who really like to argue – one final, catch-all FAQ.

11.

FAQ: Right here, right now

In this FAQ, we try to answer some questions about living in the here and now.

Earlier in our booklet, we said a few words about this element of our recovery. We discussed its importance in our practice of Steps 10 and 11, and in the relationship we develop with that inner resource that removes our fear and shows us what to do, right here and now. And we said that most of us find it hard to obtain true peace in recovery unless we learn how to live in the here and now.

Q. I have been told in my 12-Step program to take life a day at a time. I don't understand why you talk so much about taking it a *moment at a time*

Most 12-Step fellowships embrace the idea of living life a day at a time, twenty-four hours at a time. The so-called Desire Chip or 24-hour Chip that is a feature of many 12-Step meetings symbolizes a desire to remain sober or abstinent for one day. Many AA intergroups carry the “Just for Today” card, which suggests various things we can do for our recovery “just for today.” Chapter 1 of the Big Book, “Bill’s Story,” says, “Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish.” In its treatment of Step 10, Chapter 6 talks about recovery as “a daily reprieve.” And in its treatment of Step 11, it says, “On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day.”

As we advance in our recovery, many of us tend to think less frequently about living life just a day at a time. We start to believe that we can handle life in much bigger chunks than only one day.

And that is a pity, because the experience of the creators of this booklet, and the experience of others who have discussed their experience with us, is that real peace doesn't come when we try to manage our lives over longer periods of time than a day. Actually, we have found that even a day can sometimes be too long for those of us who want to find peace.

We need to live our lives in much shorter intervals than a day. We need to live them right here and now.

It's not clear to me just how I'm supposed to do this. Any suggestions?

It may be useful to talk for a moment about how we experience time.

Well, I imagine time as something that stretches from way back and off into the future. Isn't that correct?

We believe we may learn more from our *experience* of time than from how we *think* about it.

We like to think of time as a sort of line stretching from the past (the creation of the earth, for example, or the day we were born) into the future (the day we die, perhaps, or the collapse of the cosmos). We like to think that we're living at a point on this line, a point at a location between the past and future called the present, and the point moves slowly forward, away from the past and into the future.

But if this is the typical way we *think of* time, it's clear that we don't *experience* life that way at all. Instead, we experience life as a simple series of "right here and now" moments. In this moment we're *here*, and it's *now*. And this moment is immediately followed by another moment, in which we're *here* and it's *now*. And so on and so on. We're always *here*, and it's always *now*. Wherever we are, we're only ever here. Whatever time it may be, it's only ever now.

An example: Hunger

Let's think about experiencing hunger. If we're hungry, we're hungry *now*. We're experiencing the feeling of hunger *now*, not yesterday or next Tuesday, and we want something to eat *now*, not in a couple of weeks. Notice that we're talking about *experiencing* hunger – not about thinking about it, remembering it, or imagining it, but *experiencing* it. It's only possible to have an experience *here and now*. We can't experience hunger at any time other than now, or any place other than here.

But surely this isn't true only about hunger. It's true of *any* experience, including the experiences we spoke of in our list of the four elements of peace.

If we're afraid, then we're afraid *right here and now*, not last year or next month. It's true that we might *remember* being afraid last year, or *imagine* being afraid next month. But the only place and time we can *experience* fear is right here and now.

Similarly, we can only experience peace right here and now. We may have had it in the past, and it's very likely we may have it again in the future, but those are just memories and dreams. Peace is only available to us in this exact moment, right here and now.

Q. I can see that ideally I should live this way. But the realities of my life make this impossible. If I don't prepare for the future – the immediate future, or sometimes the distant future – I'm going to be in trouble

In the next FAQ, which is on dealing with fear, we talk about problems of this kind. A "problem" is a combination of two things: a situation, and our fear of the situation. Until we deal with the fear, the situation will remain a problem. If the fear is removed, we are simply left with the situation. That situation may be part of the past, or it may be something in the future. What can we do about it?

This is where "right here, right now" comes into play.

Let's suppose we realize that we are worrying about an event that will take place a week from now. Worrying means fear, so the first order of business is to do Step 10, to have the fear removed or lessened. Now we can look at the event and ask ourselves, "Is there anything I can do about this event right here and now?" This is a Step 11 exercise: we're turning to that inner resource for direction and answers.

The answer may be *Yes*, we can make some preparations for the event. Or it may be *No*, there really isn't anything we need to do. Of course, the worry may start up again. Because we do Step 10 regularly, we'll be aware of it. Then once again we can consent to having the worry

removed, and consider with the help of that inner resource what, if anything, we should do now.

Living in the present

When we first start this practice, this back-and-forth between Steps 10 and 11 can happen often. But even if we've been sober or abstinent for some time, we may need to do this back-and-forth dance several times. Often, it's just the work of a couple of minutes to deal with it.

Living in the present moment is about having our fear removed right here and now, which makes the problem disappear and leaves us with just a situation (Step 10). Living in the present moment is about using our "sixth sense" or intuition to determine what, if anything, we need to do about that situation, right here and now (Step 11). And living in the present moment is about going and doing it (or not doing it!), right here and now (Step 12).

That's what it takes to live in the here and now. It doesn't come quickly, perhaps. But we have found that, even if we can only do this occasionally, it can bring an unexpected peace to our lives.

12.

FAQ: Dealing with fear

Q. You talked earlier about the failure of self-reliance being the cause of our fear. You mentioned that Bill W. says, “Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn’t go far enough.” How am I supposed to know when self-reliance is good and when it isn’t?

Of all the questions discussed in this booklet, we would place this in the list of the top three most important ones. The passage you refer to is on page 68, as we saw earlier when we were discussing what the Big Book actually says about fear. We’ll repeat it here:

We reviewed our fears thoroughly 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.

Many of the topics raised in our 12-Step discussion meetings show how much trouble we can get into over this matter of self-reliance. Unless we are very early in our recovery, we’re able to handle much of our lives using self-reliance. We go to work, we get something to eat, we relax in the evenings, we have pastimes and hobbies, we handle everyday tasks without much difficulty.

When self-reliance starts to fail us

But for all of us, hidden somewhere among these ordinary, daily activities are certain things – often seemingly quite small things – that make us *uneasy* or *edgy* or *concerned*. Words like *uneasy* or *edgy* or *concerned* are – according to a member friend of ours – so-called “weasel words,” or comforting mild alternatives for the word “afraid.” And it can be very easy for us to say to ourselves about each of these little fears, “Oh, I can handle it,” or “I can put up with it for now.” But when we do this, are we actually telling ourselves the truth?

We have learned to say to ourselves several times each day, “Right here, right now, am I afraid?” If the same situation seems to come to mind every time we ask ourselves if we’re afraid, that’s a sign that we’ve moved well beyond the “self-reliance” solution. If we are persistently

afraid, then the *only* solution for people like us is Step 10: asking or allowing our inner resource to take away that fear.

Some members of 12-Step programs say, “Bring it as a topic to a meeting.” That’s all very well, provided that we’ve *first* turned to our inner resource to remove the fear.

Doing – and not doing – a “Step 10” in a meeting

Some of the best meetings we attend are those where some member actually does a Step 10 in the meeting. The member says, “I had this problem ... I was afraid. So I asked [my inner resource] to remove the fear. And now I’m talking about it to another person – all you people here today.” Usually this is followed by other members in the meeting talking in just the same way about some issue or other *they* have handled with Step 10.

Less effective – at any rate for us, the creators of this book – are meetings where a member says, “I had this problem, and I still have the problem – what should I do about it?” The words *I have the problem* generally mean, *I am afraid and I haven’t done Step 10*. The words *What should I do about it?* are an unfortunate invitation to advice-based cross-talk from other members in the meeting.

Q. I’ve been sober a long time, but recently I seem to have more and more problems. What’s going wrong?

The Big Book says, [*O*]ur troubles, we think, are of our own making (page 62), and [*O*]ur problems were of our own making (page 103). On page 133, it says *Avoid then, the deliberate manufacture of misery*.

How do we “manufacture” or “make” a so-called “problem”? We’ve already said something about this. We need two ingredients. First, we need a situation or set of circumstances, often one where we are unsure what we should do. The second ingredient we need is fear. Mix the situation itself with our fear of the situation, and the result is a problem. In other words, a problem is a combination of a situation and our *fear* of the situation.

Step 10, in which we ask for our fear to be removed, enables us to *detach* the fear from the problem. We ask for our fear to be removed or reduced,

and our inner resource removes or reduces the fear. When the fear is detached and removed, what we are left with is no longer a problem – it’s just a situation. We may still be uncertain how we should handle that situation. We may not like the situation. But the *fear* of the situation has been taken away or substantially reduced. And it’s the fear that does the damage, not the situation.

Q. Suppose the fear comes back? Surely it’s best to *do something about my problem, even though I’m still afraid. Doing something may solve it or make it disappear*

Let’s go back over what we just said. There *is* no actual “problem”: we *created* it by mixing the situation with our fear of the situation. A “problem” can’t be solved or made to disappear if there isn’t an actual problem. What we need is for the fear to be taken away. If the fear comes back – and it may well come back – then we ask for the fear to be removed again. In other words, we do Step 10 once more. Sometimes we need to do it over and over. But if we do the whole of Step 10, sooner or later the fear will go away. This is our experience.

Q. I’m afraid, but I’ve no idea what I’m afraid of. So how can I have my fear removed?

Those of us who have worked with counselors, therapists or psychologists may wonder about this. We may have been told that, if we isolate the causes or sources of our fear, we can then control them or “work on them.”

We need to be very careful here. We are not saying that these counselors, therapists and psychologists are not helpful or that they’re wrong. Their advice seems to work for many people, perhaps even *most* people. We have no opinion on that matter.

But if you are reading this booklet, you may be someone for whom these techniques don’t work. We, the creators of this booklet, fall into that category. Trying to discover what we are afraid of so that we can “control” our fear has never really worked for us. When we feel we must know what we’re afraid of, we’re using self-reliance. But it doesn’t matter *what* we’re afraid of. What matters is getting rid of the *feeling* of fear.

We have given up on using our best thinking to try to control our fear – or to control anything else, for that matter. We simply need for our fear to be removed. So we do Step 10, and that inner resource that we now rely on takes away or reduces the fear, right here and now.

To repeat: We don't trouble ourselves too much with wondering what has caused our fear. Instead, we simply ask for it to be removed. And when fear is removed, the problem that we might have thought we had also disappears.

Q. If asking some inner resource to remove my fear only works right here and now, what's the point of it? I need something that will work a lot longer than that

Step 10 is about the *continuing* removing of fear: fear of the past, fear of the present, and fear of the future. We're not talking about a *continuous* absence of fear. We're talking about a *continuing* absence of fear.

What's the difference? We talked about this earlier in our booklet, when we discussed our vain attempts to have fear removed for ever, or at least for a long time.

Just about everyone in the world dreams of the *continuous* absence of fear ... and no one will ever experience it.

Nobody lives "happily ever afterwards." Nobody is "happy, joyous, and free" (page 133) all the time. The American Declaration of Independence talks about "the pursuit of happiness," but the experience of most of us is that, all too often, happiness seems to run away from us faster than we are able to pursue it. We acquire things – products, services, companions, money and so on – which seem to be able to make our fear go away, only to find ourselves disappointed. If we seek help for our fear through religion, therapy, or similar activities, the fear can and probably will still return.

By contrast, a *continuing* absence of fear *is* possible. If we have found a method to have our fear removed, we can use that method when we *do* get afraid – in other words, right here and now.

When we experience a *continuing* absence of fear, we move between being aware of the fear and doing some sort of practice which takes the fear away, over and over. And the more frequently we use that practice, then the more we remember to do it, the sooner we do it, and the briefer the periods of fear become.

Q. I'm rarely afraid, and when I am I can handle it just fine now that I'm sober or abstinent. I don't see why you spend so much time talking about it

This is another version of the self-reliance question at the beginning of this FAQ. You'll recall that the person who asked that question wanted to know how to determine when self-reliance worked and when it didn't.

Now we have just the same issue being raised by someone (in our experience, usually a man) who says, "I'm never afraid," or "If I am afraid, I just deal with it, now that I'm in recovery."

So we think it's worth going over this business of self-reliance once more, because it can cause us so much damage in our 12-Step programs.

Big and little fears

In our booklet, we use the word *fear* in a very broad sense. We think that fears come in two sizes: big and little. We've talked about fear in general so far. Let's put the big fears to one side for a moment and focus instead on the little ones.

Little fears can often be handled with self-reliance: things like fearing being late for an appointment, or annoyance because somebody let us down. After all, doesn't the Big Book say that "self-reliance was good as far as it went" (page 68)?

But little fears have a habit of getting together in groups, and then there can be real trouble. If you've been in recovery for more than a few months, you will probably know a couple of people who returned to their addiction. If or when they come back, they will often say one of two things. They will say, "This terrible and unexpected thing happened to me (a big fear), and so I went back out." Or they may say – and this is the statement we're interested in – "It all became too much for me, and so I went back out."

It all became too much for me? All what? All the little things, all the little fears which they thought they'd handled with self-reliance. As the Big Book says on page 73, "[C]onstant fear and tension ... makes for more drinking." Constant fear, even a number of small fears, can be as dangerous to people in recovery as big fears. Eventually one additional little fear can come along and break the camel's back.

So when we practice Step 10, we look not just for the big fears but for the small fears too. Often they're easily dealt with: they may go away when we simply acknowledge them. Or we may need to ask that inner resource to remove them, and perhaps discuss them with someone else, however petty those fears may be.

Q. I've been sober/abstinent for a long time now. As the Big Book says on page 68, I've outgrown fear, so I don't need to continue to look for it

The Big Book actually says, "*We commenced* to outgrow fear." It doesn't say that we *do* outgrow it. We don't need to "outgrow" it, as long as we have done Steps 4-9 and then continue to practice Step 10. When fear crops up, we know what to do to have it removed.

But – as we said a moment ago – we also find that we become *more* aware of the *little* fears – the things that we used to overlook, the things that we used to think we could "manage." These may *increase* in number.

Even if we are well into our recovery, we may start to see that we have held onto behaviors which we now realize annoy our friends and family. We may have acted as self-proclaimed experts on a variety of topics (including recovery), and we see now that other people are irritated when we freely air our supposed "expertise." We have refused to accept people just as they are, so we have criticized them secretly or openly, and we have come to see that this really hurts only ourselves.

Often, when we do Step 10, we *do* outgrow fear ... right there and then, in that moment. But that's as far as it goes. There is no suggestion that this ever becomes a permanent state of affairs.

Q. When I do Step 10 with certain other people in my fellowship, they like to give me advice. What should I do when I get conflicting advice?

We authors of this booklet do Step 10 frequently, both one-on-one and in our small group. We would like to be able to say that we never offer advice to one another when we're doing Step 10. That would not be entirely true, but it happens only very rarely, and it is generally followed by an apology for making the mistake of offering advice.

We think that advice really doesn't make much sense when we do Step 10. (Actually, we tend to be suspicious of *anyone* offering advice that has not been asked for, no matter when.) Giving someone advice in a Step 10 session implies that the adviser is so wise that they know not only what they themselves should do but what someone else should do too. Personally, we find that it takes about 99.9% of our Step-based resources to determine what *we* should do. There's not much left over for determining what someone else should do.

Step 10 is about becoming aware of, and removing, an emotion – specifically fear. Step 10 is not a debate about whether we should feel afraid. It's not about what someone else thinks about our being afraid, or what someone else thinks we should do about it. It's about sharing our fear with someone else and that "someone else" sharing their fear with us.

Love and tolerance

The last sentence of the paragraph in the Big Book that outlines our Step 10 practice says *Love and tolerance of others is our code* (page 84).

We do our best to follow this code in our respective programs. Asking ourselves whether we feel love and tolerance for others can be a good measure of whether our Step 10 practice has been effective or not. So we do what we can to exercise that love and tolerance with everyone in our lives

But even so, we tend to stay some distance away from members who like to give advice.

13.

FAQ: Determining what to do, and finding the power to do it

Q. If I want to determine what action to take, what should I do first?

The first thing the Big Book suggests is to do – or to repeat – Step 10 (page 86, second paragraph). That paragraph is perhaps unnecessarily complicated, but it can easily be summarized: *Generally speaking, we do Step 10 before we do Step 11.*

If we are being selfish and dishonest, if we are resentful and afraid, these things will contaminate our practice of Step 11. We'll be influenced by our fears instead of being open to guidance from our inner resource. So at the very least, we do a brief Step 10 before Step 11. Our inner resource must first remove our fears if we are to “hear” what it has to tell us.

Q. Why are this “sixth sense” and “intuition” so important? I've had intuitive thoughts and ideas during most of life and they don't seem to have helped me very much

We too had plenty of inspirations and intuitive thoughts before we started our practice of Steps 10 and 11, and they didn't help us very much either.

Why didn't they work for us then? We've come to see that, when we're afraid, the “noise” of our fear makes it difficult or impossible to hear clearly what our inner resource is saying. Then we are in danger of listening to what our fear suggests we should do and thinking that it's the voice of intuition.

This is a very common mistake. And it's why we are usually much better off if we do Step 10 before trying to focus on what our inner resource is suggesting.

Step 10 helps remove our fear, and when our fear is removed we are going to be more at peace. And it's only when we start to feel at peace that we can hear clearly the voice of inspiration and intuition.

Let's go through that again. If we're still afraid and we ask ourselves what we should do, the answers that we *think* we hear can be too much about trying to solve our imaginary problems and too little about accepting that we invented those problems. As we said earlier, a problem is something we create when we combine a situation with our fear of that situation. Step 10 is designed to remove the fear, leaving only the situation. Step 11 can then help us determine what we should do about that situation.

Q. When I do Step 11, more often than not I seem to be “told” *not* to do something, rather than what to do. Where am I going wrong?

You're probably not going wrong. That is our experience too. Knowing what *not* to do is often just as good as knowing what to do. And often we find that the suggestion about *not doing* something is exactly what we thought we *should do* before we did our Step 10. In other words, what seemed like a great “solution” when we were afraid turns out to be not so great, once our fear is taken away.

It's also important for us to remember that we're not limited to doing Step 11 only occasionally, like twice a week or three times a month or anything of that kind. We can do Step 11 whenever we please, as long as we've dealt with our fear.

It may be that – right here and now – we're finding out only what we shouldn't do. But we can always do Step 11 again later and see if we get some additional suggestions from it.

Q. Sometimes I do my Step 10 and 11, but nothing seems to come back from it, so I still don't know what to do or what not to do

Occasionally we can be tempted to treat Steps 10 and 11 like one of those old-time amusement arcade machines. Put a coin in the slot, think about your problem, and then press the button to get a little card with the solution to your problem printed on it.

Sometimes we can practice our Step 10 and Step 11 but then we don't “receive” anything, even though we're fairly sure that our fear has gone away. That's just the way that Steps 10 and 11 can sometimes work,

because these Steps are not some kind of mechanical device. Their purpose is to find and to deepen a relationship with our inner resource over time, not to get immediate answers as to what we should do.

Receiving no answer doesn't mean that something is broken, or that we're never going to discover what we should do. After all, Step 11 generally only suggests what we should do right here and now. So "no answer" may actually be saying, *Be patient*.

Sometimes not knowing what to do may ultimately turn out to be more useful to us and others than knowing what to do.

Q. I've been doing Steps 10 and 11 for some time now, and it has very definitely made a difference. But I've also noticed that, now that I'm calmer and less easily upset, I seem to just know what to do in some difficult situations without even doing those Steps. Am I fooling myself?

We don't think so. This is exactly what the Big Book says will start to happen on pages 86 and 87:

We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind [W]e find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.

It sounds as though this is already happening with you.

Q. I can't meditate

What this usually means is *Other people have told me how to meditate, so I've tried to do what they said, but I can't do it.*

Here are some things that you may have been told:

In order to meditate, you need: at least twenty minutes of time / a special place to sit / a special something to sit on / some incense / a recording with music or a guided meditation / etc., etc., etc.

No, you don't have to have any of those things. Watching the breath is about the simplest thing we can do to meditate, so we have included an Appendix about starting to meditate which you may find useful.

If your mind wanders, that's the end of your meditation.

Not true. Just about everyone's mind wanders when they meditate. When we realize that our minds are wandering, we just go back to what we were doing *before* our minds wandered. This may happen several times during any period of meditation.

You need an expert to tell you how to meditate.

Not true. If you start with something simple, like the meditation in our Appendix, sooner or later your inner resource will start to guide you as to how *you* should meditate.

Q. Step 11 talks about prayer and meditation. I'm not religious, so I don't really want to pray. Is that all right?

Some of us (the creators of this booklet) *are* religious, so we *do* pray. Some of us (the creators of this booklet) *aren't* religious, so we *don't* pray.

Those of us who *do* pray don't have any problem with those of us who *don't* pray.

Those of us who *don't* pray don't have any problem with those of us who *do* pray.

We think this is all the answer that your question needs.

Q. I can't meditate for more than two minutes

Good. You can meditate for two minutes, then do something else, then meditate for another two minutes, and then ... well, you can probably work the rest out yourself.

Particularly when we first start to meditate, "little and often" seems to work just as well as "once a day, for a long time." Sooner or later, as we said earlier, your inner resource will take over, show you what to do to meditate, and give you the power to do it.

Q. This sounds like living a life where all we are concerned with is our own comfort right now. In other words, “do nothing very much and let somebody else take care of the hard work.”

For those of us who work Steps 10 and 11 constantly, our experience is the very opposite.

In our experience, when that sixth sense or intuition suggests we do something, it's something fairly ordinary.

Perhaps the most common suggestion seems to be *Don't do what you were just thinking of doing while you were still afraid*. Or it may be something like *Go make amends to that person* or *Call them up and say Yes, you will do what they asked you to do*.

But sometimes the suggestion is more far-reaching. Here is one that several of our friends have had over the years: *How about you volunteer to go into the prisons?* These friends have then helped with taking 12-Step meetings into a prison, or begun to write to or visit offenders in the prison system. Some religious members have joined various prison ministries. If we ask them why they did this, they don't say it was because they felt compassionate or because they wanted to make the world a better place. They say it was because their Step 11 practice suggested it.

Commitment

These suggestions from our practice of Step 11 can sometimes be disturbing. The examples we just mentioned, for instance, involve making a *commitment* – a commitment to be there, week in, week out, without excuses. Many people in 12-Step programs dislike or fear this kind of commitment. How can we say right here, right now that we are willing to do something in the future?

And the answer is obvious, when we think about it. We are not committing to do this week after week. We are committing to do it *now*, each time it comes up. And because the suggestion came from our inner resource, we know that that same resource will give us the power to do it, right then and there, each time it *does* comes up.

What some people can find particularly disturbing is that Step 11 can offer these suggestions for major commitments in just the same way as the “simple” examples we mentioned above. *How about you wash the dishes? How about you tell that person you’re sorry? How about you join that program for feeding the homeless?* Small or enormous, these suggestions just seem to come all by themselves, through a sixth sense or intuitive thought of some kind.

Q. How can I tell the difference between what I think I should do and what I think my intuition is suggesting I should do?

When this question arises for us, we ask ourselves if we’re afraid.

If we are afraid, we go back to Step 10 until the fear is removed. Then we look at the matter again.

If what we think we should do is the same as what’s being suggested by our intuition, we are probably on the right path.

I have my doubts about what you just said. Are you saying that this always works?

No, we’re not saying that it always works. Sometimes it doesn’t work, particularly when we first practice this way of doing things. As the Big Book says:

[I]t is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd thoughts and ideas (page 87).

But then it continues:

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.

Q. Since I started my own practice of Steps 10 and 11, it’s almost as though some of my own agendas are beginning to fade away. Does this mean that I’m losing my ambition? If I am, that doesn’t sound like a good thing, does it?

This is one of the greatest secrets about the practice of Steps 10 and 11.

When we practice Step 10, our fears are removed. Even if we have been in our respective 12-Step fellowships for some time, it's unlikely that we've been able to deal effectively with our fears before we began this practice of Step 10. It's much more likely that, even though we are now sober or abstinent, we have continued to try and use self-reliance to handle our so-called "problems." As we've already seen, we have created those problems ourselves, and often self-reliance has failed us and simply caused more fear.

So living a life where we can deal with our fears quickly with Step 10 may be very new to us. And as we start to live a life that is no longer dominated by fear, things can begin to look very different than the way they looked when we *were* dominated by fear.

As we learn to use Step 10 to have our fear removed, and as we use Step 11 to determine what we should do, to obtain the power to do it, and to deepen our relationship with our own inner resource, *everything* that we do and are and think and value can start to change.

We want less, we accept more. In just the way you described in your question, our ambitions and our agendas can change, and even begin to fade. We start to feel more and more sure that, if we do as that sixth sense suggests, accepting whatever is given to us can be much more satisfying than getting what we think we want.

14.

FAQ: The unsuspected inner resource

Q. As a religious member of my 12-Step program, I'm irritated by your constant use of the words "inner resource." Bill W. uses the word "God." Why don't you?

Indeed, why don't we use the word *God*? Or – failing that – why don't we use the phrase *Higher Power*? Or *Power greater than ourselves*? These phrases were good enough for Bill W., the writer of most of the first 164 pages of the Big Book. So why aren't they good enough for us, the creators of the little booklet you're reading now?

We're afraid that our answer is not brief.

"God," the "Higher Power," and Bill W.

You may be thinking to yourself that Bill W. didn't seem to have any problem himself with the word *God*. And on the face of it you would be correct. If we limit ourselves just to the first 88 pages of the Big Book, the word *God* appears nearly one hundred times. In the first 164 pages of the Big Book, it appears over 130 times.

You may also be thinking that the phrase *Higher Power* appears often, but it doesn't: it only occurs twice. The phrase *Power greater than [myself/yourself/himself/ourselves/themselves]* is a little more common, but not much – twelve times. Bill W. didn't even seem to care too much for the phrase *God as we understand [Him]* – that occurs only five times, and two of those are in the Steps themselves.

But generally speaking he seems to have preferred, and to have been quite comfortable with, the simple word *God*

Or was he?

Bill W. rethinks the source of the spiritual experience

In 1941, about two years after the Big Book was published, Bill Wilson made a significant change to it. He added an appendix. In all editions of the Big Book, beginning with the second edition, this appendix can be

found on pages 567-568. In shorter editions of the Big Book which don't include the Personal Stories, the appendix is on pages 183-184.

The second and third paragraphs of this appendix offer an apology for what the first printing of the first edition of the Big Book had said about spiritual experiences:

[We] gave many readers the impression that these ... experiences must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous It was not our intention to create such an impression.

Bill W. then offers the following words as a more accurate description of the *source* of what happens to members, based on what he had seen in the two years since the first publishing of the Big Book:

With few exceptions, our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves (page 567).

And here is what he says about how we experience this inner resource:

Most of our [spiritual] experiences are ... the “educational variety” because they develop slowly over a period of time (page 567).

Bill W.’s asterisks and footnotes pointing to the appendix

But Bill W. didn't merely add the appendix. He also added asterisks and footnotes to three pages of the Big Book (pages 35, 38, and 59 of the first edition; pages 25, 27, and 47 of the second and all other editions). These footnotes pointed readers to the appendix.

This took some effort on the part of the printers, who had for this second printing to change the layout of pages 25, 27, and 47. Space was needed at the bottom of those pages for the footnote, so the text on those pages had to be “pushed up.”

Let's be as objective as we can about why Bill W. went to all this trouble. Not only did he apologize for the "erroneous ... impression" given by his original treatment of spiritual experiences in the first printing of the Big Book. He deliberately selected certain pages which he considered to be problematic in this way and added footnotes to them, footnotes which say:

Fully explained – Appendix II (page 25)

For amplification – see Appendix II (page 27)

Please be sure to read Appendix II on "Spiritual Experiences" (page 47)

In other words, he is suggesting that, when we read these pages, we might be misled unless we have also read and understood the Spiritual Experience appendix. And the single word *God* is absent from that appendix.*

What exactly are "appendices"?

Appendices to books usually contain information that is omitted from the main text because it's not absolutely necessary to have it. If you don't bother reading appendices to most books, all you're going to miss is a lot of details.

By this standard, "Appendix II" of the Big Book is anything *but* an appendix. We can call it a correction, we can call it an amendment, a rethink, a revision, or anything else of that kind, but it is most definitely *not* what is generally referred to as an appendix. It is an expression of Bill W.'s definitive thinking on spiritual experiences, and we believe that it supersedes whatever may be said about those experiences in the main body of the Big Book.

* The hyphenated words "God-consciousness" do appear twice in the Appendix. The first occurrence says that the original version of the Big Book gave the "erroneous ... impression" that an "immediate and overwhelming 'God-consciousness'" must be part of any spiritual experience. The second says that "our more religious members" may call this unsuspected inner resource "God-consciousness."

Sold short

The second Appendix in the Big Book has, in our opinion, been sold short for many decades. We suspect that the main reason for this oversight is the fact that it's called an appendix. The implication is that, because it's an appendix, it's not particularly important.

To the contrary: We believe it to be *vital* to an understanding of Bill W.'s new thinking about the *source* of "spiritual experiences."

"Appendix II" as Bill W.'s final and vital amendment to the Big Book

However satisfied Bill W. might have been with the first 164 pages of the Big Book, it's likely that – if he had had a real opportunity to change it after its appearance in 1939 – he would have done so. But the second edition didn't arrive until 1955, and by then, as William Schaberg notes,* the Big Book had acquired the status of "Holy Writ." Much to Bill W.'s disappointment, not even he would be able to persuade AA members to change the content of any of the early literature.

And yet – as we have just seen – there was something that Bill W. *did* change about the AA Big Book, two years after its original appearance in 1939. Out of all the possible amendments and alterations he may have wanted to make, the one he chose, the one he could not allow to pass without change, dealt with the nature of the "spiritual experience" and the *source* of that experience. The only way to do this in the second printing of the first edition was in the form of an appendix. As we said, he also added footnotes on pages 25, 27, and 47. The footnotes indicate that these pages can be understood *only* in the light of what that appendix says.

On page 45, the Big Book says:

[The] main object [of this book] is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.

"Appendix II" is Bill W.'s last and definitive word on how we achieve that main object.

* Schaberg, *Writing The Big Book*, Central Recovery Press, 2019, page 604

Our conclusion

We hope that this long answer to a short question clears up any confusion about why, throughout our booklet, we use the phrase “inner resource.”

We understand, and we have no objection to, religious members calling their awareness of that inner resource “God-consciousness.” If these members choose to identify that inner resource with their conception of God, that is fine by us.

We understand, and we have no objection to, less religious or non-religious members calling it an “inner resource” which may have no religious component whatever to it. If these members choose not to identify that inner resource with any religion at all, that too is fine by us.

Whether we are believers, agnostics, or atheists, we can regard that inner resource as the means of ridding ourselves of our fear, of determining what we should do, and of obtaining the power to do it.

There need be no reason for any disagreement on this matter ... as long as we practice love and tolerance of others.

15.

FAQ: On a range of topics

Warning about this FAQ: Our treatment of some of these topics may be controversial. This FAQ offers little useful information about finding peace, so you don't really need to read it, and we suggest you don't read it unless you're fairly open-minded, very curious, or both.

Q. I am still confused about fear and acceptance. Are you suggesting that we should handle our fears by simply accepting everything? Am I supposed to accept people, places and things that other people or society might regard as completely unacceptable? I can't see that that is going to make my fear go away – it seems that it will only make things worse

For most people – including many people in 12-Step fellowships – the word *acceptance* can imply a passive resignation towards situations which may be damaging to ourselves and to other people.

This is not what we, the writers of this booklet, mean by acceptance – in fact, it bears no resemblance to what we mean by acceptance. We've already said that, in our experience, acceptance is simply the absence of fear. And Step 10 is the tool that can remove our fear.

It's understandable that people who are not in 12-Step programs might view acceptance as passive resignation in the face of unacceptable situations. But why would so many people *in* 12-Step fellowships have this very negative view of acceptance?

“Acceptance was the answer”

This is the title of perhaps the most famous story in the AA Big Book, written by Dr. Paul. And here is perhaps the most famous quotation from that story:

[A]cceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation – some fact of my life – unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or

situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment.

If we want to have a controversial topic for a 12-Step meeting, it might be hard to find a better one than this quotation. In our experience (mainly in AA meetings), when this excerpt from the story is the topic, the room tends to be split evenly between those who endorse it and those who oppose it.

It's easy to see that the way this passage is phrased invites the reaction, "So I'm supposed just to accept whatever happens to me and other people, no matter what it may be – just take it on board without argument or resistance?"

And the phrasing of this passage invites another, very obvious question. *How are we supposed to "get" this acceptance? Will-power? Self-reliance? Thinking about it? Is this really what Dr. Paul is saying?*

Let's try a little editing

Let's see how a little adjustment to the text can help us sort this out.

First of all, let's change *When I am disturbed* to *When I am afraid*. That doesn't seem to be too drastic.

But our next bit of surgery may raise a few eyebrows. Dr. Paul said:

When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation – some fact of my life – unacceptable to me

We think this is back-to-front. We think he means:

When I find some person, place, thing, or situation – some fact of my life – unacceptable to me, it is because I am afraid

And finally these insertions (underlined):

... and I can find no serenity until my fear is removed and I can then accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment.

Which leaves us with this:

When I find some person, place, thing, or situation – some fact of my life – unacceptable to me, it is because I am afraid, and I can find no serenity until my fear is removed and I can then accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment.

Is this perhaps what Dr. Paul meant to say?

There are some clues to suggest that this is exactly what he meant.

Dr. Paul says *in this moment*. In other words, right here and now. He is not talking about the action we should take (or not take) about the situation – that is the business of Step 11, as we have seen several times in our booklet. He is talking about the way we are feeling – he calls it “my attitudes” – and how that feeling “needs to be changed in me,” right here and right now. Step 10 is about having that feeling or attitude changed, about having that fear removed. What we then do about the situation is the business of Step 11. We must first *accept* the situation (Step 10), before we can hear what our inner resource suggests we should *do* and gives us the power to do it (Step 11). Otherwise we end up using a fearful brain to determine what to do. That was precisely our old way of doing things, and it’s what got us into a 12-Step program to begin with.

Perhaps we should change just one more thing. Perhaps Dr. Paul should have said:

Acceptance is the beginning of the answer to all my problems today.

In other words, our fear must go (resulting in acceptance) before we are able to determine what we should do.

Q. A little earlier, you talked about doing Step 10 in a group setting, as opposed to doing it alone or one-on-one. You

seemed to suggest that trying to do Step 10 in a group setting can lead to difficulties. What are they?

The first thing for us to say is that this is only our experience. Your experience may vary, and for all we know there may be 12-Step groups that are able to do Step 10 in this way.

We are focusing mainly on that part of Step 10 which suggests we “discuss” or talk about our fears with someone else. Members may be reluctant to do this if more than one person is listening to what they have to say. Understandably, they may feel uncomfortable about sharing personal information about themselves with more than one person, or with people they don’t know.

Here’s what we’ve noticed:

- It seems to work best with groups of six or less. The larger the group, the less willing people seem to be when it comes to being open about themselves.
- It seems to work better if all the members of the group know one other fairly well. In fact, our experience is that it works best of all with a completely private group of people. But a meeting of that kind isn’t and can’t be a 12-Step meeting, because people who are not part of that private group are excluded. Fair disclosure: We, the creators of this booklet, belong to just such a private group. We only do our Step 10 discussions one-on-one or in our closed group.
- If the group is large, it’s best to break up into groups of two or three for the discussion part of Step 10. Members can then talk with one or two other people they trust. But there can be issues even with this approach. Someone who is new to the group may be left out because no one knows them.

Q. In all your comments about Step 10, you’ve never mentioned sponsors. I do my Step 10 mainly with my sponsor, and it works out well. Why don’t you suggest this in your booklet?

We tend to be cautious about sponsorship. There is no mention of it in the first 164 pages of the AA Big Book. In the collective experience of the writers of this booklet, sponsors tend to take on the role of directors of, or advisors about, the recovery of their sponsees. And this can

become an issue when it comes to Step 10, because the discussion part of Step 10 has only worked for us when it is an advice-free interaction between two equals in a 12-Step fellowship.

When we do Step 10 with someone, we talk about our fears and the three defects of character that may have arisen out of our fears – selfishness, dishonesty, and resentment. Then the other person does the same. Neither person asks for or offers advice. In our view, the giving of advice has no place in our practice of Step 10. Any “advice” we may need will come primarily from our inner resource in Step 11. That resource may suggest we consult with others, of course, but we remember what the Big Book says on page 69: *Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let [our inner resource] be the final judge.*

In many sponsor-sponsee relationships, the sponsor offers advice and the sponsee listens to it. We, the creators of this book, may have different opinions about the value of such advice. But we are united in our belief that advice forms no part of the practice of Step 10.

This, though, is only our experience. You and your own inner resource are the best judges of whether you should do Step 10 with your sponsor.

Q. Why are you so down on discussing our problems with other members? Step 10 says, *We discuss them with someone immediately.* Similarly, the Big Book’s description of Step 5 talks about “discussing” our life story with another person

In both instances, we believe that the Big Book is using the word “discussion” in a particular way.

Discussions in general

A discussion is usually some sort of conversational exchange, frequently involving giving or listening to opinions.

Let’s imagine a discussion between A and B. The topic may be any subject, and A gives their own opinion, and B gives *their* own opinion. The exchange may be very rapid, even involving interruptions.

It’s also possible that the discussion is *about* A. In that case, B may offer praise (or criticism) of A, which A may accept (or deny). If the topic of

the discussion *is* A, then it is quite likely that B will start offering advice to A.

“Discussion” in the Big Book

Now let’s look at the “discussion” mentioned in Steps 5 and 10 of the Big Book. This is a rather different kind of discussion. First, opinions are going to be largely absent (or at least unspoken). Second, the discussion will be about *two* topics, not one: A will talk about A, and B will talk about B. If A is doing their Step 5, and B has had a similar experience, B may talk about their own experience. If A and B are doing Step 10 together, A may talk first about their fears, and then B may talk about *their* fears.

In neither case does A offer their opinion on B, or B on A. In neither case is there any offering of advice. So we are not “down” on the sort of discussion the Big Book is suggesting. We are doubtful, though, about the usefulness of any other kind of discussion that involves criticism or advice.

12-Step “discussion” meetings

This “special” meaning of the word “discussion” is even true of our 12-Step discussion meetings. In those discussion meetings, there is no *discussion* – not in the general sense of the word. In those meetings, just as in the AA Big Book, A talks about A and B talks about B. Any attempt at “discussion” in the normal sense of the word is discouraged as being “cross-talk.”

Q. You’ve implied that the “big books” of 12-Step fellowships other than AA may not be as useful as the Big Book. Why?

Let’s clarify this. By the time that other 12-Step fellowships came into existence, the unique focus of the Big Book on attaining peace exclusively through a dependence on an “unsuspected inner resource” had begun to be diluted, usually by discussing addicts’ issues in psychological or “self-help” terms. This mixture of spiritual, psychological and therapeutic solutions is typical of most of the “big books” of those later 12-Step fellowships.

It may be that this “mixed” approach using psychology, philosophy, group dynamics and the like works well for most members of those

fellowships. Indeed, AA has its own version of such a book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Presumably the *Twelve and Twelve* and the “big books” of other 12-Step fellowships would no longer be for sale if they hadn’t benefited at least some members of those 12-Step programs.

But this is not the intended audience of this little booklet of ours. Our target is members of AA and other 12-Step programs like ourselves for whom psychology, philosophy, therapy, or self-help seem to have failed to bring the kind of peace that the AA Promises speak of. That peace, for people like us, can come only from a complete surrender of our entire lives to some inner resource. That resource alone can remove our fears and suggest what we should do, right here and right now. In brief, our booklet is about how to deal with the second half of the First Step of our respective programs: *[O]ur lives had become unmanageable.*

The “big books” of at least some other 12-Step fellowships seem to be offering a solution based on our ability to manage at least *part* of our lives once we are sober or abstinent. By contrast, our reading of the AA Big Book, and our own experiences in recovery, suggest not only that our lives will never be manageable by us: they suggest that life is not intended to be *managed* at all. For us, life is something to be *experienced* when our fear is removed, and when that inner resource guides us through intuition and our “sixth sense.”

Q. Fear, fear, fear – all you seem to talk about is fear. Fear isn’t the fundamental issue of addicts. Their fundamental issue is their addiction, and yet you barely mention that

Well, we disagree on this matter, and we would like to tell you why.

Every edition of the AA Big Book contains a section usually known as “The Doctor’s Opinion.” The doctor in question is Dr. William Silkworth, who is thought to have worked with 40,000 or more alcoholics during his lifetime. Here is what he says about alcoholic men and women, with some added clarifications:

[Alcoholic m]en and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol [although] they admit it is injurious [to themselves and others] [If they stop drinking, t]hey 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 After they have succumbed to the desire again, 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 (4th Edition, page xxviii).*

The “doctor’s dilemma”

This is a description of what we might call the “doctor’s dilemma,” the doctor in this case being Dr. Silkworth, and the dilemma being the real issue facing alcoholics (and other addicts). We alcoholics drink because we like the effect: it seems to remove fear and bring a “sense of ease and comfort.” But these effects don’t last very long. And then we become afraid, because we can see that our drinking is injuring ourselves and probably other people we associate with. So we stop drinking. And when we stop drinking, far from our fear being removed, it intensifies and makes us “restless, irritable and discontented.” So we drink again to take away the fear

Our drinking is a *symptom* of something else, and that something else is *fear*. We may be able to stop drinking for a while, but unless we find some other means to remove the additional fear that comes from not drinking, we will drink again. And that is the basic issue addressed by the Big Book: How to get rid of fear without drinking (or whatever our addiction may be).

Stopping drinking and dealing with fear

A notable feature of the Big Book is the length of time it takes Bill W. to talk about fear.

The emphasis on “God” or a “Higher Power” in the early chapters is primarily as a means of stopping drinking. Only in the last two chapters of the first 164 pages that Bill W. wrote (Chapter 5, “How It Works” and Chapter 6, “Into Action,” both written in December 1938[†]) do we find a focus on ridding ourselves of fear. It suddenly comes into the foreground

* The actual page number varies across the editions of the Big Book.

† For more details of when the chapters of the Big Book were written, see the next question in this FAQ

on page 65 as fundamental to Step 4, and it stays there until page 88, which is the final page that deals with Step 11.

On the other hand, we know that the early AAs worked their program rapidly. If today's recovering alcoholics imitate those early AAs and start Step 4 within a short time – days, or a couple of weeks – of stopping drinking, they'll be dealing with the real, underlying problem of fear very quickly.

Our conclusion

You are correct, therefore, when you imply that we must abstain from whatever the source of our addiction may be. But unless that abstaining is followed *immediately* by a practice that can remove addicts' fears, the hope of recovery – let alone finding real peace – is remote.

Q. I am suspicious of your use of the AA Big Book in this booklet of yours. For example, you seem to prefer what the second Appendix says about a Higher Power to Bill W.'s numerous references to God in the first 164 pages. By contrast with those 164 pages, the Appendix contains about a page and a half. And this is far from the only example of questionable “picking and choosing” when you quote the Big Book. What's going on?

It's likely that many of our readers hold the entire Big Book in high esteem. We suspect that a number of them have a mental picture of Bill W. sitting peacefully in his study somewhere, deep in thought before he commits anything to paper, making sure that he is telling a consistent and compelling story which he has carefully mapped out beforehand, resulting in a book whose every word and sentence carry a sense of quiet, considered, and unquestioned authority.

If this is how you view the Big Book, and if your view is precious to you, we urge you to skip the rest of this section of our booklet, because that view bears little resemblance to the facts.

Still reading this section? OK – let's carry on

Here are some of the facts* about Bill W.'s writing of the Big Book:

* For much of the information in this section we are indebted to *Writing The Big Book* by William Schaberg, Central Recovery Press, 2019.

- The book was written very quickly, over a period of six months in 1938, with nothing new added during two of those months.
- Bill W. wrote the first 164 pages (with the exception of the chapter “To Employers,” which was written by someone else) under trying and difficult circumstances, in a small office, constantly pressured by others as to what he should be putting in the book or leaving out, and worrying about his perilous financial situation and the future of the infant fellowship of AA. For much of the time he was writing, he was under significant stress.
- The Twelve Steps *as such* didn’t exist before December 1938, when Bill W. wrote Chapter 5 (“How It Works”) and Chapter 6 (“Into Action”). He didn’t write the chapters of the Big Book in order: Chapters 5 and 6 were the last to be written. That means that there *were* no Steps when all the other chapters were written. Perhaps most important, there were no Steps when Chapter 7 (“Working With Others”) was originally written.*
- The chapter “To Wives” was written by Bill W., pretending to be one of the wives of recovering alcoholics. He also wrote “The Family Afterward,” although he had no family in the generally understood sense of the word. The chapter “To Employers” was written by Hank P., whose experience of dealing with alcoholic employees would have been limited in the main to the period before he stopped drinking. These three chapters therefore *cover topics of which the writers had little or no personal experience ...* by contrast with the rest of the first 164 pages of the Big Book.
- It is fairly clear that Bill W. was changing his own thinking substantially while going through the process of writing the Big Book. As we have seen, he wrote Chapters 5 and 6 last of all, and it is those chapters – pages 58 to 88 – which most of us today regard as the core of the AA program. He only starts to deal in depth with the issue of fear in these two chapters.†

* “Working With Others” was written in October-November of 1938. The reference to the Twelve Steps on page 96 must therefore have been added after Chapter 7 was written but before the Big Book was published in 1939.

† In Chapters 1-4 of the Big Book, drinking is mentioned about six times more often than fear. In Chapters 5-6, it's the other way around: fear is mentioned about four times more often than drinking.

Our conclusions

Great spiritual works are not usually written under circumstances like these. Given the situation in which it was put together, it's not surprising that the Big Book has the issues we've just identified above. And yet it *is* a great spiritual work ... in parts.

We believe that we do the Big Book a major disservice if we regard it as a mature, carefully considered work, every part of which is profound or even divinely inspired, offering something vital in every sentence. The important question is not, "What does the Big Book say?" The important question is, "What is the Big Book about?"

Well, we've already discussed what the Big Book is about. Indeed, it's the focus of this entire booklet, and here it is:

What the Big Book is about

Addicts practice their addiction because they are afraid. If they become sober or abstinent, they are in danger of returning to their addiction unless they can have their fear removed.

The Big Book outlines an approach for finding and experiencing peace with these four practices:

- having our fears of the past, present, and future taken away in Steps 4-9 and Step 10,
- determining what we should do and obtaining the power to do it in Step 11 (and doing it, in Step 12),
- experiencing some inner resource which does these things for us (the Spiritual Experience appendix, and Steps 2 and 3), and
- doing these three things right here and right now.

This, we believe, is what the Big Book is *about*.

In our view, it is simply *not true* that everything in the Big Book is needed to find and live in peace. It *is* true, however, that everything that is needed to find and live in peace is in the Big Book. That is why it is one of the greatest spiritual works of all time.

It requires that we read it with an open mind and a full appreciation of its origins. We can then see that it is one of the few books that can offer peace to both a) religious people without in any way criticizing their religious belief, and b) non-religious, agnostic, or atheistic people without in any way criticizing their rejection of religion.

Without this mutual tolerance and acceptance, we are in danger of violating the First Tradition of all our 12-Step fellowships: *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon [our fellowship's] unity.*

16.

The end

Thank you for reading (or listening to) what we have to say about finding peace in our respective 12-Step programs. We don't expect that you will agree with everything we've said, but we do like to think that you may have found something in our booklet that will be useful to you.

And for the very last time, just in case some of us have missed it, here's what we said:

Peace is the experience that arises out of continuing acceptance – acceptance of ourselves, of others, and of all the situations that we encounter which we are tempted to turn into problems. We ourselves create these problems when we combine those situations with our fear of those situations. When we ask for, or consent to, our fear being removed, the result is acceptance of the situation on our part – perhaps grudging acceptance at first, but acceptance nevertheless. Steps 4-9 and Step 10 are dedicated to removing fear and experiencing acceptance. It follows, therefore, that the practice of Steps 4-9 and the ongoing practice of Step 10 bring peace, just as the Promises suggest.

That peace can be broadened and deepened by our practice of Step 11. Step 11, practiced after Step 10, allows us to determine what we should do and gives us the strength to do it.

Our fear is removed by some inner resource, a resource of which we may be unaware before we practice Steps 4-9 and 10. Regardless of whether we regard that inner resource as another aspect of our consciousness or as a divinity, we learn increasingly to depend on it by practicing some form of meditation. This too is Step 11.

Only when we fully “comprehend the word serenity and ... know peace” will we be *fully* able to do Step 12. We said earlier that Step 12 is *descriptive* – it describes what we will inevitably find ourselves doing as a result of Step 11, because so many of the intuitive suggestions we receive in Step 11 are about helping other people. And by *helping*, we mean not merely serving them but being a *servant* to them – quite

literally, *giving* ourselves to them. As the Big Book says in “A Vision for You” (with slight alterations):

*Though they knew they must help [others] if they would remain sober [or abstinent], that motive became secondary. It was transcended by the happiness they found in **giving themselves for others** (page 159).*

Right here, right now

Our relationship with our inner resource can only be had right here and now.

That’s because we can only feel fear right here and now, so we can only have it removed right here and now.

It’s only right here and now that we are ever doubtful as to what we should do. It’s only right here and now that we can determine what we should do, and find the power to do it, right here and now.

It’s only right here and right now that our inner resource can do these things for us. And so it’s only right here and now that we can truly be at peace.

Peace is always available

In a way, though, this means that – if we practice Steps 10 and 11 – we can always find peace ...

... because we’re always right here,

and it’s always right now.

Appendix: Starting a simple meditation practice

These are suggestions for a simple meditation practice. We offer it for those of us who are committed to an ongoing working of Steps 10 and 11, but who may have difficulties with meditation.

Perhaps the simplest method of meditation is to watch the breath. So that's what we talk about here. Our approach requires only three things:

- 1) a body.
- 2) somewhere for the body to sit.
- 3) a timer.

We are going to assume that you already have a body.

Sitting

We sit “comfortably.” By “comfortably,” we mean in a position that we can maintain for some period of time without squirming or fidgeting. That may sound like lounging in an armchair or something similar. But in practice, we usually find after a while that it's more comfortable to sit upright in a regular chair, perhaps with a small cushion at our back.

Because we're already working Steps 10 and 11, we can be confident that our inner resource will sooner or later offer suggestions as to how we should sit.

The timer

We set our timer. We find that just a few minutes is best to begin with. Once more, our inner resource will let us know if or when we need to change the length of our meditation.

Breathing

Now we breathe, in the way we normally breathe. We breathe in, and then we breathe out. We breathe in and we breathe out until the timer stops.

Watching the breath

But there is one other thing we do in addition to breathing in and breathing out. We *watch* ourselves breathing in and breathing out. We watch the in-breath, all the way in. We watch the out-breath, all the way out. We watch the in-breath and then the out-breath, all the way in and all the way out, until the timer stops.

Our wandering minds

After a few in-breaths and out-breaths, we realize that we're no longer watching the breath. We've forgotten about it. We're thinking about something else. We're wondering if we're doing it right. Or we may have drifted away to something completely different, like what we're going to have for dinner.

This happens to everybody. It's normal, because normal brains think thoughts. That's what brains do – they think. They're not going to stop just because we've decided to meditate.

When we realize that our minds have wandered, we bring ourselves gently back to our meditation. Once again, we watch the in-breath, all the way in. We watch the out-breath, all the way out. We watch the in-breath and then the out-breath, all the way in and all the way out, until the timer stops.

That's meditation

That's meditation. From the moment we start the timer, we watch the in-breath and the out-breath. Then we forget to watch the in-breath and the out-breath. Then we realize that we've forgotten to watch the in-breath and the out-breath. Then we go back to watching the in-breath and the out-breath. This continues until the timer stops.

Everything that happens between the timer starting and the timer stopping is meditation.

Our inner resource

Our inner resource, that vital “sixth sense” (page 85), will offer suggestions around this basic practice. It may suggest meditating for a longer (or perhaps shorter) time. It may suggest how often to do it. It

may suggest we talk to a friend who also meditates, or that we read about it.

“Good” meditation and “bad” meditation

There is no “good” meditation or “bad” meditation. There is just meditation.

People who can meditate and people who can’t meditate

The world of ordinary people is not divided into those who can meditate and those who can’t meditate. It’s divided into those who do meditate, and a much larger group of ordinary people who don’t, or who won’t, or who *think* they can’t, meditate. What we offer here is one possible way of moving into the group that *does* meditate ... with the help, as always, of your own inner resource.