

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

Session #4 - Steps 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9

WELCOME to the fourth session of the Back To Basics "Here Are The Steps We Took" Beginner Meetings. Together, we're taking the Twelve Steps as described in the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Our objective is to find a God of our understanding who WILL free us from the deadly affliction of food addiction.

For those of you who are planning to lead a Beginners' Meeting like this, we want to assure you that there are no "rules" on how to do it. Our format is based on the Big Book, but it is still OUR interpretation of the Program. Please feel free to modify or adapt our approach to your specific needs.

Our names are _____ and _____ and we are members of Overeaters Anonymous. We're here to share our experience and help guide you in your journey toward a spiritual solution to your drinking problem.

So that we can complete each session within 1½ hours and still provide ample time for questions, we request that you write down anything that you do not understand or need clarified and save it until the end of the session. We will answer questions at that time.

In the past three weeks, we have gone through Steps One through Four. Hopefully each newcomer and those working the Steps with us are finished or are close to finishing their Fourth Step Inventories, and we ask you to make arrangements to share your Fifth Step this week with at least one other person.

Let's review what the "Big Book" says about Step Five.

Step 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Notice that the Fifth Step doesn't say that we just admit our wrongs. It says that we admit the EXACT NATURE of our wrongs, so we need to do more than just confess what we did. We also need to see WHY we did what we did so that we can ask God to help us with it. The Fourth Step guides that we have provided help us see just that.

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

Please turn to page 72, paragraph 1. This is the beginning of Chapter 6, “Into Action”. Please notice that this chapter is not named “Into Thinking” or “Into Hearing About What To Do” or “Into Telling Others What To Do” or “Into Studying”; but is called “Into ACTION”. Page 72, paragraph 1:

"Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude (Step 2), a new relationship with our Creator (Step 3), and to discover the obstacles in our path (Step 4). We have admitted certain defects; we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. (Of course, that is a promise. The book continues.) This REQUIRES ACTION on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the EXACT NATURE of our defects. (You might have remembered that Step 5 actually says, "...the exact nature of our WRONGS." But this sentence says, "...the exact nature of our DEFECTS." Bill Wilson likes to use different words that mean the same thing. Throughout the book, he uses the words faults, wrongs, mistakes, defects of character, things we have admitted are objectionable, shortcomings, flaws, and in "Bill's Story" he uses the word sins. They ALL mean the same thing - whatever blocks us off from God and others. Back to the book.) "This brings us to the Fifth Step in the program of recovery mentioned in the preceding chapter.

This is perhaps difficult - especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal INSUFFICIENT. (Like we said before, self cannot overcome self, a self-will problem cannot be solved by self-will.) Many of us thought it necessary to go MUCH further. We will be MORE reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so."

*****NEXT LEADER*****

Next, the "Big Book" tells us why we need to admit our shortcomings to another person:

"The best reason first (here's a warning): If we skip this VITAL step, we may NOT overcome food addiction. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably (or almost always) they went back to compulsively eating. Having persevered with the REST of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never COMPLETED their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only THOUGHT they had lost their egoism and fear; they only THOUGHT they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it NECESSARY, until they told someone else ALL their life story.

A.A.'s "12 & 12" expresses this warning in a similar way when it states on page 56 and 57:

"Most of us would declare that without a fearless admission of our defects to another human being we could NOT stay sober. It seems plain that the grace of God will NOT enter to expel our destructive obsessions until we are willing to try this."

It's obvious why we share our inventory with another person - because we are MASTERS at believing in our own justifications and half-truths. Aren't we the ones who used to say we didn't have a eating problem? Didn't we tell ourselves over and over that we were doing fine as we were sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss of food addiction?

Since we're not good judges of character, especially our own, we confide in someone else. Only ANOTHER person or person's can see us as we REALLY are. That's why it says that a SOLITARY self-appraisal is insufficient.

The book continues on page 73, first full paragraph. I'm going to change a few words here to personalize it a bit and I think you'll see what I mean:

"More than most people, the food addict leads a double life. I am very much the actor. To the outer world I present my stage character. This is the one I like my fellows to see. I want to enjoy a certain reputation, but know in my heart I don't deserve it.

The inconsistency is made worse by the things I do on my sprees. Coming to my senses, I am revolted at certain episodes I vaguely remember. These memories are a nightmare. I tremble to think someone might have observed me. As far as I can, I push these memories far inside myself (which is

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

another way of saying that I ignore my conscience, or my Inner Guide which is that piece of God within me. The book continues.). I hope they will never see the light of day. I am under CONSTANT fear and tension - that makes for (or leads to) more compulsive eating."

Our experience shows that if you've been thorough to this point, and you take Step Five as prescribed in the "Big Book", you WILL receive results. I can GUARANTEE that those results go contrary to having "constant fear and tension."

Let's skip a paragraph and pick up the reading at the last line of page 73.

"We MUST be ENTIRELY honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person OR PERSONS with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion. We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem. Of course, we sometimes encounter people who do not understand food addicts.

If we cannot or would rather not do this, we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend. Perhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person. It may be one of our own family, but we CANNOT disclose ANYTHING to our wives or our parents which will hurt them and make them unhappy. We have NO right to save our own skin at another person's expense. Such parts of our story we tell to someone who will understand, yet be unaffected. The rule is we MUST be hard on ourself, but ALWAYS considerate of others."

Like it was said before, when the Big Book came out, the assumption was that this book would fall into the hands of a person who had no AA in their town. We are so fortunate that our fellowship has grown to the point where today very few people have to go outside the fellowship to do their Fifth Step. Some may still choose to confide in someone who is not a member of Overeaters Anonymous, but we find that most newcomers nowadays prefer to share their inventory with their sponsor.

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

The person we choose should be closemouthed, trustworthy and supportive. He or she **MUST NEVER** discuss our inventory with **ANYONE** else. It's important that they are able to keep a confidence, and fully understands and approves what we are about to do.

*****NEXT LEADER*****

So the book gives us four specific attributes to look for in someone who is going to hear our Fifth Step. First, on page 74, toward the end of the middle paragraph, it says we share our inventory with someone who will understand, yet be unaffected. Then, two lines up from the bottom of the page, it says that it is important that they be able to keep a confidence. The next line says that they need to fully understand and approve of what we are driving at. And then the next few words say that they need to not try to change our plan. So these are the four points to look for in someone who is going to hear your Fifth Step.

The "Big Book" gives us specific instructions for taking the Fifth Step. At the top of page 75, they tell us that, as soon as we decide who is to listen to our inventory, we take action immediately:

"When we decide who is to hear our story, **WE WASTE NO TIME**. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a **LONG TALK**. (I'd like to suggest that the most effective way to do a Fifth Step is by doing it all in one sitting. That way, we get the **FULL** effect and the **FULL** picture of how devastating our life run on our will is to ourselves and to others. The book continues.) We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a **LIFE-AND-DEATH** errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence."

Something that you may not have noticed is that the Fifth Step says, "Admitted to **GOD**, to ourselves, and to another human being...." Before we meet with whoever is to hear our inventory, please take some time at a place where you feel God strongly, like a church or a synagogue or a place in nature or even in your own home (if you have some peace and privacy there), and share your inventory with your Higher Power. You may see something more in the inventory that you didn't see before. When we first share the Fourth Step with God, we begin to feel a sense of forgiveness and begin to accumulate power that we bring into admitting these things to

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

someone else. When we finally admit them to someone else, we experience humility and see that we can trust again by telling our deep, dark secrets to someone else. In admitting these things to ourselves, we gain more of an understanding of our inner workings.

In the second paragraph on page 75, the "Big Book" provides us with more directions:

"We pocket (or put away) our pride and go to it, illuminating EVERY twist of character, EVERY dark cranny of the past."

Again, to get the FULL effect and the FULL picture of how self-will has damaged and controlled our lives, we'd like to suggest that a Fifth Step be done ALL on the same day, if possible. Sometimes it takes most of the day, so make it a priority and simply get started early enough by perhaps setting aside an entire day for this life-changing activity. You'll be grateful that you did.

Then, the book tells us that after we have shared our inventories, we will get more results. Further on in the second paragraph on page 75, the "Big Book" includes more benefits as the result of taking this Step. These are the Fifth Step Promises:

"Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are DELIGHTED. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs (Step 2), but now we begin to have a spiritual experience (which is as THE result of taking some actions). The feeling that the eating problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."

We are now well on our way toward recovering from food addiction. The "Big Book" states we are in the process of having a spiritual awakening and as a result, our obsession to drink is being removed.

Please review this paragraph after you have done this Step. Think about how these promises are coming true in your lives. They CERTAINLY have come true in ours.

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

In the next paragraph the "Big Book" gives us specific directions on what to do AFTER we have finished sharing our inventories:

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for AN HOUR, carefully reviewing what we have done. (So we take ONE hour after the Fifth Step to do the following.) We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him BETTER. (Something you'll see throughout spiritual literature is that two important attributes of God is that our Higher Power is truth and love. Now, through our actions and experiences with the first five Steps, we are learning more and more about truth and love, which certainly means that we know God better. The book continues.) Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the Twelve Steps (which is page 59.) CAREFULLY reading the first five proposals (which is referring to the first five Steps) we ask if we have omitted ANYTHING, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

*****NEXT LEADER*****

Notice that the book asks us if the stones are properly in place, if we've skimped on the cement put into the foundation, and if we've tried to make mortar without sand. What stones are the "Big Book" referring to? What is the book saying by asking if we've skimped on the cement put into the foundation? What does it mean, "to make mortar without sand"? Without an explanation of these terms, these important questions could be quite confusing, therefore some important information may be overlooked. Let's take a moment to review:

Any structure has a foundation, a cornerstone, and a keystone. (And let us remember: the stronger the foundation, the stronger the structure will become.) In the chapter "We Agnostics", the book tells us that we are building a "wonderfully effective spiritual structure". In "Bill's Story" on page 12 when Ebby says to Bill, "Why don't you choose your OWN conception of God?" Bill realizes that it was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than himself. Nothing more was required of him to make his beginning. Bill saw that growth could start from that point. He then says, "Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

what I saw in my friend.” Bill tells us that willingness is the foundation of our journey toward a spiritual awakening.

When we took the Second Step together during the second week of our journey, we learned that believing is the cornerstone of our personality change when on page 47 the "Book Big" states:

"We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I NOW believe, or am I even WILLING to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he DOES believe, or is WILLING to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built."

So believing is the cornerstone.

The third step required that we make a decision. On page 62 the "Big Book" tells us that our decision to turn our will and our lives over to God's care is the keystone of our personality change (let us remember: the keystone is the stone at the top that holds ALL the other stones in place). The "Big Book" explains this when it says:

"We decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom."

Willingness is the foundation. Believing is the cornerstone. Our decision is the keystone.

Now let's take another look at these questions at the bottom of page 75: "Is our work solid so far?" Which is another way of saying have I omitted ANYTHING from the first five steps that will cause my structure to crumble? It then says, "Are the stones properly in place?" Which is another way of saying do I have willingness as my foundation; belief as the cornerstone; and have I made a decision to let God direct my life, which is the keystone? Are my first three steps solid? Then it says, "Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation?" Which is another way of saying have I skimped on the willingness in my foundation? Then it says, "Have we tried to make mortar without sand?" Which is another way of

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

saying have I tried to take the rest of the steps without really being convinced of the First Step?

After sharing our inventories with our sponsor or "spiritual advisor", we answer these questions during an hour of meditation and quiet time to make sure we haven't omitted anything.

This brings us to the end of Step 5.

Please turn to page 76 in your Big Book.

Step 6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

A.A.'s 12 & 12 says the following about Step Six: "There is a big difference between striving for a self-determined objective and for the perfect objective which is of God. The only urgent thing is that we make a beginning, and keep trying. We shall need to raise our eyes toward perfection, and be ready to walk in that direction. It will seldom matter how haltingly we walk. The only question will be "Are we ready?" It is suggested that we ought to become entirely willing to aim toward perfection. We note that some delay, however, might be pardoned. That word, in the mind of a rationalizing food addict, could certainly be given a long-term meaning. He could say, 'How very easy! Sure, I'll head toward perfection, but I'm certainly not going to hurry any. Maybe I can postpone dealing with some of my problems indefinitely.' Of course, this WON'T do. Such a bluffing of oneself will have to go the way of many another pleasant rationalization. At the very least, we shall HAVE TO come to grips with some of our worst character defects AND take action toward their removal as quickly as we can. The moment we say, 'No, never!' our minds close against the grace of God. Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be FATAL. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives, and move toward God's Will for us."

In the Big Book, all of Step Six can be found in the first paragraph of page 76. The first line says:

"If we can answer to our satisfaction, we look at Step Six."

If we can answer WHAT to our satisfaction? The Book is talking about the questions in the last paragraph of the page before this, page 75. These are

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

the questions we ask ourselves when we take the hour of reflection AFTER we do our Fifth Step by asking us to review whether or not we were thorough and honest in completing the first five Steps. So the Sixth Step is done IMMEDIATELY after taking the hour of quiet time after the Fifth Step.

Starting with the second line on page 76, the book now makes a statement and then asks us two simple questions:

“We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable (which means absolutely essential. What follows is the FIRST question). Are we now ready to let GOD remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? (And here is the SECOND question) Can He now take them all - everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

So in the last three sentences here the book asks us two questions, and depending upon what our answer is FOR these two questions, will depend upon whether we need to involve the last sentence. According to the "Big Book", immediately after we do our Fifth Step, it will be decision time once again.

*****NEXT LEADER*****

After going over Step Six in the Big Book, the person or person's hearing your Fifth Step will ask you the first Sixth Step question, which is for nothing more than the WILLINGNESS, or to be entirely ready, to have God remove the defects of character that block us off from our Higher Power working in and through us. These "unsalable goods" or "shortcomings" were disclosed in our Fourth and Fifth Steps. At that time, take a moment of silence to reflect on whether you are entirely ready, by asking yourself if you are willing to let God help you with these defects.

After you answer the first Sixth Step question, whoever is hearing your Fifth Step will ask you the second Sixth Step question, which is if you believe that the God of your own understanding is capable of now taking them all – everyone.

Notice that the Book says in the last line of the first paragraph on page 76, that if there is still a defect of character that we are NOT willing to ask God

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

to help us with, we pray for the willingness. That is all there is to the Sixth Step: Is the God of my own understanding capable of removing my defects, and am I willing to ask my Higher Power to help me with these shortcomings. If I am NOT yet entirely ready to turn over one or more of these human failings to my Higher Power, I pray to ask God to help me become willing.

If you are NOT willing to go to God with one or more of these defects, please remember to pray daily for the willingness and it WILL come, but still go on to Step Seven with the REST of the flaws you ARE willing to let God help you with.

Step 7 Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

We need to start realizing that when God begins to remove our self-will defects of character, He will ALWAYS replace them with one of HIS OWN characteristics. If he didn't, we would be the hole in the doughnut and we would be left with an empty space. That space needs to be filled with the OPPOSITE of the defect that we are asking our Higher Power to remove. For instance, if I found a lot of selfishness in my inventory, when I ask God to help me with it, He will replace it with unselfishness. Or if I saw my own dishonesty all over my inventory, when I ask God to help me with it, He will replace it with honesty. And so on. God does for us what we CANNOT do for ourselves, BUT He will NOT do for us what we CAN do for ourselves, so we need to start practicing the opposite of our defects of character. He will help us with our motivation and our thinking, but part of the Seventh Step is that we need to start practicing God's Will characteristics.

In the Big Book, Step Seven is straightforward. It consists of a prayer.

The second paragraph on page 76 contains the Seventh Step Prayer. It reads:

“When ready, we say something like this: ‘My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, GOOD AND BAD (which is another reference back to the Third Step). I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do YOUR bidding. Amen.’”

*****NEXT LEADER*****

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

Step Seven says, “Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings” so I’d like to attempt explaining the difference between just ASKING, and HUMBLY asking. Being humble is becoming aware of the littleness of ourselves, compared to the bigness of God. Did you ever think that your only problem is not getting your way? Being a servant of God is the highest attainment in OA. We CLIMB our way, all the way to servant. That’s what a winner is - a servant. We’re just out there doing what God gives us the intuition to do. And when this transformation takes place, our needs are being met from the inside, so we don’t have to go out and get anything to get fixed, we’re ALREADY fixed because we already have everything we need, and we’re simply moving through life, just looking for ways to be of service to God. So humility is an awareness that we are willing to go through whatever it takes to become God-centered. That means we’re going to have to go through the pain of often not getting our way and voluntarily go through this transforming discomfort. We’ll use the following story as an illustration:

A lump of gray clay was sitting on the shelf next to beautiful teacup. The clay says to the teacup, “Is this all there is to life, just sitting here not doing much of anything? Why can’t I be just like you, a teacup that people love, and say is very beautiful?” The teacup says, “Not too long ago, I was just like you. One day soon you will be a teacup too, and people will say that you too are very beautiful and they will also want to take you home with them.” “Yes, I would LOVE that,” says the lump of clay, “Can you ask the Master to make me into a beautiful teacup?”

Right HERE, in THIS part of the story, the clay is just ASKING to become a teacup. But HUMBLY asking is a little different than that, as will be shown by the REST of the story.

The teacup continues: “Let me tell you what it takes to become the most gorgeous, the most beautiful little teacup that everyone admires and loves.

“I didn't always look like this. There was a time in my life when I too was just a hard cold lump of gray clay. Well, one day my Master came along and He picked me up and He began to pat me and roll me and I said, 'What are you doing, stop it, quit, that hurts, don't do that, ouch, leave me alone.' And He simply said, 'Not yet.'

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

“And then He put me on this wheel and began to spin me around and around and around and I said, 'I'm getting dizzy, getting sick to my stomach, let me off of here, I can't stand this, oh, oh, what's happening, my whole shape is changing, stop it, stop it.' And He said, 'Not yet.'

After my shape had changed, He began to paint me all over. I said, 'Eew, cough, cough, that stuff stinks, stop it, stop it.' And He still said, 'Not yet.'

“Then He put me in this oven and closed the door. The oven had a little window and He kept just looking at me. And I said, 'I can't stand this heat, let me out of here, cough, cough, don't You love me, let me out of here, why are You just looking at me?' And He simply looked at me through the door and said, 'Not yet.'

“Then, finally, He opened the door, took me and dried me on the shelf for a while and put another coat of that awful paint on me (cough, cough). And then He turned that oven back on seven times hotter than it was before and put me back in there again, and I said, 'What are you doing, I can't stand this, You don't understand, I can't do this, I can't take it, let me out of here,' He just looked through the glass at me and said, 'Not yet.'

“Finally one day, He opened the door, took me out and set me on the shelf, let me cool off for a while and then came by with a mirror and He held it up in front of me and I couldn't believe it. I was so beautiful, I was so changed, I was so different. I didn't even look like that old lump of gray clay any more. And now people EVERYWHERE appreciate and love me.”

NOW, if you ask, you're HUMBL Y asking. You KNOW what's involved, you KNOW that it's not going to be easy, but you want it ANYWAY. Spirituality is about changing our attitude about pain and discomfort. It is looking THROUGH the pain to see the beauty of what is coming. The transformation is just on the OTHER side of the willingness to experience not getting my way. And as soon as we go through it, it wasn't even painful, it merely becomes a little effort. It's kinda like when you're OUT of shape and you want to get back IN shape. It's hard at first. Remember that first week in the gym when you go home and everything hurts, everywhere? But as you keep it up, a month later, it's no longer painful, it merely becomes a little effort. And it's wonderful because you know the great results it's going to produce. After a while, you LOVE pushing yourself because of the wonderful results. And the same thing can happen in the spiritual world. I

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

UNDERSTAND that at times I'm going to be uncomfortable, but I'm willing to go through with it anyway because I trust my Higher Power. That's the difference between just ASKING, and HUMBLY asking.

*****NEXT LEADER*****

Over the next week, AFTER doing Steps Five, Six and Seven all on the same day, please begin saying the Seventh Step Prayer, along with the Third Step Prayer, as part of your daily prayer life. Also, each of you have been given a handout to assist you in working Step Seven going forward. On one side of the card you have been given is the Seventh Step prayer, and on the other side are two lists. One is a list of SELF-will characteristics and the other is a list of the OPPOSITE, or GOD'S Will characteristics. Please use this card or handout by marking off on the left side the self-will characteristics that you are struggling with. Then, each morning and when needed throughout the day, ask your Higher Power to replace them with the opposite or the GOD'S Will characteristics. In other words, if fear is one of your defects, silently ask God to take away your fear and replace it with courage, faith and trust in God. And so on down the list. Not only is this a great way to include God in on relieving our shortcomings, but it is also a great way to affirm daily the direction within ourselves that we are trying to move toward.

(*****Please give an example of how you use this list*****)

Are there any questions about how to use this daily checklist?

(*****Please pause to see if there are any questions & answer them if there are*****)

According to the "Big Book" we have completed the information for practicing Step Seven on an ongoing basis.

Now, it is time to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends or restitution.

Step 8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

Something that you may not have noticed about the Eighth Step is that the word ALL is mentioned twice.

At this point in our work we will need to refer back to our Fourth Step inventories. From the lists of names on our inventories we are able to compile our Eighth Step amends list. We examine our sheets for the people we have harmed by our conduct and whom we owe amends. On page 76 in the third paragraph, the "Big Book" states:

"Now we need more action, without which we find that "Faith without works is dead." Let's look at Steps Eight and Nine. We have a list of ALL persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. NOW we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. (So we are NOT going out to fix relationships. We go out to repair the damage done, to set right the wrongs we have done. The book continues.) We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of OUR effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. (So here's a little prayer for when we are NOT willing to make an amend. Just like in the Sixth Step, if we are unwilling, we pray for the willingness until it comes. The book continues.) Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to ANY LENGTHS for victory over food addiction."

We make a separate list of names even though they're already listed in our inventories. By having a separate list of names, we're able to see more clearly those people we will go to, to make our amends.

A.A.'s 12 & 12 suggests we redouble the efforts we made while writing inventory when making our Eighth Step list. On page 77 of the 12 & 12, Bill writes:

"Every O.A. has found that he can make LITTLE headway in this new adventure of living until he FIRST backtracks and REALLY makes an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage he has left in his wake. To a degree, he has already done this when taking moral inventory, but now the time has come when he ought to REDOUBLE his efforts to see how many people he has hurt, and in what ways."

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

Aside from the list of names of those we owe amends, there's a second part to this step that we don't want to overlook. Some people we will be willing to go to right away. With others, we'll have to pray for the willingness to do this. The book suggests we pray daily for the willingness until it comes. In the meantime, we can begin to make those amends that we are **ALREADY** willing to do. We have found when we begin the restitution process in conjunction with praying for the willingness to do the seemingly more difficult amends, we start to **ALSO** become willing to make the amends that we never thought we'd be willing to face. We become more willing when we commence to get results from making other amends. When making the Eighth Step list, it is sometimes suggested to break the names into two categories: amends I am willing to make **NOW**, and amends I am **NOT** willing to make now. Also, the word "amend" has a second definition besides "setting right the wrong". To amend a document is to make a permanent change to it. So in making amends, not only are we to "right all such matters to the best of our ability", but we must **ALSO** change and stop doing the behavior that brought about the harm to begin with. You cannot make amends for things you still do. We can't call it **OLD** behavior if we are **STILL** doing it. We must move away from our old habit of apologizing for something but then doing it again. Our changed actions will speak louder than our words. Included in today's handout packet is a form to fill out that will help you put together your Eighth Step list. Please pay attention to each of the headings.

(*****Please give an example using the Eighth Step list*****)

Let's move on to Step Nine.

*****NEXT LEADER*****

(*****If appropriate, please pass the collection baskets*****)

Step 9 Made direct amends to such people, wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

On the fourth paragraph on page 76, the "Big Book" provides us with some insight as to how to approach some of those to whom we owe amends. Page 76, paragraph four:

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

"Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of business acquaintances and friends we have hurt, we may feel diffident (which means lacking confidence) about going to some of them on a spiritual basis. Let us be reassured. To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach. We might prejudice them. At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is NOT an end in itself. Our REAL PURPOSE is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us."

In the last sentence of this paragraph, the "Big Book" clearly states our purpose for living. It tells us why we are here -- to serve God and the people about us.

The book continues by asking us to let our actions, rather than our words, demonstrate to others that we have changed. Walking the walk is more important than just talking the talk. Starting with line four of page 77, the book states:

"It is SELDOM WISE to approach an individual, who still smarts from our injustice to him, and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But our man is SURE to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. (So again, it says that we are there to set right the wrong, NOT to fix the relationship. The book continues.) He is going to be MORE interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.

We don't use this as an excuse for shying away from the subject of God. When it will serve any good purpose, we are willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense."

One of the most difficult amends to make is to someone we genuinely do not like. But, whether we like them or not, we MUST proceed. The text continues:

"The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise (they're talking here about someone on our resentment list). It may be he has done us MORE harm than we have done HIM and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. (The reason why we probably have a better attitude toward our

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

enemies is because back in the Fourth Step we were asked to forgive and pray for those we felt had harmed us since they, LIKE OURSELVES, are spiritually blocked off whenever anyone brings about harm. The book continues.) Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. WE GO TO HIM in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing OUR former ill feeling and expressing OUR regret."

So the book gives us an important attitude we should have when going to make amends to someone we do not like. Our attitude needs to have a helpful and forgiving spirit, and in a few sentences it says that our manner needs to be calm, frank, and open.

In the next paragraph, the text even provides us with instructions on what to say and what NOT to say:

"Under NO condition do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply tell him that we will NEVER get over food addiction until we have done our UTMOST to straighten out the past. (This last line speaks directly to those of you who will be or have in the past made a beginning but lost interest halfway through the amends process. If that be the case, we need to ask ourselves this simple question: Does my lack of willingness to move forward with making amends have ANYTHING to do with whether I go back to compulsively eating again or not? It's an important consideration to make. The book continues.) We are there to sweep off OUR side of the street, realizing that NOTHING worthwhile can be accomplished UNTIL we do so, NEVER trying to tell him what HE should do. HIS faults are NOT discussed. We stick to OUR OWN. If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.

In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens. (That's 90% of the time.) Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own fault, so feuds of years' standing melt away in an hour. RARELY do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well. Occasionally, they will offer assistance. It should NOT matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam."

*****NEXT LEADER*****

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

The "Big Book" explains what to do about our debts. We may not like the sacrifice required to make good on our bills, but sacrifice we must. The process forces us to rely on God for guidance, which takes us out of self-will, and into God's Will. Under God's direction, we find it MUCH easier to make restitution than we EVER thought possible. In the middle of page 78, the book states:

"Most food addicts owe money. We do NOT dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our compulsive eating; they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our food addiction on the theory it may cause financial harm. Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can (and I'd like to add that we need to follow through with this plan) we let these people know we are sorry. Our compulsive eating has made us slow to pay. (Now here's a warning.) We MUST lose our fear of creditors NO MATTER HOW FAR WE HAVE TO GO, for we are liable to go back to compulsive eating IF we are afraid to face them."

The next paragraph deals with criminal offenses:

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

Next the book instructs us again to ask God for guidance. This reliance upon God is ESSENTIAL if we are to outgrow the fears that have separated us from our true selves, our Creator, and others. The book continues:

"Although these reparations (or amends) take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to ANY lengths to find a spiritual experience (which of course is OA's solution to food addiction. Now here's a little prayer) we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, NO

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

MATTER WHAT the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We HAVE to be. We MUST not shrink at ANYTHING."

Next is an example of how to proceed when OTHER people may be affected. Here, EXTREME caution needs to be taken:

"Usually, however, other people are involved. (Here's a warning) Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the food addict pit. A man we know had remarried. Because of resentment and compulsive eating, he had not paid alimony to his first wife. She was furious. She went to court and got an order for his arrest. He had commenced our way of life, had secured a position, and was getting his head above water. It would have been impressive heroics if he had walked up to the Judge and said, 'Here I am.'

"We thought he ought to be willing to do that if necessary, but if he were in jail he could provide nothing for either family. We suggested he write his first wife admitting his faults and asking forgiveness. He did, and also sent a small amount of money. He told her what he would try to do in the future. He said he was perfectly willing to go to jail if she insisted. Of course she did not, and the whole situation has long since been adjusted."

The "Big Book" suggests we ask others for help before we make some of our more difficult amends. We need direction, preferably from someone who understands and has experienced the inventory and restitution process. We MUST make SURE we do not create further harm to others as we clean up OUR side of the street. At the top of page 80, notice the directions of what to do, and please notice the five specific points the book now makes:

"Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we (1) secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have (2) consulted with others, (3) asked God to help and (4) the drastic step is indicated we (5) MUST not shrink."

So it says that we need to (1) ask the people who will be affected (like a business partner or our family) if it is OK with them that we make this amend, (2) talk with our support group and others that may have made a similar amend, (3) pray to ask God to help us decide what to do, and (4) if

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

the amend still seems like it is the right thing to do, we then (5) MUST not balk at going through with setting right the wrong.

*****NEXT LEADER*****

Next is a story of a man who USED this formula before proceeding to make amends:

"This brings to mind a story about one of our friends. While compulsive eating, he accepted a sum of money from a bitterly-hated business rival, giving him no receipt for it. He subsequently denied having received the money and used the incident as a basis for discrediting the man. He thus used his own wrong-doing as a means of destroying the reputation of another. In fact, his rival was ruined.

He felt that he had done a wrong he could not possibly make right. If he opened that old affair, he was afraid it would destroy the reputation of his partner, disgrace his family and take away his means of livelihood. What right had he to involve those dependent upon him? How could he possibly make a public statement exonerating his rival?

After consulting with his wife and partner he came to the conclusion that it was better to take those risks than to stand before his Creator guilty of such ruinous slander. (This next line is important.) He saw that he HAD to place the outcome in God's hands or he would soon start overeating again, and all would be lost anyhow. He attended church for the first time in many years. After the sermon, he quietly got up and made an explanation. His action met widespread approval, and today he is one of the most trusted citizens of his town. This all happened years ago."

The next page or so deals with domestic troubles like sex outside of a relationship. Starting with the second line from the bottom of page 80, we find:

"The chances are that we have domestic troubles. (Another understatement.) Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, compulsive overeaters are fundamentally much worse than other people. But overeating does complicate sex relations in the home. After a few years with an food addict, a wife gets worn out, resentful and uncommunicative. How could she be anything else? The husband begins to feel lonely, sorry for himself. He commences to look around in the night clubs, or their equivalent, for

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

something besides liquor. Perhaps he is having a secret and exciting affair with "the girl who understands." In fairness we must say that she may understand, but what are we going to do about a thing like that? A man so involved often feels very remorseful at times, especially if he is married to a loyal and courageous girl who has literally gone through hell for him. Whatever the situation, we usually HAVE to do something about it. If we are sure our wife does not know, should we tell her? Not always, we think. If she knows in a general way that we have been wild, should we tell her in detail? Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. She may insist on knowing all the particulars. She will want to know WHO the woman is and WHERE she is. We feel we ought to say to her that we have NO right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall NOT be repeated. MORE than that we CANNOT do; we have NO right to go further. Though there may be justifiable exceptions, and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found this the best course to take.

Our design for living is not a one-way street. It is as good for the wife as for the husband. If we can forget, so can she. It is BETTER, however, that one does NOT needlessly name a person upon whom she can vent jealousy."

In the first paragraph on page 82, we are yet again instructed to ask God for guidance as we make good on our past misdeeds:

"Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let by-gones be by-gones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind. Keep it ALWAYS in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion - jealousy. Good generalship may decide that the problem be attacked on the flank rather than risk a face-to-face combat."

This is an example of how we must be tactful and considerate of others as we make our amends. Nobody said it would be easy - it just has to be done. Remember to ALWAYS use your Higher Power as your CONSTANT Guide. By following His direction, the most difficult situations can have a positive outcome.

In the next several paragraphs, the "Big Book" authors state quite emphatically that stopping drinking is ONLY a BEGINNING. We MUST

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

take additional action if we are to recover from alcoholism. The book continues:

"If we have NO such complication (the complication they are talking about here is sex outside of a relationship. The book continues), there is PLENTY we should do at home. Sometimes we hear a food addict say that the only thing he needs to do is to keep vigilant. Certainly he must keep vigilant, for there will be no home if he doesn't. But he is yet a LONG WAY from making good to the wife or parents whom for years he has so shockingly treated. Passing all understanding is the patience mothers and wives have had with food addicts. Had this not been so, many of us would have no homes today, would perhaps be dead.

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

*****NEXT LEADER*****

So just not compulsively eating is NOT enough. The "Big Book" makes that VERY clear. The reconstruction that will need to take place in most homes may at times seem difficult. But, once again, we rely heavily on prayer and guidance from our Higher Power, sponsor and support group. At the top of page 83, our text states:

"Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We MUST take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry WON'T fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being VERY careful NOT to criticize THEM. THEIR defects may be glaring, but the chances are that OUR OWN actions are partly responsible. So we clean house with the family, (now here's a Ninth Step prayer) asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.

The spiritual life is NOT a theory. We HAVE to LIVE it (Again, the book is saying that our program needs to be more than some mental idea. It MUST be a motivating and growing positive way of life. The book continues).

Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

think we ought NOT to urge them. We should NOT talk incessantly to them about spiritual matters. They will change in time. Our BEHAVIOR will convince them MORE than our words. (One of Dr. Bob's most popular quotes is, "Carry the message, and if you must – use words." Walking the walk is so much more important than just talking the talk. The book continues.) We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone."

Here we're told that in order to achieve the vital psychic change, we HAVE to LIVE the O.A. program. So, we don't just TAKE the Steps. We practice these principles on a DAILY basis. The first nine Steps, or $\frac{3}{4}$ of the program, basically deal with the past. What follows the Ninth Step is OA's way of life, or OA's way of spiritual growth one day at a time, otherwise known as the process of Step Ten, Eleven, and Twelve.

The next paragraph on page 83 gives us directions on what to do if we can't make amends to someone face-to-face. Notice that they saved this for last:

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

Please notice that this last paragraph mentions writing an honest letter to people we cannot see. This ALSO includes if the person we harmed or hated has died. A letter written and read to a substitute listener can bring about much relief and freedom from guilt and remorse we never thought we could get rid of.

The "Big Book" concludes the Ninth Step with another list of results. Starting at the bottom of page 83, it tells us precisely what is going to happen once we commence to clear away the wreckage of our past. It describes these results as promises. The "Big Book" is filled with promises. These are just a few more of them:

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

"If we are painstaking (which means showing care) about THIS phase (the amends phase) of our development, we will be AMAZED before we are half way through. We are going to know a NEW freedom and a NEW happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace (to comprehend serenity and to know peace, we must experience it). No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our WHOLE attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly (as in a spiritual experience), sometimes slowly (as in a spiritual awakening). They will ALWAYS materialize IF we work for them."

What a message of hope! It is almost beyond comprehension that all of these wonderful events WILL occur IF we just make our amends to those whom we have harmed. But, they WILL happen - that's a guarantee.

*****NEXT LEADER*****

Please turn to page 155. We would like to give you an example of someone who could not stay sober until he became willing to complete ALL his amends. This man is A.A.'s Akron co-founder, Dr. Bob. Dr. Bob had been involved with MOST of AA's solution for alcoholism but he still drank every day because he refused to work with others and he refused to make amends for harms done. After being introduced to Bill Wilson, and relapsing one last time, he finally decided to work the ENTIRE program, instead of HIS program. With this new motivation, he accomplished making all his amends quickly and never drank again. He also started working with other alcoholics to the point where Bill Wilson referred to him as "the Prince of the Twelve-Steppers". We can read about Dr. Bob's Ninth Step in the second paragraph on page 155:

"When our friend related his experience, the man agreed that no amount of will power he might muster could stop his drinking for long. A spiritual experience, he conceded, was ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, but the price

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

seemed high upon the basis suggested. He told how he lived in CONSTANT worry about those who might find out about his alcoholism. He had, of course, the familiar alcoholic obsession that few knew of his drinking. Why, he argued, should he lose the remainder of his business, only to bring still more suffering to his family by foolishly admitting his plight to people from whom he made his livelihood? He would do anything, he said, but that.

Being intrigued, however, he invited our friend to his home. Some time later, and just as he thought he was getting control of his liquor situation, he went on a roaring bender. For him, this was the spree that ended all sprees. He saw that he would HAVE to face his problems squarely that God might give him mastery.

One morning he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received, and learned that many knew of his drinking. Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business.

At midnight he came home exhausted, but very happy. He has not had a drink since. As we shall see, he now means a great deal to his community, and the major liabilities of thirty years of hard drinking have been repaired in four."

Please pay attention to what I am about to read. For the newcomers and those taking the Steps with us, your assignment for the next week is to continue saying the Third Step prayer. If you haven't done so yet, please finish writing the rest of your three Fourth Step Inventories, create your future sex/relationship ideal, and do your Fifth Step BEFORE next week's session. After sharing your inventory with another person or persons, please take an hour of uninterrupted and undisturbed time to see if you have been thorough and honest in working the first five Steps. After completing the hour after your Fifth Step, please go through Steps Six and Seven and then start using both sides of the Seventh Step card on a daily basis. Put together an amends list, and start making amends by going out to those you have harmed. Before going out to make a specific amend, talk with your "sponsor" or spiritual advisor to ask for help. Please also keep in mind that one of the definitions for the word "amend" is "to change". So part of making amends is not ONLY to set right the wrong we may have done, but ALSO to change our behavior so that we no longer continue to harm others.

Overeaters Anonymous Big Book Study – Session Four

Even if you do NOT finish this week assignment, please still come back next week for the information on the last three Steps. We'd also like to remind you that if there is anyone here who is taking the Steps with us and does NOT have anyone working with them, please see one of the leaders after this meeting.

Next week, we will provide the information for taking Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve. We wish you the very best as you leave here about to share your Fifth Step. Miracles are about to occur and we are looking forward to hearing about them next week. We'll see you then.

This concludes our study of Steps Five through Nine. Are there any questions?