

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 13 Jul 2012 07:17

“AA is a simple program for complicated people.”

—One of many AA mottos

Everything necessary to work the 12 steps is found in the book Alcoholics Anonymous (this program has been effective for millions of alcoholics since the 1930’s, and it has also been effective for many other addictions—including lust addiction). However, when reading this book on one’s own, it’s easy to overlook important facts, to miss underlying messages, and to over-complicate the simple plan of action. Also, due to our subjectivity, we can miss how the problems and solutions described in this book apply to us—even though they very well may.

Therefore, I am trying an experiment. I don’t know how well it will work in this form, but I thought it might be worth a try. I will simply post the Big-Book, little by little, and let it speak for itself (mostly). I will also draw attention to the ideas one might otherwise miss reading it on one’s own, help show how the problems and solutions described in this book apply to us, and clarify whatever actions are called for. Much of what I write is based, if loosely so, on what I gained through Duvid Chaim’s 12-step phone groups. I am also likely to share from my own experience and my own thoughts.

I hope to cover the first seven chapters (plus two preliminary chapters) of Alcoholics Anonymous, which explains all twelve steps. They are as follows:

Foreword

The Doctor’s Opinion

I. Bill’s Story

II. There Is A Solution

III. More About Alcoholism

IV. We Agnostics

V. How It Works

VI. Into Action

VII. Working With Others

I will greatly appreciate comments and questions about this thread as it develops.

--Elyah

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 06 Oct 2012 17:38

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

***COMMENT: The following is a key paragraph. ***

These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink [of lust] thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the [sexaholic] centers in his mind, rather than in his body. If you ask him why he started on that last bender, the chances are he will offer you any one of a hundred alibis. Sometimes these excuses have a certain plausibility, but none of them really make sense in the light of the havoc a [sexaholic's] bout [of acting out] creates. They sound like the philosophy of the man who, having a headache, beat himself on the head with a hammer so that he couldn't feel the ache. If you draw this fallacious reasoning to the attention of a [sexaholic], he will laugh it off, or become irritated and refuse to talk.

***COMMENT: The main problem centers in the mind. As the slogan goes, "My mind is out to kill me and make it look like an accident." ***

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

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 07 Oct 2012 07:07

How true this is, few realize. In a vague way their families and friends sense that these [sex addicts] are abnormal, but everybody hopefully waits the day when the sufferer will rouse himself from his lethargy and assert his power of will.

The tragic truth is that if the man be a real [sexaholic], the happy day will seldom arrive. He has lost control. At a certain point in the [lusting] of every [sexaholic], he passes into a state where the most powerful desire to stop [acting out] is of absolutely no avail. This tragic situation has already arrived in practically every case long before it is suspected.

***COMMENT: Read this next paragraph very carefully: ***

The fact is that most [sexaholics], for reasons yet obscure, have LOST THE POWER OF CHOICE in [acting out]. Our so-called will power becomes practically non-existent. WE ARE UNABLE at certain times, TO BRING INTO OUR CONSCIOUSNESS with sufficient force THE MEMORY OF THE SUFFERING AND HUMILIATION OF EVEN A WEEK OR A MONTH AGO. We are without defense against the first drink [of lust].

***COMMENT: Sometimes we fail to bring into our consciousness the humiliation of only a day or an hour ago. ***

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 08 Oct 2012 18:52

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

The [sexaholic] may say to himself in the most casual way, "It won't burn me this time, so here's how!" Or perhaps he doesn't think at all. How often have some of us begun to [act out] in this nonchalant way, and after the third or fourth [hour], pounded on the [keyboard] and said to ourselves, "For God's sake, how did I ever get started again?" Only to have that thought supplanted by "Well, I'll stop [in another ten minutes]." Or "What's the use anyhow?"

When this sort of thinking is fully established in an individual with [sexaholic] tendencies, he has probably placed himself beyond human aid, and unless locked up, may die, or go permanently insane. These stark and ugly facts have been confirmed by legions of [sexaholics] throughout history. But for the grace of God, there would have been thousands more convincing demonstrations. So many want to stop, but cannot.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 11 Oct 2012 07:09

***COMMENT: The following is a key paragraph: ***

THERE IS A SOLUTION

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

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

***COMMENT: The following is from Appendix II in the Big Book, which explains what is meant by a "spiritual experience." ***

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

The terms "Spiritual Experience" and "Spiritual Awakening" are used many times in this book, which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from [sexaholism] has manifested itself among us in many different forms.

Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, the conclusion is erroneous.

In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many [sexaholics] have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming "God-consciousness" followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook. Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the "educational variety" because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he 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. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. 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.

Most of us think the awareness of a power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it "God-consciousness."

Most emphatically we wish to say that any [sexaholic] capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.

"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance – that principle is contempt prior to investigation." --Herbert Spencer.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 14 Oct 2012 13:13

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

A certain American Business man

A certain American business man had ability, good sense, and high character. For years he had floundered from one sanitarium to another. He had consulted the best known American psychiatrists. Then he had gone to Europe, placing himself in the care of a celebrated physician (the psychiatrist, Dr. Jung) who prescribed for him. Though experience had made him skeptical, he finished his treatment with unusual confidence. His physical and mental condition were unusually good. Above all, he believed he had acquired such a profound knowledge of the inner workings of his mind and its hidden springs, that relapse was unthinkable. Nevertheless, he was [acting out] in a short time. More baffling still, he could give himself no satisfactory explanation for his fall.

So he returned to this doctor, whom he admired, and asked him point-blank why he could not recover. He wished above all things to regain self-control. He seemed quite rational and well-balanced with respect to other problems. Yet he had no control whatever over [lust]. Why was this?

He begged the doctor to tell him the whole truth, and he got it. In the doctor's judgment he was utterly hopeless; he could never regain his position in society and he would have to place himself under lock and key, or hire a bodyguard if he expected to live long. That was a great

physician's opinion.

But this man still lives, and is a free man. He does not need a bodyguard, nor is he confined. He can go anywhere on this earth where other free men may go without disaster, provided he remains willing to maintain a certain simple attitude.

Some of our [sexaholic] readers may think they can do without spiritual help. Let us tell you the rest of the conversation our friend had with his doctor.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 15 Oct 2012 07:46

The doctor said: "You have the mind of a chronic [sexaholic]. I have never seen one single case recover, where that state of mind existed to the extent that it does in you." Our friend felt as though the gates of hell had closed on him with a clang.

He said to the doctor, "Is there no exception?"

"Yes," replied the doctor, "there is. Exceptions to cases such as yours have been occurring since early times. Here and there, once in a while, [sexaholics] have had what are called vital spiritual experiences. To me these occurrences are phenomena. They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them. In fact, I have been trying to produce some such emotional rearrangement within you. With many individuals the methods which I employed are successful, but I have never been successful with a [sexaholic] of your description."

Upon hearing this, our friend was somewhat relieved, for he reflected that, after all, he was a good [shul] member. This hope, however, was destroyed by the doctor's telling him that his religious convictions were very good, but that in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience.

Here was the terrible dilemma in which our friend found himself when he had the extraordinary experience, which as we have already told you, made him a free man.

We, in our turn, sought the same escape, with all the desperation of drowning men. What seemed at first a flimsy reed, has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of God. A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, "a design for living" that really works.

***COMMENT: This program of recovery is much more than a way to stop acting out; it is a new design for living. ***

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 17 Oct 2012 15:40

The distinguished American psychologist, William James, in his book "Varieties of Religious Experience", indicates a multitude of ways in which men have discovered God. We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned, and felt, and seen, means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color, are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters.

We think it no concern of ours what religious bodies our members identify themselves with as individuals. This should be an entirely personal affair which each one decides for himself in the light of past associations, or his present choice. Not all of us have joined religious bodies, but most of us favor such memberships.

In the following chapter, there appears an explanation of [sexaholism] as we understand it, then a chapter addressed to the agnostic. Many who once were in this class are now among our members. Surprisingly enough, we find such convictions no great obstacle to a spiritual experience.

Further on clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered. These are followed by forty-three personal experiences.

Each individual, in the personal stories, describes in his own language, and from his own point of view the way he established his relationship with God. These give a fair cross section of our membership and a clear-cut idea of what has actually happened in their lives.

We hope no one will consider these self-revealing accounts in bad taste. Our hope is that many [sexaholic] men and women, desperately in need, will see these pages, and we believe that it is only by fully disclosing ourselves and our problems that they will be persuaded to say, "Yes, I am one of them too; I must have this thing."

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 23 Oct 2012 12:47

CHAPTER THREE: MORE ABOUT [SEXAHOLISM]

***COMMENT: The next few paragraphs are key reading: ***

MOST of us have been unwilling to admit we were real [sexaholics]. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our [lusting] careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could [act out] like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his [acting out] is the great OBSESSION of every abnormal [luster]. The persistence of this ILLUSION is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were [sexaholics]. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

We [sexaholics] are men and women who have lost the ability to control our [lusting]. We know that no real [sexaholic] ever recovered control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals—usually brief—were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that [sexaholics] of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better.

***COMMENT: If you are still holding on to the idea, "I'll overcome this," then you can't move forward. ***

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 26 Oct 2012 07:23

We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make [sexaholics] of our kind like other men. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by still worse relapse.

Physicians who are familiar with [sexaholism] agree there is no such thing as making a normal [luster] out of a [sexaholic]. Science may one day accomplish this, but it evidently hasn't done so yet.

Despite all we can say, many who are real [sexaholics] are not going to believe they are in that class. By every form of self-deception and experimentation, they will try to prove themselves exceptions to the rule, therefore non-[sexaholic]. If anyone, who is showing inability to control

his [acting out], can do the right-about-face and [lust] like a gentleman, our hats are off to him. Heaven knows, we have tried hard enough and long enough to [act out] like other people!

Here are some of the methods we have tried: [using filtered internet] only, limiting the number of [times we act out in a week], never [acting out when other people are around], never [acting out] in the morning, [acting out] only at home, never having [pornography or internet access] in the house, never [acting out] during business hours, [talking to women] only [for business reasons], switching [to a phone without internet access], [looking] only [at "innocent" pictures], agreeing to resign if ever [acting out] on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums—we could increase the list ad infinitum.

***COMMENT: Do you identify with any of these methods? What could you add to the list? ***

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 29 Oct 2012 16:40

We do not like to brand any individual as a [sexaholic], but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest [unfiltered computer] and try some controlled [acting out]. Try to [act out] and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.

Though there is no way of proving it, we believe that early in our [lusting] careers most of us could have stopped [acting out]. But the difficulty is that few [sexaholics] have enough desire to stop while there is yet time. We have heard of a few instances where people, who showed definite signs of [sexaholism], were able to stop for a long period because of an overpowering desire to do so. Here is one.

A Man Of Thirty

A man of thirty was doing a great deal of spree [lusting]. He was very nervous in the morning after these bouts and quieted himself with more [acting out]. He was ambitious to succeed in business, but saw that he would get nowhere if he [acted out] at all. Once he started, he had no control whatever. He made up his mind that until he had been successful in business and had

retired, he would not [lust] another [bit]. An exceptional man, he remained [squeaky clean] for twenty-five years, and retired at the age of fifty-five, after a successful and happy business career. Then he fell victim to a belief which practically every [sexaholic] has—that his long period of sobriety and self-discipline had qualified him to [lust] as other men. Out came his carpet slippers and a [magazine]. In two months he was in a [treatment center], puzzled and humiliated. He tried to regulate his [acting out] for a while, making several trips to the [treatment center] meantime. Then, gathering all his forces, he attempted to stop altogether and found he could not. Every means of solving his problem which money could buy was at his disposal. Every attempt failed. Though a robust man at retirement, he went to pieces quickly, and was dead within four years.

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 01 Nov 2012 06:35

I just want to say that I would like to keep this thread extremely focused--mostly just the BB posts.

I would appreciate it if discussion on this thread is kept to a minimum.

If something here sparks off more than a brief comment, you can say, "This has really got me thinking" and make a link to your own thread and discuss the matter ad infinitum if you so desire.

Also, feel free to fill up people's PM folders to capacity.

I'm just a very focused kinda' guy, and this is a very focused kinda' thread.

Thank you for your understanding.

--Elyah

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

Posted by gibbor120 - 01 Nov 2012 16:28

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

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 04 Nov 2012 20:36

This case contains a powerful lesson. Most of us have believed that if we remained sober for a long stretch, we could thereafter [act out] normally. But here is a man who at fifty-five years found he was just where he had left off at thirty. We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: "Once a [sexaholic], always a [sexaholic]." Commencing to [act out] after a period of sobriety, we are in a short time as bad as ever. If we are planning to stop [acting out], there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to [lust].

Young people may be encouraged by this man's experience to think that they can stop, as he did, on their own will power. We doubt if many of them can do it, because none will really want to stop, and hardly one of them, because of the peculiar mental twist already acquired, will find he can win out. Several of our crowd, men of thirty-five or less, had been [acting out] only a few years, but they found themselves as helpless as those who had been [acting out] twenty years.

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

Posted by Dov - 05 Nov 2012 04:34

That was a biggie. So many people I meet want to beat this bad rap and say, "You mean if I choose this program of recovery I will have to be sicko my whole life?!"

OMG. First of all, either you are, or you are not. Secondly, one who asks this is *really* not asking - but saying, "You mean if I choose this derech, I will *never* be able to act out my lust ever again like a normal Jew does?! **Never** use porn again? Not even just a bit when I really, *really* want to?!" Yup, that's what he is saying.

But he does not admit that. He assumes he really means something else...but is not usually able to say just what it is.

Nu.

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