



Handout 3 – Alcoholics Anonymous 12-Step Program

From Alcohol.org

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a global, community-based program that was created to help those struggling with problematic drinking get sober with the support of their peers through daily meetings and discussions surrounding addiction. AA gives men and women a place to come together and share their experiences, recover from alcoholism and maintain sobriety. Its concept revolves around that premise that alcoholism is an illness that can be managed, but not controlled.

AA was founded by Bill Wilson and his physician, Doctor Bob Smith in 1935 and eventually grew to include two more groups by 1939. That same year, Wilson published *Alcoholics Anonymous*, a text which explained its philosophy and methods. We know it today as the 12 Steps of recovery. Over the years, the 12 Steps have been adapted by other self-help and addiction recovery groups, such as Gamblers Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, to those struggling with other forms of addiction. Additionally, many groups have changed the explicitly Christian overtones of the original 12 Steps to reflect more secular or agnostic philosophies.

There are no other requirements to AA other than having a desire to quit drinking, and it is not associated with any organization, sect, politics, denomination, or institution. Those attending AA make a commitment to join either voluntarily, as a continuation of therapy or via court-mandated rehab.

Given the number of individuals struggling with or at risk for an AUD, it is understandable that AA has grown to what it is today—an organization with more than 115,000 groups worldwide.

The 12 Steps of AA

AA's 12-Step approach follows a set of guidelines designed as "steps" toward recovery, and members can revisit these steps at any time. The 12 Steps are:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.