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WISDOM OF THE TWELVE STEPS: 1ST STEP

6 Continuing Education Credits

Asynchronous Distance Learning Course

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- **National Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (NAADAC) #94564**
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ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

David Walton Earle, LPC combines his counseling skills with his twenty-plus years of executive management experience into a powerful matrix called Business Coaching. Using this technique, Earle assists leaders to increase their leadership effectiveness through people skills. He is also a teacher, trainer, author, counselor, and alternative dispute professional. Earle earned a Master's of Science in Counseling from Texas A&M and has held executive management positions in various fields including industrial construction, private investment banking, and corporate trouble shooting. He is now the president of the Earle Company, an organization dedicated to change.

The First Step and Twelve-Step Recovery: Current Evidence on Effectiveness, Mechanisms, and Evolving Access

The 1st Step framework this course provides — addressing the dual challenges of admitting the problem and accepting powerlessness over alcohol and drugs — operates within a twelve-step recovery model that has now been evaluated with a rigor matching any other treatment modality. Since this course was written, a Cochrane review has established that twelve-step facilitation performs as well or better than cognitive-behavioral therapy for alcohol use disorder, a meta-analysis has extended the evidence to twelve-step programs beyond AA, the emergence of online meetings has changed how individuals access twelve-step support, and positive psychological interventions have been evaluated as supplements to traditional recovery approaches.

The effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous and twelve-step facilitation — the clinical framework within which this course's 1st Step content is practiced — was definitively established in a 2020 Cochrane review analyzing 27 studies with 10,565 participants. The review found that AA and twelve-step facilitation interventions "performed at least as well as established active comparison treatments" including cognitive-behavioral therapy on all outcomes. On abstinence specifically, AA/TSF was superior — producing higher rates of continuous abstinence and remission than alternative treatments. Additionally, AA/TSF reduced healthcare costs compared to other interventions (Kelly et al., 2020). For the 1st Step this course teaches — admitting powerlessness and accepting that one's life has become unmanageable — the Cochrane evidence means that the twelve-step process beginning with this admission is not merely a spiritual tradition. It is an evidence-based treatment approach with outcomes at least equal to and in some cases superior to the most well-established clinical interventions in the addiction treatment field.

The evidence for twelve-step mutual-help groups beyond Alcoholics Anonymous — including Narcotics Anonymous and other programs that address the broader substance use disorders this course's clients may present with — was synthesized in a 2024 systematic review and meta-analysis of 55 articles covering 47 distinct studies. The meta-analysis found that twelve-step mutual-help attendance and involvement were negatively correlated with severity of addictive disorder symptoms and positively associated with quality of life measures. Social, emotional, and spiritual factors were identified as influential in recovery outcomes across these peer-support organizations (Leurent et al., 2024). For the 1st Step framework this course provides, the Leurent et al. review confirms that the mechanisms of twelve-step recovery — the social connections, the emotional processing, the spiritual engagement — operate consistently across different substances and different twelve-step organizations, not only in AA.

The evidence base for twelve-step recovery beyond alcohol — directly relevant to counselors whose clients present with opioid, stimulant, and polysubstance use — was updated in a 2025 review published in *Current Addiction Reports*. The review synthesized the current literature on mutual help groups for illicit drug use disorders, including Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, and non-twelve-step alternatives such as SMART Recovery. Across the studies reviewed, mutual help group attendance and involvement consistently predicted reductions in drug use and in overall addiction severity, and more methodologically rigorous studies produced stronger effectiveness estimates rather than weaker ones. The review also identified that drug-focused mutual help groups have historically shown lower professional facilitation success rates than alcohol-focused groups, that culturally tailored meeting formats confer additional benefit for racial and ethnic minority populations, and that online delivery

positively influences retention (Kepner & Humphreys, 2025). For counselors teaching the First Step to clients whose primary substance is not alcohol, the Kepner and Humphreys review confirms that the admission of powerlessness and the mutual help framework it opens generalize across substances.

The mode of twelve-step meeting access — which has changed fundamentally since this course was written — was examined in a 2024 longitudinal study of 531 adults with lifetime alcohol use disorder recruited from both in-person and online twelve-step groups. Those attending exclusively online meetings attended substantially more meetings but showed reduced group involvement compared to in-person attendees. Online attendees were less likely to endorse lifetime abstinence as a recovery goal. However, outcomes improved across all attendance modes over time, and online attendance maintained comparable alcohol outcomes to in-person participation, though in-person engagement better supported reductions in heavy drinking (Timko et al., 2024). For the 1st Step process this course teaches — which involves the intimate act of admitting powerlessness in a group setting — the online dimension introduces a new clinical question: can the vulnerability required to genuinely work Step 1 occur through a screen? The data suggests that online meetings increase access and frequency but may not fully replicate the relational depth that in-person twelve-step participation provides.

The clinical question of whether online-only twelve-step participation delivers equivalent outcomes to in-person attendance was answered with causal mediation modeling in a 2025 pooled analysis of the National Peer Alternatives in Addiction Longitudinal Study. Across 1,152 adults with lifetime alcohol use disorder followed for twelve months, online-only attendance produced significantly worse alcohol outcomes than in-person-only attendance, and the difference was mediated by lower levels of group involvement rather than by attendance frequency itself. Combined online and in-person attendance produced outcomes statistically indistinguishable from in-person-only participation, and the relationship between involvement and outcomes was consistent regardless of delivery mode. The authors concluded that "high involvement may be difficult to achieve in online contexts" and recommended incorporating some in-person attendance whenever possible (Zemore et al., 2025). For the First Step, online meetings are not inferior because they are digital, but because the relational depth that drives outcome improvement is harder to cultivate through a screen.

The question of whether twelve-step programs outperform secular alternatives — or the reverse — was addressed directly in a 2026 analysis of the National Peer Alternatives in Addiction Longitudinal Study. Among 1,152 adults with alcohol use disorder followed for twelve months, greater mutual help group involvement strongly predicted higher odds of alcohol abstinence, with an odds ratio of 2.62, and predicted fewer drinking problems across the follow-up period. The critical finding for clinical practice was that mutual help group choice — SMART Recovery, Women for Sobriety, LifeRing, or twelve-step programs — was unrelated to outcomes, either independently or in interaction with involvement. What predicted recovery was not which program a client attended but how deeply they engaged with it (Zemore et al., 2026). For counselors teaching the First Step to clients who express reservation about the spiritual language of twelve-step recovery, the findings provide an evidence-based alternative pathway.

The personality-level effects of twelve-step participation were examined in a 2026 prospective study comparing 77 adults in early alcohol use disorder recovery who increased twelve-step attendance against 77 matched controls who did not. Participants who increased their attendance by at least one meeting per week showed significant reductions in both drinking days and heavy drinking days and significant reductions in two specific impulsivity traits: Negative Urgency, the tendency to act out in response to negative emotions, and Lack of Perseverance, difficulty sustaining task focus. The reduction in

impulsivity did not mediate the reduction in drinking, indicating that these two benefits of twelve-step attendance operate through distinct mechanisms (Levitt et al., 2026). For the First Step this course teaches — where the admission of unmanageability confronts clients with the consequences of their own impulsive behavior — the Levitt findings suggest that twelve-step participation not only reduces drinking but independently reduces the emotional-reactivity traits that drive relapse.

The effectiveness of twelve-step participation across diverse client populations — particularly sexual and gender minority clients, who face documented disparities in substance use disorder prevalence — was examined in a 2024 analysis of 1,353 adults with lifetime alcohol or substance use disorder drawn from sexual and gender minority communities. Greater twelve-step involvement was associated with significantly lower past-year alcohol use disorder symptoms and lower past-year substance use disorder symptoms across the sample. Participation rates varied by subgroup: gay and queer respondents with alcohol use disorder showed higher participation than comparison groups, while lesbian respondents with substance use disorder showed lower participation, though most identity-based differences attenuated substantially after adjusting for age (McGeough et al., 2024). For counselors delivering the First Step framework to sexual and gender minority clients, the findings confirm that when engagement does occur, the clinical benefit is comparable to that observed in the broader population.

The positive psychological dimension of recovery — relevant to the hope and self-efficacy that emerge after the admission of powerlessness in Step 1 — was evaluated in a 2025 systematic review and meta-analysis of 30 publications examining 36 positive psychological interventions for substance use and addiction recovery. The interventions appeared feasible and engaging, though efficacy was mixed, with small, nonsignificant effects on both positive psychological outcomes and substance use outcomes across eight randomized controlled trials (Carlon et al., 2025). For the recovery process this course describes — where the 1st Step's admission of powerlessness creates the foundation for rebuilding hope and purpose — the Carlon et al. findings suggest that the positive psychological resources recovery programs aim to build (gratitude, meaning, purpose, hope) are more difficult to cultivate through structured interventions than the twelve-step tradition would suggest. The twelve-step approach may produce these outcomes more naturally through the communal, narrative, and spiritual processes embedded in step work rather than through discrete positive psychology exercises.

Wisdom of the Twelve Steps

1st Step Workbook

Single Tear

David Walton Earle, LPC

**Dedicated to those who suffer
and
are in need of healing.**

David Walton Earle, LPC

Books

What To Do While You Count To 10
Professor of Pain
Iron Mask
Red Roses 'n Pinstripes
Love is Not Enough
Gilligan's Notes
Simple Communication for Complicated People
Contents of a Small Boy's Pocket

12-Step workbooks:

Wisdom of the Steps – 1st Step
Wisdom of the Steps – 2nd Step
Wisdom of the Steps – 3rd Step

Co-authored

Leadership – Helping others to Succeed –
Senator George Mitchell, Patricia Schroeder, et al
Extreme Excellence – Michael Higson, Arlene R. Taylor, et al
You might Need a Therapist If... Cliff Carle, John Carfi

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***“Acceptance of what has happened
is the first step to overcoming the
consequences of any misfortune.”
William James***

The *Wisdom of the Steps* is a series of workbooks written to assist any person with an addiction to drugs, and/or alcohol. This workbook also helps people suffering from compulsive gambling, sex addiction, love and sex addiction, eating disorders, compulsive shopping, internet or electronic obsession, and anyone who loves someone with any of these debilitating problems. All of these maladaptive behaviors stem from the same dysfunctional coping skills - *an external solution for an internal problem*.

Wisdom of the Twelve Steps invites you to embark on a wonderful journey, your own Odyssey into the recovery waters of change. We promise days of bright sunshine, strong winds, and periods of smooth sailing. However, be forewarned, this is a stormy and demanding ocean; you will need all hands on deck to successfully pilot these waters. Fortunately, for you, there are many who have already navigated these passages and know the way. There are also many eager sailors who will help you adjust your sails, mend your broken spars, and show you the stars for your steering.

You are not alone.

This book has four main parts.

Part I This story is an illustration of some of the principles and dynamics in this step. When a story surrounds a lesson, learning is better retained and much faster. *Single Tear* provides that structure.

Part II This section contains tenets and lessons required by all steps so they are included in every workbook in the *Wisdom of The Steps* series.

Part III This part focuses entirely on the 1st Step with discussions, challenges, and provocative self-questions.

Part IV Appendix

***“Everyone thinks of changing the world,
but no one thinks of changing himself.”***

Leo Tolstoy

Part I

A Single Tear

A sleeping man lay on crumpled sheets and blankets. His breathing was heavy and irregular, a restless sleep on the edge of awakening. He was of medium build with a three-day salt and pepper growth of beard. He was in his early forties with grey at the temples and the beginning of a receding hairline. His face had deep cavernous lines, as if all the cares of his life were on display, indelibly etched, obvious to any observer.

Dirt film on the window diffused the late afternoon sunlight. The distant hum of traffic on the street outside does not drown out the ticking of an alarm clock. The room had good quality furniture, which by now had seen better days. It was obvious a woman's touch had long ago influenced the colors and wall coverings, though they were now faded with time and neglect. A once beautiful antique brass bed was the focal point of the room; at one time, it would have been expensive, but now given the reality and the surroundings, this fine-looking bed seemed totally out of place.

A slight groan came from the man as he rolled over and assumed another position. The smell of last night's drink hung heavy in the air, and an empty scotch bottle lay on the floor as a silent testimony to the night before. In the distance, a church bell was ringing. Had he been awake, he would have heard it and known that he had slept through most of the daylight hours. Again the man stirred, his eyes opened briefly and quickly closed, as if afraid of what he might see. As he finally awakened and opened his heavy eyes, he felt the room moving slowly around and then moving faster and faster. He put his foot on the floor as if to steady his motion, feeling the knot in his stomach protesting last night's abuse. In the background, the alarm clock faintly ticked, faithfully marking the passage of time.

His neck muscles were stiff and with a slow rubbing motion, he gently rubbed the back of his neck. This had a soothing effect and the tightness slowly and reluctantly receded. The temporary relief was in marked contrast with the rest of his body, which was screaming with neglect and abuse.

The ringing of the alarm clock shattered the silence. The man rolled over away from the noise, a pillow over his head, determined to out-wait the clock's spring. This clock was stubborn; it would not stop ringing.

How the noise hurt his head. How his joints ached. How he wished it would stop. Louder and louder, the clock seemed to ring, and tighter and tighter, the man wrapped the pillow around his head. This battle of wills continued between the mechanical object and this human who would have preferred to be comatose. Nothing this man did deterred the determination of the clock, its invasive ringing noise echoed in his hung-over head. The clock continued to ring with ever-increasing intensity, forcing the man to arise and search for the alarm.

When the noise was located, his motions were surprisingly quick, considering his recent reluctance to rise. He leapt to his feet, locating his mechanical nemesis under a pile of scattered dirty shirts and last week's discarded underwear. At last, his search rewarded him relief, he pushed the button and stopped the ringing. The room's silence was deafening.

He sat on the bed and wearily surveyed his domain. The dead soldier of the bottle from last night's binge now lay empty and discarded on the floor. The man lovingly picked up the bottle, turning it on end so the last few drops flowed into his unquenched throat.

Where is another bottle? He panicked as he tried to clear his cloudy brain. *What did I do with the other bottle?* He thought. *The one I bought yesterday or was it the day before?* Panic began to swell inside him; a heavy pressure now squeezed his chest. In an instant, he remembered a frightening fact. He drank all of them! An ever-increasing panic filled his thoughts. *All gone* echoed in his desperate mind. *All gone.* Then he remembered - there was one left! In a quick bounding leap, he headed for the dresser and opened the bottom drawer. He rapidly threw his clothes onto the already cluttered floor as he searched for his prize. His hand circled his goal, another bottle with an unbroken seal - a rarity in his house. *Change is on its way, relief is now at hand,* he chuckled to himself.

As he started to open this 12-year-old scotch of Glen Fiddich, he recalled the reason this bottle was still there, with the seal intact. It had been here, in this same drawer for over four years. It was a gift from his former boss as recognition for his successful landing of a very desirable contract, a reward for his hard work. The fact that this bottle was still in this darkened drawer was impressive to him. He now equated that award to a time-a million years ago-and how wonderful he felt receiving that recognition. Every time before when his frantic desire for the next drink threatened the contents of this bottle, this memory provided his resolve. Why had he spared this bottle when all others were gone? *Maybe it is like the turkey the president pardons every year at Thanksgiving*, he thought. *This bottle has a presidential pardon*, he laughed to himself.

Then he recalled what he always told himself about this bottle, *the reason I spared it, if I drink this bottle, it would be like all others, and it would not be special. And because it is so special, I will not drink it. See, if I did drink it, I would be an alcoholic. Because it is still here*, his logic went; *I know that I am not...not an alcoholic!* The conclusion of this thought process followed the same self-delusional mantra - *I am not an alcoholic*. As if just saying, I am not an alcoholic, created the reality; he knew he was not one of those people...an alcoholic.

These were the thoughts echoing through his hazy mind as his pondered the contents of this bottle. *I am not an alcoholic!* he exclaimed as he put the bottle on the dresser, thus proving... *he did not have a problem*. He was proud of himself. His control was still intact. He did not have a problem like all those other losers. *I am not an alcoholic*, he repeated again with justified indignation.

His hand shook as he released the prized bottle. His knees slowly gave way until he was sitting in a slumped position on the floor, his back to the wall. After a period of silence, in which he could not recall a single thought, he opened his eyes and surveyed the wreckage of this room. *This room stinks*, was his first reaction. *That thought was strange*, he pondered, for he had been living in this apartment for many months, even before his wife left him, and he had not smelled it before. *This room is a total disaster*, was his realization. A chuckle escaped his lips when he recalled how his mother had

always reminded him, “Your room is a disaster, and unless you clean it you will never make anything of your life.”

Well, Mother, you were right; my room is a disaster and so is my life! These words were only half spoken, hardly audible. My life is a wreck! he repeated. A sudden panic seized him. What if drinking is causing this wreckage in my life. These thoughts raced through his mind. As quickly as this thought entered his consciousness, his denial quickly shut the door to that possibility.

A couple of years ago, he got a DUI, was court ordered to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and reluctantly went to one. He defied the court by never attending another. *What a bunch of whiners, complaining about everything*, was his reason for not returning. He had been glad he did not return, was proud of his resolve, and resented anyone who insisted that he needed to go back.

The only positive memory of that one A.A. meeting was when one man told his story. The man at the meeting said “...it was like there **were two dogs inside my head** that were fighting each other. One dog was the **dog of drink and the other was the dog of recovery.**” From that powerful image, the man chuckled to himself. **Two dogs**, the man repeated to himself. Maybe what made it so memorable was what he overheard when leaving the meeting when another man asked, “Which of those dogs are winning?” Before answering, there was a long pause from the first man, as if he never had considered that question before.

The man’s ears picked up. “I guess,” said the storyteller, “I guess the **dog who is winning the fight is the one I am feeding.**” Ever since that A.A. meeting, the man had wondered about the significance of that story. *Why had it stayed with me*, he asked aloud.

Which one am I feeding?, echoed in his head as his mind returned to his previous thought, *What if drinking is causing this wreckage in my life*. As quick as this thought entered his mind, he again dispelled it with a declaration: *I’m not going to drink anymore! I quit! If I have the character to never touch this bottle after all these years, then, by God, I have what it takes to stop drinking. I just won’t feed that **dog of drink** ever again*, he declared.

He said this declaration with resolve and great force intensified by his unacknowledged denial. However, in an instant, a small voice deep within began whispering, reminding him of all the other resolutions he had previously made, some to his various employers, many to his former wife, and many more to himself. The fact that he absolutely meant but ultimately broke all the other promises did not deter him from making this latest pledge. Ignoring this small nagging voice as a nuisance to disregard, he declared aloud with the sweeping of his hand, *I would even clean this room, making it nice and clean. Like my new life without alcohol*, he thought.

I will make this room shine and smell good again, he muttered under his breath. He began cleaning with all the intensity of a reformed alcoholic; it was a determined man who picked up discarded clothes, some dirty and some just never put away. Since he couldn't tell the difference, he put them all in the laundry basket. Monday after work, he planned to get his laundry done. As the dust flew, the room began to take on a more tidy appearance. Every once in a while he would glare at the bottle of scotch still sitting on the dresser, patiently awaiting his attention

As his newly found sobriety stretched into double minutes, he scrubbed and then polished the floor. The wood floor began to take on a special sparkle and smelled fresh from the lemon in the floor wax. He polished the furniture, paying special attention to the dresser holding the bottle. He lifted this golden liquid and smiled at it with a sense of pride he had not known for a long time. *See how easy it is to resist?*

Next on his list was the bed. Off with the old sheets—he could not remember the last time he had changed them—then on with the clean. It was amazing how this once torn and ragged room was now taking shape. This burst of energy transformed a once unsightly, disgusting room into a place of acceptance. Perhaps a compulsive cleaner would never consider it perfect, but the comparison was striking. Upon completion of this cleaning project, the man sat on a chair and surveyed his room. It was neat and clean. On the dresser was the old bottle that seemed to be calling him. Whenever his eyes wandered, they would always return to the center of the dresser and to the unopened bottle.

One drink in this nice clean room, one smooth drink over ice, hmmm, sure sounds nice, the man thought to himself. As quickly as this thought came to his mind,

he immediately changed the flow of thoughts. Once he changed his focus away from the bottle, he smiled to himself in pride; he could ignore thinking about the bottle any time he wanted to. *This newfound self-control was working wonders.* Why had he ever doubted himself, he thought. *Alcoholics do not have that control, but I do,* he assured himself, *And I can do this without those stupid meetings.*

A shave and shower were next on his list. The hot water was running and his hand checked the temperature before the next conscious thought hit him. His mind returned to the bottle, *Maybe I should just pour it down the drain,* he thought. He contemplated whether it was best to destroy this bottle and its contents or just drain off the liquor and keep the bottle as a memento to his new life of sobriety. He envisioned himself telling his friends the significance of the now drained bottle. He discarded both options when he declared aloud; *the bottle and the liquor will stay unopened on that dresser! **I am not an alcoholic!***

After a shower washed away the sweat and accumulated body odor, he began to shave his three-day stubble. He chuckled to himself as he recalled a cartoon he once read: “Does shaving cream actually soften your beard or does it just mark your place?” He laughed again, feeling fresh, clean, and alive. Through the deepest recesses of his stomach, thoughts of food entered his mind and he realized how hungry he was, “Let’s see what time it is.” He looked at the electric wall clock: 5:00. “Plenty of time for the happy hour at the Blue Moon,” he thought, “They always have plenty of *hors d’oeuvres* and I can eat for free.”

Then he remembered that it was Sunday and the Blue Moon was not open. Panic then seized him. If he was to keep his now very tender sobriety, he realized he could not go into his favorite places and drink. *But I will miss all of my friends, they wouldn’t understand,* he worried.

Maybe I won’t go out to drink there anymore; I’ll just stay home and drink a few beers in the evening. When rationalizing that thought, he became calmer. The image of cool beers floated through his still alcohol-soaked brain and he began obsessing, *maybe one drink out of that bottle before I go out to eat, just one drink would be nice - something to settle my nerves.*

No! He firmly declared, I have given it up. I am now on the wagon and I promise, this time for good, I will never drink again!

He grabbed his coat and headed out the door into the wet chill of the early evening. In the flickering darkness of evening, a flight of birds appeared black against the gray February skies. A gust of wind bit through his light jacket and the bitter cold helped him make up his mind where he was to eat. *Somewhere close* he decided. *I'll eat at Mother's Restaurant* and he turned around the corner.

He went into the restaurant and sat at the first available table. Although he scanned the menu, he knew what he wanted before he sat down. He knew the food very well. *Only too well*, he lamented.

His thoughts drifted to the past when he had a wife and family, *she was just too hard to live with, and it didn't work out. She was always making things difficult for me, and I mean always.* He remembered, *she would wreck my plans for going out with the boys for a couple of beers, and bitch at me, telling me to stop drinking. A lot of good her bitching did.* He always wondered, *what was the harm?* If she wasn't bitching about his drinking, she complained about all the time he spent at the office. *Being at the office, especially at the end of our marriage, was preferable to being at home with her*, he thought. I'm doing this all for you, he would tell her, thus excusing and justifying all his absences and "drinking with clients" that kept him out many evenings.

I mean - why not? Why can't I have friends? Why couldn't she understand? I needed to entertain clients and they liked to drink. It was part of my job, expected of me, he justified. He would rationalize his long periods of absence with the excuse that it was to benefit their future. And if he wasn't working, she was always cleaning. *Cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, my god that woman was obsessive - she was always cleaning or yelling at me to pick up*, he remembered. "Don't put your beer on the table without a coaster!" she would yell at him. *A coaster, my god, a coaster*, he exclaimed to himself, working himself into a small rage. *All the time coasters, if she would have just stopped nagging*, he thought, *it could have worked out but she ruined my happy home.*

It was a constant battle, *if she would have just stopped nagging and quit trying to control me*. The sentence hung on his lips as he felt the loss of what he once had, his loving wife. Then she had changed! She told him it was because of his drinking, but he knew it was not; she had changed. Changed into a mean shrew and became obsessed about his drinking. *If she had just let me drink in peace*, he lamented. Feeling the pangs of hunger, he remembered, *and man, that woman could cook*.

His mind wandered to the special meals she would prepare when they were first married. He was very successful in the beginning of his career before *politics*, as he labeled his failures, forced him out of job after job. Before the run of bad luck, when his career was ascending, they would celebrate each raise with his favorite meal: lamb chops and a fancy wine from some exotic place. The thought of the wine made his mind turn to drinking, and that bottle of scotch still unopened waiting for him at home on his dresser, just where he had left it. *I mustn't think about that damn old bottle*, he declared. *I do not need to be thinking about it*. Fortunately, the server arrived interrupting his thinking and requested his order.

The moon was out and the night sky was dark by the time he started out of the restaurant, heading into the damp and chilly night air. *Thank God, I don't have far to go*, he thought, *I should have worn my heavy jacket*. He lowered his head to block the wind from his face. This position allowed him to view only the sidewalk as he walked. He made sure he didn't step on a crack. *Don't want to break my mother's back*, he smiled at this thought *break her back? Now that was an interesting thought*, he reflected. As the wind picked up, he quickly put his mother out of his mind and focused on getting back to his apartment, out of the cold.

Battling the surprising force of a once calm evening, the wind, and its penetrating cold occupied all his thoughts. *A good stiff shot of scotch would really feel good going down right now*, he anticipated. *On a cold night like this, whiskey would chase away this chill. It wouldn't hurt if I just took one good slug; just one sip wouldn't hurt*.

One drink is never enough, a voice responded. The recovery dog is barking, he laughed. This is the voice all addictive people hear but like most, choose to ignore. One drink before I turn in would be okay -- just one drink to warm me in this bitter cold.

After all, look what I accomplished today, I've cleaned up that trashy room and swept, mopped, and polished the floor. That floor now sparkles, he smiled to himself, and I deserve to reward myself. A sudden fleeting thought gripped him in terror. Drinking, what a lousy reward, but in an instant his denial closed on that rational thought. Anticipating the warm burn of the scotch and looking forward to happy memories soon to be his when the numbing effect of the alcohol arrived - when the **dog of drink got fed**.

Just one little drink, reverberated in his brain as his thoughts battled one another. *No! I will not. I cannot. I will not open that bottle! I have resisted opening it for so long through much tougher times than this. I will not open it*, he declared to himself with unparalleled resolution. *I am not an alcoholic! But I want a drink really bad*, again the self-talk battle, *maybe I do have a problem*. His addiction acted quickly, as quickly as this rational thought came into his mind; it quickly closed the door on that possibility. These two conflicting thoughts were a battle constantly waged deep in the dark recesses of his alcohol-infected brain.

These were his **two fighting dogs**. This battle was a constant tug between admitting he was an addict who needed A.A., and his fiercely defended rationalization that by keeping this bottle's contents intact he was definitely not an alcoholic. A cold chill ran down his back as a sudden realization consumed his thoughts, *I will not drink from that special bottle...I just will not*, as his obsession to feed the **addict dog grew**.

The war continued, as two dogs now fought in his brain. One dog wanted to change, wanted to admit his addiction, to surrender to reality. The other, more dominant dog thought it would die if it could not have alcohol and fought with wild abandon any thoughts to the contrary. *I have not opened that bottle, proving I am not an alcoholic*, the man declared as he again fed this dog. The dogs battled in a fierce fight to the finish, leaving the man confused and exhausted. He had long ago given over his power to influence the outcome of this battle; he was willing to accept the reality of the winner of this fight. **Which dog would win?** Which dog was he feeding?

The cold was now penetrating his light jacket and making it hard to breathe, let alone to think. The effects of the cold and the desire to get warm consumed his

thoughts. His body felt the cold; his mind registered the pain, and then demanded that he provide warmth. His addict brain told him alcohol would solve this problem; **score one for the addict dog**. Anyone operating with his or her intellect would reject this rationalization. Intellectually, his brain did too, but in his compulsive reality he was different; here, his confused thinking made sense and quickly overruled his intellect. He was not an alcoholic and did not have a problem.

I just need one drink to warm me from this bitter cold, and then I can retire for the evening in my nice clean room for a well deserved good night's sleep. I have a big day at work tomorrow and I want to be well rested, he planned. Since he made it absolutely clear to his addict brain that he would not open this special bottle, a logical conclusion to his dilemma become obvious. I'll just get another bottle for the evening, and take that one drink before bedtime, just a nightcap to celebrate my newfound sobriety, was his delusional conclusion, "...and to warm me up." The **addict dog howled** with anticipation.

He knew a friend who lived close by and would sell a bottle to him. It would not be the same quality of scotch as in his special bottle, the price would be as much as expensive scotch, but this was a special occasion that needed to be celebrated, *Yes, sir, John Fredrick would be just the ticket*, he thought. He reached into his wallet and noticed to his relief, the unspent twenty. *This is more proof that I am not an alcoholic. Would an alcoholic have money in his pocket? Well, I have money. I don't dig around in trashcans for food. I have a job. And that special bottle will forever be unopened. I am not an alcoholic!*, he declared with satisfaction. Without really thinking, the man's feet had already deposited him at John's backdoor. John was a retired teacher who spent a lot of time alone. His neighbors did not like him but somehow the man and he had developed a friendship and often drank together. Why his neighbors did not like John, he didn't know, but now he needed John and was glad he was his friend.

The man's breathing relaxed when John finally answered his knock on the door. No words were necessary; all John had to do was look into the man's eyes to witness the intense desire for drink. Money quickly changed hands – cash for the promise of the happiness encased in a bottle. With a muffled "thank you," the man grabbed the bottle and quickly turned towards home.

He was back in his room when he realized how cold he had become. The chill of the night had penetrated his inadequate jacket but now he enjoyed the contrast between the cold of a few moments ago and the warmth of his now-clean apartment. He anticipated the first swallow, a burning sensation that was such a good feeling, nothing like it. The anticipation of the effects of the swallow brought back pleasant memories, euphoric recall of how wonderful alcohol felt going down. How clean the room and its pleasant smell looked briefly interrupted his thought pattern and reminded him of his vow to “be on the wagon.” That vow was less than three hours old, but since the man was only going to have one drink, *it really was not breaking my vow*, he concluded. Immediately he gazed at the bottle he held in his hand, realizing how his best intentions of a short time ago were a distant memory, as a **giant dog pushed away a starving one.**

He gently placed the new bottle on the nightstand of his bed and fell backwards into the softness of the well-worn mattress. He closed his eyes tightly and tried not to think of anything; anything, save the new bottle now resting patiently next to him on the nightstand. The bottle ready to release the pleasure genie he knew was inside. This calling of the bottle was the siren’s call to ancient sailors, leading them to their doom on hidden rocks. In the arena of his mind, the dust was swirling as the two dogs continued their fight. One dog was now gaining ground and the other, cut and bruised, fell back under the vicious onslaught. The dog **of Bacchus** (god of wine and partying) was growing larger in the man’s brain and quickly overcoming the resistance of the much weaker **dog of sobriety.**

In his swirling brain, he recalled his boyhood and his own father’s obsession with alcohol. How he loved his daddy when he was sober, but feared his wrath when his father drank. His mother would hide his father’s drinks, search for her husband when he didn’t show up, and bring him home when drunk. She made her son promise never to drink, “...never to wind up like your father.” His mother was always blaming her problems on alcohol. *If only he would quit drinking, then I would be happy*, she would declare to anyone who would listen. He had painful memories of his mother crying herself to sleep, waiting for his father’s return, and the hellacious battles that ensued upon his return home. When his parents fought, which was often, he would

hide in the closet, not caring who *won* the fight. *Just stop!* he would yell in his head. He shuddered with the memory of that dark closet and the angry voices coming from downstairs.

He recalled his mother's anguish and tears the first time he had come home with the "**smell of the devil**," as she called it, on his breath. He held all these memories tight under his closed eyes, all those memories, all that pain, and it was about alcohol. These memories were swirling in his mind as the thought of the fresh bottle on the nightstand still beckoned him.

One small swallow to chase away these obsessive memories and thoughts, one drink and that is all it will be, a distant and less painful memory. He continued to justify his thoughts, I have not had a drink all day, and one is not going to hurt. One drink never hurt; it was all those other ones that followed that caused problems, he half chuckled to himself. With my newfound resolve, I can stop after the first one, I know I can, he convinced himself. I haven't had a drink all day and one drink is not going to hurt me. The **large dog was barking** now as he stood over the body of his fallen foe. His weakened and almost comatose **recovery dog** lifted his head but before he could challenge, the **addict dog** opened the new bottle. In an instant, the ice clinked as it filled the empty glass. Better make it a double, since I'm only having one, was the man's thought.

The first swallow was long and slow; it had even more satisfaction than he had eagerly anticipated a few moments ago. He closed his eyes, *the best part of drinking is the first swallow*. It indeed had been a good day. He now had a clean room. He would be able to report to work on Monday, on time, and without his usual hangover. The clean room renewed and cheered him. The alcohol had begun to mellow and relax him, and he sighed, satisfied with life.

Without a conscious thought, he poured another small amount into this now properly chilled glass. This drink was as smooth as the first and an ever-greater realization was his reward. *Yes, this is the way to live*, he concluded, *a couple of drinks to get me to sleep tonight and tomorrow, I'll be ready to go to work*.

He went to the bathroom, showered, and then brushed his teeth when his thoughts turned to his unopened bottle. With a smile on his face, he recalled the

contents were still safe. Somehow, his vow never to drink like his father was still intact. A large, **vicious dog was now howling at the moon since his hunger was satisfied and another lay dying at his feet.**

Yes, mother, I'll not be like dad. He could never do what I am able to do, he was never as strong as I am, as he talked to the air. Empty bottles were the only ones in his father's house, either Dad drank them all, or Mother threw them away. I have a full bottle of the best scotch in my house, something dad could never do!

He was now ready for bed when he thought that a nightcap would really put the finishing touches on this satisfying day. *Kind of a celebration*, he declared; this last drink went down a little faster than the others did as the warm glow of the alcohol's effects began to increase. The feeling allowed him to be bigger than his dreams. He loved this feeling. *The stars are the limit*, he proudly declared.

There is nothing like the taste of booze to make a man feel alive, he declared to all who may be listening. Dad, you never did drink good whiskey; you always drank that rotgut, he talked aloud as he poured himself another drink. You always were a cheap drunk! The force of his anger even surprised him. As he poured himself another drink, he yelled, "At least I'm not like you, Dad, you lousy drunk!"

It was a few hours later when he opened his eyes slowly and to his surprise he was on the floor. The lemon scent of the newly applied floor wax was lost on him as his dulled senses failed to pick it up. He still clutched the empty bottle in his hand, as he moaned with a vague recollection of how he came to be on the floor.

His only conscious thought was to look over at the dresser and view his prized bottle. A sigh of relief escaped from his semi-conscious mind, as the bottle was still full, "*See, Mother, I am not an alcoholic like Dad.*" He tried to get up, but the effects of the alcohol had rendered his muscles almost useless. The best he could do was a semi-fetal position on all fours; he was unable to raise his head from the floor. "*I hate you, Dad!*" he screamed which echoed in his head but to the audible world no sound could be heard. Before he passed out again, a single tear escaped from his now closed eyes. As he slowly lost consciousness, the tear made its way down his cheek and fell down to the freshly waxed floor, making a tiny puddle on the floor, a single, painful tear.

In the distance, a church bell slowly pealed, announcing the end of vespers. The sound of the alarm clocks incessant ticking echoes in the dead silence of the room, only disturbed by the heavy breathing of the inebriated man now passed out on the clean floor where a **large dog now stood guard over his reclaimed slave.**

1st Step:

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

Part II

Before Beginning

The Introduction, the Word of Warning, and the section entitled Understanding *Wisdom of the Twelve Steps* are included in all twelve volumes of this series. These sections are vital to understanding when studying the different volumes in this series, since readers may choose any workbook at any time. The section entitled Doubt in each of the first three workbooks expands upon common doubts people experience with each step.

Maybe you have already used this workbook series for a different step or are familiar with several of these volumes; however, consider this thought. You are now different than before and may see things a little differently. Some parts of your life, thoughts, and levels of awareness have changed. Working the steps changes people, your recovery has already changed you, so give yourself permission to reread this section and answer the same questions again.

The answers you record for Exercise 1-14 doing the 1st Step will be very different from what you write when you work on the 12th Step. Even if you use this series multiple times, review your previous answers; compare your first responses to the new answers for this step and explore what has changed and what remains. This comparison allows for new insights and often provides additional understanding. By answering the same question at different times in your change process, you can measure your growth and maturity as you journey through the *Wisdom of the Twelve Steps*.

House Keeping Notes:

This series of workbooks is for all addictions, drug, and/or alcohol, also people suffering from compulsivity such as gambling, sex, sex/love, eating disorders, internet/electronic, codependency, and a host of other maladies – all will find this material helpful. For the purpose of simplicity and to decrease confusion, this book calls all miseries *addiction*.

Especially in early recovery, two strange thoughts are common: “I’m different,” and “I can do it my way.” When you hear one (or both) of these echoing in your head, this is your addict brain attempting to keep you from recovery. Your addiction is “cunning, baffling, and powerful” and wants you to fail. If your addictive behavior worked for you, then you wouldn’t need a Twelve Step Program. Be forewarned and guarded when these thoughts echo in your head. “I’m different” and “I can do it my way” are samples of addictive arrogant thoughts blocking recovery. Trust what has been successful for others. Trust the process.

Promise

Your pain and misery have screamed for a long time, telling you change is necessary. For many years, you successfully ignored their messages, but now you are responding to the pain you know so well and the desire to change your life. You want something better. You are now in recovery and have embarked upon the journey of the 12-Steps. Congratulations!

The Twelve Step journey provides a deep exploration of yourself, allowing you to find and claim the gift that is you. Thinking of yourself as something valuable may be hard to accept for persons beginning this process. Thinking of yourself as a gift might be stretching your self-definition to the maximum, perhaps even to the breaking point. Part of you wants to believe you are a gift, but another part is so entrenched in the shame of addiction that you want to reject something so alien. The level of your discomfort with this concept is directly proportional to the rocks blocking your road to recovery. Overcoming these obstacles requires you to utilize your sponsor, the fellowship, supportive friends and family, and the Twelve Steps. These large stones seem insurmountable until you successfully navigate past them. After you have successfully reached the other side, you will see that they are not the giant reasons for failure you once thought, rather, they are small pebbles, merely fragments of the boulders you once feared.

Here is the promise: start your study of the Twelve Steps and, by using this book or another like it as your guide, work with your sponsor, be honest, and share

what you learn with others. *This is all you have to do to chase away the darkness, stay sober, and find serenity.* This is not only the promise of this book, but also an echo of many thousands of men and women who would also wish you well and attest to the success of the Twelve Steps. Many of these people could not see out of their own black hole. By working the program, they became successful despite the blackness of their past. They now are rewarded for their hard work, live in the light, and are happy they chose to continue. Follow their lead and you *will* be successful.

Remember: you are the tip of the change arrow, poised on the edge of discovery. You stand at a crossroads now. What you do will substantially affect the rest of your life and the lives of many others. Once begun, your recovery sends ripples of change through the universe, affecting not only your life but also the lives of those you love, now and for generations to come.

***“It's the most unhappy people
who most fear change.”
Mignon McLaughlin***

Big Book - Promises

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellow. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and 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.”

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with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only – use of this material in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems or concerns, or in any other non-A.A. context, does not imply otherwise.

The more work you do on the steps, the closer the promises become true for you. If this is what you want, you now have the path blazed by many others before you.

“People have a hard time letting go of their suffering. Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar.”
Thich Nhat Hanh

Exercise 1

The second habit from the book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Steven Covey, is “Begin with the end in mind.” Every time you pick up this workbook and begin your lesson, begin with the end in mind by reading the Big Book’s promises. Once you define your goals, the chance of success is unlimited. Write what you want...begin this step’s journey with your end in mind.

Where do you want your recovery to take you?

Exercise 2

At this very moment, what do you need out of your recovery?

Necessary Components:

To make any change a person must have three components:

- **Desire to change**
- **Willingness**
- **Ability**

Exercise 3

What is motivating you to change?

***“Our only security is our
ability to change.”
John Lilly***

Desire to Change

The desire to change has a wonderful ally motivating humans toward change. What ally do you have? Pain can be your friend. What!

If you put your hand upon a hot stove, what is your reaction? Even before the emphatic expletives come out of your mouth, you remove it quickly. What motivated you to move your hand so quickly? *Pain*. If it were not for the pain you would not know your hand was burned until you smelled the burning flesh...*much too late*. Pain is a message carrier providing communication between different parts of the body. Emotional pain acts the same way by telling us change is necessary. How long has your emotional pain been telling you change is needed? How long have you ignored its message?

Often people in emotional pain have physical ramifications or consequences such as ulcers, stomach problems, depression, etc. A woman I know said she always knew which of her two children she was worried about depending upon the location of her pain: her neck pain for her daughter and her shoulder pain for her son. People in pain often enter recovery only after trying all sorts of other home remedies; often recovery is a desperate step when all else has failed. In despair, they enter the change environment of relief. Different people obtain different results; some people continue a lifetime of growth, while others immediately leave. Some, when the pain ceases and the crisis subsides, return to their old way of living...back to the previous status quo of unhappiness. Have you experienced this? You taste recovery, and marvel at the flavor, but then do not choose to enjoy the entire 12-step meal. Pain's motivation is gone. You have found relief so you think this is enough and you stop your growth and miss the beautiful journey awaiting you. This happens because your *addict voice* is so cunning, powerful, and baffling; so great in fact, your inner-addict can talk you into or out of almost anything.

Exercise 4

What tools do you plan to use to assist you in your recovery process? Example: In this discussion, A.A. is an example of a tool.

Exercise 5

What else do you need in order to be successful? How do you plan to fill these needs?

Example: I need support of recovery people, or I need to make time to work a program, or I need someone to go home with me to help me clear out all of my drugs.

Note: Recovery allows the full expression of all emotions, especially joy. To celebrate the freeing effect of happiness, several *smile* statements are included to lighten your burden. Although not designed to split your sides with uproarious laughter, in these jokes we see ourselves from a different point of view. When we can laugh, we spit in the eye of addiction with comic relief.

You might need recovery when...
alcohol becomes the perfect solvent...
dissolving all your self-respect.

Willingness

A man building a child's play house swung a hammer, missed the nail, and caught the full impact of the hammer on his thumb. Now, those of you who have done something like this can readily appreciate the word "ouch," and whatever he said following that.

The bleeding under the nail became worse, causing him to get closer to his pain threshold. He held his thumb high in the air, attempting to lessen the amount of blood pressure to his aching thumb. All day long, he kept his thumb high above his head for as long as he had the strength. When he lowered his arm, his damaged thumb began to throb and hurt even more. Even copious amounts of ice couldn't reduce the swelling enough...it just hurt!

Everything he did for rest of the day revolved around seeking relief from this ever-increasing pain. Finally, the pain was too much and he sought relief at the emergency room of the local hospital. Visiting the hospital became necessary after the pain battered down his natural resistance to parting with his money. Reaching this threshold, he rushed himself to the local emergency room seeking relief.

Until he finally obtained relief from this pain, he was totally *thumb-conscious*. Every thought, every action, and everything revolved around this pain. He was totally consumed by the throbbing, an aching reminder of his ill-aimed blow. It was not until the pain was so great that he chose to change by entering the hospital emergency room

to find relief. He had to become willing to allow pain to guide him in his quest for relief.

Exercise 6

List or describe the pains and pressures you experienced with your old lifestyle.

You might need recovery when...

your expectations are so low
your ideal date is someone who
doesn't fall drunk into his spaghetti.

Ability

***“It doesn’t work to leap a
twenty-foot chasm in
two ten-foot jumps.”
American Proverb***

Ever hear words of wisdom for the first time, and know these words are true? There is great wisdom that others have already discovered, and it is available somewhere in the world’s collective subconscious. All you have to do is have the *desire* to seek it and the *willingness* to change, then almost magically the wisdom appears. You have that ability right now!

If your doctor said, “You have to drastically change your lifestyle or die a horrible death,” would you change? Most people would say, “Yes.” Statistics tell a

different story; people seldom change their lives to a healthier lifestyle! Alan Deutschman, author of the book *Change or Die*, explains that people who make life or death decisions involving drastic lifestyle changes face tremendous odds for failure—nine out of ten return to their old destructive behavior within two years! Heart attack, stroke, addiction, and cancer victims face shortened life spans unless they change their lives. Most vow to change but only a few succeed; how come? Why is change so hard?

Change is like the breaking of an egg for breakfast. The egg will never be the same. The cooking process transforms the egg, and upon eating the egg, the body changes this food into fuel. The shattering of the shell begins this chain reaction. Breaking eggs is always messy and so is the change process. Breaking out of your denial is cracking the egg of your change process. What keeps this process going? Why do some people experience success while others do not?

Your recovery involves changing from the old lifestyle, old friends, old ways of thinking and traditions. An often-unrecognized part of the recovery process is grieving your loss. For example, the alcoholic cannot drink like the “normal” person. It may not seem so, but this loss is really a grief issue. Intellectually, you know all you have to do is give up your addiction for 24 hours, and for this time, you have chosen abstinence. However, your old friends and drinking buddies have not; you cannot associate with them if you want to achieve your goals. No matter what your addiction or compulsivity, many changes are required for success. Giving up destructive behaviors and friends - even when necessary for survival – represents loss. Recovery people have to feel these losses and in order to progress, must grieve to move forward.

In his book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankel, a Nazi concentration camp survivor, developed a theory that human beings can “...suffer any loss, make any change, and endure any hardship if the meaning is known...hopelessness of our struggle did not detract from its dignity and meaning...we would...suffer proudly—not miserably—knowing how to die.” Until you can answer several questions, recovery will not belong to you.

- What is the reason for change?
- What meaning does this change have?

- Where am I going?
- What's in it for me?

Until you find your answers, progress will be slow and relapse is likely. Recovery requires psychological, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. The reason lifestyle changes have such a dismal record, Dr. Dean Ornish, founder of the Preventative Medicine Research Institute writes, “...**motivation by fear is not enough to sustain the change.**” He writes, “...**Death is too frightening to think about and denial is a trick our brain successfully plays unless the emotional component is solved.**” Part of the solution has to be an effective expression of emotions. Meetings are a wonderful place for you to be truthful, to express deep feelings such as fear, sadness, regret, and sorrow. These are the same feelings your addiction prevented you from expressing. What you ran from before, you now need to own and share.

Returning to Alan Deutschman's example of those with a life-threatening disease, statistics prove another dynamic. With a support group, instead of the dismal 1 out of 10 failure rate, those rates dramatically change to 9 out of 10 success rate. We in the recovery community prove this every day. Recovery requires the group process; to be fully present in the meetings by expressing your emotions as well as your story. Give yourself permission to be honest and gain the release you seek from your addiction.

Most alcoholics do not quit drinking out of fear of imprisonment, death, or significant loss; their denial system is ingrained, protecting their addiction. “Telling people who are lonely and depressed that they're going to live longer if they quit smoking or change their diet and lifestyle is not that motivating,” Ornish writes. “Who wants to live longer when you're in chronic emotional pain? Who wants to give up alcohol, a cherished habit, if you come out of your denial and really feel miserable?”

People addressing their feelings in the Twelve Step Program can begin to think differently; in this group setting, the expression of honest feelings reduces denial and the recovery process begins. In the protective folds of the recovery program, you discover coping skills that work much better than your addiction. Your *need* for something outside of yourself to make you feel okay shrinks and begins to melt away.

Your strength now comes from a place of inner tranquility instead of the contents of the bottle, etc. Breathe easily - you have a support group. Because of the group, your chance of success has dramatically improved!

The 12 Steps creates a pathway that allows natural wisdom to appear. Hear the words, experience the wisdom of others, accept what you intuitively know to be true and this change can be yours. You already have the ability once you realize the power is within you...*trust the process.*

Exercise 7

Go back and read the second paragraph in this section about people having to change their lifestyle. If you had to change your lifestyle or face a horrible death, would you do it? How successful do you think you would be without a support system?

Exercise 8

What are the reasons for your willingness to change? What brought you into recovery?

Exercise 9

What meaning, what value can you obtain from the suffering you experienced from your addiction? Note: Many people have trouble with this question, so if you find yourself stuck do not ignore this question, but rather wait awhile and allow this concept to filter through your consciousness as you continue this workbook. This question seems very strange, but its answer is an important part of your recovery journey. Give yourself permission to explore this question and come back to it from time to time.

You might need recovery when...
the only way you know of getting
rid of a bad mood is to pass it on!

Exercise 10

Where am I going with my recovery? What is in it for me?

Exercise 11

Are you able to express your emotions? (See the Mood Chart on page 80) Do you use these words in your significant relationships, with your sponsor? Most people do not. Observe the next meeting you attend, how many people actually use feeling words? How comfortable are you using these words in your significant relationships?

Emotions

What is the definition of *cool*? *Cool* means to not show emotions, not express deep feelings, and without the honesty afforded by full expression of your emotions, creates a high degree of dishonesty. When you drank, drugged, and/or controlled others, you successfully hid from your emotions. You were by this definition absolutely *cool*! Being in an altered state completely divorced you from your emotions, so you achieved the ultimate of *cool*. Did being *cool* work for you?

In her book, *Positivity*, Dr. Barbara Fredrickson describes emotions as sailing. Positive emotions are the winds in the sail. Negative emotions are different; they are the keel that extends down from the hull allowing the sailboat to tack against the wind. Without the wind, sailboats are becalmed and do not move. Without the keel, the sailor could not follow the plotted course. Both types of emotions are necessary.

When hiding, ignoring, stuffing, or denying emotions, a person is helpless against the winds of this world. Using emotions correctly allows progress in the direction the sailor desires. Are you going to continue to allow the chaotic winds to blow you all over the ocean or are you going to learn to sail?

Contrary to Dr. Fredrickson, describing emotions as positive or negative is incorrect. Since you have emotions, and need those to navigate, how can they be positive or negative? Instead, your feelings just are. Consider this different terminology. The so-called negative emotions are really for *warning* and positive emotions are the *healing* feelings. May the *healing* emotions fill your sails and may the gift of *warning* protect you as you journey.

Using this chart and identifying your emotions is the opposite of your addiction; you now are able to manage and use what you formerly denied and were so terrified of experiencing. You are now able to be free.

**You have two choices:
hide from your feelings
or
allow them to guide you.**

Exercise 12

Prior to recovery, you probably used one or more of these addictions and/or compulsions: alcohol, drugs, food, sex, work, the lives of other people, etc. One description of addiction is “an external solution for an internal problem.” Describe what you have used before (maybe still do) as an “...external solution(s) for internal problem(s)” How successfully did this external solution fix your internal problem.

Sample - External solutions for an internal problem

Internal Problem	External Solution	Recovery Option
You lost the promotion at work.	You scream at your significant other.	Be honest and tell her of your disappointment.
You lost the promotion at work.	You drink.	Go to a meeting.
You lost the promotion at work.	You tell the boss to “stick it where the sun don’t shine.”	Explore your feelings (mood chart) get your center. If you still feel wronged express it a positive way.

You’re not happy so you buy a new car thinking this is what you need for happiness. No, that didn’t work, then perhaps a new girlfriend, or a move to an exotic place, make a million dollars, win the jackpot, and/or take a hit of that wonderful smelling joint will bring you the contentment you seek. Something has to fix this restlessness. You know you will be okay if you can just find it. Write about the external solutions that you used when attempting to fix your internal problems.

“When a pupil is ready, a teacher appears.”
Buddhist Proverb

Understanding Wisdom of the Twelve Steps

W*isdom of the Twelve Steps* is a series of individual workbooks for recovering people to assist them in working the steps, one step at a time. The steps are a journey of change; they seem simple and straightforward - and they are - but at the same time, translating this simple wisdom into our complicated brains needs time, understanding, and the wisdom of others.

Wisdom of the Twelve Steps includes a recovery story related to each step. Following the story is information about how to work the step and each workbook concludes with a series of specific thought-provoking questions. These questions, when answered, provide understanding often overlooked without this process. If your goal is to have a happier and more productive life, then challenge yourself to find the answers to these difficult questions.

To gain the maximum benefit from your recovery process, attend 12-Step meetings, talk to your sponsor, and share with the recovering fellowship. Allow these wonderful parts of your program to be the catalyst for your change process. Without the energy and motivation offered by the recovering community, this workbook will sit on your shelf collecting dust...a sad reminder of the happiness you chose to give away to your addiction.

Think of your family on Christmas morning, when everyone gathers in their pajamas, drinking coffee or hot chocolate, and eating sticky buns. There is happiness all around, tension from the past is lessened, and there are many smiles of anticipation. We look at the Christmas tree and all the gifts arranged beneath its decorated branches. We are excited about seeing the people we care about opening their gifts as we anticipate tearing off the brightly colored paper from ours. What would Christmas morning be if we did not open the presents? Why would anyone not want to open his or her gifts? Excellent question, however this is often what happens when people attend the 12-Step meetings but never actively work the steps. They have the Christmas morning but without the gifts.

Christmas morning is similar to attending a 12-Step meeting. As wonderful and beneficial as these meetings are, you miss the presents under the recovery tree if you

do not work the steps or choose to open the presents awaiting your joy. Are you ready to open your presents? The best way to use this book is to read it completely; allow yourself to dwell on what you read for a few days. Then start on the questions and take your time processing your answers. Like the steps, this book works best when processing slowly and carefully.

In a day or two, reread the section entitled: Understanding this Step and write notes to yourself, underlining important concepts. Allow this description to spread through your consciousness. There will be areas you agree with, some you may not agree with, and hopefully much to challenge you. Remember you are okay as you are now and there may be areas where you may need to challenge your thinking. Not all your thoughts are wrong, misguided, or incorrect, but many are. Allow yourself permission to examine *all* your thoughts - what is working for you and what is not. Get input from those whom you respect, ask questions in the meetings - be open-minded - *challenge yourself*.

After this section, there is a specific series of questions for each individual step with space to answer each. Spend the necessary time digging deep for understanding. It may help to read your answers to your sponsor, providing a wonderful place for additional learning. These questions and your answers will inspire you as you share with others.

Someone once said working the steps is like a healthy pregnancy; it takes at least nine months to work them all (if it takes longer, do not worry; work at your pace and in your own time). Congratulations, you are now ready to begin working another step. Join the many people over the years that have changed using the 12 Steps.

You might need recovery when...
you socialize with everyone else because
you don't want to be alone with yourself.

Exercise 13

Are you fully using the program, making meetings, working with a sponsor, and reading the Big Book? Do you ask your higher power to keep you sober in the morning? Are you thankful at night? Are you working the steps? Where does your program need improvement as of this moment?

Exercise 14

More importantly, think about the unmanageability of your life. Is it something worth returning to? Of course not, so before you again allow your “self-will to run riot,” recognize that to be successful, you desperately need discipline and structure to help see you through recovery. If you do not have your recovery, what do you have? Your future requires you getting you back. Putting your program first keeps self-will at bay.

Working the steps involves time, energy, commitment, desire, and willingness. Are you ready to put this into your change process? If so, then declare to yourself:

- I have the *desire* to complete this step.
- I have the *willingness*.
- With my recovery program and my higher power's help, I have the *ability to* complete this step.

Word of Warning

“Holding anger is a poison. It eats you from inside. We think that hating is a weapon that attacks the person who harmed us. But hatred is a curved blade. And the harm we do, we do to ourselves.”

Mitch Albom

Others who are close to you may like the changes they see you making, but since you have hurt many or all of them in the past, they may not trust any positive change you make. You may be surprised to see doubt on their faces, disbelief in their eyes, and fear in their hearts as they await the other shoe to drop or for you to return to who you were before recovery. They have so long walked on eggshells around you; they no longer know how to walk differently. They may not acknowledge the changes in you because addiction is a family disease - affecting everyone. Allow others to believe in you again, in their own time – not your time. Change your behavior, get your happiness back, and eventually they will be able to accept the new you. Do not allow others to deter you from your appointed date with recovery as your life may depend upon it.

Self-improvement promises to be difficult, challenging, scary, and painful, but at the same time wonderful, fulfilling, empowering, and joyful. You will not regret the time you spend on making a lifetime of changes. After this process, you will have an improved zest for life, increased ability to love, and more self-esteem.

Many of the old time A.A. members say, “My program is the most important thing in my life.” This is wise council; your addiction does not want you to know this truth. Putting your recovery before your family, work, and even God seems selfish, mean-spirited, and heading in the wrong direction, but before you reject this sage

advice, think about what you were before recovery. Did you really have your family, work, and a close connection with your higher power? Before recovery, didn't you experience a lack of connection with yourself and others? Did you feel close to your creator?

Connecting with yourself is the cornerstone of a happy life; the greater the self-connection, the more you can connect with others. Make a decision to become an internal millionaire. In this enviable state, no one can take away your wealth or steal it, the IRS cannot tax it, and the people you love will receive your living inheritance. More importantly, think about the unmanageability of your life. Is your old life-style something worth returning to? Of course not, so before you again allow your "self-will to run riot," you desperately need discipline and structure to help see you through recovery. If you do not have your recovery, you have nothing - your future requires you getting you back. Put your program first and await the results.

A successful recovery program requires structure in order to change. Structure includes attending meetings, reading the Big Book, and working with your sponsor. Working the steps with others is a wonderful structure. The slogans are another form of simple discipline your wounded soul needs to hear. This book, the Big Book, and many others like it are a form of structure. Allow yourself to use the structure, the tools, and the thousands of other people already in the recovery community. These gifts are available to you and will help you achieve your goals.

Part III

Two Word Trip-Wire

A trip wire sets off a land mine. In order to be forewarned and forearmed, it would be advisable to bring these two hazards--two trip wires--out of the shadows to explore. Both of these are double-edged swords. One side will work for positive change and the other limits progress.

The first trip wire is *arrogance*, and the second is *doubt*.

Arrogance

A large part of your addiction is arrogance - your arrogance. Here you might say, "I'm not arrogant." Perhaps this is true. However, ponder this question and allow space for self-exploration, perhaps even discovery.

Here are some sample places others have hidden from change. In the depths of your darkness, when you're all alone, see what may fit you.

- My way is better than yours.
- I am right and you are wrong.
- I am too wonderful to change.
- I have the answer and you do not.
- I am too intelligent to change.
- I am too powerful to change.
- I am too strong to change.
- I am too afraid to change.
- I am too weak to change.
- I am too different to change.
- My denial works better than reality.
- This is a bunch of bull.
- My God is better than yours.
- Nobody has it harder than I.
- Everyone wants me; I am so special.
- Nobody wants me.
- Nobody understands me.
- Nobody can love me.
- Nobody loves me.
- I am okay, and you are not.
- My parents did not listen to me.
- My parents abused me.
- My parents abandoned me.
- My parents controlled me.
- My parents did not have boundaries.
- My parents were too rigid.

Any of the above listed attitudes/beliefs are examples of your addiction trying to protect itself. Your addiction tries to keep you in the chaos to which you have grown so accustomed to and wants to keep you from the peace you desire and deserve.

The healthy side of arrogance is the pride we feel when overcoming a limitation. There are many roadblocks in recovery. When you successfully deal with one – go ahead - pat yourself on the back and enjoy some healthy pride.

Exercise 15

This question may be hard, but it is very necessary, similar to a dentist performing a root canal; necessary for healthy teeth but quite discomforting. For this question, write about your arrogance.

Exercise 16

One recovery person said, “I did not drink nearly the amount most in this room drank, but I can match my arrogance with the best of you.” How has your arrogance affected your recovery? How has your arrogance affected your relationships?

Doubt

When using this workbook, separate your religion or lack thereof from this discussion. Spirituality is different. **Spirituality is the inward search to find and claim the gift of life you were given – your self-love.**

Try to temporarily mentally divorce yourself from your faith or non-faith. You may return to your previous beliefs at any time as nothing in this series wants to insist you discard cherished beliefs or non-beliefs. These are yours and represent your best thinking to date. This exercise only seeks to allow a broadening of awareness, allowing for exploration into previously hidden parts of your being. Join this Explorers Club and in this search, you can add to what you already know.

1st Step Doubt

Before you walked through the door of your first meeting, part of you had hope. You hoped for something better than what you experienced in the past. However:

- You *doubt* this program will work at all.
- You *doubt* – since you are so different – recovery will work for you.
- You *doubt* if you really want to give up your addiction.
- You *doubt* you are willing to pay the price of change.
- You *doubt* how being powerless will lead you to power.

Healthy Doubt

Note: The healthy side of doubt is realizing the chasm is ten feet wide and your best leap is only eight feet. Your doubt keeps you from testing certainty with stupidity. Perhaps your doubt will turn out to be true, keeping you from falling into the abyss – “I don’t think I can jump that far.” Listen to your healthy doubt and assess the risk by asking others and doing the necessary research to determine if you can accomplish the task and determine if you are willing to pay the associated costs.

You might need recovery when...
your mother is the
travel agent for guilt trips.

Working the First Three Steps

The first three steps are often the hardest for several reasons. The first rock in the road is the lack of recovery maturity. Most people who begin to work the steps are relatively new to the program and may be uncertain about recovery. If this is you, you are unsure if this is going to work or if recovery really is the **way** you want to go, **need** to go, or even **if** you can achieve the success you see in others. This awareness can be very unsettling.

Working the steps requires change and for most, this is another boulder blocking serenity. Change is hard. Having started this learning exercise of the Twelve Steps, you recognize you must change in order to achieve the peace you want in your life. Tighten your seat belt, breathe deeply, relax, and allow yourself the comfort of knowing...*change is hard, change is difficult*, but most importantly, *you are not alone*.

The third reason, your old behavior is a habit. It may be something you wish to change, need to change; but habits – even destructive habits - demand considerable awareness, energy, and support from others to replace them with something unknown. It also demands trust. Is the new life in recovery going to be better than the old? What is it going to cost you?

A summarization of the first three steps is:

- ***I can't.***
- ***He can.***
- ***I think I'll let him.***

1st Step - *I can't.*

The specific problem the first step often creates is the concept of *powerless*. Do you want to be *powerless*? No, of course not, but this step requires a unique understanding of power and powerlessness. After working this step, you will understand how you get *power* from your *powerlessness*.

Although you think yourself unique, your addiction tells you two strange thoughts, common to most in early recovery:

- ***You can do this on your own.***
- ***You are different.***

Warning: When you hear one (or both) of these echoing in your head, this is your addict brain attempting to keep you from recovery. Your addiction is “cunning, baffling, and powerful” and wants you to fail. With messages like this, your addiction is trying to get you to quit your program and return to the “fun-times” you had before recovery. It is trying to set you up for failure. When you hear, “you can do this on your own” and that “you are different,” challenge that voice. Is it your rational brain speaking wisdom or is it your addiction trying to set you up for failure?

However, you can turn the tables on your demons by just agreeing. Say to yourself, “You know, dear addiction, you are right. I am special, different, and unique.” And, “Yes, I can do this on my own, in fact, no one will do it for me. I am the one who ultimately determines my success or failure. And with you or without, my addiction, I am going to work a recovery program.” Changing your thinking and saying something like this reframes your thinking and allows you to take back the power you previously gave away to your addiction.

If your addictive behavior worked for you in the past, then you would not need a 12-Step Program. So be guarded when these thoughts come, because it may be the spider inviting you back into the web, an engraved invitation from your addiction. To be successful consider exploring the path blazed by many before you. If you could achieve contented sobriety on your own, why has success been so illusive? Think about the many times you promised yourself something different. How many times have you succeeded without the loving support of the Recovery Tribe?

Understanding the 1st Step

This step often gives people a great deal of difficulty. In fact, there is another recovery program called Rational Recovery (R.R.), which has a fundamental difference with Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) involving two of the steps. R.R. Program takes issue with the concept of a higher power as expressed in Step 3 and with the powerlessness in Step 1. No one wants to be powerless, “...so...why work a program that advocates powerlessness?” This section will explore this misunderstanding.

Make two columns on a piece of paper. Label the left hand column, ***Can't Control***. For this example, picture an alcoholic sitting before this chart with a pen in his hand. Now, Mr. Alcoholic, fill in the ***Can't*** column with what you *cannot* control about your addiction and make a bullet-point list of the things concerning your addiction over which you have no control. For example, can you control that your supplier lives in the same neighborhood, or if your favorite bar is located down the street, or that your co-workers like to stop off for a beer on their way home? Can you control your genetic predisposition to the disease of Alcoholism? Can you control the availability of your drug of choice? Can you control the stress you experience in life? Can you control what other people think of you?

Looking over this impressive list, there is a lot you have no control over. Look at your list, Mr. Alcoholic, and tell me, can you control the *ultimate outcome* of your addiction? You probably expect your sponsor to insist you emphatically say, “Yes, I can control the outcome.” Consider the impressive list of what you cannot control...do you really have control over the outcome? You do not. While you do not have control, do you have *influence* over the outcome? Yes, you certainly do. Probably more that you think, so add the word *outcome* to the bottom of the left hand column.

On the right hand column, write ***Can Control***. Make a list under this heading of that which you do have control. For example, do you have control over your behavior? Your thoughts? Your feelings? Even though you may want to reject having control over your feelings, guess where they belong: in the ***Can Control*** column. For example: how about your first drink, Mr. Alcoholic, how about your choice to work the steps or not, are these something you ***Can Control*** or ***Can't Control***? Where does

your choice to change or stay the same belong? Correct: it belongs in the **Can** column. Using similar questions as a template, make your own chart of what belongs in the **Can Control** column. After your list is sufficient and you struggle to add another, where would your attitude belong? Do people hold you accountable for your attitude? Of course, so it also belongs on the **Can Control** side. Later in this workbook, you can personalize this **Can/Can't Control** discussion.

The 1st Step has just two parts, unmanageability, and powerlessness. Anyone walking through the doors of recovery for the first time can talk about how unmanageable their life is. If their lives were not in chaos, why attend? Nobody started coming to meetings because they were happy. No, it was because they felt wounded and the only solution left to their unmanageability was to enter the place of change. Recognizing unmanageability is the easy part of the step.

On the other hand, powerlessness gives many people problems. Do you want to be powerless? Of course not, and often people shy away from this step for this exact reason; they already feel their lives are spinning out of control and nothing they have done has been able to change the direction in which they are heading. Since they already feel powerless, admitting they are not in control magnifies and increases their unmanageability and, by completing the circular causation, their resistance to admitting their lack of control increases the powerlessness they experience. The opposite of powerlessness is having power. Is having power in your life something you want?

At the end of every 12-Step Meeting, we join hands and say the Serenity Prayer. What does the word serenity mean? It is a noun meaning the state of being calm, peaceful, and untroubled. Do you wish to have this state of calmness, tranquility, and a sense of safety deep down? So how can this step help you achieve this state when you have previously spent so much time in turmoil?

When you say the Serenity Prayer, for what are you actually praying? Are you seeking some far away wisdom from some guru on a mountaintop? No, of course not, but you do seek the knowledge to help you find the peace you have so long sought.

In the example of Mr. Alcoholic, he has already listed what he cannot control in the **Can't** column and then listed what he can control in the **Can** column. All he needs to do now is to draw the line between the two columns. This line provides the awareness necessary to make a choice. In this book, it is called the **Wisdom Line**. Until Mr. Alcoholic draws this line between what he can and what he cannot control, he lacks the awareness necessary to live a peaceful life. Before he put the factors affecting his life into their logical column, he was too close to the problem to see, to separate the forest from the trees. Now armed with the **Can/Can't** knowledge, he can step back and develop the ability to choose; ***until you choose, you do not have a choice.***

“When I was younger I’d berate myself: ‘You’re fat, you’re not a good dancer, you’ll never have a boyfriend.’ I don’t sweat that kind of stuff anymore. Now every day is a miracle. I’ve also learned that if something is painful or upsetting, you shouldn’t hide from it. You should make it part of your life instead.”
Valerie Harper

Wisdom

Do you remember Mr. Alcoholic? In this next exercise, work the example. This time you can personalize the experience to see how it affects your life.

The Wisdom Chart exercise is *powerful*. In order to achieve maximum benefits, time is required. *Do not hurry this exercise for it will pay great dividends.*

Exercise 17

What worries you? Think of a concern of yours. Although you may be worried and concerned about many things, narrow down this example to one thing, maybe it is a person, your job, death, or hosts of other areas making you worry. Briefly write your worry here.

Exercise 18

Now when thinking about this worry, answer this question, what about this problem **can't** you control? Spend some time listing everything about this problem that is out of your control.

Write below a bullet point list about just what about your expressed worry you can't control.

Wisdom Chart

Parts of the problem <i>I Can't control:</i>	Parts of the problem <i>I Can control:</i>

(See some of the examples found on the next page.)

In addition to what you already wrote about what you can't control, here are a few things to think about to help you to determine what may be on the **Can't** side.

Can't Control-Sample questions:

- Can you control someone else's situation?
- Can you control if the other person changes?
- Can you control other people's behavior?
- Can you control other people's thoughts?
- Can you control other people's emotions?
- Can you control what other people think about you?
- Can you control how they treat you?
- Can you control how they view the situation?
- Can you control if the other person loves you?
- Can you control how the other person loves you?
- Can you control if the other person stays or goes in this relationship?

Record each one separately as a bullet point on the *Can't* side.

After you have made your list, take a moment, and study it. Looking at this list, can you control the ultimate **outcome** of this situation? **Yes/No?**

Granted, you may have influence over the outcome, perhaps even more than you think...but considering all that is out of your control, is the ultimate outcome really something you **Can** control?

Knowing what you cannot control is a powerful realization. Now go back to the sample worry you chose to work on the previous page. When thinking about this identified worry, now answer this question:

What about this problem *Can* you control?

Think about your expressed worry, what you can control. Add those to the chart under the **Can** control side.

If you have difficulty getting started on the list about what you **Can** control, review the sample below, using it for a starting point for your study.

Sample Exercise

What is your worry? *Relationship with my husband*

Parts of the problem <i>I Can't control</i>	Parts of the problem <i>I Can control</i>
• His behavior	• My behavior
• His thoughts	• My thoughts
• His emotions	• My emotions
• His fidelity	• Am I true
• What he says to me	• If I love him
• If he loves me	• How I express my love
• How he expresses his love	• If I stay or go
• If he stays or goes	• The support group I choose
• His friends	• If I attend recovery
• His addiction	• My contribution to the success
• The outcome of this relationship	• If I change
• If he changes	• My attitude

Some people disagree with some of the topics listed under the **Can** Control section such as, *thinking, emotions, or love*. The following paragraphs about love and emotion are especially helpful if you also had trouble with the placement of these words on the **Can** side.

“We arrive in the rooms tangled up in a web of complexity and confusion. Our lives are unmanageable because our minds are unmanageable.”
Ray A.

Emotions

People often have difficulty accepting that they have control over their emotions. Until a person knows how to manage feelings, emotions tend to be in control. So to those who think emotions are in control of them, think about this; if I forced you to put your emotions in one of two columns, one **Can't** control and the other **Can** control, which column does it logically belong to? Managing emotions is not easy, you may not know how to, but if forced to decide, which column does it belong to? If you said **Can**, you are right...if you still say put it on the **Can't** side...hold your concern, put in the **Can** column with a question mark. Ultimately, you will have to decide for yourself to which side it belongs.

Love

Is love a choice? People choose to fall in love; they also choose to fall out of love. Think about the person you love now. Can you think back to the day you chose to love this person? Can you think of when you decided to stop loving this person? Partners make numerous choices to express love or not. Every time love is withheld creates a little divorce, all accumulating up until the day the papers are signed and the divorce is finally legal.

Perhaps a parent's love is not a choice, but rather Mother Nature's way of protecting the future. Does a parent choose to love their children, or is their love a natural instinct? You will have to determine the answer to this challenge.

Many recovery people repeat the Serenity Prayer as a mantra on a regular basis, some have it embroidered on their walls, or sitting as a reminder on their desk, but often they lack the understanding of what it **really** means or the **power** found within its simple message. In this section, you will take apart that wonderful Serenity Prayer to see how it works and specifically what it can do for you.

Serenity Prayer

**God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.**

Based upon a poem by Reinhold Niebuhr

You might need recovery when...

instead of wrestling your demons,
you now snuggle with them.

This simple wisdom resonates with most people, but until they apply it practically, it becomes a dust-collecting poem mounted on their wall. So let us explore this poem in light of your stated worry.

“...grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change.” You already listed everything not in your control. Until you accept what you **Can’t** control about your relationship (in this example) you will continue to worry, and serenity will not be yours. Accept your list as it currently exists, realistically. Living life on life’s terms provides a short cut toward peace.

“...the courage to change the things I can...” focusing on the **Can** side of this can/can’t divide is *Thumb-Work*. Hold your two hands out and point the thumbs toward you; this is *Thumb-Work*. Most people, especially in a relationship, want to do *Finger-Work*, point their finger at others, inventorying other people’s defects, and insisting that others change so that they can be okay.

“...and the wisdom to know the difference.” This wisdom, this simple awareness separates what I **Can** control from what I **Can’t**. The line down the middle of the page –**The Wisdom Line** - distinguishes strength from weakness, chaos from peace, and discord from understanding.

What does the word serenity mean to you? Here is an example. Picture a submarine sailing on the Gulf of Mexico when all of a sudden, it spots a gigantic storm on the radar - a perfect storm. Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike all rolled into one. The submarine just pulls the plug and heads for the bottom. On the surface huge, gigantic waves are crashing, lightning is flashing, and the thundering roar of the storm

creates *mayhem*. On the bottom, there is calm, peacefulness, serenity...a sense of safety, a sense of feeling okay. Do you want those feelings deep within you? Most do.

Exercise 19

See if this is true for you... when focusing on the **Can't** side most people get this type of reaction. Write these six bullet point words listed directly on top of the words you wrote on the **Can't** side. Use a different colored pen for contrast.

- Thoughts of: "I'm not okay"
- Worry
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Depression
- Chaos

Do these concerns sound familiar? Is your picture pasted on the **Can't** side?

What emotions do you feel when you see what your focus on the **Can't** side caused?

Exercise 20

However, when you focus on the **Can** side, you get something entirely different.

- I am comfortable... "I'm okay."
(Everyone else around may be "squirrely"...but I am okay)
- Peace
- Calmness
- Serenity

Write the bullet point words right on top of the words you wrote on the **Can** side of the Chart on the next page (again, using a different pen).

Label the **Can** side – TRUST; then label the **Can't** side - FEAR. What side do you want to be on? People do not choose the FEAR side (**Can't**) when doing this exercise. Therefore, why do well-meaning, well-educated, good people choose to focus on what they **Can't** control; the FEAR side? Why do people do this? Good question.

The **Can** side is all Thumb Work. Most people want to point fingers at others and blame. Pointing fingers is Finger Work and on this side, you may make statements such as this:

- “You know what your problem is...”
- “I’d be happy if you would do ...”
- “If only the boss would do...”
- “If you loved me you’d...”

These are all indications of *Finger Work*, putting personal responsibility on someone else wishing they would change so we could be okay. Pointing the finger blurs the ability to focus on what we **Can** control.

Thumb Work is hard; no one really wants to look at how they can change. This resistance is a normal human trait but accepting this focus serves people well.

Think about your addiction/compulsivity. Fill in the table on the next page using the same procedure you used before but now change your expressed worry and focus on your addiction. Completing this exercise provides valuable information about your addiction. It will be a road map telling you what you **Can** control, and what you **Can't** control.

Parts of the problem <i>I Can't control</i>	Parts of the problem <i>I Can control</i>
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Exercise 21

Hold your hands out flat in front of you with your palms down. Now turn your hands sideways, so your thumbs point up, and then make a fist. Bend your elbows so your thumbs are pointing at you; who are you pointing at now? This is *Thumb Work*. What does it feel like to have your thumbs pointing toward you?

Exercise 22

Now go back to the Wisdom Chart. Write down why you may think humans tend to focus on what they **Can't** control.

Answer this question before continuing.

People focus on things they **Can't** control (**FEAR** side) because it is their... *habit of thought*. Everyone has certain habits usually formed by how a person thinks. What patterns of thoughts form your habits?

Today, doing this Wisdom Chart exercise you are now able to challenge your thinking. You can now focus on what you **Can** control (**TRUST** Side) and have the reward of peace and serenity, or you can focus on things you **Can't** control (**FEAR** side).

You are not a bad person if you continue to focus on the **Can't**. However, focusing on the **Can't** side becomes the “Happy-Vacuum” sucking up happiness; some call this side the “Fun-Sucker” or “Suckie-Side.” No matter what the name, this awareness represents a choice. Having no choice is very stressful but having choices reduces stress.

Now picture driving into a service station; you need some gasoline. You pull up to the pump, stick the credit card into the slot, put the little numbers into the machine, get the hose...you are all set, right? Instead of putting the hose into the gas tank, you

start pumping gas on the ground. The meter is running, costing you money. Answer this question; is the gasoline on the ground doing your car any good? No, it is wasted energy. Has any bit of worry you ever did...ever changed the outcome of the problem? Your worry was a waste of time, a waste of energy and did not accomplish a thing.

Does worry ever improve the outcome?

Think about the identified worry topic you selected at the beginning of this exercise. After you made this comparison of the **Can** and **Can't**, you now have a road map. You can focus on things you **Can** control and have the corresponding peace and serenity, or you can focus on things you **Can't** control. It is your choice.

If you find yourself worrying but you want a choice, make this declaration: "I choose to worry about... (fill in the blank)." When declaring you are going to worry about something and accepting responsibility for the outcome, you are now in a position where you can choose. How much energy and happiness have you wasted when focused on something of which you have no control? Until you start to choose, you do not have a choice.

Exercise 23

Since you have completed the Wisdom Chart, now increase your awareness about the line separating the **FEAR** side from the **TRUST** side of the Wisdom Chart. Look for this line in all your relationships; this line exists between what you **Can** control and what you **Can't** control. You have a different line between you and everyone. There is one between you and each of your kids, a different one with your spouse, lover, co-workers, boss, in-laws, etc. There is even one between you and traffic. Can you control the traffic jam...no. Can you control your attitude waiting for the traffic to clear? Yes! It is simple...not easy.

When you focus on what you **Can't** control, your mind runs in circles, just like a squirrel running in its cage. Instead, when you focus on what you can control, your mind becomes linear in nature, and with this straight perspective, you are in a better position to perform the next right step.

So when you start feeling *squirrely* (anxiety swirling in your stomach), ask yourself, “Self, what are you focusing on?” Every time, you will discover your focus has been on something over which you have no control.

The truth is...

You can't fix can't.

Exercise 24

Wisdom Chart Review:

Answer the questions below based upon how you filled out your Wisdom Chart in Exercise 18.

Check off what you experienced when you concentrated on the thing you **Can't** control? Did you have any of these...

- Anxiety?
- Worry?
- Stress?
- Happiness?
- Peace?
- Serenity?

When your energies are focused on what you cannot control, the **Can't** side, do you feel:

- I'm okay
- I'm not okay

What do you experience when you focus on the **Can** side (on what you can control), what is the result?

- Anxiety?
- Worry?
- Stress?
- Happiness?
- Peace?
- Serenity?
- Calmness?

When your energies are focused on what you **Can** control, the **Can** part of the Wisdom Chart, do you feel:

- I'm okay
- I'm not okay

Exercise 25

If you chose to change your thinking from the **Can't** control side to the **Can** control side, what behaviors would you have to give up in order to focus on the **Can** side of your choice?

Is moving things you used to think belong in the **Can't** control side to the **Can** control side uncomfortable? Is giving up control something you need to do?

- List the behaviors you need to give up to focus on the **Can** side of your choice.
- Are you ready to give up control?
- Are you ready to accept what this change would require?
- What would this change be like for you?

A man is a consummate worrier and has difficulty separating what he can control from what he cannot control. Recently, he overslept and missed making the deliveries his contract requires. In his absence, with no notification, his company hired a hotshot company to do what he was supposed to do. His job is what separates him from the bread line and is extremely important to him.

When he called his employer about missing his route, the boss was rather non-committal about the results of his missing his shift, telling him they would discuss it when he returned. Then Hurricane Isaac hit Louisiana so there was some time before he was able to talk with his employer, creating a great opportunity to worry.

His old behavior was to fret, worry, and ruin his peace until he could find out his fate. With the gift of the Wisdom Line, he knew the result was out of his hands so he decided not to worry. Upon returning to work, his bosses jokingly called him “Sleeping Beauty” and very lovingly told him they understood and had been concerned about him as it was not like him to miss a delivery. His oversleeping experience taught him how debilitating worry could be and how it had controlled his life. Now with the Wisdom Line insight, he no longer gives up his peace for something out of his control.

“My happiness grows in direct proportion to my acceptance and in inverse proportion to my expectations. That’s the key for me. If I can accept the truth of ‘This is what I’m facing — not what can I expect but what I am experiencing now’ — then I have all this freedom to do other things.”

Michael J. Fox

Exercise 26

Had you the same experience as this man, not knowing if you would have a job or not when returning to work, would you have chosen to worry or not? You know how to worry. What would it be like not to worry?

You might need recovery when...
you don't make the same mistake twice,
you make it 5 or 6 times...*just to be sure.*

Words are powerful. For example, when faced with a difficulty such as letting go of your former lover, the tendency is to say something like this, "I can't let her go," or "I can't ever date someone else again." This is not to say grief is not painful or not real or difficult to work through, but the pain increases and the healing slows down to a crawl when sufferers use the word ***Can't***. Unless someone has a gun pointed at your head, the word ***Can't*** becomes debilitating. Try instead a powerful antidote and substitute the words "***I choose not to...***" instead of ***Can't***.

This simple change of wording puts power back where it belongs. You have the choice in the example of the jilted lover of letting go and moving on, a decision rightfully belonging on the ***CAN*** side of the Wisdom Line. When you say the word

Can't, you wind up on the FEAR side of the equation where a steep price is extracted from your peace and serenity.

Here is another example of the power of words. Think of the proverbial half-full or half-empty glass of water. As the saying goes, those who see the glass as half-empty are pessimists and those who see it half-full are optimists. This classic example is a wonderful illustration of thinking and the power of words. How a person views the content of the glass depends on their individual and diverse choices of thoughts about this image. The truth of the illustration about the water in the glass is that regardless of how you view the glass, your perspective does not change the amount of water in the glass. Your reality is only dependent on your choice of how you want to view the water level.

Here is another example about the power of words. A man smashed his thumb in the car door, and it hurt like &%*#%. Amidst his pain, a nurse asked him about his 'discomfort'. "What is your discomfort level? Rate it between 1 and 10, with 10 being the highest." After the pain subsided, the man quizzed the nurse about this strange "nurse-talk." She told him the word "pain" is a negative and triggers an automatic reaction. "Discomfort" is a neutral term and does not carry the same power as the word "pain."

Do you use power words such as "hate" as in, "I hate traffic"? Compare this attitude to, "You know, I don't like traffic" or "this traffic really annoys me." Say it once and it is a statement of fact; say it more than once it is a complaint.

Exercise 27

Does your use of the word **Can't** cause you to be stuck? What power words are limiting your happiness? What is your "discomfort" level?

Now let's talk about monkeys - everyone loves monkeys, right?

You are a responsible person. You get up every morning and do certain necessary tasks to get yourself ready, or help your family, and/or your spouse. Unless you are independently wealthy or stay home to take care of the household, you head off to work and are responsible for doing what is necessary to earn a living. Are you responsible for your own happiness? Good...you are. These routines, obligations, responsibilities, etc. are examples of your monkeys.

Other people have their monkeys, what they are responsible for achieving. Are you responsible for your significant other's monkeys? No, you are not. Sometimes temporarily, a circumstance requires one spouse to assume something not belonging to them, and this is one of the strengths of a close relationship. Under stress, there are times when one partner may take some duties belonging to the other. However, can you take responsibility for your loved one's happiness? No...not your monkey, no matter how you want to assume it.

How about your children's monkeys - as much as you may want to be responsible for your children's monkeys, the older they get, the more responsibility they assume or are given or should accept. (Pick what is appropriate for your kids). For example - their grades...whose monkey is it - yours or your children's? It is not your monkey. You may supply them with the best education money can buy but it is up to your children to succeed or not. Their success or failure belongs to them...not you. You may have a tremendous influence but the bottom line is...it is their responsibility.

Contrary to your early learning...*other people are responsible for their happiness*, including your children. Problems increase when you take responsibility for other people's monkeys. It is a tremendous burden to carry another's load on your shoulders with the associated stress symptoms of anxiety, depression, being overwhelmed, and burned out. It also teaches others they are weak without you. If not careful, you can become so important in other people's lives, they begin to think they cannot function without you. Deep down, is this the message you want them to receive? This type of message creates boomerang kids who return without the

confidence necessary to live out of their parent's orbit. How can they function without you if you are so indispensable? This consequence is called a ***failure to launch!***

Think of the anachronism OPP, meaning *Other People's Problems*. In meetings, you hear many heart-wrenching stories. Being the caring person that you are, you may want to fix a problem for another member. Instead of "fixing" it for them, think OPP. This change of thought allows you to keep your objectivity and not take ownership of something that does not belong to you. If you try to own someone else's story, you lose your outside influence and objectivity. For example, in all 12-Step recovery programs, there is a rule against *cross talking*. Crosstalk is when one member talks directly to another during the meeting, usually giving advice. This is an attempt to fix it for another person. When someone attempts to control the situation, fixing it with advice, no matter how well intended, it becomes judgmental. Instead of the gift of listening for understanding, people who try to fix another's problem poison the atmosphere of acceptance and the communication becomes unsafe for honesty. The no crosstalk rule is an absolute necessity for the healing atmosphere. Let others have their monkeys and you take care of your monkeys (You probably already have a 600 pound gorilla on your shoulders). Trust the process - others will handle their own monkeys. As much as you may want to fix it for them, they are capable of dealing with their monkeys without your advice.

It's not my monkey!

Exercise 28

How much fixing do you do in your significant relationships? Whose monkeys do you carry? What would it take you to let go, trust the process, letting others handle their monkeys?

Be aware of your monkeys and check your shoulders for other people's monkeys you may now be carrying; separate the two and return other people's monkeys to their shoulders. Will you feel better not carrying what does not belong to you? How about the 600-pound gorilla still sitting on your shoulders, does he belong to you?

Ask yourself this simple question...“Whose monkey is it?”

You might need recovery when...
the cross you carry, you have
already willed to your daughter.

Exercise 29

What monkeys are you carrying? Are they yours or do they belong to someone else? Do you want to carry this monkey or would letting go better serve you? What would happen if you let other people become responsible?

***“As long as it’s something you truly want to do,
then it’s never too late to take that first step.”
Kou Matsuzki***

Exercise 30

The next time you fill your car with gasoline, think about where you put the gas...in the tank...or...on the ground. “Where shall I pump this gas?” As ridiculous as this question is, unknowingly, you ask yourself this same type of question all the time. Just under your conscious awareness, you ask yourself, “Do I want to be weak, strong, sad, happy, powerless, powerful, worried, or peaceful?” Make a choice. ***Until you start to choose, you do not have a choice.***

There are certain things you are powerless to control. Accept it and do not waste your energy trying to fix what you cannot control. ***You can't fix can't!*** In other words, accept the things you ***Can't*** control, discover your strength to change the things you ***Can***, and the line between is the wisdom needed for success. Here a strange phenomenon happens; you gain power from your powerlessness. What makes more sense; expending energy on worrying about something you have no control over, or transforming formerly wasted energy into something productive? Using the ***Can-Can't*** method, you get power from recognizing where you are powerless. Not putting energy into the ***Can't*** side but instead transferring it to the ***Can*** gives you more energy to tackle your monkeys. When you recognize you are powerless over certain parts of your addiction and quit wasting energy trying to change what is not yours and

where you lack control, your recovery will take off. Transfer the wasted energy previously spent on what you **Can't** control into what you **Can** control. By this simple transformation, this change of thinking, *you get power from your powerlessness.*

So when you start to feel anxious, uncertain, worried, or squirrely make a list comparing what you can control to what you cannot control. With this list, you now have the power of choice. You and only you can choose where you are willing to spend your energy. Remember: ***Until you start to choose, you do not have a choice.*** Do you want to squirt the gasoline on the ground or into the tank? Where do you want your power? Where it belongs? Or do you want to give it to someone else? Your choice.

Think about the last time you were upset. What side of the **Can-Can't** equation were you feeding?

You might need recovery when...
you repeatedly tell alcohol “no”
but alcohol just doesn't listen.

Exercise 31

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. Notice in this step there is a dash between *alcohol* and *that*. What does that dash mean to you?

Exercise 32

Visualize an image of your addiction. It may be a picture, a word, a symbol, anything you wish to represent what you now face and struggle to overcome.

1st Step Prayer

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Serenity Prayer

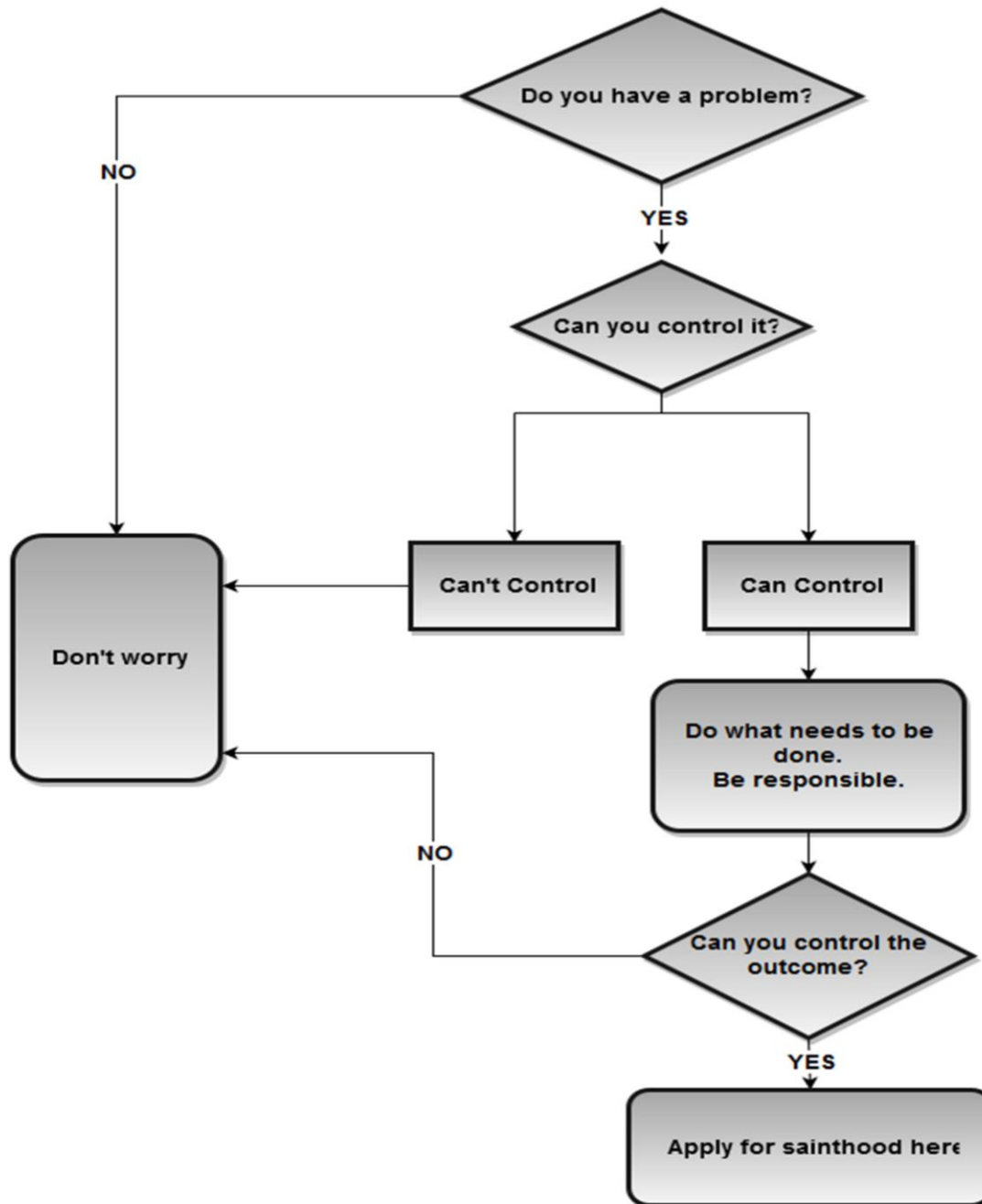
Based upon the poem by Reinhold Niebuhr

* * *

In case you have not yet heard, here are the six things necessary for you to be successful in your recovery journey: ask for recovery in the morning, be thankful at night, go to meetings, read the Big Book, get a sponsor, work the steps. Are you ready to do this? Are you ready to be successful?

You might need recovery when...
being drunk is like your childhood,
everyone remembers what you did, except you.

Can - Can't Problem Outline



Outline modified from the work of an unknown author.

Part IV

Mood Chart

MAD	GLAD	SAD	FEAR	HURT
Agitation	Admiration	Abandoned	Alarm	Aloof
Angry	Affection	Agonized	Anxious	Ashamed
Annoyed	Confident	Bored	Apprehension	Belittled
Antagonism	Cordiality	Crushed	Bashful	Burdened
Arrogant	Curiosity	Deflated	Bewildered	Cheated
Bitter	Delight	Depressed	Cautious	Denied
Contempt	Desire	Disconnected	Confused	Deserted
Defiant	Devotion	Disparaged	Distraction	Disappointed
Disapproving	Ecstasy	Distant	Dread	Dismay
Disdain	Ecstatic	Distraught	Embarrassed	Embarrassed
Disgust	Elation	Distressed	Envious	Exhausted
Enraged	Enthusiasm	Downcast	Evasive	Guilty
Frustrated	Excitement	Gloomy	Fearful	Humiliated
Furious	Fervor	Grieving	Fluster	Insulted
Hostile	Flush	Helpless	Frightened	Lonely
Indignant	Generosity	Hopeless	Horrorified	Pain
Irritated	Happy	Ignored	Hysterical	Pained
Livid	Hope	Isolated	Inadequate	Regret
Mischievous	Hopeful	Jealous	Insecure	Shame
Rage	Inspiration	Melancholy	Overwhelmed	Suffering
Resentful	Passion	Miserable	Panic	Shocked

You might need recovery when...
 you explain your tendency for making the
 same mistake again and again as,
 “Some mistakes are just too damn fun not to repeat.”

About the Author

David W. Earle, LPC is a mental health counselor, helping clients with anger management, substance abuse, compulsive gambling, eating disorders, anxiety, depression, and relationships. When he combines his Licensed Professional Counselor skills with his twenty-plus-years of executive management, he utilizes business coaching as a powerful matrix for transferring leadership skills. He is also a teacher, trainer, author, coach, and alternative dispute professional.

Earle earned a Master's of Science from Texas A&M and has held executive management positions in various fields including industrial construction, private investment banking, and corporate trouble shooting. He is now the president of the Earle Company, an organization dedicated to change.

Earle has been on the panel as a mediator and/or arbitrator for various organizations such as U.S. Federal Court-Middle District, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Financial Industry Regulator Authority (FINRA), Natural Futures Association (NFA), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), and the Louisiana Supreme Court. He was on the faculty of the University of Phoenix for over 10 years.

His trademarked motto is *My Life Will Change... When I Change*[™]. He enjoys tennis and lives in Baton Rouge with his wife, Penny, their dog, Fletcher and cat, Hobbes.

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***“Owning our story and loving ourselves
through that process is the bravest
thing we will ever do.”
Anonymous***

Suggested Reading

Anger - Thich Nhat Hanh
Another Chance - Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse
Beyond the Relaxation Response - Hebert Benson, M.D.
Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous - Bill Wilson
Calling All Women - Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse
Codependency No More - Melody Beattie
Daily Reflections for Highly Effective People - Stephen R. Covey
Getting to Yes - William L. Ury, Roger Fister, Bruce M. Patton
I'm Ok – You're Ok - Thomas A. Harros, M.D.
Just Listen - Mark Goulston
Learning to Love Yourself - Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse
Life After Divorce - Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse
Love - Leo Buscaglia
Man's Search for Meaning - Viktor E. Frankl
The Magic of Conflict - Thomas F. Crum
People Can't Drive You crazy if You Don't Give Them the Keys – Mike Bechle
The Power of Now - Eckhart Tolle
The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success - Deepak Chopra
The Way of the Wizard - Deepak Chopra
Understanding Co-Dependency - Sharon Wegscheider Cruse
Circumplex Model for Marriage & Families – Dr. David Oleson
Wake UP! - Tom Owen-Towle
You Are What You Think – David Shoop, Ph.D.
7 Habits of Highly Effective People - Stephen R. Covey

“Books may well be the only true magic.”
Alice Hoffman

Notes

Notes

Notes

You might need recovery when ...
you not only carry another's monkey
you carry the entire damn circus.

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Appendix A: WISDOM OF THE TWELVE STEPS – 1ST STEP

Directions: To receive credits for this course, you are required to take a post test and receive a passing score. We have set a minimum standard of 80% as the passing score to assure the highest standard of knowledge retention and understanding. The test is comprised of multiple choice and/or true/false questions that will investigate your knowledge and understanding of the materials found in this CEU Matrix – The Institute for Addiction and Criminal Justice distance learning course.

After you complete your reading and review of this material, you will need to answer each of the test questions. Then, submit your test to us for processing. This can be done in the following manner:

Submit your test via the Internet. All of our tests are posted electronically, allowing immediate test results and quicker processing. First, you may want to answer your post test questions found at the end of this appendix. Then, return to your browser and go to the Student Center located at:

<http://www.ceumatrix.com/studentcenter>

Once there, log in as a Returning Customer using your Email Address and Password. Then click on ‘View Lesson Quiz’ and you will be presented with the electronic exam.

To take the exam, simply select from the choices of "a" through "e" for each multiple choice question. For true/false questions, select either "a" for true, or "b" for false. Once you are done, simply click on the submit button at the bottom of the page. Your exam will be graded and you will receive your results immediately. If your score is 80% or greater, you will receive a link to the course evaluation. You will also receive a link to the Certificate of Completion. This is the final step in the process, and you may save and / or print your Certificate of Completion.

If, however, you do not achieve a passing score of at least 80%, you will need to review the course material and return to the Student Center to resubmit your answers.

NOTE: THE EXAM QUESTIONS AND /OR ANSWERS MAY BE IN A DIFFERENT ORDER IN THE ONLINE EXAM

Answer the following questions by selecting the most appropriate response.

1. What did the 12-year-old scotch of Glen Fiddich represent?
 - a) changing his life
 - b) beginning of sobriety
 - c) he was not an alcoholic
 - d) his wife who left him

2. How long did his latest declared sobriety last?
 - a) a few hours
 - b) a couple of days
 - c) a day and half
 - d) two weeks

3. The two dogs that fought in this man represented counteracting forces. What were those forces?
 - a) good and evil
 - b) black and white
 - c) recovery and addiction
 - d) ying and yang

4. When a person in recovery hears certain internal messages, it is often his/her addict brain attempting to keep their addiction in control. This book presented two addictive messages - what are they?
 - a) I'm different AND I can do it my way
 - b) I'm different AND I don't like groups
 - c) I am strong enough on my own AND I can do it my way
 - d) AA success rates are so low AND Why should I change

5. For most entering recovery, their pain and misery have screamed at them for a long time before they decide to change.
 - a) True
 - b) False

6. Remember: you are the tip of the change arrow, poised on the edge of discovery. You stand at a crossroads now. It is dangerous to follow in the footsteps of those who worked the program before.
 - a) True
 - b) False

7. The addict that puts their recovery before family, work, and even God is selfish, mean-spirited, and heading in the wrong direction.
 - a) True
 - b) False

Wisdom of the Twelve Steps – 1st Step

8. A successful recovery program requires structure in order to change.
- a) True
 - b) False
9. What habit of Steven Covey's book, 7 Habits of Highly Effective People did this book encourage
- a) Be proactive
 - b) Begin with the end in mind
 - c) Put first things first
 - d) Seek first to understand, then to be understood
10. When laughing, a recovery person spits in the eye of addiction with comic relief.
- a) True
 - b) False
11. Emotional pain acts the same as physical pain, telling us ...
- a) Change is necessary
 - b) Tomorrow is a new day
 - c) You are not okay
 - d) Grief is necessary
12. According to the Wisdom of the Steps, three things are necessary for change:
- a) Desire to change, willingness, and ability
 - b) Starting point, goal in mind, and willingness to change
 - c) Pain, guidance, and support
 - d) Knowledge, guidance, and a sponsor
13. Without support, people seldom change their lives to a healthier lifestyle.
- a) True
 - b) False
14. Change is like the breaking of an egg for breakfast. The egg will never be the same. The cooking process transforms the egg, and upon eating the egg, the body changes this food into fuel. The shattering of the shell begins this chain reaction. Breaking eggs is always messy and so is the change process. Breaking out of your denial is cracking the egg of your change process. What keeps this process going? Most vow to change but only a few succeed; how come? Why is change so hard? Why do some people experience success while others do not?
- a) recovery involves grief
 - b) recovery is a chain reaction
 - c) denial is not a part of recovery
 - d) recovery lacks meaning

Wisdom of the Twelve Steps – 1st Step

15. In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankel, a Nazi concentration camp survivor, developed a theory that human beings can "...suffer any loss, make any change, and endure any hardship if the _____ is known.

- a) cause
- b) perpetrator
- c) outcome
- d) meaning

16. Recovery requires the group process; to be present in the meetings both physically and emotionally. Recovery also requires the full expression of emotions.

- a) True
- b) False

17. Telling people who are lonely and depressed that they're going to live longer if they quit their addiction and lifestyle is motivating.

- a) True
- b) False

18. Many people in recovery have trouble accepting that their suffering has any value.

- a) True
- b) False

19. Although included in this book, the Mood Chart has little value in recovery.

- a) True
- b) False

20. Only a few of the steps are simple and easy.

- a) True
- b) False

21. To rebuild broken relationships, it is helpful for recovery people to insist on healing past resentments - the quicker the better.

- a) True
- b) False

22. People who are in a close relationship with an addict tend to disbelieve the positive changes and live in fear of the bad behavior's return. They may like the changes but do not trust the positive changes.

- a) True
- b) False

Wisdom of the Twelve Steps – 1st Step

23. Here are some sample places others have hidden from change. All these are true except one.

- a) My way is better than yours
- b) I am right and you are wrong
- c) Tell me so I may learn
- d) I have the answer and you do not

24. Your addiction tries to keep you in the chaos to which you have grown so accustomed and wants to keep you from the peace you desire and deserve. All are examples of your addiction trying to protect itself except one.

- a) My denial works better than reality
- b) This is a bunch of bull
- c) My life will change when I change
- d) My God is better than yours

25. When studying spirituality a 12-Step Program recommends the letting go of all previous held beliefs.

- a) True
- b) False

26. Separating religion from spirituality broadens awareness, allowing for exploration into previously hidden parts of your being.

- a) True
- b) False

27. All the below statements are true about healthy doubt except one.

- a) Allows for testing certainty with stupidity
- b) Allows for risk assessment by asking others
- c) Helps decide the associated costs of a decision
- d) No such thing as healthy doubt

28. Spirituality is different than religion or lack thereof. Spirituality is the inward search to find and claim the gift of life you were given – your _____.

- a) freedom
- b) self-love
- c) happiness
- d) recovery

29. After you have made your Can / Can't list, can you control the ultimate outcome of most any situation?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Wisdom of the Twelve Steps – 1st Step

30. The 1st Step has just two parts - unmanageability and powerlessness. Anyone walking through the doors of recovery for the first time can talk about how unmanageable their life is. If their lives were not in chaos, why attend? The 1st Step often gives people problems because of
- a) the unmanageability part
 - b) the powerless part
 - c) giving up addiction
 - d) admitting they have an addiction
31. The following belongs in the Can't Control column except...
- a) your supplier lives in the same neighborhood
 - b) your favorite bar is located down the street
 - c) your co-workers invite you to drink beer
 - d) attending a 12-step meeting
32. The following belongs in the Can Control column except...
- a) your behavior
 - b) your feelings
 - c) other's reactions
 - d) your thoughts
33. What is the easy part of the first step?
- a) recognizing unmanageability
 - b) admitting powerlessness
34. The Wisdom Line provides the awareness necessary to make a choice. This line separates...
- a) can and the can't
 - b) separates experience, strength and hope from cross talk
 - c) what separates recovery thinking is different than addictive thinking
 - d) separating sanity and insanity
35. Which side of the Can/Can't line does the ultimate outcome belong?
- a) Can
 - b) Can't
36. Many recovery people repeat the Serenity Prayer as a mantra on a regular basis but lack the understanding of what it really _____ or the _____ found within its simple message.
- a) means, power
 - b) says, insight
 - c) is, freedom
 - d) has, insight

Wisdom of the Twelve Steps – 1st Step

37. The Can side is all Thumb Work. Most people want to point fingers at others and blame. All are examples of Finger Work except...

- a) You know what your problem is
- b) I'd be happy if you would do
- c) I need to change
- d) If you love me you'd

38. Finger Work is putting personal responsibility on someone else wishing they would change so we could be okay. Pointing the finger at another tries to decrease personal responsibility by blurring what we Can control.

- a) True
- b) False

39. The reason people tend to focus on things they Can't control is because of...

- a) how they were raised
- b) habit of thought
- c) self-will run riot
- d) past positive results

40. Although worry is hard on a person, in the long run it often has a positive effect on the outcome.

- a) True
- b) False

41. When a person feels anxious they should...

- a) examine what side of the Can/Can't they are focused
- b) call their sponsor
- c) breathe deeply and relax
- d) recognize the warning and protect themselves from danger

42. People consumed with worry do NOT find it helpful to separate what they can control from what they cannot control.

- a) True
- b) False

43. Those who see the glass as half-empty are pessimists and those who see it half-full are optimists. Reality does not depend on an individual viewpoint but instead how much water is in the glass.

- a) True
- b) False

Wisdom of the Twelve Steps – 1st Step

44. Problems increase when you take responsibility for other people's monkeys. It is a tremendous burden to carry another's load on your shoulders with the associated stress symptoms of anxiety, depression, being overwhelmed, and burned out. The anachronism that helps is OPP. This means ...

- a) other people's problems
- b) other problems postponed
- c) omitting people's program
- d) other peoples program

45. Transferring the wasted energy a person previously spent on what they Can't control into what they Can control is a change of thinking. This is how people get power from recognizing their powerlessness.

- a) True
- b) False