



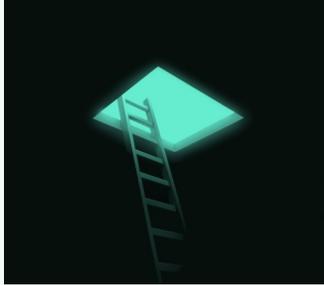
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The Second Step—A Measure of Hope

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If the First Step is a measure of our despair, the Second is a measure of our hope. The First Step is the admission and acceptance of our defeat—total, absolute defeat. With all our resources, we can't stay sober; with the best intentions and with the utmost determination, we still find our lives crashing down around our heads. Indeed, we are powerless over alcohol, and our lives are unmanageable.

But if we are powerless over alcohol, then who or what will keep us sober? And if we cannot manage our own lives, then who or what will guide us, help us return to some sort of rational existence?

In answer to both questions, the Second Step says: a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

With that single, simple statement, the Second Step lays the spiritual cornerstone of AA: If we are to recover from the physical, mental, and spiritual disease called alcoholism, we must come to believe in and rely on a force outside ourselves.

This is not easy for most of us to do, and for many it takes time. Fortunately, the Step is very careful to use the wording "Came to believe." Some of us come to believe almost instantly; others take weeks or months; still, others take years. There is no set timetable, and there is no reason to feel guilt over inability to accept the Second Step immediately, with all its ramifications. On the other hand, though, if we do not work toward an acceptance of the Step, if we ignore it or kick it under the rug and hope it goes away, we cut the spiritual heart out of the program.

So, by hook or by crook, we come to believe. But believe in what?

In three things: the existence of a force outside— and greater than—...*(continued on page 3)*...

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Steps | Traditions | Concepts

STEP 2

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

TRADITION 2

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority— a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

CONCEPT 2

“The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole society in its world affairs.”

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... *(continued from front page)*... ourselves; the fact of our own insanity; the ability of the greater power to take care of that insanity.

For reasons which someday someone may explain far better than I can, many or even most alcoholics seem to have trouble with the word “insanity,” though the track record of any practicing alcoholic—even the part we remember—should be proof enough that we are at this stage somewhat different from the normal. To many, the word conjures up visions of men in white coats, or patients chasing butterflies across Happydale, or anyone of a dozen forms of psychotic behavior. But a word is only a word, and “insanity” can refer to any kind of behavior that is at variance with what is generally accepted as normal.

Our obsessive, compulsive behavior in relation to alcohol can hardly be termed normal. Nor can the things we do while drinking. Nor can many of the habit patterns, mental processes, or just plain hangups we have after we stop drinking.

Any discussion of the Second Step will show that the word “insanity” means, to different people, that we were insane while we drank, or before we started drinking, or at all three stages. These differences of opinion become unimportant in the light of this statement: If we were insane while we drank, the craving to return to that life must be equally insane, and if there was or is some problem that adds fuel to the craving, then the problem must be eliminated.

But the solution offered by that statement is not as easy as it looks. To put it crudely: A truly sick mind cannot repair itself; in fact, many times it can’t even see what’s wrong.

The human mind has a marvelous ability to protect itself from outside influences. Although the conscious portion of the mind may have a sincere desire to find out what’s wrong and to fix it, the subconscious part will block any such effort by putting up a bewildering variety of misleading motivations, misinformation, and misdirections. The more important—the deeper—the particular hang-up is, the higher and thicker this wall will be. If the problem is big enough, the conscious, thinking mind will not even be aware of its existence, and the mind that does become aware will still be powerless to do much about it.

There is a higher power.
I'm not it.

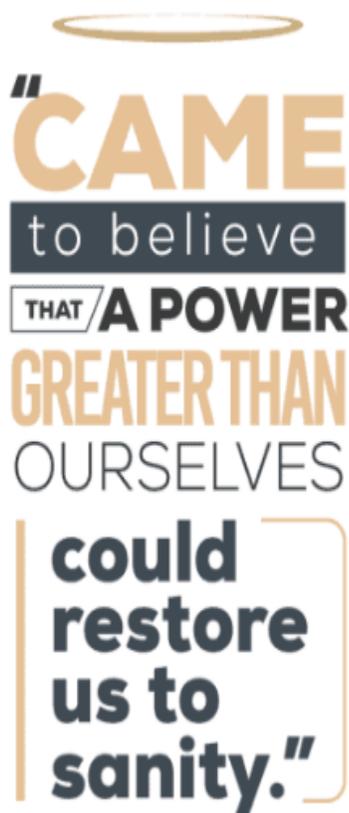
The knowledge of that helplessness in trying to cope with our own problems by ourselves is an integral part of the First and Second Steps. The Second Step states very clearly that our insanity can be taken care of, our sanity restored, by a power greater than ourselves. Once we have become aware of our own irrationality and our inability to cope with it singlehanded, it then becomes a question of searching out a solution that is outside—and greater than—ourselves.

It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of this search for acceptance of power, a force, an influence that is outside ourselves. The Step refers to a power greater than ourselves. Obviously, if we are unable to solve our problems alone, the power must be greater than we are in order to bring about anything much worthwhile. However, babies have to creep before they can walk, and walk before they can run. It is tough merely to begin to look outside ourselves for any kind of force or power, let alone a greater power. In fact, it is hard for some of us to accept the idea that there is anything outside ourselves.

That last statement deserves some explanation. A rational, thinking, conscious mind has no trouble with the idea that each person, thing and force has a separate and distinct existence. We can ... *(continued on page 4)*...

...(continued from page 3)... say (and believe), “I am. You are. He is.” However, the subconscious or unconscious mind often rejects this idea. It says, “I am, but you exist only as I think about you.” Extreme? Hardly. One of the most powerful tools in AA is the process by which one alcoholic identifies with another. First, this identification consists merely of recognizing that there are people who exist independently of our own minds. Then the process goes further: It identifies another alcoholic as a similar human being. But the basic identification is with another human being as a separate entity.

Once that log jam has been broken up, the rest of the process is relatively easy. Once we become aware that there are other people and things—and forces—outside ourselves, it becomes a matter of searching until a power that does some good is found. Eventually, through any one of a wide variety of spiritual experiences, the power is recognized as the basic driving force of the universe.



CAME
to believe
THAT **A POWER**
GREATER THAN
OURSELVES
could
restore
us to
sanity.”

Disposing of the whole concept of acquiring a greater power in one or two sentences may seem abrupt, but is anything else worth saying? Those who have had a spiritual experience already know all about it, while for those who have not yet had one, an outpouring of words would have no real meaning.

The search for higher power and the nature of that power, when found, are very personal matters. Many of us have no trouble in accepting God as our Higher Power; many others shy away from the word “God,” but have no trouble accepting the presence of some sort of universal force; still others look upon our AA group or all of AA as a power greater than ourselves.

In all these cases, though, we have acquired a belief in some force that is external, more powerful than we are, and capable of helping us return to sanity. This implies that the external, more powerful force is a force for good, an orderly force capable of making sense out of the chaos of reality, and bringing order to our own chaotic lives.

The final stage of a full acceptance of the Second Step is to come to believe that this greater power—a good and orderly greater power—will indeed actually help us. We have already accepted the idea that this force can do the job. Now we must become convinced, completely convinced, that the power will do it.

Once again, words are hardly an adequate method of trying to express belief. Those who have thrown themselves on the mercy of the court, so to speak, know that the higher power will do exactly as the Step says. But that statement is no help at all to those who haven’t.

What may help is a very brief description of one member’s struggles with the Second Step.

I came into AA as an agnostic—or, rather, I didn’t believe in anything much, but I wanted to. Although I couldn’t begin to accept the concept of God, I certainly liked the serenity and obvious peace of mind I saw in those who did believe.

As my time in the program grew, this desire grew. Also increasing day by day was my pain—pure, unrelieved pain—not physical pain, but a longing inside my brain and my heart for something above and, most important, beyond me.

My group and the whole AA program helped, and as time went by ...(continued on page 6)...

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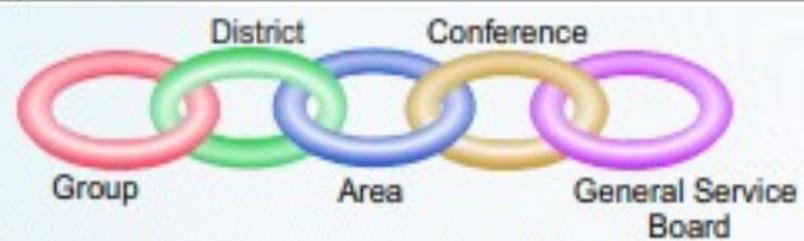
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*Presented by Past Delegates with
sharing by Area Officers, Chairs and Service
Coordinators*

1/27/2021	Meet our Area Registrar - Mary P Plus Discussion of How Area Finances Work
2/3/2021	Meet Our Area Treasurer - Richard C Plus Learn about Area 14 Guiding Documents (Including the back story by Corliss G and others)
2/10/2021	Meet Our Area Delegate - Ruth R Plus hear about the General Service Conference
2/17/2021	Meet our Alt Delegate - Mary A Plus General Service Conference Agenda



Embrace Change Through Education

Questions?
Contact lionspaw0621@gmail.com
An Area 14 AA Service Event

... (continued from page 4)... I began to perceive some sort of order where there had been only confusion, some sense of guidance where there had been only a labyrinth of blind alleys.

Then one day (on the Garden State Parkway, as unlikely as that sounds) all the pieces fell into place. Whatever barrier had blinded my vision, preventing me from seeing the true nature of things, was gone. For the first time in my life, I became aware of the all-pervading presence of incomprehensibly vast power.

Then, too, I became aware that I was only one infinitely small—but vitally important—part of the universe. Infinitely small because I was one tiny soul on one planet going around one sun in one galaxy of countless billions, but vitally important because the entire, immense universe would be very, very, very slightly different without me, as it would be different without any of us.

The vision, if I may call it that, was momentarily staggering, but only momentarily. The essential rightness of my vision sustained me, and still sustains me. If I am a part of the whole—even a tiny part—I belong here.

And if I belong here, all I have to do is find out exactly what I am supposed to be and do. For me as an alcoholic, part of this answer is obvious. The universe has the ability—in fact, it makes it a rule—to eliminate the bad and the sick, and since the alcoholic is indeed a sick person, the universe—or society—will eliminate him. Therefore, to drink is for me to deny my higher power.

But that is only part of the problem, although perhaps the most important part. I personally conceive of the universe as a very orderly place; to achieve a serene and happy existence, all that is required of me is to be aware of this order and fit myself into it. This is a lot easier said than done, of course. So, in AA, after the Second Step, there are ten more designed to help accomplish this.

But once we have accepted, as ineluctable fact, our powerlessness over alcohol, and once we have come to believe that a greater power will give us all the help we need, we have made two giant steps along the road to recovery.

-P. S., Greenwich, CT



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Tradition Two

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Sooner or later, every AA comes to depend upon a Power greater than himself. He finds that the God of his understanding is not only a source of strength, but also a source of positive direction. Realizing that some fraction of that infinite resource is now available, his life takes on an entirely different complexion. He experiences a new inner security together with such a sense of destiny and purpose as he has never known before. As each day passes, our AA reviews his mistakes and vicissitudes. He learns from daily experience what his remaining character defects are and becomes ever more willing that they be removed. In this fashion he improves his conscious contact with God.

Every AA group follows this same cycle of development. We are coming to realize that each group, as well as each individual, is a special entity, not quite like any other. Though AA groups are basically the same, each group does have its own special atmosphere, its own peculiar state of development. We believe that every AA group has a conscience. It is the collective conscience of its own membership. Daily experience informs and instructs his conscience. The group begins to recognize its own defects of character and, one by one, these are removed or lessened. As this process continues, the group becomes better able to receive right direction from its own affairs. Trial and error produces group experience and out of corrected experience comes custom. When a customary way of doing things is definitely proved to be best, then that custom forms into AA Tradition. The Greater Power is then working through a clear group conscience.

We humbly hope and believe that our growing AA Tradition will prove to be the will of God for us.

Many people are coming to think that Alcoholics Anonymous is, to some extent, a new form of human society. In our discussion of the First Tradition, it was emphasized that we have, in AA, no coercive human authority. Because each AA, of necessity, has a sensitive and responsive conscience, and because alcohol will discipline him severely if he back slides, we are finding we have little need for manmade rules or regulations. Despite the fact that we do veer off at times on tangents, we are becoming more able to depend absolutely on the long-term stability of the AA group itself. With respect to its own affairs, the collective conscience of the group will, given time, almost surely demonstrate its perfect dependability. The group conscience will, in the end, prove a far more infallible guide for group affairs than the decision of any individual member, however good or wise he may be. This is a striking and almost unbelievable fact about Alcoholics Anonymous. Hence we can safely dispense with those exhortations and punishments seemingly so necessary to other societies. And we need not depend overmuch on inspired leaders. Because our active leadership of service can be truly rotating, we enjoy a kind of democracy rarely possible elsewhere. In this respect, we may be, to a large degree, unique.

Therefore we of Alcoholics Anonymous are certain that there is but one ultimate authority, "a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience."



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