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Step Five

Step Five is almost always paired with Step Four. Interestingly enough, that is not the case in the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Chapter 3 is about Step One. Chapter Four is about Step Two. Chapter Five is Steps Three and Four. And Chapter Six is Steps Five through Eleven. Only when you reach Chapter Seven is a whole chapter devoted to a Step again—in this case, Step 12. So, at least to the authors of the Big Book, Step Five isn't even in the same chapter as Step Four. It truly is a Step by itself and not just Step "4B." Philosophically, Step Five has more in common with Step one, and that is the way I treated it.

In Step one, "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable." It doesn't specify who we admit this to, but I think it's safe to assume that we admit it to ourselves first. Then when we are in a meeting and say those magical words, "I'm Doug and I am an alcoholic," we are also admitting it to other human beings. If we have yet to do Step Two, we may not have admitted it to a Higher Power, but it is safe to say that we will by Step Three. By doing so, we have admitted to the physical compulsion to drink no matter what, once we take the first drink. And we have identified ourselves with other alcoholics who have the same problem. Once they start drinking, they can't stop.

Step Five is another process of identification. But this time we are identifying with other alcoholics in the process by which they take that first drink. The old A.A. saw that "when you get hit by a train, it's not the caboose that kills you," is quite descriptive of our plight. We know that we can't stop drinking once we take that first drink. In Step Four we began to identify some of the reasons that we might use to take a drink. (Or you can call them excuses if you wish.) Step Five is the way that we identify with other alcoholics.

First we admit the nature of our wrongs to God. In the form of confession or prayer we talk to God about our resentments, fears and guilt. This will come in handy later as we are going to ask His help in relieving us of them. Then we admit to ourselves the exact nature of our wrongs. Now the "wrongs" are to a great extent the things we did when we were drinking. But the "nature" of our wrongs was the motivations to drink. As outlined in our Fourth Step our resentments, fears and guilt are what led us to drink, and the selfish pursuit of ease and comfort led us to commit the various wrongs that we drunks are so skilled at. So, admitting to God and ourselves that we were resentful, fearful, guilty and above all selfish, gives us a good picture of ourselves

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Step Six

Step Six is described in the 12 and 12 with the rather quaint and unintentionally sexist description as the one which separates the men from the boys. What the author is saying is that this Step requires a degree of courage, maturity, and perhaps, wisdom, which men have in larger measure than their younger counterparts. It is certainly one of the Steps at which "... we balked. We thought we could find an easier softer way." In fact, if we could pick and choose which Steps to work on, we would probably skip all of the even numbered ones. But do them in order we must. And if we have been fearless and thorough for the very start, Step Six should hold no terrors.

Step Six asks us to be in a state of mind and emotion where we are ready to have God remove defects of character. Being "ready" does not necessarily mean being "eager." But if we have recognized that certain aspects of our character are holding us back from leading a sober and fulfilling life, then we must also recognize that at some point we need to be rid of them. The problem comes in deciding which one needs removing and when to do it. Some of these so-called character defects have actually been survival tactics which served us well when we were younger but that we have now clearly outgrown. A child steals food when he is hungry and has nothing to eat. He learns to steal other things that in his child's world-view he needs and cannot live without. A child learns to lie when he discovers that a lie can protect him. A lie that avoids a beating or a failing grade at school allows him to survive to lie another day. Fear prevents him from going places that are too dangerous for a child. And isolation, masked as "shyness" protects him from rejection. But we have seen in Step Four that as adults, our coping mechanisms have become these defects of character that we have now used as excuses to drink. They are now serving as millstones hung around our necks. And yet, we are reluctant to give them up because we have nothing to replace them with, and they have served us well – even as they led us to our ultimate negative coping mechanism of drinking ourselves to death.

Just as I believe that Step Five and Step One are linked, I believe that Step Six owes much to Step Three. In Step Three, we have realized that we have a disease that we are completely powerless over, that no human power will be able to completely restore us, and that God has the power and the will to help us. So in Step Three we put our trust in Him. Now, having identified in Step Four some of the reasons (excuses) we used in taking the first drink, and having seen in Step Five that

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Step Five

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as alcoholics.

The magic of Step Five is that now we will also talk to another human being about it. Commonly this is done with a sponsor, or at least another alcoholic. The Big Book and 12 X 12 suggest that it can also be done with a clergyman, doctor, counselor, or even a total stranger. However, to get the full and mighty benefit from Step Five, I believe that most of it should be done with another member of Alcoholics Anonymous, ideally a sponsor. In the process of thoroughly doing a Step Five with a sponsor there is dialogue, not monologue. It is not merely a process of breast-beating for hours. “Mea culpa” has its place, but it comes later in the Steps. In revealing some of their innermost thoughts, feelings, and secrets to another alcoholic, you make yourself vulnerable. (“Vulnerable” is defined as “open to moral attack or criticism, and capable of being hurt.”) We are a ticking time bomb of resentments, fears and guilt which have evolved into shame and remorse. But now the miracle happens. The person we are pouring out our souls to listens carefully and then offers feedback in the form of confessing to similar feelings and actions. Very often they laugh at their own foibles and have us laughing too. The important point is that we find out that other, and perhaps most, alcoholics have done the same things, felt the same feelings, and had the same disasters. I have heard of Step Five workshops where in sort of a speed-dating format, as many as six alcoholics share their Fifth Steps one-on-one. In this way, they are less likely to leave something out they might have forgotten, and more likely to talk to someone similar to themselves. In all cases, however, we are not as unique as we thought we were. And once again, when we can identify fully with another alcoholic in their disease, then we can fully identify with their recovery.

This is the key to Step Five as it is with Step One. When we can be fully invested in the idea that we are alcoholics, and that all alcoholics share some common thoughts, feelings and behaviors, then we can fully invest in the recovery that these alcoholics in A.A. are offering us. We can go on to the next Step, and the ones after that, confident in the knowledge that they have helped people exactly like us for more than 70 years. [And] that with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous and our Higher Power, we can, and will, recover.

Submitted by,
Doug H., Hesperia, CA

Tradition Five

Every newcomer learns (some of us the hard way) that the business of staying sober must have top priority. If we fail at that, we can't succeed at anything else. The Fifth Tradition tells us that that groups should remember *their* “one primary purpose.”

Often, unthinking enthusiasm puts a group off the main track. One, for instance, offered an “expanded A.A. program” that included helping newcomers to find jobs. Tradition Five doesn't frown on the individual A.A. who tells another about a good

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Step Six

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others in A.A. used the same excuses and have stopped drinking, we desire the same solution. And that continues in Step Six. If lying, stealing and acting out of fear no longer are ensuring our survival, and are, in fact, dragging us down, then we really don't need them anymore. We are still confused and worried because we have not yet found anything to take their place in our survival pack. But here is the magic of Step Six. Just as we made a decision to trust God to care for us in Step Three (and God did the rest), we now make a decision to trust God to remove the defects of character for us. Step Six at this point is kind of a passive Step. We can sit back and wait for God to work His miracle. Farmers know when to remove unproductive or dead branches so that the tree's overall well being is not harmed, and it is stronger and more productive in the next growing season. God knows which branches of our personalities have outlived their usefulness, and He knows the right time to remove them so that we hardly notice. And now, those faulty coping skills have been replaced by God Himself. We suddenly find that God really is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. What alcohol did for us, with such tragic consequences, God now does for us with triumph and joy. Where the bottle used to say, “Come over here and everything will be all right,” (and it was very much NOT all right) now God says, “Come here and all will be well.” And, of course, it is.

So while I may not have been eager and enthusiastic to give up my former coping tools, I trusted God to replace them with something that worked better – something that would not drive away everyone who loved me and lead me to insanity or death. Some He removed quickly, some came later, and some I still have. And one of the ones I still have, I have come to believe that maybe they are not defects of character but strengths that were channeled and focused through God. And the key was, once again, trusting God to know what is best for me and knowing that He will do it. And now that the things that have been holding me back from achieving and accomplishing some of my goals and ideals have been removed. I am ready to work with God to realize those potentials fully. I am ready for Step Seven.

Submitted by,
Doug H., Hesperia

Tradition Six

The “related facility” may be an outside group combating alcoholism – or an enterprise that A.A.'s want to start. It was the latter that most often confronted to young Fellowship. Outside agencies were pretty scarce in those days, and some members thought A.A. should cover the whole alcoholism field. Led by a “super-promoter” (as the “Twelve and Twelve” describes him), one group built an all-purpose center, including a section for drying-out treatment. Picture any group tackling such a project! Arguments over cost, architecture, staff, fees, medication, and rules might even make the local paper. (And pity the poor newcomer straying into the group – “We'll get around to

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opening. But when the group turns itself into an employment agency, newcomers may get confused about *their* primary purpose. A.A.'s function is to help them get sober—then they can find work for themselves.

Using discretion, a member may lend a few dollars needed for a meal or a hotel room, or may even invite a broke alcoholic to be a temporary houseguest. But the A.A. group as a whole is not a friendly finance company, nor a welfare department, nor a housing bureau.

Even when acting on their own, as individual members, A.A. lay people certainly shouldn't award themselves honorary medical degrees and hand out diagnoses and prescriptions and amateur analyses of other people's neuroses. Exactly because this personal failing is so common, the A.A. group in all its dealings should be extra careful to emphasize that it is not invading the medical field. Through the personal experiences of its members, it is qualified to carry only one message: how an alcoholic can recover in A.A. That's all.

Yet one group recently felt itself equipped to set up an "alcoholism information center." The temptation is understandable; it was even stronger at the time this Tradition was written, because public ignorance about alcoholism as an illness was more widespread than it is now. Since then, other agencies have sprung up to assume the task of educating the general public on alcoholism. That is not A.A.'s purpose, but these agencies also are trying to help the active alcoholic. They are our friends—and Tradition Six marks the boundaries of the relationship. . . .

Via, The Twelve Traditions Illustrated

Intergroup Minutes 17 April 2010

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 a.m. by Kara O. who led us in the Serenity Prayer. Sheldon S. read the Twelve Traditions.

In Wayne U.'s absence, Betty B. read the minutes from the Feb. 20, 2010 meeting. There were two corrections made. Sheldon S. motioned to accept the minutes as corrected, Glen R. seconded the motion, and it was approved.

Sheldon S. gave the Treasurer's Report. Group donations were down about \$200.00 for the month. For full details, see April's Newsletter.

Craig B. gave the Office Manager's Report. In March, the office had 125 visitors, 253 information calls and one 12 Step call. Call forwarding had 205 information calls and four 12 Step calls. Craig thanked the twelve groups that donated. He thanked Abel C. and Ride to Recovery for their contribution of over \$1,600.00. Davy J., Chairman of the 2010 Convention came in with a \$5,100.00 + donation from the convention. Davy explained they were able to contribute such a large amount because they are able to lower prudent reserve since moving to the Ambassador Hotel. Thank you 2010 High Desert Convention Committee.

Tradition Six

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you in a minute.")

Though that ambitious center failed, some individual members have since founded successful clubhouses, rest farms, halfway houses, etc. The enterprises are run by these A.A.'s and patronized by other members or prospective members. But money and property *are* involved. Therefore, it has proved wise to keep the operation of the facility completely separate from that of any A.A. group, and to keep "A.A." or terms like "Twelfth Step" out of the name.

Toward outside agencies dealing with alcoholism, the A.A. policy is "cooperation but not affiliation." A group cooperates, for example, by welcoming referrals from clinics or by sponsoring A.A. groups in institutions. But in one area, money for a rehab was solicited *at an A.A. meeting* – implying affiliation. In another, A.A. was listed among beneficiaries of a United Fund drive. . . .

Via, The Twelve Traditions Illustrated

Old Business: It was reported that Pebble Beach Park in Victorville has been reserved for the Founder's Day Picnic scheduled for June 12, 2010. Flyers and tickets will be available at Central Office soon. Kara O. reported that Bob O. had not been able to get a hold of the Spanish Central Office yet. Nominations and elections were table until we have a quorum. Craig B. again thanks the person/persons responsible for the A.A. ad in the Daily Press. It has been running regularly for several months.

New Business: Craig has gotten letters from prisoners around the country that would like to have A.A. pen pals. Contact Craig if you are interested in becoming one. Craig noted that gold-plated medallions are now available at the office along with crystal-covered medallions. Special order chips and medallions early to insure arrival in time for the "special" day. Please note, however, that all special orders **MUST** be pre-paid. Men and women are needed for the Twelve Step list from all cities. Also, call the office if you would like your name put on the Speaker List. Craig also noted that a good way to contribute to Central Office is to subscribe to the Newsletter for the Fellowship. Ruby asked why convention flyers were not getting to clubs down the hill. It was suggested that she ask the Convention Committee.

Announcements and Birthdays: The next Intergroup Meeting will be 19 June 10 at 9:30 a.m. Donna S. will have 6 years on 22 Apr. and Debbie Y. will celebrate 8 years on 20 Apr. Ruby announced that Joe B. celebrated 29 years on 10 Apr., John C. 22 years on 15 Apr. and Kathy F. 44 years on 1 Apr. Congratulations to all.

Betty B. motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 a.m., Glen R. seconded the motion and it was approved.

Submitted by, Betty B., Substitute Secretary

Upcoming Events

June 19, 2010

Recovery Through Service to Alcoholics Anonymous, 11:00 a.m.—2:30 p.m., at the Church of the Nazarene, 8518 Maple St., Hesperia, CA. For more information contact John W. at 760-912-0581.

Brought to you by District 19.

June 25 — 27, 2010

37 Annual Antelope Valley Round Up. Call 661-945-5757 for more information.

June 25 — 27, 2010

June Lake Campvention. For information visit www.junelakecampvention.org or contact Joe C. at 760-949-0599.

July 1 — 4, 2010

International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous, San Antonio, TX. For more information visit www.aa.org. There will also be information at Central Office.

August 27—29, 2010

Regional Forum with our U.S./Canada General Service Board of A.A., Torrance Marriott South Bay Hotel, Torrance, CA. For more information contact G.S.O. at 212-870-3400 or visit the Web Site at www.aa.org.

September 24 — 26, 2010

59th Southern California A.A. Convention, Town & Country Hotel, San Diego, CA. Visit www.aasocal.com for more information.

Directory Changes

NEW MEETINGS

HESPERIA

Thursday, 5:30 p.m.

Young at Heart Meeting

(Young People's Meeting)

Contact Jeni at 760-912-0572

Thursday, 7:30 p.m.

Cedar Street Big Book

Contact Pam W. at 760-912-0581

Both meetings are at 13482 Cedar St.

Become a "Faithful Fiver"

What are Faithful Fivers?

They are A.A. members who pledge at least \$5.00 each month toward the support of their Central Office to "carry the message." Many of us have spent more than \$5.00 daily/hourly on alcohol during our drinking days!

I agree to pledge \$_____ and enclosed is my contribution.

Name*:_____

Address:_____

City:_____

State/ZIP:_____

**You may remain anonymous if you wish.*

Central Office Activities

	<u>MAY</u>	<u>Y.T.D</u>
Visitors	81	429
Info Calls	198	909
12 Step Calls	1	4

CALL FORWARDING

Info Calls	189	707
12 Step Calls	1	7

TOTALS

Info Calls	387	1,627
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The Challenge of Failure

In God's economy, nothing is wasted. Through failure, we learn a lesson in humility which is probably needed, painful though it is.

As Bill Sees It, p. 31

How thankful I am today to know that all my past failures were necessary for me to be where I am now. Through much pain came experience and, in suffering, I became obedient. When I sought God, as I understand Him, He shared His treasured gifts. Through experience and obedience, growth started, followed by gratitude. Yes, then came peace of mind—living in and sharing sobriety.

Daily Reflections, p. 64

The Old-timer's Prayer

God, keep me from the habit of thinking that I must volunteer in every meeting no matter what the topic. Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details and give me wings to get to the point. Remind me to guard confidences and to keep still when I feel that it is necessary to share information "just for someone's won good." Release me from the need to straighten out everybody else's thinking and program.

God, I ask for the grace to listen to newcomers. Please help me to remember the patience with which others listened to me when I was new. Please seal my lips to giving advice, and help me to remember to share my experience, strength and hope. Remind me that my purpose is to fit myself to be of maximum service to You and the people around me.

Help me to remain teachable, God. Teach me (again!) the lesson that, occasionally, it is possible that I may be wrong, and remind me of the freedom that I gain when I am able to promptly admit it and make amends where necessary. Help me to remember the difference between making amends and saying, "I'm sorry."

Help me to be a worker among worker, a friend among friends, and a drunk among drunks. Keep me from being a bleeding deacon, God, and help me to walk the path towards being an elder statesman. Keep me ever mindful that I cannot manage my own life. I don't want to be a saint, God. Show me the way to seek you so that I may continue to grow along spiritual lines. Remind me to put Rule 62 into practice in my life. It is so easy to take myself too seriously.

Keep me free of gossip, character assassination, and judgment. Remind me that although I have humbly asked, my character defects and shortcomings arise when I least expect them. Help me to walk with serendipity, to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people, and give me the grace to tell them so. Help me to see that You love each of Your children, and that You do not need my opinion of them or suggestions on what they might deserve.

Help me to be willing to accept Your answer to my prayers, whether or not it is the answer that I thought I wanted. You know that I have trouble with acceptance sometimes, God, so there are times when You will need to help me to be willing to be willing. Show me how to walk through life with grace, dignity, and my head held high, carrying Your message and practicing these principles in all my affairs.

And God, thank You for the people that You have put in my life—my family (of origin and of A.A.), my sponsor, my sponsees, my A.A. family sponsees, the people of my home group, the people who first reached out their hands to welcome me to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. I know today, God, that I could not have walked these Steps to get from where I was when I walked in the door to the person that I am today, if it were not for the blessings You have given me through Your precious children.

Thanks, God!

Ronnie O.

Ronnie o. sat on the back row of his first A.A. meeting on a Saturday night in Wrightwood, CA on 9 February 2008. It had been 24 hours since his last drink. Introducing himself as a newcomer near the beginning of the meeting, I approached him afterwards and asked if he sincerely wanted to stay sober. Not waiting for an answer, I offered to pick him up the next morning and transport him to an Area 09 Service Committee meeting in Indio. I could only promise that he would not drink between 6 a.m. when I picked him up and 6 p.m. when I dropped him off.

Then a new G.S.R., I was somewhat surprised when he said, "Yes," and even more surprised when he was standing in his front yard the next morning shortly after sunrise. I cautioned that this would not be a "typical" A.A. meeting, but that he was guaranteed not to drink sitting there in my backseat and later mingling with other Southern

California alcoholics. Along the way I picked up my service sponsor, John W. in Hesperia and the three of us proceeded to make the three-hour drive to Indio. As usual, though somewhat elongated, we had the meeting-before-the-meeting during the drive.

Once there, Ronnie was introduced to A.A. at the Area level. There were 150 alcoholics in one large room, amplifying chaotic conversations occurring in both English and Spanish. When one can't hear, one speaks louder, which feeds on itself and is overwhelming at first. Of all the A.A. related functions I've attended, it is A.A. at the Area level that seems to best demonstrate our 9th Tradition. I continue to be amazed (and pleased) at how we always get things done even in the face of all the seeming lack of organization! How several hundred alcoholics somehow end up at the right committee tables even when there are no signs to announce who is meeting where was disconcerting at first and is now something I've come to appreciate.

Ronnie was introduced to several District 19 folks, you in typical A.A. fashion made him feel at home. Then several other alcoholics welcomed him when they learned that he was a newcomer thrust into Area level bedlam. It may not have been as cozy as a group of a dozen faithful A.A.s sitting on couches in someone's home, but there was every indication that he felt right at home surrounded by a hundred trusted servants. It's sometimes difficult to see the similarities between an A.A. home group and an Area level group; however, whenever two alcoholic get together it doesn't seem to matter where.

The 14 February 2010 A.S.C. hosted by District 11 marks two years since we attended that meeting. If he holds his mouth right (i.e., not in a circle near a glass hole), Ronnie will be celebrating two years on 8 February 2010. Although he has never revisited an Area level meeting, he is a dedicated member of Alcoholics Anonymous and makes his home group in Phelan, CA. I've told this story to a half-dozen alcoholics as evidence that A.A. working, at even the Area level, can be an effective way of beginning a new sober life. Now, it's a pleasure to share this story with the entire Area. You just never know how first impressions can lead to lasting sobriety! Even in large crowds, it continues to be one alcoholic caring enough to carry the message to another alcoholic who no longer wants to suffer that has worked for 75 years and continues to do so!

Submitted by,
Ed L., District 19, Secretary

And Finally . . .

A woman goes to the doctor, beaten black and blue.

Doctor: "What happened?"

Woman: "Doctor, I don't know what to do. Every time my husband comes home drunk he beats me to a pulp."

Doctor: "I have a real good medicine for that. When your husband comes home drunk, just take a glass of sweet tea and start swishing it in your mouth. Just swish and swish but don't swallow until he goes to bed and is asleep."

Two weeks later the woman comes back to the doctor looking fresh and reborn. "Doctor that was a brilliant idea! Every time my husband came home drunk, I swished with sweet tea. I swished and swished, and he didn't even touch me!"