

# WHO ME



Helpline 0845 769 7555

This booklet is published in the interest of alcoholics who want sobriety more than anything else in life... who have been unable to find release from alcoholism.

**T**HE UNHAPPIEST person in the world is the chronic alcoholic who has an insistent yearning to enjoy life as he once knew it, but cannot picture life without alcohol. He has a heart-breaking obsession that by some miracle of control he will be able to do so.

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# heart disease cancer alcoholism

Yes

**It does belong on this list**

Alcoholism is a fatal illness for which there is no known medical cure, and many of its victims are forced to wage a losing battle, not only against the ravages of the illness, but also against the ignorance of a society which largely refuses to regard the alcoholic as a sick person.

To many people, the word 'alcoholic' means someone who is perverse and weakwilled. "Why on earth doesn't he control his drinking?" they ask.

Those of us who are alcoholics, and who have tried to control our drinking know just how impossible a task that is.

This is because alcoholism is an *illness*.

While we stay away from drink, we function much like other people. But if we take *any alcohol whatsoever* into our systems, something happens both physically and mentally which makes it difficult or impossible for us to stop.

**We have lost control of our drinking, but...**

# What is this elusive illness called ALCOHOLISM ?

The action of alcohol on the alcoholic is similar to the manifestation of an allergy. It is compounded by an overwhelming craving for the very thing that can only worsen the effects of physical suffering, irrational behaviour and increasing isolation.

The practising alcoholic's mental and physical condition is thus so affected by continuous use of alcohol that everything except its procurement is neglected or ignored for long periods. Sooner or later, whether indulgence is continuous or periodical, it results in a total disruption in all family and social relations.

The main problem of the alcoholic centres in the mind rather than the body. If you ask why he or she started on that last bender, the chances are you will be offered any one of a hundred alibis. Once in a while you may get the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is usually that the alcoholic has no more idea why than you have.

The characteristic of alcoholics which precludes all possibility of ever becoming social drinkers is explained as a physical allergy and a mental obsession, and the only relief for the chronic alcoholic is total abstinence from alcohol.

## *DON'T MISUNDERSTAND US*

Not all drinkers are alcoholics. Many people can drink normally and suffer no physical, mental or social ill-effects. Alcoholics Anonymous has nothing to offer these drinkers. For them, alcohol is not a problem and we can only say "May it always stay that way".

This message is directed only to those of us for whom it is a very different story: one of craving and compulsion sending us ever deeper into bewilderment and despair... And that is only the beginning.

## *ALCOHOLISM IS A PROGRESSIVE ILLNESS OFTEN OF GRADUAL ONSET*

No alcoholic starts as a down-and-out. It is our drinking and the behaviour which accompanies it that in time may lose us our homes, families and jobs. Accidents, jail sentences, hospital admissions, suicides and murders are frequently linked to alcoholic drinking. We know because we are alcoholics.

*WE KNOW* what it is like to give up drink, and then wait in agony for the off-licence or the pub to open.

*WE KNOW* what it is like to spend money that we cannot afford; to be driven to steal; to hide drink in half-a-dozen places round the house; to wake up not knowing where we have been or what we have done, or knowing only too well.

*WE TOO* have felt those terrible feelings of loneliness, despair, depression, remorse and self-hatred that this illness brings.

*THROUGH COMING TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS* we found out how to stop drinking, and how to stay stopped. Furthermore we have discovered that life without alcohol is not only bearable but positively enjoyable. We were able to start to get better as soon as we stopped fighting the idea that we were alcoholics.

# ONLY YOU CAN DECIDE

## Are you an alcoholic?

To answer this question ask yourself the following questions and answer them as honestly as you can.

	YES	NO
1. Is drinking making your home life unhappy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does your drinking make you careless of your family's welfare?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you drink because you are shy with other people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is drinking affecting your reputation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you drink to escape from worries or trouble?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you drink alone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Have you lost time from work due to drinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Has your ambition decreased since drinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Has your efficiency decreased since drinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Is drinking jeopardising your job or business?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Have you ever felt remorse after drinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Are you in financial difficulties as a result of drinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	YES	NO
13. Do you turn to or seek an inferior environment when drinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Do you crave a drink at a definite time daily?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Does drinking cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Do you want a drink the next morning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Do you drink to build up your self-confidence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Have you ever had a complete loss of memory as a result of drinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Has your doctor ever treated you for drinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Have you ever been in hospital or prison because of drinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## What's your score?

If you have answered YES to any one of the questions, there is a definite warning that you may be an alcoholic.

If you have answered YES to any two, the chances are that you are an alcoholic.

If you have answered YES to three or more, you are almost certainly an alcoholic.

Why do we say this? Only because the experience of hundreds of thousands of recovering alcoholics has taught us some basic truths about our symptoms - and about ourselves.

If you can admit you are an alcoholic

## HERE'S HOPE FOR YOU

Admitting you are an alcoholic may seem today like the end of the line to you, but there are thousands of people in AA who can testify that acceptance of their powerlessness over alcohol was not an end, but a beginning; the beginning of their recovery and a new, useful and rewarding life.

AA have a simple, workable programme. It is a down-to-earth programme designed BY and FOR alcoholics. If you honestly want sobriety above all else and are fully willing to follow this programme without qualification, you have written your own guarantee for sobriety.

### *THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR AA MEMBERSHIP IS A DESIRE TO STOP DRINKING*

This does *not* mean signing up, or paying a subscription fee. You simply come along to an AA meeting, where you will find people who have been through exactly the same sort of things as you. Get to lots of AA meetings. That way you will hear different AAs telling their experience. Among them you will find people with whom you can identify closely - people you feel understand YOU.

### *MAYBE YOU ARE STILL NOT CONVINCED YOU ARE AN ALCOHOLIC.*

In which case, a few meetings may help you to decide. All we ask is that you bring with you an open mind.

### WHY NOT GIVE THE AA PROGRAMME A TRY?

We did, and it works.

## THE AA PROGRAMME OF RECOVERY

The AA Programme of Recovery is summarised in the suggested Twelve Steps. These are set out in the book ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (The 'Big Book'), which was written and based on the experience of the first hundred AAs to get sober in America.

### HERE ARE THE TWELVE STEPS

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

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

### **You may see the point of these steps straight away**

On the other hand, they may seem completely alien to you, full of talk of God and wrongdoing. When we speak of God or spiritual awakening, we are not giving you a new theology or trying to put a new light or explanation on your own belief.

In AA there are as many different religious beliefs and interpretations as there are members. You only need to come to believe that a power greater than yourself exists and is much more capable of running your daily life than you have shown yourself to be; for some that power is the AA group, or the Fellowship as a whole.

### **A programme for living**

If you are an alcoholic, sobriety is the most important thing in your life without exception. You may believe your job, or your home life, or one of many other things come first. But consider, if you do not get sober and stay sober, the chances are you won't have a job, a family, sanity or even life. If you are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety, you have much more chance of getting sober and staying sober. If you put other things first you are only hurting your chances.

In order to live without alcohol, most of us find that we have to live comfortably with ourselves, our conscience, and with the world. The Twelve Steps help us to do so. They help us to sort out our attitudes in areas which may always have been difficult for us - relationships with other people perhaps, or our attitude to class, money or responsibility. They help us get rid of guilt about the past and anxiety about the future.

## The first drink...

Many of us had difficulty in understanding that for us, it was the first drink that did the damage. We argued that we never got drunk on one drink, it was the fourth, or the eighth, or the sixteenth, that was the culprit. If only we had just had one or two we would have been all right.

The fact was that we **could not stop** at one or two. Once we had taken the first drink, our will-power dissolved, and our power of choice was gone. Even if, occasionally, we had managed to control our drinking, that very control lulled us - next day or next week or next month - into believing we could handle alcohol. **We can't.** It is the **first** drink that destroys our power of choice. No matter how small, or how innocent, or tempting the first drink seems, we stay away from it - a day at a time.

**An alcoholic is a person for whom one drink is too many, and a hundred are not enough.**

## A day at a time

We in AA try to live within the day. We don't give up drink for life, or for the next ten years, or for the next six months. We just try to stay away from the first drink for **today**.

In the same way we try to keep our feelings and emotions in the present. We don't look back in guilt and anguish at the past, or worry about the things that may go wrong in the future.

**That way we stay sober a day at a time.**

## **First things first...**

Perhaps when you come to AA, you are surprised to find men and women still attending meetings many years after they have stopped drinking.

We continue to come because, in our experience, alcoholism is never cured. No matter how long we have been sober, our illness is reactivated at any time by taking the first drink, and it can only get worse.

Our ability to stay away from that drink depends on the maintenance of our mental and spiritual health. Staying sober is an active process, we have found our only sure - and enjoyable - course is to stay close to AA. That way we don't revert to our old destructive ways of thinking and behaviour and we share our experience with the newcomer.

At first some of us thought this was obsessive. Once we were sober we wanted to spend more time with our loved ones, to get ahead with careers, or hobbies.

Older, wiser members urged us to put our sobriety first. They pointed out that, in time, we would each find the balance that was right for us. Without sobriety, the future held nothing but destruction of ourselves and everything around us; with sobriety, the world could once more become our oyster.

**Sobriety is the most  
important asset we have.  
No matter how long it is since  
our last drink, we are .  
ONLY ONE DRINK AWAY  
FROM A DRUNK**

# The Man In the Glass

\*

When you get what you want in your struggle for self  
And the world makes you king for a day,  
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself  
And see what THAT man has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or wife  
Who judgement upon you must pass;  
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life  
Is the one staring back from the glass.

Some people may think you're a straight-shootin' chum  
And call you a wonderful guy,  
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum  
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest,  
For he's with you right up to the end,  
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test  
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of life  
And get pats on your back as you pass,  
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears  
If you've cheated the man in the glass.

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## **Alcoholics Anonymous**

is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober, and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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



Approved by  
The AA General Service Conference in Great Britain

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