



# the program

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## a spiritual awakening

### Session Four

**“12 Step recovery programs like AA and NA are not really “programs” at all, but instead are fellowships of people meeting together with a common problem and a common solution.**

**The actual program is the 12 Steps, meaning that someone can attend AA or NA meetings but if they are not actively taking the 12 Steps than they really are not in the AA or NA program but are instead just in the fellowship and attending meetings.”**

Differences between Addiction Treatment & 12 Step Recovery - Maryland Addiction Recovery Center

### **From How It Works - Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous**

**Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:** 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable. .... 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.

Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that **we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.** The principles we have set down are guides to progress. **We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.**

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### **Topics for Discussion**

- How would you explain it if someone asks you what AA /NA is?
- Is AA/NA different than IOP or therapy? What's the difference?

### **A Question for You to Think About**

Look into your mind and heart - there are no right or wrong answers - this question is to give you a chance to really think about your recovery. You will not be asked to share your answer.

Everyone has an opinion about recovery from substance abuse. The important opinion belongs to you. What does recovery really mean to you? Is it about the substance? Is it about not being in trouble? Is it about changing your personality? Is it to have charges dropped, get the kids back, pacify the family? If you didn't have to consider " love, law or liver", would you go into recovery?



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#### **What Does It Mean to Have a Spiritual Awakening in Sobriety?**

A spiritual awakening is difficult to define with one word or phrase because it is different for everyone who experiences it, but there are some clear signs that you have had a personal and spiritual transformation in recovery. If the person you were when you first stopped using is completely different from the person you are now, you've experienced a spiritual awakening. Often this is a gradual process that requires you to face difficult emotions and truths about yourself. The 12 steps of AA will lead you thorough this process. Sponsorship and fellowship give us guidance and support as we work the program. The beauty of all 12 step programs is that we are given the opportunity to "pass it on" through 12 step and service work. "Having had a spiritual awakening, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs". Other ways to recognize a spiritual awakening:

- **A clear attitude change** – changing from being angry, defiant, uncooperative, and unwilling to change to being open-minded and willing to listen
- **Personality change** – Instead of living in and justifying our resentments and character defects, we work on changing ourselves through the steps and belonging to the fellowship
- **Improved outlook on life** – we leave victimhood and self-pity behind. We understand acceptance and compassion. We learn to trust a Higher Power and no longer feel hopeless
- **Increased ability to share and feel emotion** – no longer isolated and bitter, we engage with life and other people. We feel alive, fulfilled, full of purpose, and energetic, despite what's going on in the world.

#### **And a Word about God and the Spiritual Experience**

The word, God, appears 142 times in the Big Book. It appears 173 times in the 12 and 12. Most of these references to God reflect the early influences on AA (Oxford Group) and the times that the books were written (1939-1953). God is presented as a very traditional, patriarchal being. Some early AA members resisted the idea of presenting this idea of God in the program, however. That's how "God, as we understand him" was added to the third step. The references to a "Higher Power" also came from these more liberal AAs. How each of us defines God or a Higher Power, is totally up to the individual. One thing is certain though, a spiritual awakening is necessary for continued sobriety and that depends on each of us finding "a power greater than ourselves".