

An Introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous, the Big Book and the Twelve Steps.

Course Overview:

This 8-week course is designed to introduce the basic principles of *Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)*, as outlined in the *Big Book* and the *Twelve Steps*. Through readings, discussions, and writing exercises, students will gain a deeper understanding of the history, philosophy, and practical applications of the AA program. This course is designed for anyone who has struggled with drugs and alcohol, who wonders if their life could be better and how, or perhaps has a loved one who is suffering and wonders about what to do. At the end of this course, students will have a thorough understanding of the nature of addiction, how AA and the Big Book and other resources can aid recovery and how to make their own beginnings on the path to recovery.

Session 1: Introduction to AA and the Big Book

Reading: The "Forewords" (BB, pp.xiii-xxiv); "The Doctor's Opinion" (BB, pp. xxv-xxxii); "Bill's Story" (BB, pp. 1-16); "AA Traditions" (BB, pp. 562-63); "The Twelve Traditions" (12&12, pp. 129-189).

- Overview of AA and its history
- Introduction to the Big Book
- Understanding alcoholism as a disease
- The physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of alcoholism

Discussion Prompts:

- What stood out to you in the readings?
- What questions do you have about AA or the Big Book?
- How is your story like "Bill's Story?"
- How do you understand alcoholism as a disease?
- What are the implications of this understanding for recovery?

Assignment: Write your story in the style of "Bill's Story." (Max 2500 words)

Session 2: How Does AA Work?

Reading: "How it Works" (BB, pp. 58-60); "There is a Solution" (BB, pp. 17-30)

- Definitions of addiction
- Who's an alcoholic?
- How does AA work? How can the words in a book treat a disease?
- An outline of how the Steps aid recovery
- Realizations and Turning Points
- How did Bill W get sober?

Discussion Prompts:

- More thoughts own alcoholism as a disease?
- Why are you here?
- Do you see more similarities between your story and Bill's Story?
- Do you see yourself or someone you know in the definitions?

Assignment: Identify the turning points and realizations of your experience with addiction.

Session 3: Powerlessness, Sustainability and Other Important Concepts

Reading: "More About Alcoholism" (BB, pp. 30-44); Step One (12&12, pp. 21-24; "Acceptance Was the Answer," (BB, pp. 407-420).

- The concept of powerlessness and the First Step
- Unmanageability vs. Sustainability
- How desperation and willingness drive recovery
- Acceptance and Self-Honesty
- The nature of the bottom and what it represents

Discussion Prompts:

- How do you understand the concept of powerlessness in relation to alcoholism?
- Can you think of examples of powerlessness in your own life?
- Was/Is your life manageable?

- How can you be powerless over alcohol and stop drinking?
- What does it mean to surrender and accept in the context of recovery?

Assignment: What was your bottom? Why? (500 words)

Session 4: Coming To Believe

Reading: “We Agnostics” (BB, pp. 44-58); “How it Works” (BB, pp. 58-72); “Step Two” (I2&I2, pp. 25-34); “Step Three” (I2&I2, pp. 34-42)

- Overview of Steps Two and Three
- Coming to believe and willingness
- The role of ego in addiction
- Spirituality and religion in recovery
- The Big Book and spiritual awakenings

Discussion Prompts:

- What are your initial thoughts and feelings about the Twelve Steps?
- How do you understand the first three steps?
- What are your spiritual beliefs around addiction and recovery?
- How do you think your life would change if you actually did Step Three?
- Steps Two and Three and fear

Assignment: Construct a Higher Power capable of restoring you to sanity (500 words, bullet points accepted)

Session 5: Turning Over Lives and Wills

Readings: “Into Action” (BB, pp. 72-89); “Step Three” (I2&I2, pp. 34-42)

- Is there a higher power capable of restoring me to sanity?
- An overview of Step Three
- Operationalizing spiritual experiences
- The importance of Gratitude and Humility

Discussion Prompts:

- What am I grateful for?

- How are gratitude and humility connected and how do they help recovery?
- What is involved in actually turning my life and will over?
- Why does this aid recovery?
- Can you be too humble?

Assignment: List 20 words you would use to describe yourself; List 20 words to describe how you think others view you

Session 6: Steps 4 and 5: The Purpose and Process of Taking a Moral Inventory

Reading: “Working with Others” (BB, pp. 89-104); “Step Four” (I2&I2, pp. 42-55); “Step Five” (I2&I2, pp. 55-63)

- What is a moral inventory?
- The importance of admitting wrongs and seeking forgiveness
- The importance of Self-Honest in recovery
- How to take an inventory?
- The exact nature of our wrongs?
- The purpose of the 5th Step?
- Review 4th Step Worksheets

Discussion:

- How do you understand the role of admitting wrongs and seeking forgiveness in the recovery process?
- What are your initial reactions to the idea of taking a moral inventory?
- How might this step be helpful in recovery?
- How does this contribute to self-honesty?

Assignment: Design your own 4th Step workbook

Session 7: Steps Six and Seven

Reading: “A Vision for You” (BB, pp. 151-164); “Step Six” (I2&I2, pp. 63-70); “Step Seven” (I2&I2, pp. 70-77).

- Overview of Steps Six and Seven
- What does “Dropping the Rock” mean?”
- The role of ego in addiction and recovery
- What has to change?

- The role of ego in Steps 6 and 7
- What does “letting go” mean?
- How do you do it?

Discussion Prompts:

- What is involved in letting go?
- The role of ego in creating resentments?
- What did alcohol do for you?
- Does addiction serve a purpose?
- What frightens you about sobriety?
- Grieving addiction

Assignment: What has changed for you? (250 words)

Session 8: Living Ten, Eleven and Twelve: Building a Program, Building a Life

Reading: “Step Ten” (12&12, pp. 88-96); “Step Eleven” (12&12, pp. 96-106); “Step Twelve” (12&12, pp. 106-125).

- Overview of Steps 10-12
- The importance of ongoing spiritual and moral growth
- Sponsors and Sponsees
- Deepening spiritual experience
- Designing Your Recovery

Discussion Prompts:

- How do you understand the ongoing process of spiritual and moral growth in recovery?
- What role do the Twelve Steps play in this process?
- How are you going to implement what you’ve learned here in your own life?
- How do you understand the ongoing process of spiritual and moral growth in recovery?
- How do you understand the role of fellowship and service in recovery
- What role do meetings and sponsorship play

Reading List:

1. Alcoholics Anonymous. (2002). *Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition*.
2. Wilson, B. (1955). *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

3. Fox, R. (1955). *Alcoholism: It’s Scope, Cause and Treatment*.
4. Mann, M. (1978). *Marty Mann’s New Primer on Alcoholism*
5. Cleveland, H. H. (1997). *A Program for You: A Guide to the Big Book’s Design for Living*.
6. Cheever, S. (2004). *My Name Is Bill: Bill Wilson—His Life and the Creation of Alcoholics Anonymous*.
7. Carnes, P. (1983). *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*.
8. Selby, J. W., & Slaymaker, D. R. (2013). *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Search for Meaning*.