

Al Kohallek Goes On A Forty-Day Serendipity Journey

DAY 4 - Today is _____

When you start your daily practice you may ask your Higher Power – *“Cause me to have all the honesty, willingness and open-mindedness I may need here and now. I ask, for the guidance, love and wisdom that I need to work through this process and gain the most I can at this time. I am as willing as I can be to set aside everything I even think I know about this area, this way of life so that my chances for an open-mind and to be teachable are better and that I may realize Your Three Spiritual Gifts: Awakening to You, to be the love I am and to be the individual You created me as. Thank You.”*

INDEX FOR THIS DAY ACTION

1. Workbook Reading assignment Introducing Step One page 21. Underline those things that were most useful for you and/or caused you to have questions. Write them down.
2. Workbook assignment is working the Six Essential Characteristics of Alcoholism and other addictions page 21. Write out your response to the Six Essential Characteristics.
3. Today’s reading assignment from Alcoholics Anonymous is There is a Solution (Chapter 2 Fourth Edition pages 17 - 29) Average reading time 24 minutes. Underline those things that were most useful for you and/or caused you to have questions.
4. List the most important ideas you can relate to or identify with as a result of today’s reading; Fourth Edition pages 17 - 29 Alcoholics Anonymous. How do these ideas directly relate to the area you are currently working this Forty Day Commitment? Give examples.

Responding to each of the Six Essential Characteristics of alcoholism and other addictions, both substance and non-substance addictions on page 25, will give you some insights into your dis-ease, and point the way to recovery. If we do not get to the conditions and causes of our addictions we may not get over that addiction or we may remain dry but may not be joyous, happy and free about it.

Today’s Mission Statement: Today’s reading from the Big Book, There Is A Solution, like each of the suggested readings will add to and enrich our toolbox. What each of us has in common is not only the dis-ease as is often thought, but the solution.

Everyone has a Special Gift to give to others and to themselves. If we could be still and listen to the wisdom of our heart, we would know what that it is. The secret of happiness is to know and use your Special Gift. The secret to abundance is to give your Special Gift to others. If this is true why are we not experiencing that Special Gift? Most likely we have made up or gone along with a lot of sick illusions. Step One is a beginning tool in this process, which can help remove illusions and obstructions that seem to block your Special Gift so that the natural healing can take place. When we reach a place in our life where we realize our powerlessness to change with our present understanding and our inability to be still and if we are willing to seek help, it will come.

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1. Workbook Reading assignment Introducing Step One page 21. Underline those things that were most useful for you and/or caused you to have questions. Write them down.

STEP ONE (Honesty) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.

ALWAYS START AT STEP ONE

If we had previous success working our Twelve-Step Program, we realize it's time to reapply the program to another area of our life. One is tempted to jump over the first three Steps and start on another inventory. If we jump over the first three Steps, there is a strong likelihood that we will not have near the success with the rest of the program. We strongly suggest that when one has made a decision to work this process on a "new" area, always start at Step One. It is important that we come to the realization that we are unable with our present understanding, alone and unaided, to truly experience any real change. We need to realize that we are powerless and we cannot manage our life very well with our present mindset. The mind that made us sick or limited cannot make us whole or well (Step One).

Al: Once I have admitted that I am powerless and that I cannot manage my life, then why do it again?
Lou-is: Our mind plays tricks on us. This is a good example where we worked the Steps on one area, and then we generalize that experience to cover all areas of our life. It would be like we had experienced some success at our job and then think that we should automatically be successful in every area of our life. A person new in the program will often experience a lot of highs and lows, directly or indirectly, due to generalizing.

INCREASE THE PAIN

We have set up the First Step in a way that will help increase the pain of holding on to that which we need to have changed, healed, or transformed. The questions will contrast back and forth: What will it cost us if we do not change? What may we gain if we do experience change?

Al: I don't want nor need any more pain.

Lou-is: Then get busy.

SIX ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

In general, there are six essential characteristics of alcoholism, and other addictions. Being aware of these can help us understand a little better what path our problems take. These may be helpful in raising our "bottom." In other words, they help our denial break down, if we are ready. These characteristics apply to most problem areas not just the chemical addictions, but sick, harmful, addictive relationships and many others.

The following is to be used as part of our First Step. The idea is to help raise our "bottom", in other words, to help break down our denial. We want to increase our awareness of the dynamics of our problem and to increase the pain of holding on to it. Skip the first one, "Allergy", if the area you are working on is an area other than a form of chemical addiction, such as any form of non-substance addictions, i.e. money, sex, work, etc.

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SIX ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ALCOHOLISM, AND OTHER ADDICTIONS

1. ALLERGY - The phenomena of physical craving that kicks in with the first drink of alcohol, slice of cake, pill or any drug, etc. This craving is limited to those with a chemical addiction.

Al: For the first time I understand that I have an allergy to a number of chemicals not only alcohol, which set up a physical craving for more and more. I experienced this physical craving after having only a drink or having a smoke or drink a Dr Pepper.

Have you realized your Triggers? What are they?

2. PROGRESSIVE - Tolerance: takes more to get the job done or we are unable to get by with what we once did. With non-substance addictions it takes more money, sex, work, etc.

Al: The last year that I drank I had graduated to pints or half pints, telling myself that I would only drink that and no more but I did. I was fooling myself about my alcoholism progressing. On top of my drinking problem getting worse so was my insane jealousy problem progressively getting really bad, to the point I did not have a moment of peace, which seemed to call for drinking more.

How has your dis-ease progressed? Does it take more or does it take less to hurt more?

3. SELF-DELUSION - Starts with denial, then repression, and then mind games, rationalizing, then comes the conscious lying. The rationalizing and consciously lying really do a job on our trust, self-esteem, respect and self-respect. At all cost we must keep our addictive behavior going.

Al: I don't know what I would have done without denial. If I had realized one more failure in the early days of AA I would have killed myself. When my denial broke down I could not fool myself about addictions any more. But by then I had little or no trust, respect or self-respect left.

What has been your experience with self-delusion?

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4. **DISTORTION OF ATTENTION** - Preoccupied with the object of our addiction or attachment, we cannot think of anything else but stuff connected with the addiction or the person or thing we are attached to. The distortion becomes our **ULTIMATE CONCERN**. Another word for it is "idolatry." The addiction becomes our god.

Al: When I was still drinking I could not stop thinking where and how my next drink was coming. My obsession about the drink was indeed my ultimate concern, my god. When I was in my jealousy insanity my obsession was much like my drinking, I had to be reassured that my wife was not with someone, so I would track her down.

Can you give an example of this type of thinking and feeling?

LOSS OF WILLPOWER - Each time our willpower fails, with our best intentions, we feel even more hopeless, useless, and worthless. The greatest damage to self-esteem comes from repeated failures at trying to change addictive behavior. It really hurts when we try our best to stop and cannot.

Al: The last year I drank I really tried everything I could find to do and I failed to stay stopped. I had held back from a total commitment not to drink for sometime and when I did totally commit not to drink every again I really got depressed because I could not stay stopped. As for the insane jealousy I promised myself and my wife I would never, never, never accuse her of sleeping around again but I could not keep my promise. Much like my alcoholic drinking I could not handle my jealousy problem with willpower.

Can you give examples of your loss of your willpower?

6. **WITHDRAWAL** - "They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort that comes at once by taking a few drinks" or a few bites, etc. Our addiction becomes part of our automatic nervous system the more we repeat the behavior. We have in some cases enlisted billions of our body and brain cells. **THE ADDICTION BECOMES OUR "REALITY"**. Our mind says; "Play it again, Sam." When the body/mind is deprived of something it has become accustomed to, it responds with danger signals, as if something is wrong. Then we have the backlash or rebound. There is a natural rebound for the human condition in any growth cycle. We can go just so far and our personal "reality" tells us to come "home". This natural rebound will most often happen after we have had a peak experience, and if we do not understand the rebound cycle we are likely to question the peak experience as being real. "How could I feel so down after such a great high?"

