

Step Zero - Before You Begin: An Invitation to a New Life

Your Sponsor's Companion Packet

1 A Warm Welcome from Your Sponsor

To the person who is reading this: Hello.

You are here, most likely, because you are in pain. You are here because the thing you thought was your solution—the drink, the drug, the habit—has become a prison. You may be "drowning to death" in your addiction. You may be terrified, paralyzed by shame, and so weighted down by your past that any recovery feels impossible.

You may feel like you are a bad person. We are here to tell you that you are not. You are a *sick person* who is in need of a spiritual solution.

The legendary footballer George Best, who died from this illness, left a haunting plea: "Do not die like me."

This program, these simple steps, is the answer to that plea. It is a way out. It is a path to a new life, a life you cannot even imagine right now. We have walked this path, and we are here to walk it with you.

Before you take the First Step, we ask for just three things.

2 The Three Gifts We Ask You to Give Yourself

1. A Gift of Patience (and Abstinence)

We ask that you be patient. Be patient with yourself, with this process, and with the people around you. This is not a race. You did not get here in a day, and you will not be "cured" in a day.

To make this work possible, we ask that you stop *polluting yourself*, one day at a time. This process requires a clear mind and an honest heart. Your body and brain need time to heal. Give yourself this gift of abstinence, so the spiritual solution can be revealed.

2. A Gift of Self-Forgiveness (The Antidote to Shame)

We ask that you *begin to forgive yourself*. Right now, you are likely your own worst executioner. The weight on your shoulders—the guilt, the remorse, the shame—is the past. You are *here*, right now, in the present. That is a miracle.

You cannot build a new, beautiful house while you are still punishing yourself for the old one burning down. This program will give you the tools to *make amends* for the past, but for now, just accept this: **You are worthy of recovery.** Your past does not define your future.

3. A Gift of Open-Mindedness (The Antidote to Fear)

We ask that you be *open-minded*. Fear is the jailer of the addict. It is the voice that whispers, "This won't work," "You are different," "It's impossible."

We are not asking you to believe in anything specific. We are simply asking that you be *willing to believe* that this can work for you. Be willing to believe that the thousands of us who have recovered are not lying. Be willing to set aside your old ideas—the very ideas that led you to this "drowning" place—and try a new way.

3 The Journey Ahead: A Summation of The Way

You are standing at the beginning of a path. Here is a brief map of the journey you are about to take:

- Part 1: The Foundation (Steps 1-3)

First, we admit the problem—that we are powerless and our lives are unmanageable (Step 1). Then, we find hope: we come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity (Step 2). Finally, we make a decision: we turn our will and our lives over to the care of that Power as we understand it (Step 3).

- Part 2: The Action (Steps 4-9)

Next, we clean house. This is the brave work. We make a "searching and fearless" inventory of our past (Step 4). We share this inventory with God, ourselves, and another human being, breaking the power of secrecy and shame (Step 5). We become entirely ready to let our character defects go (Step 6) and humbly ask for them to be removed (Step 7). Then, we make a list of all persons we have harmed (Step 8) and, to the best of our ability, we make direct amends to them, cleaning our side of the street (Step 9).

- Part 3: The New Life (Steps 10-12)

Finally, we begin a new life of maintenance and purpose. We continue to take a daily inventory, catching our mistakes before they grow (Step 10). We seek, through prayer and meditation, to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power, asking only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out (Step 11).

And at last, having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we are given our *higher calling*: we try to carry this message to others, and to **practice these principles in all our affairs** (Step 12).

4 The Promise: A Life of Purpose

This is the "Apotheosis," the great transformation. This is the epitome of a spiritually lived life. We are reborn with a new identity.

We learn to operate from a place of love, not for it. We give without expectation. We find that

our "daily reprieve" from addiction depends on our spiritual condition, and that condition is strongest when we are helping someone else.

The Big Book promises that "nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics."

This is the "why." We do this work so we can be free, and we stay free by giving that freedom away. This is the reward. You will find you have a "host of friends." You will "watch loneliness vanish... to see a fellowship grow up about you." You will get to see *the light come on* in another person's eyes—the same light that is about to come on in yours.

This is the end of these guides, but it is the beginning of The Way. You are not being asked to do this alone. Find a guide (a Sponsor). All you have to do is ask for help and then be willing to take these simple suggestions.

A new life is waiting for you. All you have to do is begin.

-Your Sponsor