

How do you know if you are having a spiritual experience?

If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking (using or acting out in an obsessive-compulsive manner), you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic (addict). If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer. (p. 44, A.A. 4th Edition)

If you are a 'real' alcoholic or addict and if only a 'spiritual experience' will conquer your affliction, then it is not important to know what a spiritual experience is, how to achieve it, and most importantly, how to recognize it when you have it.

What is a spiritual experience?

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, (pg. 567-568, 4th Edition) defines spiritual experience as:

- "...the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism (addiction) has manifested itself among us in many different forms."
- "...a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone."
- "...our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves. Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience."

How do we achieve a spiritual experience?

By taking the 12 steps as directed in the first 103 pages of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God. (p. 45, A.A. 4th Edition)

Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps. We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men.(p. 46, A.A. 4th Edition)

What does a spiritual experience look like?

<image002.png>Epistemology or theory of knowledge is the branch of philosophy that studies the nature, methods, limitations, and validity of knowledge and belief. (From [Wikipedia](#), the free encyclopedia)

"As we understood him" -- which means when I speak about God, I am really referring to my own experience, which is all I know -- it has been revealed to me individually. It is like explaining sex to a virgin. If you have not had sex, you might understand it intellectually, you may have even watched a movie about it, but the personal experience is unknown--it is alien. But once you have had sex, you now have recognizable benchmarks to identify the experience. The same holds true for identifying what a relationship with God or the Higher Power is like.

The Big Book authors, men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body, all who have claimed having a spiritual experience or awakening, describe it as:

Established on such a footing (Step 3) we became less and less interested in ourselves, our own little plans and designs. More and more **we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life**. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became **conscious of His presence**, we began to **lose our fear** of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn. (p. 63, A.A. 4th Edition)

Once we have taken this step (5), withholding nothing, **we are delighted**. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our **fears fall from us**. We begin to **feel the nearness of our Creator**. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now **we begin to have a spiritual experience**. The feeling that the **drink problem has disappeared** will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe. (p. 75, A.A. 4th Edition)

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development (Step 9), we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new **freedom and a new happiness**. We **will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it**. We will **comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace**. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That **feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear**. We will **lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows**. **Self-seeking will slip away**. Our whole **attitude and outlook upon life will change**. **Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us**. We will **intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us**. We will **suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves**. (p. 83-84, A.A. 4th Edition)

Love and tolerance of others is our code. And we have **ceased fighting anything or anyone, even alcohol**. For by this time **sanity will have returned**. We will **seldom be interested in liquor**. **If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame**. We **react sanely and normally**, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are **not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation**. We feel as though we had been placed in a **position of neutrality safe and protected**. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are **neither cocky nor are we afraid**. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition. (p. 84-85, A.A. 4th Edition)

According to the Big Book authors, these are the recognizable benchmarks that tell us we are having a spiritual experience or awakening.