

Confessions of a Big Book Sponsor



I remember asking someone in the fellowship a few years ago, “Are you working your program?” He replied, “Yes I went to a meeting today.” I responded, “No, that’s not what I’m talking about. Are you working with someone?” He said, “Yes, I have a sponsor.” I replied, “No, that’s not what I’m talking about. Are you working with a newcomer?” He said, “I’m just a few months sober. I’m only a newcomer. This is selfish program, I need to work on myself first.” I never saw him again.

WHO AM I?

I am a Big Book Sponsor. I practice the 12 Step Program as outlined in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, the original recipe for recovery as practiced by the original 100 who recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.

By working the Twelve Step program as described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, I have had a spiritual awakening. The obsession to drink and use has been removed. My progressive alcoholic/addiction illness has been arrested. My disease has been placed into remission. I have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. As a result, I am able to remain, almost effortlessly, abstinent from alcohol and all mind-altering substances. I have ceased fighting anything or anyone, even alcohol and drugs. My sanity has been returned. I am not fighting temptation, nor am I avoiding people, places and things on a trigger list. I feel as though I had been placed in a position of neutrality safe and protected. I have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for me. I am neither cocky nor am I afraid. This is how I react so long as I keep in fit spiritual condition. Furthermore, by living in the disciplines of Steps 10, 11 and 12 every day, I have a daily program of action that really works in rough going. I have way of living without alcohol or drugs.

You can recognize me at 12 Step meetings because I am the one who brings my own Big Book. To show other alcoholics/addicts precisely how I recovered is the main purpose of this book. I carry a common solution—a way out on which we can absolutely agree and upon which we can join together as brothers and sisters in harmonious action. My deportment shouts that I am a person with a real answer. I carry no attitude of Holier Than Thou. I do not talk down to the alcoholic/addict from any moral or spiritual hilltop. I ask for no payment. I have no axes to grind nor people to please. You can expect to endure no lectures from me. My only desire is to be helpful. I offer friendship and fellowship.

WHAT I DO

You will find me at 12 Step meetings armed with the facts about myself. As an ex-problem drinker/user, you will see me making an approach to the newcomer—looking for someone who needs and wants hear about our common solution—someone with an honest desire to stop drinking or using—someone who wants what I have and is willing to follow the instructions as outlined in the Big Book—someone who wants to be joyous and free of active alcoholism and or addiction.

When I find someone who really wants to stop drinking or using, we go to a coffee shop and, together we read and study the first 164 pages of the Big Book. When we come to a Step instruction, we take the Step together as instructed in the Big Book. I practice co-sponsorship—two addicts, working one-on-one, seeking a Higher Power. Because lack of power is our dilemma, we meet three to four times a week, working quickly, all 12 Steps in 30 days or less. My purpose for sponsorship is to teach others how to teach others how to work the 12 Step program as outlined in the Big Book of A.A. Therefore, once the new person has learned and worked all 12 Steps and is living in the disciplines of Steps 10 and 11 on a daily basis, I help my sponsee find a qualified addict who wants to stop and get them working together on their 12 Step journey. Thus, I conclude my formal sponsorship with my sponsee, knowing that they have a dependence, not on me, but upon their Higher Power. Moreover, I rest easy, knowing that the fellowship has one more teacher amongst its members, freeing me to commence looking for another willing, honest and open-minded addict to instruct and repeat the process.

WORKING WITH OTHER ALCOHOLICS/ADDICTS

I have carried the message of the Big Book to many alcoholics and addicts and rarely have I seen a person fail who thoroughly follows our path.

Untreated alcoholic/addicts are unlovely people. My struggles with them are strenuous, comic and tragic. Those who could not or would not see our way of life are often consumed by their temptations which leads them to the gates of insanity or death. Helping other addicts is the foundation stone of my recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough for me. I have shared time, energy and money. My business and personal life has been interrupted by the telephone ringing at any time of the day or night. My spouse sometimes

feels neglected. I have made innumerable trips to police courts, detox centers, hospitals, jails and asylums. I have counseled frantic spouses and relatives. Occasionally I have to meet such conditions.

I have worked hard with many alcoholics/addicts on the idea that only an addict can help another addict. I have had many failures. I once asked another Big Book Sponsor about their success rates and she replied, "I am 100% successful". Astounded, I asked how is that possible? She replied, "I'm still sober". That to me is one of the best kept secrets in our fellowship today. I often hear that this is a "selfish program", but whenever I put my sobriety first I could never stay sober. When I started showing the newcomer how to stay sober, I have found no trouble staying sober. As Doctor Bob once remarked, "strenuous work one alcoholic with another was vital to permanent recovery".

LOVE AND TOLERANCE OF OTHERS IS MY CODE

In the 12 Step rooms I have been accused of being a Step Nazi, Big Book Thumper, a Holy Roller, a Zealot, a Big Book Page Pusher and recently I was called a "Steptard". I have been thrown out of groups and asked not to come back. I have been asked not to bring my Big Book into some A.A. meetings. I have been physically and verbally threatened by members of the fellowship for teaching that our 12 Step Program can be learned in an afternoon. I have been blamed for killing people with the Big Book.

When confronted with such animosity, my program tells me I have to look at my part. Have I been crusading, righteous, or critical? Have I been engaging in frothy debates or windy arguments? Have I been demonstrating an attitude of intolerance? Yes, there have been times when I have been all these things, but I claim spiritual progress not perfection and I am no saint.

I confess that I am a Big Book fundamentalist. I work my Big Book like a recipe for recovery. When I follow the 12 Step instructions as outlined in the book, it awakens my mind and I make conscious contact with my Higher Power. I must remember that when I focus my mind on what is wrong with the fellowship and the meetings today, the more I become restless, irritable and discontented. I must remember that the meetings are filled with many suffering and untreated addicts. Therefore, I practice acceptance and focus on what is good about the meetings and the fellowship. I try to see what I can positively add to the meeting—my only desire is to be helpful. Sometimes I have charged the "meeting makers" of killing people with their, "Don't drink and go to meetings" mantra. In return, they, the "Meeting Makers Make It" sect, have accused me of killing people with my Big Book thumping attitude. What I have learned is this: it is not the "Meeting Makers" that are killing people nor is it the "Big Book Thumpers", it's the 20 to 30 years of abusive drinking and using that kills the alcoholic/addict. I must remember that I have no monopoly on recovery, but I do know that the Big Book solution works.

WHY DO I CONTINUE TO WORK WITH OTHER ALCOHOLIC/ADDICTS?

Having had a spiritual experience, I try to practice the 12 Step principles in all my affairs. First, I take care of family, for sobriety is not enough and I am a long way from making good to my spouse, parents and children whom for years I have so shockingly treated. Second, I take care of my business, for there can be no family if I am not self-supporting. And third, in my spare time, I carry this message to other alcoholic addicts. For me, this approach, in this order, is a balanced program.

Over the years I have witnessed a fellowship grow up about me. I have watched the spirit grow in the eyes of a suffering individual and seen them recover from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. I have seen them make a 180 degree turn in life, only to help some other suffering addict do the same. This is the experience I would not miss. I know you will not want to miss it either. Frequent contact with newcomers and other Big Book sponsors is a bright spot in my day.

My life has taken on a new meaning and I seem to be of benefit to others. I have found a new freedom and happiness. I know serenity and peace. I continue to lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in the people in my life. My attitude and outlook on life has changed. Fear and economic insecurity is down and I know how to intuitively handle situations which use to baffle me. I realize that my Higher Power does for me what I could not do for myself alone.

A VISION FOR YOU

Thus I grow spiritually and so can you with a Big Book in your hand. It contains all you will need to begin working with the addict who still suffers. I know what you are thinking, "I'm a newcomer myself and I do not have enough sobriety time to be of use to anyone. What could I possibly offer another newcomer? Maybe I should wait a year or two." Rubbish! By working the Big Book solution, you will tap a source of power greater than yourself. To duplicate, with such backing, what I have accomplished is only a matter of willingness, patience and labour. Remember your reliance is always upon your Higher Power. It will show you how to create the fellowship you crave. Ask in morning meditation what you can do for the addict who still suffers. The answers will come if you work your program. But if you are shaky you had better work with another alcoholic/addict instead. Remember you have recovered and have been given the power to help others. You will soon find out that when all other measures fail, work with another alcoholic/addict will save the day. Give freely of what you have been shown and join us on the Broad Highway of the Fellowship of the Spirit. You will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

Trust God, Clean House, Help Others.

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