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# Oasis

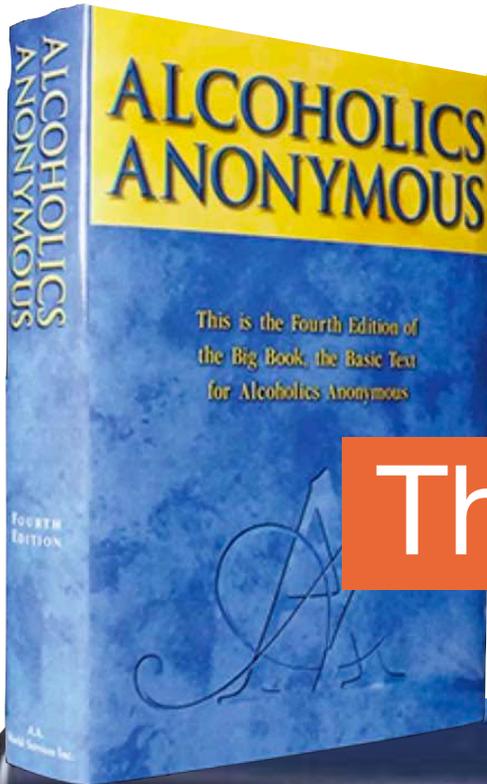
Summer 2022

OA Infoline:  
(201) 528-3398  
www.njioa.org

The quarterly newsletter of NJIOA — Northern Jersey Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

“The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism.”

Big Book, Title Page, Fourth Edition



## The Big Book Gave Me A Blueprint for Life

I remember when my friend gave me the big book many many years ago and said, “Here, read it.” I opened it and the sentence I read was: “An alcoholic is self will run riot though he usually doesn’t think so!” I closed the book and thought, oh boy that’s me! From the moment I read the Big Book, I realized how special it was. The people who wrote the book spoke from experience. Following these steps would be life changing. The Big Book has given me a blueprint for my life that I could never imagine possible. It is taking everything that I have learned through scripture and brought it to an understanding in a way that I never understood. It truly gives me hope; it is my direction for life that I was never given. It tells me that I am not a bad person; that I have a disease; that there is hope; that I can recover. I always thought that there was no way out of my addiction, yet the Big Book lays the path that I am willing to follow its directions. I thank God for this fellowship, for the Big Book — for my life in recovery.

— Ann Marie H

# The Big Book & Me

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### JULY 2022

July 12 — Relapse to Recovery workshop  
7:00pm-9:00pm Sponsored by Region 7

July 14 — NJIOA Intergroup Meeting 7:30pm

**Live Event** July 23 — Hike & Picnic (rain or shine)  
Tourne Park, Boonton, NJ 11:00am start

### AUGUST 2022

Aug 11— NJIOA Intergroup Meeting 7:30pm

**Live Event** Aug 28 — Kayaking Monksville Reservoir  
Ringwood, NJ 8:00am

### SEPTEMBER 2022

Sept 8— NJIOA Intergroup Meeting 7:30pm

**Live Event** Weekend Sept 16-18 — Region 7 Assembly  
Marriottsville, MD

### SAVE THE DATE

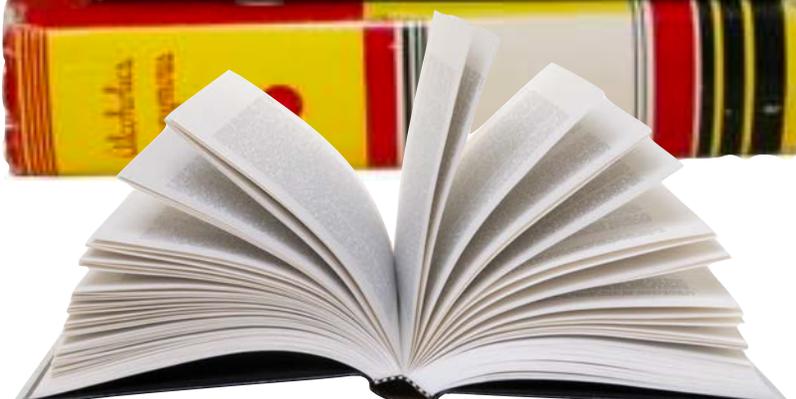
**Live Event** Weekend Nov 4-6 — Region 7 Convention  
Ocean City, MD

All events are virtual unless specified. All times are Eastern ET.  
See our website for event details and ZOOM links.

[www.NJIOA.ORG](http://www.NJIOA.ORG)

“Our hope is that when this chip of a book is launched on the world tide of alcoholism, defeated drinkers will seize upon it, to follow its suggestions.”

Big Book, A Vision For You, page 153



## The Big Book Opened Up A New World

I came to OA 31 years ago, after many failed so called "Diet Programs." At my first meeting, I knew right away that I was in the right place! This was special! A totally different meeting! What impressed me most was the joy and happiness expressed by the people in the room. I wanted that emotional recovery they had possessed. That evening I purchased the book: **A L C O H O L I C S ANONYMOUS**. We never parted! I kept going to meetings and listening to people who mastered this book and lived by it each and every day! A whole new world opened up, it was as if the "Red Sea" split in front of me and I walked on dry land! Everything I needed to know I encountered in its pages. I wasn't the only one who experienced failure after failure! That first bite again and again! The Big Book describes the "Mental State" that precedes that first bite {drink}. The BB also presents a solution to the problem, suggesting I follow the "Twelve-Steps", which led me to believe in "a power greater than myself." With faith came spiritual growth. I put down the food, started reading the BB and writing on it every day. With abstinence and the camaraderie that I received in the OA rooms I started to feel, think and act differently. I learned how to adapt to the cards I was given.

— **Orah B.**

"They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks."

Doctor's Opinion, page xxviii

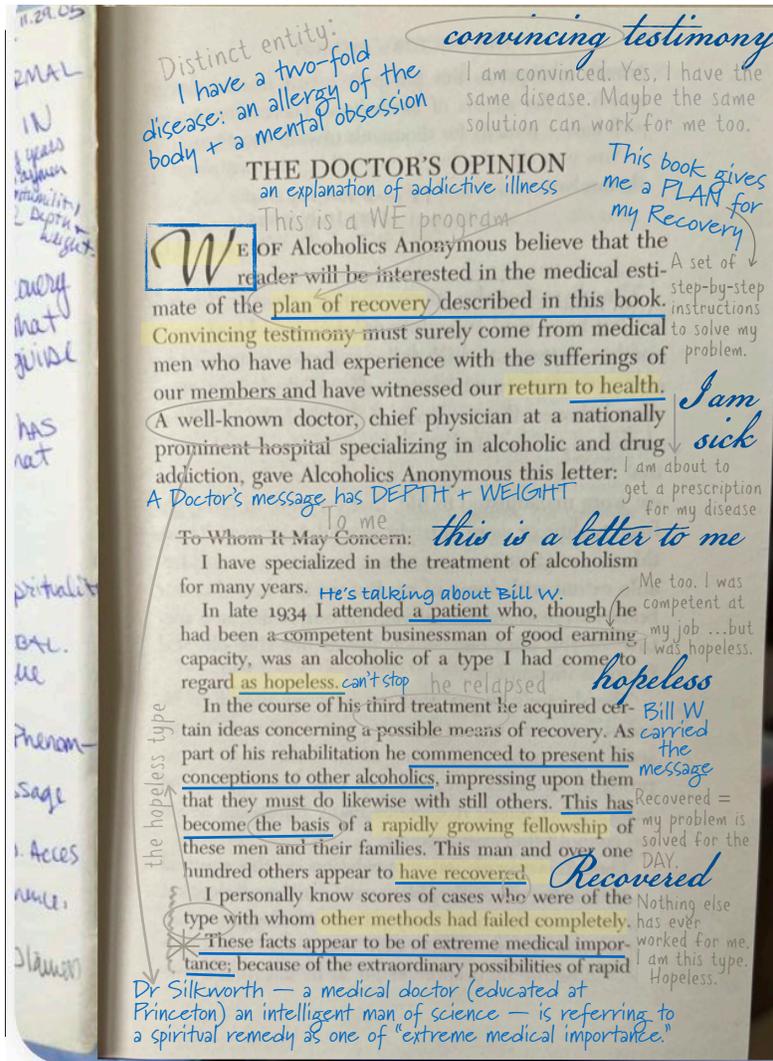
"We believe that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average drinker."

Doctor's Opinion, page xxviii

## The Big Book Taught Me About Myself

I was 12 years sober in AA when I started OA 22 years ago. I went to my first OA meeting and heard that I needed to get a sponsor and work the steps. I thought, "I don't need to do that! I have a sponsor, and I've worked the steps". But after only a few days of trying to work a food plan myself, I realized I needed to take the suggestion of getting a sponsor. I needed that accountability. I had an aversion, as well, to reading the AA literature and substituting "food" for "alcohol". The concept that the food and alcohol were the same for me made sense. But when people would say it's more difficult to remain abstinent from the food than alcohol, I'd think "You don't know," and "That just isn't true." But I latched onto the HOW program, the grey sheet, weighing and measuring and as it worked for me, I became a 90-day wonder. I worked the steps with sponsors, I had sponsees, I went to meetings, but I was still holding onto some resentments and not really seeing the food for the poison it could be. Of course, I relapsed. I never stopped weighing and measuring and following my food plan, but I picked up my will when I picked up other foods in addition to my meals. I never really got my abstinence back until I finally got sick and tired of being sick and tired and came back to HOW and got a HOW sponsor again. Now, FINALLY, I am realizing the truth in the Big Book and how it applies to my food addiction. I substitute "food" for "alcohol" and realize that yes, my food addiction is just as serious and probably came well before my alcohol addiction. I realize the importance of letting go of resentments ("How It Works"); the disease explained in the Doctor's Opinion; that I am powerless over food; that it's the first extra bite that leads to the binge; that ultimately it's my relationship with my Higher Power that will keep me abstinent because I cannot have that relationship without being abstinent; that I have to work the steps and keep working the steps; and that more than anything, I need my OA fellowship and that I need to do service and give back what has been so freely given to me.

— **Karen S.**



4th Edition Big Book, First page of the Doctor's Opinion, page xxv. Personal notes scribbled in the margins over the years by the book's owner.

"Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol."

Doctor's Opinion, page xxviii

## The Doctor's Opinion

"Once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules."

Doctor's Opinion page xxix

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## The Big Book & Me — Carrying Its Message

If you were to ask me what my favorite chapter of the AA Big Book is, my answer without hesitation is Chapter 1, "Bill's Story". To me Bill represents the consummate addict (it's about his self-will). This account truly represents what is mentioned on the first page

of Chapter 5 (How it Works) – what we were like, what happened and what we are like now. Bill's story starts off with his account of what his life overseas during World War I was like (self-assured) but discovered liquor. As he returned home and began to strive for perfection in his life alcohol became a bigger part of his daily life. It took over every aspect of his life and he fell apart. I can relate with that as I used food in every aspect of my life, good times and bad. My behaviors with food were just a mask for the unmanageability of my life. Just as Bill thought he could handle his alcohol, I thought I could control my eating. However successful we both were in other aspects of our life, the drug of choice rendered us powerless. When it was explained to Bill that he had an illness and that it wasn't a behavior did he first realize that all his will still could not overcome the power of alcohol. For me, it wasn't until I entered the OA rooms that I realized that my behavior towards food was due to an obsession of the mind and an allergy of the body. That opened my eyes to the possibility that I could change my life with food. But there was still work to be done. Ebby comes to talk to Bill as part of his work and explains that Bill needed to find a Higher Power to help with his alcoholism. This was the turning point for Bill. His realization that he could have a higher power of his own understanding. When I was working on my 2nd and 3rd steps with my sponsor and realized that my Higher

*"One alcoholic could affect another as no nonalcoholic could."*

Big Book, Foreword to the 2nd edition

Power is within me (as it says in, We Agnostics), I began to realize that recovery is not about becoming abstinent or sober. It is about surrendering my life to my Higher Power and developing a faith that my Higher Power would take care of me. When I began to be willing to be open to doing so, that's when I began to receive messages from my Higher Power without asking for things. As it says at the end of the chapter, "Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish." The final part of Bill's story speaks of service to others. Bill and his wife open their lives and their home to help other alcoholics with recovering. They devoted the rest of their time to creating a program that would help not just alcoholics, but millions of people with different addictions. Very early in my recovery, I was encouraged to do service. I took positions and meetings where I could run meetings, set up, and eventually became chair of a meeting. I sponsor and help others in OA with their programs to live meaningful lives. I have tried to "up" my service by taking a position on the intergroup board and by becoming a Region Rep. But my service does not end at the doors to the rooms. My recovery in OA has led me to get my certification as a life coach and start a practice working with cancer patients, as I am a survivor myself. We have to carry whatever message our Higher Powers provide for us. We cannot just live in our bubbles of our recoveries. For if we don't, we will turn back to our drug of choice. And if we do, we will surely die. I choose to live and help others live as well, just like Bill W. did all those years ago.

FAITH without WORKS is dead



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Bill W., co-founder of A.A.

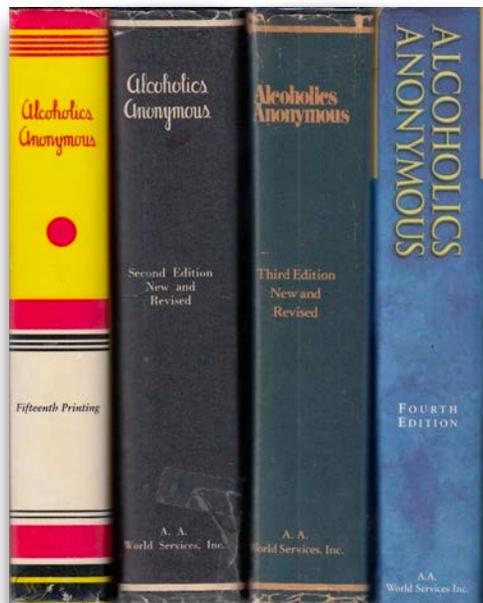
*"The door opened and he stood there, fresh-skinned and glowing. There was something about his eyes. He was inexplicably different. What had happened?"*

Big Book, Bill's Story, page 9



*"While I lay in the hospital, the thought came that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what had been so freely given me. perhaps I could help some of them. They in turn might work with others."*

Big Book, Bill's Story, page 14



First Edition April 10, 1939 Second Edition 1955 Third Edition 1976 Fourth Edition 2001

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*"At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view."*

Big Book, Bill's Story, p.12

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— Jon K.

*"Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men"*

Last lines of Bill's Story Big Book, page 16





*Photograph taken by Susan L., as an interpretation of a spiritual experience, and inspired by the following Big Book quotation:*

“Then, like a thunderbolt, a great thought came. It crowded out all else: “Who are you to say there is no God?” This man recounts that he tumbled out of bed to his knees. In a few seconds he was overwhelmed by a conviction of the Presence of God. It poured over and through him with the certainty and majesty of a great tide at flood. The barriers he had built through the years were swept away. He stood in the Presence of Infinite Power and Love. He had stepped from bridge to shore. For the first time, he lived in conscious companionship with his Creator. Thus was our friend’s cornerstone fixed in place. No later vicissitude has shaken it. His alcoholic problem was taken away. That very night, years ago, it disappeared. Save for a few brief moments of temptation the thought of drink has never returned; and at such times a great revulsion has risen up in him. Seemingly he could not drink even if he would. God had restored his sanity.”



## I Thank God For The Big Book

The Big Book means a lot to me. In the first 164 pages it outlines how to work the steps of the program. Abstinence is not the most important thing in my life today although it comes in a close second. My reliance on God is the most important thing in my life. It says in the Big Book on page 51 when many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of the presence of God is today the most important facts of their lives they present a powerful reason why one should have faith. I rely on on and trust God and seek his direction with every facet of my life. It also says in the doctors opinion that we have a physical allergy with a mental obsession. I believe this. I was born a compulsive over eater and will die one, and I am addicted to any and all foods, and I was obsessed with food. Today most of the time, the obsession is lifted thanks to being in FIT spiritual condition. Thank God for OA and AA and the Big Book.

I accept the Big Book as the 'basic text' of my OA program of recovery. When I follow its instructions, I give myself a chance at living one day of my life in a decent way. The Big Book lays out a plan for living, and offers me directions for this new way of life. I am a relapse survivor and I have learned this lesson the hard way: I need to follow the directions contained in this book in order to live. My disease is that serious. Following the directions means (for me) that I work the steps every day, as a way to clear the path to God. By the grace of God, I was granted a second chance at recovery and I am clinging to program with everything I've got. I find myself more willing than ever to follow its instructions, despite the fact that I usually dislike following instructions. In this case, I feel as if my life depends on it. So, I follow these directions to the very best of my ability and choose to see the Big Book as my instruction manual for life. The BB tells me my problem is a lack of power. I agree. It tells me that the solution is to surrender to a Higher Power. I agree. And then it tells me to follow the directions of the 12 Steps to find and connect to my Higher Power. I agree to this plan of recovery every morning. By following its clear-cut directions, I notice the Big Book has become an essential part of my day — and a critical part of my psychic experience in recovery. The Big Book is like a road map — my GPS to God. I am grateful for the willingness to follow that path for today.

— Alison L

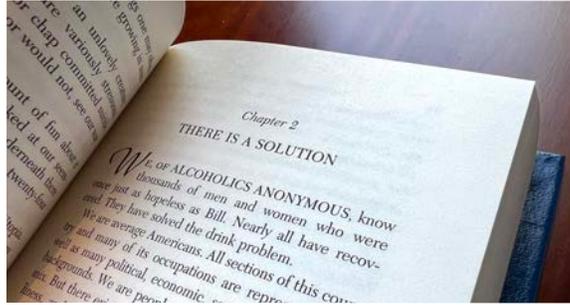
I have struggled with weight issues all my life. I was born with the disease of MORE. I was never full, foods were never 'too rich' and as I grew, so did my disease and my weight. I actively looked for binge buddies and I grew up in New York City — an over eater's idea of Heaven. I gained and lost over 100 lbs nine times before I was finally introduced to OA. My mom was concerned, my doctors were concerned. At work, we had an hour off for lunch, and I spent so much time going from one fast food place to another that my principal was concerned because I would return late leaving my students unsupervised. My husband was concerned, my kids were frightened, confused and damaged by my mood swings caused by my eating disorder. I was so consumed with the size of my body that I avoided going to weddings, funerals, social

*"We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed."*

There Is A Solution, Big Book page 25

gatherings, and family events — and that meant my husband and kids couldn't go too. I was sure people were judging me, whispering about, me laughing at me — the perfect definition of an EGOTIST with an INFERIORITY complex. I had a serious problem and it was smothering me and my family. I was sure Nothing could fix me. My mind was Broken. What was I to do? But God took pity on me and I was introduced to Overeaters Anonymous and life changed for me. Not quickly, but in God's time. Today, two decades on, I use all tools which are the handrails that help me climb the 12 steps to food neutrality and peace. I weigh my food. I Pray. I Pause (practice acceptance until Serenity emerges). I work with others, I learn so much from them. To see them start like a little seed, like a container to protect a sleeping plant that will blossom, when it wakes up through this beautiful program, and grow in the sunlight. Now I try to focus on what's good in the world because when I do, I have a good day. When I focus on what's bad, I have a bad day. I realize I can't go back and undo my past, but I can make a brand new end.

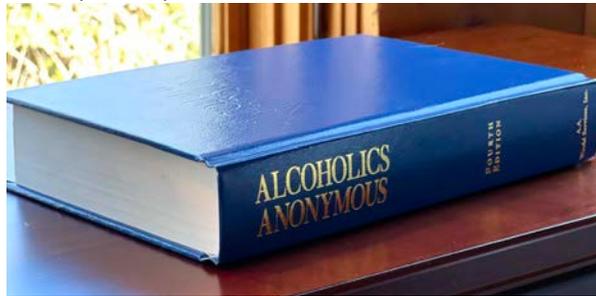
— Barbara E.



*"The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out... This is the great news this book carries to those who still suffer."*

Big Book, There Is A Solution, page 17

gatherings, and family events — and that meant my husband and kids couldn't go too. I was sure people were judging me, whispering about, me laughing at me — the perfect definition of an EGOTIST with an INFERIORITY complex. I had a serious problem and it was smothering me



*"There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others."*

Big Book, There Is A Solution, page 25

*"This book has become the basic text for our Society."*

Big Book, Preface, page xi



a simple kit  
of spiritual tools

## A Deeper Dive Into Page 417

The Big Book and Me — I love this topic. It reminds me of a boy and his dog. Someone, in this case, me, and their faithful companion. And that's what the Big Book has become for me — a faithful companion, a fount of wisdom, a place of refuge, and place to find sanity and serenity and guidance.

In my 38+ years in and out of the rooms of OA, who could imagine that this blue book with the unlikely title, Alcoholics Anonymous could have meaning or pertinence to my life? As I have read it and reread it over the years, I am amazed at how, not only is it pertinent to me, but in different phases of my life certain phrases jump out at me with new meaning. Sometimes I even joke that someone has broken into my home and inserted the passage that I don't remember ever seeing before.

I will never forget the day 10 years ago when I was attending a phone meeting and at the end they read from the famous "Acceptance" paragraph on page 417 of the 4th Edition. I've always loved that paragraph. Many people do. But what happened next is that they went on to read the following paragraph. It was as if I had never read it before, but, clearly, I must have. What leaped out from those pages was this: "When I complain about me or about you, I am complaining about God's handiwork. I am saying that I know better than God." It was like an electric shock. Was I really thinking that I knew better than God?

That reading has had a profound effect upon me. I can't complain about you or them or even me! I am not perfect. I am human, so of course I find myself complaining and judging from time to time. But those wise words pop me back to sanity. When I become conscious of my thoughts and actions, I choose the "Better Way", the way my Program teaches me. As a result, I am a better and better version of myself with plenty of room for improvement and growth. Thank you, Big Book, for your wisdom!

— **Judy L. Dumont**



## The Big Book Has Given Me A Life

Reading the BB for a daily writing, I come across many reminders of why I am in this program, whether reading in the first 164 pages, or in a story, I connect to this fellowship. Recently reading "Physician, Heal Thyself!", I was brought back to Chapter 5 -

How it Works: "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path."

"Half measures availed us nothing."

"We stood at a turning point."

"If you have decided you want what we have and are will to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to take certain steps."

At my first meeting, I saw and heard recovery, from addicts on this path. It's what I wanted and knew immediately I had to be willing to follow what has worked for so many addicts for DECADES. I don't do it perfectly. There is no perfect, and that's OK. It's my journey and my experiences. Some things in life are black and white - they cannot be done "a little" and be successful. OA is one of those things. I cannot have "some" or "a piece" and expect to stay in recovery. I can't let my defects run my life and expect serenity. I must give myself over to this program. It's simple, but not easy. But one day at a time, the fellowship and the teachings in the Big Book, have given me a life: my life and a chance to live in recovery.

— **Fran S. Teaneck**

How It Works — "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path."

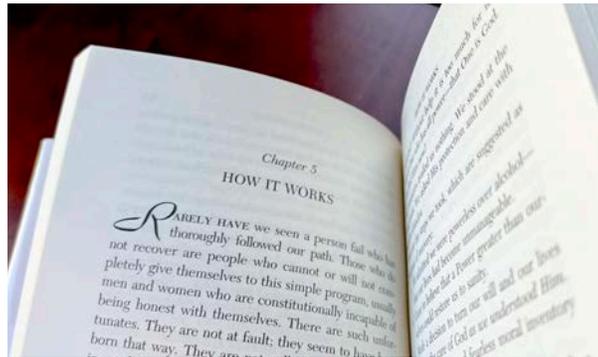
These are my favorite pages in the Big Book. Not only do they give me hope, they give me a guide by which I can get, and stay sober. Honesty is highlighted here, as well as the fact that we must be as willing to chase our recovery the way we chased our drug of choice. How free do I want to be? I've learned through program that the greater my surrender to my

Higher Power, and to letting go of things I cannot control, the more free, happy and at peace I am. I have also learned that nothing worth having comes easy, and that sobriety is a gift.

— **Beth**

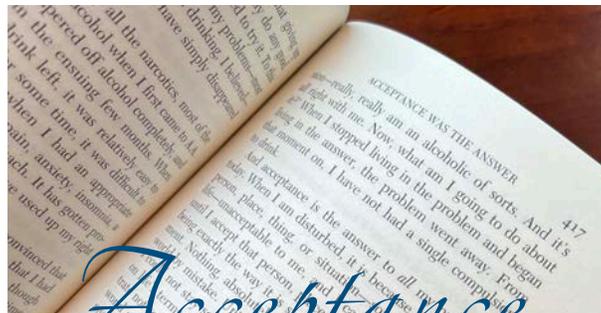
"To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book."

Big Book, Foreword to the 1st edition

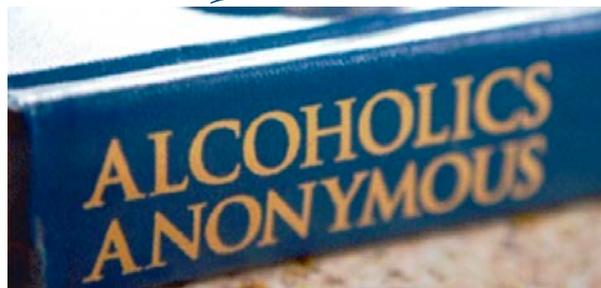


"Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to take certain steps."

Big Book, How It Works, page 58



Acceptance is the answer



"Remember that we deal with alcohol — cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power — that One is God. May you find Him now!"

Big Book, How It Works, page 58-59



## The Promise Of A New Life

If you have read the Big Book you have certainly encountered what we call the "promises" on pages 83 and 84. These are like prophecies that the program shows us what will happen to us if we follow the program. These promises are not something that might happen to us. They are a sure gift that we receive from our Higher Power for following this 3-fold program. It changes us in ways we could never dream of. They seem extravagant but are very subtle and we become aware of their presence gradually as we work our program one day at a time. They promise us that we are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness even before we are finished with the program. It changes us fundamentally. Our whole attitude on life is thrown away and a new attitude, one of peace and serenity, will take its place. A psychic change occurs and our whole outlook on life will be altered. I came into this program with no self-worth, no self-

sometimes quickly,

sometimes

slowly

confidence and lots of guilt, shame and humiliation. All of it hidden under a mountain of food and fat. I was at my bottom with nowhere else to go. They said they would help me so I took a leap of faith and asked for that help. It was a simple program: don't overeat and go to meetings. All my help was there. I was amazed at all the people willing to help me. I found I didn't have to do it myself. They promised me a new life. No guilt, no shame. Pride and self-confidence and self worth were there for the taking. Fear left me to be replaced by hope and courage. Fear of people and their hurtful comments, fear of economic insecurity, fear of uselessness and self pity will all leave. I would be a changed man. Pride in myself as a worthwhile person. Courage to overcome my fear and serenity in my new found personality. A new Frank that fits into society properly. I was promised these things and all came true. I am still amazed at what the program and my Higher Power did and continues to do every day. I was promised and they delivered.

— Frank, Dover

## An Ever-Growing Spiritual Solution

When a friend brought me to my first OA meeting, it was a format called "No Nonsense," and I don't recall the Big Book being mentioned (granted, my memory isn't what it used to be). For 20 years I was in and out of the rooms. The only type of sponsor that I knew about was a food sponsor. In 2011, having never achieved sustained weight loss, I opted for bariatric surgery, however, it didn't address my disease. I knew my addiction ran deeper than just losing weight. I had lost weight in the past. Each time I gained it back, and then

# PROMISES

Promise 1  
We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

Promise 2  
We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

Promise 3  
We will comprehend the word serenity.

Promise 4  
We will know peace.

Promise 5  
No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

Promise 6  
The feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

Promise 7  
We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

Promise 8  
Self-seeking will slip away.

Promise 9  
Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

Promise 10  
Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.

Promise 11  
We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

Promise 12  
We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

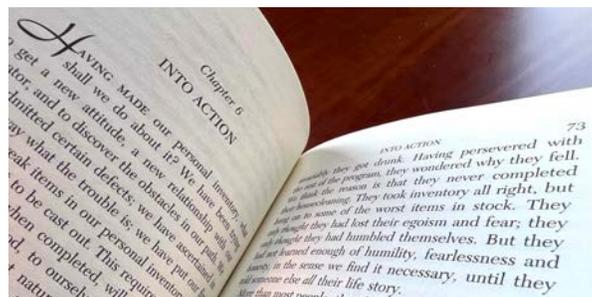
Big Book, Into Action, pages 83-84

some. If I didn't get myself back in the rooms, I'd gain it back again. The surgery was not the solution. My old sponsor agreed to meet with me and we went to a meeting together. It was a step study. Many people in that meeting referred to the Big Book. I heard that there was going to be a Back to Basics Big Book Study for 6 weeks at the Sunday morning Belleville meeting. It was there that I met my first Big Book sponsor. Not long after, that Big Book meeting became my home meeting. My sponsor took me through the steps as they are written in the Big Book. I began to think of the book as HOW TO manual for working the OA program. I came to accept my food addiction as a disease, and the directions in the book as what I must do to achieve the solution, one day at a time. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous is the text book for working the program. It's a guide for living. Each time I read it I find deeper meaning, I learn something new. It is a dynamic relationship. I came to OA looking to lose weight and I found a new, ever-growing, spiritual solution. I am grateful for the original group of men and women who first put these words on paper, and for those who continue to carry the message.

~ Joyce S.

"If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through."

Big Book, Into Action, page 83



## One Man's Experience

I have a love-hate relationship with the big book of A.A. (Big Book) and it being quoted as if the entire volume were Truth, with a capital T. I have five copies of it so one would think it was pretty important in my life, and it has been, but not like one might think. There is a sentence in one of the stories that is marked out in my first copy because it was one of those things that I had to apply "take what you like and leave the rest." I heard it quoted in meetings a lot as if were part of the textbook section in the first 164 pages and as if it were the most important line in the entire book. I did not believe it then and I still don't. It's that line on the old page 449, now page 417, that says, "Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake." It seems to me that this line can be used to rationalize and justify just about anything. As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, and a person who works with abused children, I cannot ascribe to that line. If anyone wants to know why I don't believe it, I will be happy to discuss my concept of God one-on-one, but this is not the forum for that kind of sharing. I do not believe this line and it's okay. It doesn't make the story any less powerful. I do believe it is one's man's testimony about his concept of God. It's not mine. It's not part of the Steps, Traditions, Concepts, or Tools. It was not helpful to me in working Step Two and I do not use it as part of my program. Yet here I am, 25 years in OA/HOW, still using the Big Book to work my program. It's important for me to accept others as they are, no matter what their concept of God or a Higher Power, and it's important for me to be accepted, no matter my concept of God. I don't cross out the line anymore because I have learned to accept that this was one man's experience.

— Betsy, TX

ABANDON  
*yourself* to  
GOD

My Big Book is a faithful friend. It brings me joy, comfort and solace. I learn new things from reading it, every time I open its cover. The pages are dear to me, dog-eared now, torn and worn with love. The margins are scribbled with notes, paragraphs are highlighted, sentences jump out at me in yellow and blue like happy companions. When I need its wisdom most, my Big Book is right there for me. I reach for it. Somehow my fingers find the page and my eyes seem to land on precisely what I need to read at that particular moment. Sometimes I just hug it and release the fear or the feeling. Works every time.

— Susan S.

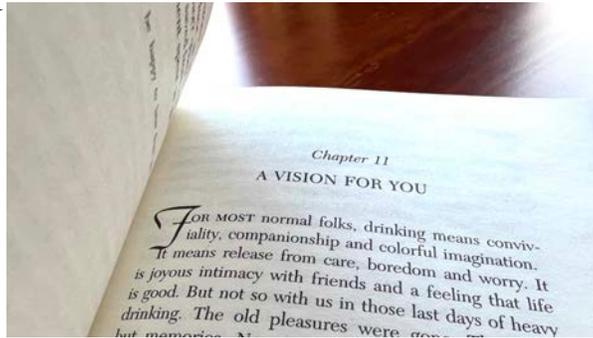
## The Big Book As Textbook

When I first came into this program I was exhausted from fighting this disease on my own. I knew my problem was I needed to stop eating compulsively, but no matter how much of myself I threw at me, I just couldn't lick it. I immediately found help first through the fellowship and then a sponsor.

My first experience with the Big Book was the same old adage, me trying to fix me. This time I was trying to identify "my story" with the stories of a bunch of men who were drunks. More than twenty years ago, I was told by a fellow to just read the last 3 paragraphs of each story because that's where the "recovery was." Well, I was trying to read the Big Book like "Chicken Soup for the Soul." After 12 years of working the tools and abstinence, I relapsed. This disease is permanent, progressive and deadly. Hopeless and despairing, I crawled back into a meeting and knew I had to do

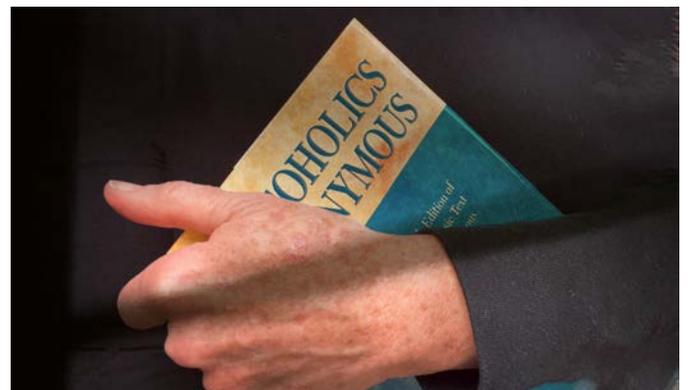
something different. The sponsor I found directed me to the Big Book once again. This time I was told it is a textbook. I was asked to shut off my own interpretation of the text and listen to what the author was trying to say. I was told that the 12 Steps are merely the cliff notes and the entire program is written in the first 164 pages. My sponsor taught me the oral tradition (unwritten history) of the Big Book, which unlocked the program for me. I learned that I was self-centered and nothing about living in my story, aka my own crap or myself, was going to fix me. I needed to become God-centered and others focused, which is achieved by following the instructions on a daily basis and working with others to do the same. No matter what life throws at me today I have peace and serenity. I once thought of being buried with my Big Book, but then thought instead I would leave it for my family and friends as it contains the directions for a happy and joyful life and it is one of my dearest possessions. I believe the Big Book is meant to be shared to be understood. I am forever grateful this was shared with me.

— ToniAnn A.



"Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us."

Big Book, A Vision For You, page 164



"Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you -- until then"

Big Book, A Vision For You, page 164

# DID YOU KNOW?

## Who Wrote The Big Book?



Bill W.

### “ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:

The Story of How More Than One Hundred Men Have Recovered From Alcoholism,” nicknamed “The Big Book,” was written by William Griffith Wilson (Nov 26, 1895 – Jan 24, 1971) — aka Bill W. — and many

of the first 100 members of the group. The composition process was collaborative, with drafts of the book sent back and forth between Bill W's group in New York and Dr Robert Smith (August 8, 1879 – November 16, 1950) — aka Dr. Bob — the other founder of A.A., in Akron, OH. It was published in 1939 and laid the foundation for the 12-step movement that revolutionized addiction treatment and helped millions of people get and stay sober. With more than 37 million copies sold, the Big Book is one of the bestselling works of all time.

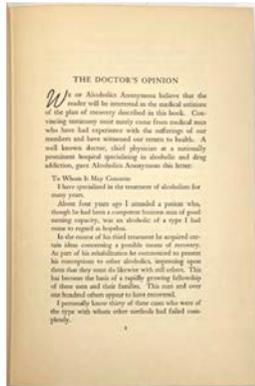


Dr Bob

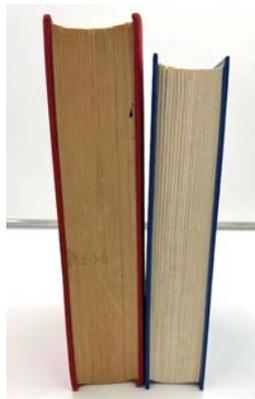
source: Wikipedia

## Why We Call It The Big Book

A printer in Cornwall, NY, named Edward Blackwell, had been highly recommended to Bill Wilson. Blackwell was the President of Cornwall Press. So Bill and Hank Parkhurst (author of the personal story “The Unbeliever” in the first edition of the Big Book) went to Cornwall to see Blackwell. There they were told that the book would probably be only about four hundred pages when printed. That seemed a bit skimpy. They wanted to sell the book for \$3.50 per copy. That was a very large sum in those days; the equivalent of about \$60 today, and people might not think they were getting their money's worth. They picked the cheapest, thickest paper the printer had, and requested that each page be printed with unusually large margins surrounding the text. This made for an unusually large book. Thus, the book came to be nicknamed the “Big Book.”



Wider margins of the 1st edition.



Side-by-side size comparison of a 1st edition (left) and a 4th edition (right).

source: hacoaa.org

## Who was Ebby Thacher?



Bill Wilson with Ebby Thacher, c. 1955-1961

Edwin “Ebby” Thacher was the man who first carried the message of recovery to Bill Wilson in 1934. Bill wrote this dedication in a Big Book he gave to Ebby in 1960:

*Dear Ebby,  
No day passes that I do not remember that you brought me the message that saved me — and only God knows how many more.  
In affection, Bill*

source: silkworth.net

This was Ebby's Promise to Bill W, as published in the Big Book: “My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems.”

Big Book, Bill's Story, page 13

## Why are the first 164 pages considered so important?

The reason the Big Book carries so much weight in AA is that it contains the directions to get sober. The first 164 pages of the Big Book are considered the basic text of this program. These first pages explain

the alcoholic problem and precisely how to solve it. They provide not only a solution to the problem of alcoholism, (which is the 12 steps), but also explain the principles we need to have to become recovered and to stay sober. The AA organization has not

changed the first 164 pages because these instructions have helped so many people recover. Some of the stories after the first 164 pages have been updated and changed as time has passed.

source: renewallodge.com

## Who was Lois Wilson?



Lois and Bill Wilson pictured in the gardens at Stepping Stones.

Lois Wilson (Mar 4, 1891 – Oct 5, 1988) was married to Bill Wilson, and was the architect and co-founder of Al-Anon and Alateen— the first of many replications of the AA program by other Twelve Step fellowships. The Wilsons bought Stepping Stones, their historic house in Bedford Hills, NY, in 1941 — more than five years after Bill W. took his last drink in December 1934. Lois later co-founded Al-Anon there. Her tireless effort and vision made Al-Anon the strong organization it is today and her unique contribution to humanity made Lois Wilson one of the 20th Century's most important women. She died in 1988 at age 97, and is buried beside her husband in the East Dorset Cemetery in East Dorset, Vermont.

source: stepping stones foundation

## PAST EVENTS

### Cherry Blossom Stroll

The bright yellow sun and blue sky made the fragrant pink and white blooms look even more brilliant. A group of fellows gathered in Branch Brook Park on the morning of Sunday, April 10th, for our annual Cherry Blossom Stroll. There was a brand newcomer among us. For many of us, it was the first face-to-face meeting in quite some time. Some even came from far. After we all met and greeted one another, we took a moment for a fun photo-op on an amusement train and then started our meeting. (We are not a glum lot!) The meeting focused on the Big Book's concept of fellowship and that we no longer need to be alone with this disease. At the conclusion of the meeting, we walked the grounds of the park under the cherry blossoms where there were many other photo opportunities taken. Mark your calendar for next year! Hope to see you there.

### Measuring Out My Life

On Sunday, March 20th, NJIOA was fortunate to have three wonderful speakers participate in our workshop called, "Measuring Out My Life: How I Work my Life Around Program." Nancy J. joined us from Pennsylvania and opened the workshop, sharing her incredible story and delineating how and why she puts her Program first. Next, we heard from Alan B. from Ohio, whose experience, strength and hope was truly inspiring. Roger V. from California was the last (but certainly not the least) to speak, describing his dedication to his Recovery and how important being available for service is to his Program. After each speaker, there was time for attendees to ask questions or respond to what they had heard. What a truly uplifting day!

### The Body Image Workshop

On Sunday, May 22nd, NJIOA hosted an exciting Body Image workshop called "Comfortable in my own skin." We had fantastic attendance — 87 participants joined us, including one member from Hawaii. We had 3 wonderful speakers Maria G, Jonathan, and Melissa — each speaker shared their own experience and challenges with body image, and shared how working the program had helped them develop a more positive body image. In one memorable moment, one of the speakers invited the meeting participants to write a love letter to their own bodies, and some then shared their letters with the audience. It was very moving.

### Day Of Inspiration

On Saturday, April 23rd, 27 participants from Ohio, Louisiana, Wisconsin, New York City, California, and of course, New Jersey, gathered on Zoom at the NJIOA Workshop, "Day of Inspiration: What Inspires Change?" to find out. We heard Phil from NYC speak, Janice from Louisiana, and Warren from Indiana. Each shared their story with us and how they were inspired to change. While there is never just one "right" answer as to what inspires change, we did hear a lot about gratitude, service, loving ourselves and the love of our Higher Power. Their stories were moving and the dedication of each of the speakers to their Program and their Recovery was inspirational.



## PAST EVENTS



Glorious photos from the Cherry Blossom Stroll on April 10th, 2022

### Letter To The Editor

I had the good fortune of attending the Body Image Workshop sponsored by NJIOA on the evening of Sunday, May 22nd. The workshop included three inspiring speakers, a wonderful writing activity and a lot of insightful shares.

One of the speakers was a male and it was so interesting to hear about body image through the eyes of a man. I had never heard a male perspective on body image and the impact on his life. It seemed very similar to women's perspective.

The writing exercise consisted of writing a love letter to our bodies. Since this is difficult task for most of us, the leader provided 4 prompts or sentence starters:

- 1) I am amazed by how you.....
- 2) Thank you for.....
- 3) I promise to.....
- 4) My body is.....

I would encourage everyone to try this writing exercise. The participants enjoyed writing this letter and their shares were surprising and positive. I know that I loved my Love Letter to my body!

— Fran U.

## SPONSOR LIST

Something New! NJIOA now has a Sponsor Coordinator who will help bring together available sponsors and sponsees. Interested sponsors and sponsees can email the Sponsor Coordinator at [NJIOASponsorCoord@gmail.com](mailto:NJIOASponsorCoord@gmail.com) to receive a brief questionnaire to complete. Sponsors' names and information will be added to our available sponsor list. Sponsees looking for a sponsor will also be given a brief questionnaire to complete and then will be given the names of an available sponsor or two from our list to contact. Reach out today to use the vital recovery tool of sponsorship! Email our Sponsor Coordinator here:

[NJIOASponsorCoord@gmail.com](mailto:NJIOASponsorCoord@gmail.com)

## Carry The Message



MIGHT YOU KNOW someone who could benefit from our program? Bill & Dr Bob said the only way to stay clean is to work with others. You could tell others about our program. Maybe send someone a newcomer packet. Invite them to a meeting. We have beginner meetings, newcomer meetings and meetings to support members coming back from relapse.

## INTERGROUP MEETINGS

**THE NJIOA INTERGROUP BOARD** meets on Zoom, once a month, at 7:30pm, on the second Thursday of the month. Find the link on our website [www.njioa.org](http://www.njioa.org). Everyone is welcome to attend these meetings, where NJIOA topics are presented for discussion, Board business and finances are discussed, and events are planned. If you would like to get a topic on the next meeting's agenda, please email our Intergroup Chair, ToniAnn, at [typedforu@cs.com](mailto:typedforu@cs.com).



## RECOVERY HELP LINE

Are you struggling and need to speak to someone? Do you live in a remote location and need contact? Please call our friendly volunteers below to remind you that you are not alone!

**PLEASE try all the numbers until someone answers your call**

NAME	PHONE	AVAIL TIMES (ET)
ANDREA P	973-985-8169	4PM-6PM weekdays
ANDREA P	973-985-8169	8AM-6PM weekends
AUDREY C	201-819-5575	Please text first.
JANET B	201-248-8001	Until 9PM
MARCY E	973-694-1274	ANYTIME
SUSAN L	973-704-6345	4PM-6PM weekdays
SUSAN S	201-960-1995	11AM-7PM
TERRY P	862-812-4467	9AM-11PM
TONI ANN A	973-945-0233	Before 11PM

*"The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life."*

Big Book, There Is A Solution, page 25



## YOUR TRUSTED SERVANTS

<b>TONIANN A</b> Chair	<a href="mailto:typedforu@cs.com">typedforu@cs.com</a> 973-945-0233
<b>MARIA G</b> Vice Chair	<a href="mailto:mtg7176@gmail.com">mtg7176@gmail.com</a> 201-314-1350
<b>RONNI S</b> Secretary	<a href="mailto:ronnis.2020@outlook.com">ronnis.2020@outlook.com</a> 201-647-3613
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<b>BONNIE F</b> Web Chair	<a href="mailto:b4oai8n8@gmail.com">b4oai8n8@gmail.com</a> 201-657-3916
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<b>BRENDA W</b> Telephone Hot Line	<a href="mailto:BrendaOANJ@gmail.com">BrendaOANJ@gmail.com</a> 973-704-5082

## OUR 7th TRADITION

*Please make a donation.*

When we put money in the 'basket,' we help our meeting, our Group, our Region and OA World Service.

**Venmo or Zelle:**

**[njioaPAY@gmail.com](mailto:njioaPAY@gmail.com)**

By Mail:

**NJIOA, PO Box 827**

**Fairlawn, NJ 07410**



## EDITORIAL NOTE

The **OAsis** is the quarterly newsletter of NJIOA (Northern Jersey Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous). The opinions expressed here are those of the individual authors, and not those of NJIOA or OA as a whole. The theme for the next issue is: "How has the Pandemic changed your program — for better or worse." Deadline for copy is Sept 1, 2022. Please email your submissions to the OAsis Editors, at: **[maryanncluney@gmail.com](mailto:maryanncluney@gmail.com)**