

Big Book Changes

These are the changes that have been made in the program portion of the Big Book (the first 164 pages and the roman numerated pages) since it was first published on April 10, 1939.

Changes are in Blue and page numbers are provided.

Each 1st t reference given in red is from the First Edition.

The numbering of the 2nd reference is from the 2nd through the 4th editions which hasn't changed over the years.

1. "THE DOCTOR'S OPINION"

xxv. "THE DOCTOR'S OPINION" [The Doctor's Opinion has been shifted up in the roman numeral section as each preface to the edition has been added.]

12. We gave up our positions and off we roared on a motorcycle, the sidecar stuffed with tent, blankets, change of clothes, and three huge volumes of a financial reference service.

2. We gave up our positions and off we roared on a motorcycle, the sidecar stuffed with tent, blankets, a change of clothes, and three huge volumes of a financial reference service.

15. As the whiskey rose to my head I told myself I would manage better next time, but I might as well get good and drunk then.

6. As the whisky rose to my head I told myself I would manage better next time, but I might as well get good and drunk then.

24. The good doctor now sees many men who have such experiences. He knows they are real.

14. The good doctor now sees many men who have such experiences. He knows that they are real.

25. I have seen one hundred of families set their feet in the path that really goes somewhere; have seen the most impossible domestic situations righted; feuds and bitterness of all sorts wiped out.

15. I have seen hundreds of families set their feet in the path that really goes somewhere; have seen the most impossible domestic situations righted; feuds and bitterness of all sorts wiped out.

25. In one western city and its environs there are eighty of us and our families.

15. In one western city and its environs there are one thousand of us and our families.

25. At these informal gatherings one may often see from 40 to 80 persons. We are growing in numbers and power.

16. At these informal gatherings one may often see from 50 to 200 persons. We are growing in numbers and power.*

*In 2001, A.A. is composed of more than 100,000 groups. [note added in printings of 2nd edition]

26. 16. Bill W., co-founder of A.A., died January 24, 1971. [note added in later printings of 2nd edition]

27. We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, know one hundred men who were once just as hopeless as Bill. All have recovered.

17. We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, know thousands of men and women who were once just as hopeless as Bill. Nearly all have recovered.

28. But the ex-alcoholic who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours.

18. But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours.

Big Book Changes

30. Our very lives, as ex-alcoholics, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs.

20. Our very lives, as [ex-problem drinkers](#), depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs.

36. 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, toward our fellows and toward God's universe.

25 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, toward our fellows and toward God's universe.

[*Fully explained - Appendix II.](#)

36. Then he had gone to Europe, placing himself in the care of a celebrated physician who prescribed for him.

26. Then he had gone to Europe, placing himself in the care of a celebrated physician ([the psychiatrist, Dr. Jung](#)) who prescribed for him.

38. With many individuals the methods which I employed are successful, but I have never been successful with an alcoholic of your description."

27. With many individuals the methods which I employed are successful, but I have never been successful with an alcoholic of your description."*

[*For amplification - see Appendix II.](#)

39. Further on, clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered. These are followed by more than a score of personal experiences.

29. Further on, clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered. These are followed by [forty-two](#) personal experiences. [See [Big Book Stories](#) for 1st Edition and Original Manuscript Stories and listing of 2nd and 3rd Edition Stories]

41. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his [liquor](#) drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker.

30. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker.

42. Science may one day accomplish this, but it [evidently](#) hasn't done so yet.

31. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.

43. We do not like to brand any individual as [an](#) alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself.

31. We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself.

44. Several of our crowd, men of thirty-five or less, had been drinking only a few years, but they found themselves as helpless as those who had been drinking twenty years.

33. Several of our crowd, men of [thirty](#) or less, had been drinking only a few years, but they found themselves as helpless as those who had been drinking twenty years.

45. Potential feminine alcoholics often turn into the real thing and are gone beyond recall in a few years.

33. Potential [female](#) alcoholics often turn into the real thing and are gone beyond recall in a few years.

Big Book Changes

45. But try and get them to see it!

34. But try and get them to see it!*

*True when this book was first published. But a 1998 U.S./Canada membership survey showed about one-fifth of A.A.'s were thirty and under.

51. Let him tell you about it: "I was much impressed with what you fellows said about alcoholism, but I frankly did not believe it would be possible for me to drink again.

40. Let him tell you about it: "I was much impressed with what you fellows said about alcoholism, and I frankly did not believe it would be possible for me to drink again.

51. I somewhat appreciated your ideas about the subtle insanity which precedes the first drink, but I was confident it could not happen to me after what I had learned.

40. I rather appreciated your ideas about the subtle insanity which precedes the first drink, but I was confident it could not happen to me after what I had learned.

56. To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis--not always easy alternatives to face.

44. To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.

56. About half our fellowship were of exactly that type.

44. About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type.

56. But cheer up, something like fifty of us thought we were atheists or agnostics.

44. But cheer up, something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics.

59. At the start, this is all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him.

47. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him.

59. That is growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere.

47. That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere.

59. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.

47. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.*

*Please be sure to read Appendix II on "Spiritual Experience."

[Added in 2nd Edition]

62. In our personal stories you will find wide variation in the way each teller approaches and conceives of the Power which is greater than himself.

50. In our personal stories you will find a wide variation in the way each teller approaches and conceives of the Power which is greater than himself.

62. Experience has taught that these are matters about which, for our purpose, we need not be worried.

50. Experience has taught us that these are matters about which, for our purpose, we need not be worried.

62. Here are one hundred men and women, worldly indeed.

50. Here are thousands of men and women, worldly indeed.

Big Book Changes

63. Once confused and baffled by the seeming futility of existence, they **will** show the underlying reasons why they were making heavy going of life.

50 - 51. Once confused and baffled by the seeming futility of existence, they show the underlying reasons why they were making heavy going of life.

63. They **will** show how the change came over them.

51. They show how the change came over them.

63. When one hundred people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith.

51. When **many hundreds of** people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith.

63. Others **like them** came near putting Galileo to death for his astronomical heresies.

51. Others came near putting Galileo to death for his astronomical heresies.

64. We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn't apply to our human problems this same readiness to change the point of view.

52. We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn't apply to our human problems this same readiness to change **our** point of view.

65. When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of this universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God.

52. When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of **the Universe**, we had to stop doubting the power of God.

69. That very night three years ago it disappeared.

56. That very night, **years ago**, it disappeared.

72. 12. Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

60. 12. Having had a spiritual **awakening** as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

72. That God could and would if sought.

60. That God could and would if **He were** sought.

73. He begins to think life doesn't treat him right. He decides to exert himself **some** more.

61. He begins to think life doesn't treat him right. He decides to exert himself more

74. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without Him.

62. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without **His aid**.

Big Book Changes

78. My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride-Personal and sex relations-Security (fear)
65. My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride-Personal sex relations-Security (fear)

79. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle.

66. We were prepared to look **for** it from an entirely different angle.
 [2nd edition -- This was since been switched back to "at" in the 3rd and 4th editions).

88. Should we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

76. **If** we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

93. This all happened **three** years ago.

80. This all happened years ago.

94. Should we have no such complication, there is plenty we should do at home.

82. **If** we have no such complication, there is plenty we should do at home.

102. Usually it is wise to wait till he goes on a binge.

90. **Sometimes** it is wise to wait till he goes on a binge.

104. And be careful not to brand him an alcoholic.

92 And be careful not to brand him **as** an alcoholic.

104. Continue to speak of alcoholism as a sickness, a fatal malady.

92. Continue to speak of alcoholism as an **illness**, a fatal malady.

105. Let him ask you that question, if he will. **If he does not ask, proceed with the rest of your story.** Tell him exactly what happened to you.

93. Let him ask you that question, if he will. Tell him exactly what happened to you.

105. But he will be curious to learn why his own convictions have not worked, and yours seem to work so well.

93. But he will be curious to learn why his own convictions have not worked **and why** yours seem to work so well.

111. Argument and fault-finding are to be avoided like leprosy.

98. Argument and fault-finding are to be avoided like the **plague**.

Big Book Changes

117. TO WIVES

104. TO WIVES*

*Written in 1939, when there were few women in A.A., this chapter assumes that the alcoholic in the home is likely to be the husband. But many of the suggestions given here may be adapted to help the person who lives with a woman alcoholic -- whether she is still drinking or is recovering in A.A. A further source of help is noted on page 121.

121. These are some of the questions which race through the mind of every girl who has an alcoholic husband.

108. These are some of the questions which race through the mind of every woman who has an alcoholic husband.

121. He will use that as an excuse to drink some more.

111. He will use that as an excuse to drink more.

121. He may seek someone to console him - not always another man.

111. He may seek someone else to console him - not always another man.

126. He knows that over a hundred men, much like himself, have recovered.

113 He knows that thousands of men, much like himself, have recovered.

127. We make this recommendation with some confidence. About a year ago a certain state institution released four chronic alcoholics. It was fully expected they would all be back in a few weeks. Only one of them has returned. The others had no relapse at all. The power of God goes deep!

114. We make this recommendation with some confidence. For years we have been working with alcoholics committed to institutions. Since this book was first published, A.A. has released thousands of alcoholics from asylums and hospitals of every kind. The majority have never returned. The power of God goes deep!

128. The wives and children of such men suffer horribly, but not less than the men themselves.

114. The wives and children of such men suffer horribly, but not more than the men themselves.

128. You will no longer be self-conscious, nor feel that you must apologize as though your husband were a weak character.

115. You will no longer be self-conscious or feel that you must apologize as though your husband were a weak character.

134. That is why we are anxious that you understand, and that you avoid these unnecessary difficulties.

121. That is why we are anxious that you understand, and that you avoid these unnecessary difficulties.*

*The fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups was formed about thirteen years after this chapter was written. Though it is entirely separate from Alcoholics Anonymous, it uses the general principles of the A.A. program as a guide for husbands, wives, relatives, friends, and others close to alcoholics. The foregoing pages (though addressed only to wives) indicate the problems such people may face. Alateen, for teen-aged children of alcoholics, is a part of Al-Anon. If there is no Al-Anon listing in your local telephone book, you may obtain further information on Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups by writing to its World Service Office: 1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617.

137. We think each family which has been relieved owes something to those which have not, and when the occasion requires, each member of it, should be only too willing to bring former mistakes, no matter how grievous, out of their hiding places.

124. We think each family which has been relieved owes something to those who have not, and when the occasion requires, each member of it should be only too willing to bring former mistakes, no matter how grievous, out of their hiding places.

Big Book Changes

138. A man may criticize to laugh at himself and it will affect others favorably, but criticism or ridicule **of him** coming from another often produce the contrary effect.

125. A man may criticize to laugh at himself and it will affect others favorably, but criticism or ridicule coming from another often produce the contrary effect.

139. With these we have experience galore.

126. With these we have **had** experience galore.

143. We have come to believe He would like us to keep our heads in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth, **nevertheless**.

130. We have come to believe He would like us to keep our heads in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth.

144. Instead of developing new channels of activity for themselves, mother and children **may** demand that he stay home and make up the deficiency.

131. Instead of developing new channels of activity for themselves, mother and children demand that he stay home and make up the deficiency.

150. **ONE** of our friends, whose gripping story you will read, has spent much of his life in the world of big business.

136. **AMONG MANY** employers nowadays, we think of one member who has spent much of his life in the world of big business.

152. I felt this was inevitable and wondered if the bank were doing the man an injustice.

138. I felt this was inevitable and wondered if the bank **was** doing the man an injustice.

154. Even when you understand the malady better, you may find this feeling rising.

139. Even when you understand the malady better, you may **feel** this feeling rising.

156. At this point, it might be well to explain alcoholism, the sickness. Say that you believe he is a gravely-ill person, with this qualification--being perhaps fatally ill, does he want to get well **immediately**?

142. At this point, it might be well to explain alcoholism, the **illness**. Say that you believe he is a gravely-ill person, with this qualification -- being perhaps fatally ill, does he want to get well?

158. That won't hurt him a bit, though he does not go for this remedy.

144. That won't hurt him a bit, **even** though he does not go for this remedy.

158. You are betting, or course, that your changed attitude and the contents of this book will turn the trick. In some cases it will, and in others it may not.

144. You are betting, or course, that your changed attitude **plus** the contents of this book will turn the trick. In some cases it will, and in others it may not.

159. When our work spreads and our numbers increase, we hope your employees may be put in personal contact with some of us.

144. **As** our work spreads and our numbers increase, we hope your employees may be put in personal contact with some of us.

159. The greatest enemies of we alcoholics are resentment, jealousy, envy, frustration, and fear.

145. The greatest enemies of **us** alcoholics are resentment, jealousy, envy, frustration, and fear.

Big Book Changes

160. After your man has gone along without drinking a few months, you may be able to make use of his services with other employees who are giving you the alcoholic run-around -- provided, of course, they are willing to have a third party in the picture.

146. After your man has gone along without drinking **for** a few months, you may be able to make use of his services with other employees who are giving you the alcoholic run-around -- provided, of course, they are willing to have a third party in the picture.

162. If you do, your past will be forgotten and the fact that you went away for treatment will not be mentioned.

147. If you **take it**, your past will be forgotten and the fact that you went away for treatment will not be mentioned.

164. I have enjoyed every moment spent in getting them straightened out.* *See appendix-The Alcoholic Foundation. We may be able to carry on a limited correspondence.

150. I have enjoyed every moment spent in getting them straightened out.* *See Appendix VI-We shall be happy to hear from you if we can be of help.

166. As ex-alcoholics, we smile at such a sally.

151. As **ex-problem drinkers**, we smile at such a sally.

168. Nearly four years ago, one of our number made a journey to a certain western city.

153. **Years ago, in 1935**, one of our number made a journey to a certain western city.

168. **Then** after all, had he not been sober six months now?

154. After all, had he not been sober six months now?

169. Painfully aware of being somehow abnormal, the man did not fully realize what it meant to be alcoholic.

155. Painfully aware of being somehow abnormal, the man did not fully realize what it meant to be alcoholic.*

*This refers to Bill's first visit with Dr. Bob. These men later became co-founders of A.A. Bill's story opens the text of this book; Dr. Bob's heads the Story Section.

170. Goes off his head completely when drinking.

156. Goes off his head completely when **he's** drinking.

170. Understand he was once a well-known lawyer in town, but just now we've got him strapped down tight."

156. Understand he was once a well-known lawyer in town, but just now we've got him strapped down tight."*

*This refers to Bill's and Dr. Bob's first visit to A.A. Number Three. See the Pioneer Section. This resulted in A.A. first group at Akron, Ohio, in 1935.

174. He succumbed to that gay crowd inside, who laughed at their own misfortune and understood him.

160. He succumbed to that gay crowd inside, who laughed at their own **misfortunes** and understood his.

175. Being a large place, we think that some day its Fellowship will number many hundreds.

161. Being a large place, we think that some day its Fellowship will number many hundreds.*

*Written in 1939.

176. Under only slightly different conditions, the same thing is taking place in several eastern cities.

161. Under only slightly different conditions, the same thing is taking place in **many** eastern cities.

Big Book Changes

176. We are greatly indebted to the doctor in attendance there, for he, although it might prejudice his own work, has told us of his belief in our work.

162. We are greatly indebted to the doctor in attendance there, for he, although it might prejudice his own work, has told us of his belief in [ours](#).

176. Then, in this eastern city, there are informal meetings such as we have described to you, where you may see thirty or forty, there are the same fast friendships, there is the same helpfulness to one another as you find among our western friends.

162. Then, in this eastern city, there are informal meetings such as we have described to you, where you may [now](#) see [scores of members](#). There are the same fast friendships, there is the same helpfulness to one another as you find among our western friends.

177. This practice enables us to lend a hand, at the same time avoiding certain alluring distractions of the road, about which any traveling man can inform you.

162. This practice enables us to lend a hand, at the same time avoiding certain alluring distractions of the road, about which any traveling man can inform you.*

*Written in 1939. In 2001, there are over 100,000 groups. There is A.A. activity in approximately 150 countries, with an estimated membership of over two million.

177. You forget that you have just now tapped a source of power [so](#) much greater than yourself.

163. You forget that you have just now tapped a source of power much greater than yourself.

177. We know a former alcoholic who was living in a large community.

163. We know [of an A.A. member](#) who was living in a large community.

177. This was only a few days ago at this writing.

163. This was only a few days ago at this writing. [\(1939\)](#)

178. He will show you how to create the fellowship you crave.

164. He will show you how to create the fellowship you crave.*

*Alcoholics Anonymous will be glad to hear from you. Address P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163.
