



Beyond the Basics

12 Step Recovery Program

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The Progressive Nature of Alcoholism



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1) Are YOU Alcoholic or Not?

Are You Alcoholic or Not?

“MOST OF US have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. (BB p.30)”.

- **Question:** *How do I know if I am really an Alcoholic? NOT everyone attending AA is an Alcoholic. The only requirement for AA membership is a “desire to stop drinking”.*
- **Suggestion:** *The Big Book describes two types of drinkers who are NOT Alcoholic. If either describes your relationship with alcohol, you are probably NOT Alcoholic.*

Are You Alcoholic or Not?

THE MODERATE DRINKER

- “Moderate drinkers have little trouble in giving up liquor entirely if they have good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone.” (BB p.20)
- *Have you had good reason to give it up?*
- *Were you able to give it up entirely?*
- Note: Alcohol is a drug. Substituting another drug for alcohol is not the same as “giving it up entirely”.

Are You Alcoholic or Not?

THE HARD DRINKER or PROBLEM DRINKER

- The “**hard drinker**” is someone who may habitually drink to excess but given “a sufficiently strong reason... this man can also STOP OR MODERATE, ...” (p.21, 39)
- NO mental obsession (he can STOP and won't be driven to change his mind) AND
- NO phenomenon of craving (this person can MODERATE and drink the intended amount without triggering a craving to drink more which “changes their mind”.

Are You Alcoholic or Not?

THE NON-ALCOHOLIC

- *The only requirement for AA membership is a “desire to stop drinking”.*
- *Non-alcoholics who have decided to stop drinking are encouraged to attend AA meetings. They come to enjoy the sober fellowship and to repeatedly renew their resolve to “not drink no matter what”.*
- *How then, do we distinguish the chronic or real alcoholic from the non-alcoholic?*

Are You Alcoholic or Not?

THE ALCOHOLIC

Here is perhaps the most “often-cited” test for determining if you are alcoholic:

- “If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, OR if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are **probably alcoholic.**” (p.44)
- **Note:** The “OR” implies either condition indicates you are “**probably alcoholic**”.

Are You Alcoholic or Not? (Summary)

- The test is NOT the amount you drank or the trouble it may have caused. The test is whether you have experienced either:
 - 1) the phenomenon of craving, which occurs **AFTER** you take the first drink, **OR**
 - 2) the mental obsession, which occurs **BEFORE** you take the first drink.
- The significance of this determination is:
“If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness (alcoholism) **which only a spiritual experience will conquer.**” (p.44)

Are You Alcoholic or Not?

THE ALCOHOLIC

Dr. Silkworth offers a more definitive test:

- “We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, 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 temperate drinker.” (p.xxvi)
- **Note:** *The word “NEVER” means that if you do experience the phenomenon of craving, you are definitely a “chronic alcoholic”.*

SUMMARY:

- *The 2 major indicators of alcoholism are:*
 - 1) the phenomenon of craving (definitely)
 - 2) the mental obsession (probably alcoholic)
- *If neither indicator is present, the person is probably not yet an alcoholic, even though they may often choose to drink to excess.*
- *The Non-alcoholic is one who has NEVER experienced the phenomenon of craving, AND can successfully STOP OR MODERATE.*

Are You Alcoholic or Not?

DISCUSSION:

- *How many times have you decided to **quit entirely**? How long before you “changed your mind”? A day, a month, or a year?*
- *Have you attempted to **moderate** your consumption? Did you ever “change your mind” and exceed your self-imposed limit?*
- *Have you **EVER** experienced what they describe as the “**phenomenon of craving**”?*
- *Have matters gotten progressively worse?*

Are You Alcoholic or Not?

THE BIG BOOK (BB)

of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

is a **“SURVIVAL GUIDE”**

with **DO-OR-DIE DIRECTIVES**

for **DESPERATE ALCOHOLICS**