

## Plain and Simple Language translation of the Big Book

So, I got to see the draft of the Plain and Simple Language translation of the Big Book. It was quite an experience and I'd like to share it with you the best I can.

First, the reading room was a very controlled environment designed to keep pictures or replicas of any kind from coming out and hopefully prevent versions getting into the hands of the body prematurely.

So we were allowed no phones, computers, or our own Big Book. We were given a new 4<sup>th</sup> edition to use for comparison. We were facing a wall and no talking was allowed. We had note paper available for notes that has disclaimers on it.

I was surprised that I was emotionally moved when I was reading. I felt like I was getting the message I am already familiar with, and it was very easy to understand what it meant. The meaning felt clear, and I thought the message was very close to the same as our beloved Big Book.

I am giving you examples in this letter from my notes. *Please keep in mind that this is a draft and still could change.* My intention is to communicate the way it feels to read it and give you an idea of what it is like.

The first thing I noticed is a disclaimer on the very first page that says, “**This book is not intended to replace Alcoholics Anonymous**” and “**If you are curious about the original Big Book, we encourage you to get a copy and members will help you read it.**” The working title is “A.A. in Plain Language: A tool for Accessing the Big Book”.

The forward is a brief overview of our history.

In some places, the translation followed the sentence structure of the Big Book, with slightly different words. In other places, the idea or concept was conveyed, but it wasn't comparable sentence by sentence.

There are definitions for words that were not translated in the margins.

**Sober/Sobriety – not using mood altering chemicals such as alcohol or narcotics. Relapse – When an alcoholic who has stopped drinking for a period of time begins to drink again.**

### Doctors Opinion

In the Dr's Opinion, Dr Silkworth's letter is on one side of the page with the translation on the other.

An example is where the Big Book says They are restless, irritable, and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort ... the phrase translates to...**and they feel anxious and frustrated unless they feel the comfort they get from drinking. Frothy emotional appeal: begging these people to stop.**

### Bills Story

Bills story is formatted in subchapters: My early years as a Stock Market Investor; Wealth success and Lots of Liquor; A New start in Canada; Starting and Stopping Again; Learning about Alcoholism; A visit from a Friend; The Long Road to Recovery; and Bringing a Message of Recovery to More Alcoholics.

### **More About Alcoholism**

In the paragraph that talks about the different things we try to control our drinking; the list is formatted in bullets.

The story about Jim is now anonymous and the jaywalker is a woman.

### **We Agnostics**

We Agnostics names God 8 times in the first 2 pages.

### **How it works**

How it works listed the steps as they are on one side with an explanation on the other side the same way as Dr. Silkworth's letter.

- The line in How it Works about old ideas translates to: **“Some of us tried to keep our old ideas and they just held us back”**. The B in the ABC's was different: **“No human power could have stopped or changed our alcoholism”**.
- The paragraph right after the ABC's: **“The 12 steps were created so that we could help ourselves and others understand these 3 ideas and then grow beyond them. We had already accepted our powerlessness over alcohol and already believed in a higher power. That meant we were at step 3. But what did that mean? And how could we do it?”**
- Later it continues... **'Selfishness – self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles...more self-centered than most people'....**

### **Taking Inventory and Responsibility**

Taking Inventory and Responsibility is the title of one of the subchapters in “How it Works”.

### **Resentments**

The line in the Big Book about “we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure” is translated to “searched out the flaws in our personalities that caused our struggles” and the Mr. Brown chart is the same.

- Resentment is “feeling anger about being treated unfairly...holding a grudge... staying angry for a long period of time. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. Holding on to our grudges can be fatal...”
- The list of “affects” is the same: self-esteem, security, ambitions, personal relationships, sex relations.

### **Fear Inventory**

- Subtitle: Fear hides everywhere. In our Big Book, “*evil and destructive thread that wove its way through the fabric of our existence*” is translated to **“we put them on paper even if they weren't connected to feelings of resentment...”** In the *Fear Prayer* the translation is: **“God, help me not feel angry at this person...”**

### Sex Inventory

- The sex inventory asked the same questions, and the last line “*swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself*” is the same. It means being willing to make amends whenever you’re wrong (as long as you don’t cause more harm by doing so).

### Into Action

The “Into Action” chapter is much shorter, but I saw all the directions I am used to. Here’s another example from my notes:

“...Go to any lengths for victory over alcohol” is: “**whatever it took to win our battle with alcohol.**”

### The Promises

- “*amazed before we are halfway through*” translates to “**amazed before we have made amends to half our list of people.**”
- “*No matter how far down the scale we have gone*” translates to “**no matter how badly we behaved in the past.**”
- “*...gain interest in our fellows*” translates to “**...take an interest in helping other people.**”
- “*Fear of economic insecurity*” translates to “**...fear of money worries.**”
- “*...that used to baffle us*” translates to “**...used to confuse or worry us.**”

### Step 10 and Step 11

In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Step:

- “*Grow in our understanding and effectiveness*” translates to “**...become more effective.**”
- “*...daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition*” translates to “**...Relief from alcoholism for that day completely depends on us keeping our spirituality.**”
- “*Thoughts be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives*” translates to “**thoughts stay away from self-pity, lying or self-serving motives.**”
- “*We alcoholics are undisciplined*” translates to “**we alcoholics struggle to obey rules when we are left on our own.**”

### Step 12

The next chapter is all about how to practice Step 12.

The translation is currently 87 pages through the 6th chapter, but the page numbers don’t match up because the formatting is very different with having the subchapters and no “xx” pages.

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The General Service Conference’s sense of the body is that this writing captured the message of our Big Book. We gave suggestions of minor edits, and asked that the committee continue its work and bring a draft to the General Service Conference Literature Committee next year.