

# An Updated “How It Works”



*This updated version of “How it Works” – originally published as chapter five of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1939 – was created by Hilary J and the Sober Agnostics group and is read at the beginning of their meetings in Vancouver, BC, Canada.*

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The program is a tool to help us to recover from our addictions. It requires us to be completely honest with ourselves, and to take personal responsibility for our own behaviour and attitudes. We have found this to be a crucial element in our recovery.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you truly desire recovery, and are willing to go outside your comfort zone and work hard to change your life and your behaviour, then you are ready to take certain steps.

Some of these appeared very daunting. At first, most of us thought we could find an easier, softer way; but we could not. Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point, and chose the path to sobriety. Here are the Steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addictions—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to accept that we needed strengths beyond our awareness and resources to cope with our problems.
3. Made a decision to use the program to overcome our addiction.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves: acknowledging our strengths and weaknesses, and the fears, resentments and selfish behaviours that contributed to our addiction.
5. Admitted to ourselves without reservation, and to another human being, the details of that inventory, both positive and negative.
6. Were ready to let go of our destructive patterns.
7. Humbly sought to change our behaviour and attitudes in order to achieve sobriety.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Searched within ourselves for our rightful path in life and the power to carry that out.
12. Having achieved recovery through taking these steps, we tried to carry this message to other addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to work hard to improve our lives and maintain our recovery. The principles we have set down are merely guides. We claim progress rather than perfection.

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