

- Getting Sober
- Staying Sober
- The next frontier- Emotional Sobriety

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STEP 6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Bill W, A.A.'s cofounder, was a prolific writer. His Grapevine writings have been compiled into a book, called *The Language of the Heart*. On page 315 Bill W. writes "Freedom Under God: The Choice is Ours". He wrote the following:

In it's deeper sense AA is a quest for freedom-freedom under God. Of course the immediate object of our quest is sobriety—freedom from alcohol and from all its baleful consequences. Without this freedom, we have nothing at all.

Paradoxically, though, we can achieve no liberation from alcohol obsession until we become willing to deal with those character defects which have landed us in that helpless condition. Even to gain sobriety only, we must attain some freedom from fear, anger, and pride; from rebellion and self-righteousness; from laziness and irresponsibility; from foolish rationalization and outright dishonesty; from wrong dependencies and destructive power-driving.

In this freedom quest, we are always given three choices. A rebellious refusal to work upon our glaring defects can be a ticket to destruction. Or, for a time, we can stay sober with a minimum of self-improvement and settle ourselves into a comfortable but often dangerous mediocrity. Or we can continuously try hard for those sterling qualities which can add up to greatness of spirit and action-true and lasting freedom under God, the freedom to find and do his will.

For most of us this last choice is really ours; we must never be blinded by the futile philosophy that we are just the hapless victim of our inheritance, our life experience, and our surroundings—that these are the sole forces that make our decisions for us. This is not the road to freedom. We have to believe that we can really choose.

**God of your understanding*

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Tommy 2 Years
April M. 90 Days
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The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety

Grapevine January 1958 author Bill W. rewritten here in part:

I think many oldsters who have put our AA "booze cure" to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the next major development in AA—the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows and with God*.

Those adolescent urges that so many of us have for top approval, perfect security, and perfect romance—urges quite appropriate to age seventeen—prove to be an impossible way of life when we are at age forty-seven or fifty-seven.

Since AA began, I've taken immense wallops in all three areas because of my failure to grow up, emotionally and spiritually. My God, how painful it is to keep demanding the impossible, and how very painful to discover, finally, that all along we have had the cart before the horse! Then comes the final agony of seeing how awfully wrong we have been, but still, finding ourselves unable to get off the emotional merry-go-round. How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotion result, and so into easy, happy, and good living—well, that's not only the neurotic's problem, it's the problem of life itself for all of us who have to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all our affairs.

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That's the place so many of us AA oldsters have come to. And it's a hell of a spot, literally. How shall our unconscious—from which so many of our fears, compulsions, and phony aspirations still stream—be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want! How to convince our dumb, raging and hidden "Mr. Hyde" becomes our main task.

I've recently come to believe that this can be achieved. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones—folks like you and me—commencing to get results. Depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. I kept asking myself, "Why can't the Twelve Steps work to release depression?" By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer... "It's better to comfort than to be comforted" Here was the formula, all right. But why didn't it work?"

Suddenly I realized what the matter was. ***My basic flaw had always been dependence—almost absolute dependence—on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like.*** Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

There wasn't a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away.

Because I had over the years undergone a little spiritual development, the absolute quality of these frightful dependencies had never before been so starkly revealed. Reinforced by what grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these ***faulty emotional dependencies*** upon people, upon AA, indeed, upon any set of circumstances whatsoever. Then only could I be free to love as Francis had. ***Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing a love appropriate to each relation of life.***

I could not avail myself of God's love until I was able to offer it back to him by loving others as he would have me.