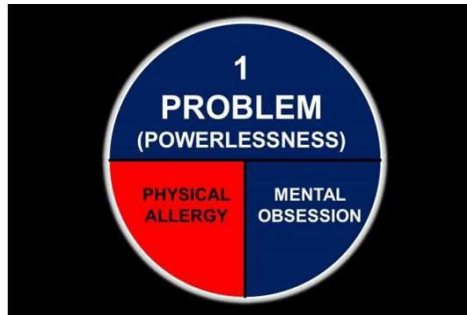


THE PROBLEM



When many of us started coming to AA we knew we had a problem. We were powerless when it came to alcohol. It had control over us; our minds, our bodies and even our souls. Our lives were a hot mess.

We learned that we had a problem. That problem is a mental obsession with alcohol coupled with a physical allergy to alcohol.

The problem is mental obsession not physical allergy. The physical allergy is what we all have and will never go away. Once we take that first drink, our bodies take over and want more and more. This is what the Big Book calls “phenomenon of craving.”

Mental Obsession:

BB Pg 23 – “the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his **mind**, rather than in his **body**.”

Definition – Mental Obsession

BB Pg 24 – The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. **We are without defense against the first drink.**

Physical Allergy:

BB Pg 22: We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink, as he may do for months or years, he reacts much like other men. We are equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this

Before First Drink – Mental Obsession

After First Drink – Physical Allergy – Never goes away

BB Pg 33: ONCE AN ALCOHOLIC, ALWAYS AN ALCOHOLIC – It never goes away

Are you not convinced?

BB Pg 31: We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.

PHYSICAL ALLERGY

Physical Allergy – You have a physical allergy to alcohol. Once you take one drink, your body begins a craving for alcohol. You don't stop drinking. There is no "well, it's time to go." No "I've had enough." No "I have things to do tomorrow." You get drunk.

It's like an allergy to peanuts. If you don't eat peanuts your allergy to them will never break out.

BB Pg xxvi: The physician who, at our request, gave us this letter, has been kind enough to enlarge upon his views in another statement which follows. In this statement he confirms what we who have suffered alcoholic torture must believe - **that the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind**. It did not satisfy us to be told that we could not control our drinking just because we were maladjusted to life, that we were in full flight from reality, or were outright mental defectives. These things were true to some extent, in fact, to a considerable extent with some of us. But we are sure that our bodies were sickened as well. In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.

Body = Allergy

Mind = Mental Obsession

BB Pg xxviii: 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. These allergic types can **never** safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.

Chronic – Always present or encountered

Allergy – abnormally high sensitivity

Phenomenon – Experience/fact

Never - at no time in the past or future; on no occasion; not ever

BB Pg xxviii: **Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol.** The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the **phenomenon of craving** develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.

Effect – a change that is a result of an action

PHYSICAL ALLERGY

BB Pg xxx: All these, and many others, have *one symptom in common: **they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving**. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence.

*Alcoholics all have this allergy and will never go away

Craving – Intensely wanting or hungering for

BB Pg 30: We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals—usually brief—were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a **progressive illness**. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better.

Progressive – Continually worsening

BB Pg 30: We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of our kind like other men. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is **no such** thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.

No such – does not exist

TEST

BB Pg 31: We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.

Before First Drink – Mental Obsession

After First Drink – Physical Allergy – Never goes away

BB Pg 22: We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink, as he may do for months or years, he reacts much like other men. We are equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this

BB Pg 32 – “A man of Thirty” story – Never recover from physical allergy

BB Pg 33: ONCE AN ALCOHOLIC, ALWAYS AN ALCOHOLIC – It never goes away

MENTAL OBSESSION

WHERE MENTAL OBSESSION LIVES:

BB Pg 23: These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his **body**. If you ask him why he started on that last bender, the chances are he will offer you any one of a hundred alibis. Sometimes these excuses have a certain plausibility, but none of them really makes sense in the light of the havoc an alcoholic's drinking bout creates. They sound like the philosophy of the man who, having a headache, beats himself on the head with a hammer so that he can't feel the ache. If you draw this fallacious reasoning to the attention of an alcoholic, he will laugh it off, or become irritated and refuse to talk.

Mental obsession – Is the main problem, is in the mind and before the first drink

Physical allergy – Is NOT the main problem, is in the body and is after the first drink

WHEN DOES MENTAL OBSESSION STRIKE? HOW M.O. AND P.A. WORK TOGETHER

BB Pg xxviii: Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the **phenomenon of craving** develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.

True from false - Illusion

BB Pg 24: The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.

Definition – Mental Obsession

OBSESSION IN ACTION

BB Pg 35: Jim's story

BB Pg 37: The Jaywalker story – Read and think how this is you and alcohol

BB Pg 39: Fred's story – Generally read 1st 15 lines on page 41

MENTAL OBSESSION

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MODERATE DRINKER, HARD DRINKER AND REAL ALCOHOLIC

BB Pg 20 – 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 Pg 20 – Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason—ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor—becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention.

BB Pg 21 – But what about the real alcoholic? He may start off as a moderate drinker; he may or may not become a continuous hard drinker; but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink.

The above is the definition of the REAL ALCOHOLIC

BB Pg 5 – I woke up. This had to be stopped. I saw I could not take so much as one drink. I was through forever. Before then, I had written lots of sweet promises, but my wife happily observed that this time I meant business. And so I did.

Shortly afterward I came home drunk. There had been no fight. Where had been my high resolve? I simply didn't know. It hadn't even come to mind. Someone had pushed a drink my way, and I had taken it. Was I crazy? I began to wonder, for such an appalling lack of perspective seemed near being just that.

Renewing my resolve, I tried again. Some time passed, and confidence began to be replaced by cocksureness. I could laugh at the gin mills. Now I had what it takes! One day I walked into a cafe to telephone. In no time I was beating on the bar asking myself how it happened. 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. And I did.

The remorse, horror and hopelessness of the next morning are unforgettable. The courage to do battle was not there. My brain raced uncontrollably and there was a terrible sense of impending calamity. I hardly dared cross the street, lest I collapse and be run down by an early morning truck, for it was scarcely daylight. An all night place supplied me with a dozen glasses of ale. My writhing nerves were stilled at last. A morning paper told me the market had gone to hell again. Well, so had I. The market would recover, but I wouldn't. That was a hard thought. Should I kill myself? No—not now. Then a mental fog settled down. Gin would fix that. So two bottles, and—oblivion.

BB DEFINITION OF AN ALCOHOLIC

BB Pg 44, Line 4 – 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.

MENTAL OBSESSION

RECOVERED:

1. The BB uses the term “recovered” many times; title page, xiii, xvii, 17, 29, etc. The BB uses “recovered” 23 times. “Recovered” is something to do; not to simply theorize about it. Do we recover (?) is the wrong question...it seeks to avoid action.
2. The sincere question is: What special and technical usage did Bill assign to that word? What is he trying to tell us?
3. Read the “recovered” promises (bottom of 84, top of 85) aka 10th Step Promises
4. Half of this understanding is wanting to understand.
5. **BB Pg 85** – “the problem has been removed.” This problem is, of course, the mental obsession and **NOT THE PHYSICAL ALLERGY**. However, the mental obsession has not been destroyed. It will always be “out there waiting.”
6. **BB Pg 85** – “...in fit spiritual condition” means we could become unrecovered tomorrow!
7. **BB Pg 85** - It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.

Our problem (mental obsession) will be removed when we experience a vital spiritual experience. We find this spiritual awakening by working the steps. It will remain removed as long as we remain in fit spiritual condition.