

Step 1 Workbook v2: Powerlessness and Unmanageability

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

This is the beginning of honesty. Step 1 isn't just about drinking—it's about the patterns that kept us trapped, the lies we told ourselves, and the illusion of control we clung to. This is where freedom begins: not by fighting, but by admitting defeat and asking for help.

Reflection Questions

1. What does 'powerless over alcohol' mean to you—beyond the words?
2. What attempts did you make to control or manage your drinking, and how did those end?
3. In what ways did alcohol change your behavior, morals, or relationships?
4. How did you try to hide, justify, or minimize your drinking?
5. What consequences—emotional, relational, financial, spiritual—did you suffer as a result of drinking?
6. How has your life been unmanageable even during dry spells or attempts at moderation?
7. What lies did you believe about yourself or alcohol that kept you trapped?
8. How did your drinking affect people you love—and how did you respond to that?
9. What feelings did you try to numb or escape through drinking?
10. What was your emotional and spiritual bottom—and what finally made you ask for help?
11. What does surrender look like in your life today?
12. What might accepting Step 1 make possible for you now?

Quotes from AA Literature

Big Book (4th Edition)

"We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics." — Big Book, p. 30

"The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed." — Big Book, p. 30

"The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker." — Big Book, p. 30

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

"Who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one, of course." — 12 & 12, Step 1

"Until we so humble ourselves, our sobriety—if any—will be precarious." — 12 & 12, Step 1

"We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength." — 12 & 12, Step 1

Plain Language Big Book

"In Step One, we stop denying that we have a problem and accept that we need help." — Plain Language Big Book

"Our lives don't have to be falling apart on the outside to be unmanageable on the inside." — Plain Language Big Book

"Powerlessness isn't failure—it's the first honest step toward recovery." — Plain Language Big Book

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Affirmations

Write affirmations that help you stay honest, open, and willing to receive help from others and from your Higher Power.

Examples: 'I am willing to accept help.' 'Surrender is the start of freedom.'

Prayer Reflections

Write a prayer asking for the willingness to be completely honest about your drinking and to accept the help offered to you.