

# **DAA**

**Drug Addicts Anonymous**



# **Am I a Drug Addict?**

**An Introduction to  
Drug Addicts Anonymous**



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**W**ELCOME to Drug Addicts Anonymous (DAA). This booklet has one aim: to help you find a permanent solution to the problem of drug addiction.

We have all been where you are now. Though we loved to get high, our drug use had become increasingly problematic. But when we tried to cut down, we failed, and if we managed to ‘get clean’, staying clean seemed almost impossible. Life without drugs was a dismal, scary prospect – many of us couldn’t even imagine it.

Faced with what looked like a long, hard road towards an uncertain future, we felt apprehensive and weary. We also felt confused: our own behaviour baffled us and some of the information we were given didn’t make much sense. Hopefully, this booklet will address at least some of your questions. If you don’t find the answers here, please call our helpline - or better still, visit one of our meetings.

There you’ll find drug addicts from many backgrounds who between them used many different drugs, both legal and illegal. Yet we share a common problem. When using, most of us had little or no control over the amount we took. And when we tried to stop, even if we gave it our best shot, we were unable to stop permanently.

We have found a common solution to our problem. Together, we escaped what became an existence filled with fear, loneliness, anger and despair. We now enjoy full, rewarding lives beyond any we once thought possible. If it has worked for us, this solution can also work for you. We will do our best to show you how.

Drug Addicts Anonymous is a society of men and women who have recovered from drug addiction by following the Twelve Steps. This tried and tested programme of action is detailed in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, also known as the ‘Big Book’. We use the AA Big Book as our own manual for recovery; though written by and for alcoholics, we find it just as effective for drug addicts like ourselves.

Our primary purpose is to help others recover from drug addiction, an illness that claims the lives of many and condemns still more to live in perpetual misery. Before coming to DAA, many of us sought other kinds of help, but nothing seemed to work for us in the long run. We began to suspect we were hopeless cases. So it came as a relief to learn that if we are willing to take action and follow the example of those who have gone before us, the solution offered in DAA is guaranteed to bring about a profound change in thought, attitude and behaviour. To recover successfully, a transformation of this kind is vital.

DAA is open to *anyone* who has a desire to stop using *any* mind-altering substance. There are no membership fees or dues - indeed, no obligations whatsoever.

## **SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS**

### ***Do I need DAA?***

DAA is for people who can't regulate their drug use, or who can't stop using, or who, when they get clean, can't stay clean. We lack control over when or how much we use. Try as we might, we can't use drugs like other people – people we see 'getting away with it' and having fun. It may well be that we too used to 'get away with it', and had fun while it lasted, but not anymore. When it comes to drugs, we have lost the power of choice.

### ***Am I a drug addict?***

In DAA we identify ourselves as drug addicts and understand drug addiction as an illness. However, we never tell anyone they are an addict or that they have the illness of drug addiction. Instead, by describing our own experience of the illness, we help others to recognise its symptoms in themselves. The description given here may help you to draw your own conclusions.

### ***Why can't I control the amount I use?***

When we put a mind-altering substance into our bodies, we find we have little or no control over the amount we then take. Though we might start out saying "I'll only do one" or "I'll use this bit and save the rest till later", we frequently

end up using far more than we intended. We react physically to drugs by craving more drugs; our bodies, never satisfied, demand more and more. This phenomenon doesn't occur in non-addicts (this may include some people who use drugs heavily). Unlike them, once we get started we often have a baffling inability to stop, or even slow down.

If we can't therefore use drugs moderately, the question is how to stop altogether.

***When I decide to stop, why can't I stick to my decision?***

When the drugs run out, or if something else compels us to stop, many of us swear that this time we are finished for good – and mean it. But before too long the thought occurs to us that enough time has passed (perhaps only a day or two!) and that we should now be able to control our drug use. We can't adequately recall our recent experience of going completely overboard. We convince ourselves that this time it will somehow be different. We score drugs and begin the cycle once more.

Because we can't keep the memory or thought of what happened last time firmly in our minds, the past consequences of our drug use do not deter us from using again. The idea that drugs will give us a sense of ease and comfort becomes too strong to resist. Due to what the Big Book calls a *strange mental blank spot*, the harm we caused ourselves and others, and the humiliation and misery we experienced even a day or two ago, does not prevent us from returning to drugs.

The delusion that we can 'get away with it' can be very subtle: we tell ourselves we'll "only do a little bit" or that using "just once can't hurt me". At other times, we are seized with a sudden, overwhelming urge to go and score, regardless of the consequences. One way or another, the insane thought wins out time and time again.

Some people mistakenly believe that to be a drug addict one must use so-called 'hard' drugs or use drugs every day. But irrespective of the type or amount of drugs we use, it is these symptoms - the insane thinking that precedes our drug use and the physical craving once we start – that distinguish us as drug addicts. Once these symptoms are established, we are in serious trouble.

### ***What happens to me when I'm clean?***

Many of us have experienced a sense that we don't belong, or that something is missing, or that there's something 'wrong' with us that we can't quite explain. It seems we can't find emotional satisfaction the way other people do. It's as if our lives lack an important mystery ingredient; without this elusive 'something', we feel lost and empty. Equally, we're unable without drugs to tolerate even minimal levels of stress, boredom or dissatisfaction.

The Big Book describes this internal condition simply as *restless, irritable and discontented*. Of course everybody, at least to some extent, feels this way some of the time. We discovered, however, that using drugs is an extremely effective way to relieve this kind of discomfort. At first, drugs worked for us as nothing else did - though in time they provided less and less relief. Eventually, we feel bored and depressed even when using. But if we ever manage to get clean, our problems quickly overwhelm us and life soon seems impossibly hard work.

It is often when we are clean that our condition becomes truly unbearable. Beset by feelings of self-pity, self-loathing, uselessness and despair, our world seems drained of colour and vibrancy. Life is at once frightening and excruciatingly tedious. Shut off from any sense of a connection with other people, we experience fear, loneliness, anger and confusion as our normal state of mind.

Though life with drugs is no longer an option, we find living without them intolerable. Many of us grow preoccupied with thoughts of suicide: we want to stop suffering and this seems like the best idea we can come up with.

When we use drugs, we lack control. When we stop using, we always start again. The cycle is endless. Some of us didn't need to use for long in order to realize this. For others, it took many years. Either way, we had to admit that for us this is the truth.

*If this all sounds familiar, perhaps you are asking yourself, 'what now?'*

## **SPONSORSHIP**

### ***What is a sponsor? Why do we use sponsorship?***

Freedom from drug addiction can be achieved by taking the Twelve Steps. But this isn't something we can do on our own (any more than we can learn to drive a car without the help of an experienced driver). In DAA we therefore offer sponsorship. A sponsor is someone with the experience needed to guide others through the Steps. Having taken all twelve Steps themselves, our sponsors have recovered from the illness of drug addiction. They are no longer prey to the insane thinking that precedes using drugs. Their task is to show us how to follow the programme in order to obtain the same result.

We learn from our sponsors how to live drug-free and enjoy sane, rewarding, happy lives. They have been where we have been: they too were once powerless over drugs. They can identify with our obsession and compulsion to use drugs regardless of the consequences. Our sponsors take us through the Steps using the instructions given in the Big Book. By following their guidance, we are able to experience for ourselves the miracle of recovery from drug addiction.

Sponsorship is available at our meetings. A DAA member will, if you ask them to, consider it a privilege to sponsor you. If a member isn't able to sponsor you at the moment, they'll be happy to introduce you to somebody who can. Alternatively, call our helpline and we will help you find a sponsor.

## **THE STEPS**

### ***Why do we take the Twelve Steps? What do they do?***

We come to the Steps broken, defeated and lost. Life has become impossible either with or without drugs. The Big Book describes the programme as a *design for living*: though it may seem daunting at first, we find that we are willing to try this new way of life. We then discover that our feelings, thinking, outlook and behaviour all change as we follow the plan of action outlined in the Steps.

# THE TWELVE STEPS OF DRUG ADDICTS ANONYMOUS

We took these steps in order to recover:

1. We admitted we were powerless over narcotics and all other mind-altering substances - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
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. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to drug addicts, and to practise these principles in all our affairs.

*The Twelve Steps are adapted with permission from AA World Services, Inc. The permission to adapt AA's Steps does not imply an endorsement or affiliation with DAA.*

Many of us considered ourselves atheists, and felt alarmed or discouraged when we saw the word ‘God’ in the Steps. It is important to stress that Drug Addicts Anonymous is not a religious organization: we are never asked to agree with anyone else’s concept of a ‘Power greater than ourselves’.

In DAA we like results, so we let the results of working the Steps speak for themselves. In the beginning, it isn’t even necessary to believe that the programme will work for us. We just need to be willing to give it a try. Other DAA members help us by sharing their experience; it turns out that their stories are remarkably like our own. What has worked for them will therefore work for us. We begin to see that a new life is within reach. For the first time in a long time, there is hope. We start following the programme and begin to grow.

### ***The first three Steps***

Though there are slight variations in the way different DAA members work them, the Steps teach all of us the same spiritual principles. In Step One we are asked to admit to our innermost selves that we are drug addicts, that we have lost the power of choice and control over drugs. Looking back, we can see that our attempts to regain control always ended in failure: if they’d succeeded, we wouldn’t be where we are now.

Many of us clung for years to the persistent idea that we could turn back the clock and control and enjoy drugs as we once used to (or at least as we imagined we once used to). The Big Book describes this as the *great obsession* of every drug addict. An honest examination of our past reveals that no human power could cure our addiction: husbands and wives, children, parents, friends, lovers, doctors, therapists, key-workers – none of them can keep us from returning to drugs. And our own will-power is hopelessly ineffective. But the power to solve our problem must be found somewhere: this is our dilemma. And this is where Step Two comes in.

We begin by asking ourselves one short question: “Am I willing to believe in the possibility of a Power greater than myself?” If our answer to this is “yes”, or at first even “maybe”, we can then ask this Power, however we conceive it, to remove the insane thinking that always leads us back to drugs.

We are completely free to choose a 'Higher Power' of our own understanding. While some of us are comfortable turning to the God of an established religion, perhaps one from which we have drifted away, many prefer to make a start by treating a DAA group – or whatever it is that keeps the group's members clean - as our Higher Power. Others think in terms of the power of nature or the physical universe, recalling places that are special to us or moments when we felt at peace and connected to the world. For some, it helps to remember a deceased relative or friend.

We take time to think this through – many of us have never given matters of this kind even the slightest consideration. Some of us have to overcome strong prejudice, mistrust and doubt. We find it helpful to talk to other DAA members about their experience of this Step.

Once we come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can remove our obsession to use drugs and restore us to sanity, we are ready to take the Third Step. Here we make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power. This does not happen overnight: our decision is the beginning of a lifelong process of spiritual growth. We ask our Higher Power to free us from what the Big Book calls the *bondage of self* – the selfishness and self-centredness that ruled our lives and almost destroyed us.

Just as there are many ways to understand the concept of a Higher Power, there are many ways to go about the Third Step. But in practical terms it comes down to two things: affirming our newfound faith with a prayer, and making a commitment to the rest of the Twelve Steps. Our sponsors continue to guide us as we take each of the Steps that follow. Before long, a new life will unfold around and within us. We will experience for ourselves the *spiritual awakening* that the Steps promise.

## PRACTICAL SPIRITUAL ACTION

We don't recover from drug addiction just by thinking about our problem. Instead, we must take *action*. Ever since its first publication in 1939, drug addicts have recovered successfully by following the AA Big Book's clear-cut instructions. Why do we still use this book in DAA today? Quite simply, it continues to deliver fantastic results.

Successful recovery also depends on frequent contact with other drug addicts. 'Fellowship' (the term we use for DAA as a whole) is a common bond shared by each and every DAA member in countries around the world, to which we all contribute. Once we start attending DAA meetings and begin to share our experience with other addicts, we lose the frightening sense we once had of being completely alone in an unfriendly universe. We form trusting relationships with our fellows, which reconnect us to the rest of the human race. As we learn to live as equals, neither inferior nor superior to anyone else, we outgrow self-centred fear and discover our true place in the world.

A 'home group' is a group of drug addicts who run a DAA meeting (or sometimes more than one meeting). When we first start going to DAA meetings, most of us choose a particular group, and that group then becomes our home within the fellowship. We turn up every week, help set up the meeting room, share our experience with each other and with newcomers, and enjoy the company of recovered drug addicts.

Though we attend other meetings, we *join* our home group. We discuss and vote on matters affecting our group, and in this way help shape its character and future. We also vote in our groups on matters affecting DAA as a whole, and so participate fully in our fellowship's growth and development. Many of us are unused to arriving on time, holding positions of trust and responsibility, being accountable to our fellows and working with them towards a common goal. We soon find that we can readily apply the simple things we have learned in our home group to our lives and relationships outside the fellowship.

Service - being helpful and useful to others - is indispensable to recovery. For many years we have been self-seeking, self-centred and full of self-pity. In our groups, we now contribute to the health and happiness of others. Making the tea, greeting newcomers, tidying up after a meeting, organizing a group outing - we receive endless opportunities to be of use to our fellows and to drug addicts who still suffer. In even the smallest task, we make a genuine contribution to something greater than ourselves. In our service to others, we put the principles of the Steps into practice - in our own lives, and in the lives of those around us.

Essentially, the Twelve Steps are a programme of spiritual action. To some of us, this at first sounds like mystical mumbo-jumbo. God, Higher Power, prayer, spiritual awakening - what relevance has any of this stuff to the very real problem of our drug addiction? On the other hand, we are relieved to find DAA meetings full of down-to-earth drug addicts who don't take themselves too seriously - men and women who insist that the programme is thoroughly practical. As soon as we discover, as they have, that we can use prayer to stay clean, we find we've tapped into a Power we can then apply in our daily lives to problems that once baffled and defeated us. Unlike drugs, this Power never runs out, costs nothing and is always available. In our experience, it is a Power on which we can rely absolutely.

*It works - it really does.*

## WHAT NEXT?

If you're interested in what we have to offer or how we can help, please:

Call our national helpline: **0300 030 3000** Open 10am till 10pm (calls charged at the normal landline rate)

Or email: **wecanhelp@daa-uk.org**

Or use the text chat facility on our website, where you can talk to one of our members live online. Open 10am till 10pm

The best way to find out more about DAA is to come to one of our meetings. Our website has a Find a Meeting page and lists all current DAA groups in the UK. There you can find details of when and where the meetings are and the phone numbers of members who can answer any questions you might have about the meeting: **www.daa-uk.org**

*We look forward to seeing you soon.*

## **WITH GRATITUDE**

We thank our friends around the world for their contribution to the life of our fellowship. In particular, we owe a debt of gratitude to DAA's founding members in Sweden, who through their work have helped countless drug addicts to recover and find freedom.

# DAA

Drug Addicts Anonymous



**DAA OFFERS FREEDOM FROM DRUG ADDICTION**  
**[www.daa-uk.org](http://www.daa-uk.org)**

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