

Walk Softly and Carry a Big Book

(official and unofficial sloganeering
from the 12 Step programs)

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WalkSoftlyandCarryaBigBook.com

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Many thanks to Penny Pennington and Recovery Emporium, for their personal collection(s) of recovery and self-help slogans, quotes, and anecdotes. The collection of this work drew heavily upon their foundation. In addition there were numerous folks who put together small collections of slogans that we want to thank:

A Collection of Trash, Truth, & Trivia by Scully

Daily Reprieve, designed for Earl Husband

Denial is not a River in Egypt by Sandi Bachom

Keep Coming Back by Meiji Stewart

Meeting Wisdom by Brian L.

Recovery Wisdom from Turning Leaf Press

Simple Sayings by David P.

Most of all we appreciate the many thousands of those attending and sharing in 12 Step meetings, without whom this work could never have been compiled.

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INTRODUCTION

Our inherited wisdom in the 12 Step programs has been pithily summarized in adages and aphorisms, wise sayings and proverbs, one-liners and slogans, notes, quotes, and anecdotes. Here is one of the most complete collections of what we tell each other around the tables, in our literature, when we give a pitch, and when the newcomer walks through the doors. Some of it is wise, some simple and some seemingly dim. But remember that our ability to understand and assimilate insight changes both with knowledge, time in recovery, and service to others. What seemed very wise at 30 days may seem silly at three years.

In Section One, *Slogans, Sayings, and Super One-liners*, we list the slogans, sayings, and one-liners that we have all come to know and love in the various 12 Step fellowships. They are organized alphabetically by topic.

We not only put the words that have been handed down to us through the group vine in this lexicon of sayings, but we often put the quotes from the people who inspired us. In Section Two, *I heard it through the Groupvine*, we have attempted to use only those proverbs, one-liners, quotes that are used in the 12 Step fellowships. There are, of course many references to widely used pithy sayings that are in general public use. But if we use them a lot in the fellowships, they are included here also. In this sense we have tried to focus on our program quotes—those phrases that mean something to us in recovery. Naturally, there are many more worthy sayings in general use, but if they don't

contain meanings and wisdom that the fellowships adhere to— things we repeat to each other and here in the rooms and from our sponsors, they probably aren't listed here

Acronymity is the foundation of all our traditions as well as the title of Section Three of our book. This chapter explores the acronyms we've made up and chuckled over since Bob and Bill met in 1935 in Akron (Acronym), Ohio. In Section Four we deal with those innocuous slips of the tongue that sometimes have us rolling on the floor---we call it *Freudian Sips*, oops, we mean "slips"! And finally our book on sloganeering winds up with a look at how we look at prayer. This is Section Five, the *Higher Powered Pages*.

This collection was not done by one person or even a handful. These are *your* words and this is *your* book. It is what we say to each around the tables, what our speakers delight us with, what our newcomers shock us with. Most of all it comes from you, your heart and soul and your recovery. Suffice it to say that you too are an author, one of the many thousands of "authors" who have oft repeated these sayings, slogans, proverbs and prayers.

So sit back, thumb through the collection, chuckle and reminisce—for this is our collection of wisdom in shorthand, 12 Step sloganeering.



FORWARD

At one of my first meetings a fellow named Don H. talked about the Big Book being a text with stories in the back. He explained that the front part of the book is the "meat of the program" and the stories are the "hamburger helper."

I am a student of our literature, among my weekly committed meetings are a Big Book Study and a Step Study --- it's where I know I will hear the solution discussed. But I also go to at least one discussion meeting. The folks that chair those meetings share their experience, strength, and hope that help me identify with what I've read and how the solution of the program works in their life and my life today. The "hamburger helper" is like that --- mini meetings in print.

Walk Softly is that kind of a book. Shelly has pulled together little tidbits about recovery that get my attention, give me a different point of view, make me think, or make me laugh, provide me with a different perspective, show me another part of the solution.

When I was new I went to meetings with a woman named Marie. One night at the Wilder Group, Marie shared that her brain was still a little foggy and that in order to remember some of the things that she would hear in meetings she had started taking notes.

As a frustrated (and unpublished) writer, I loved her idea and started doing the same thing ~ or at least my interpretation of what I heard Marie describe. I'd make notes about things that I heard people say that helped in my recovery or at least seemed to help in theirs. Eventually I wound up with several notebooks full of one-liners that I had heard in meetings that I later put together into a little tome called "As We See It."

I was reminiscing with some friends about this recently when we were talking about A.A. literature. What I know today is that much of what I initially found so amazingly profound from the long-timers when I came in can be found in the books of our program. This, of course, only goes to prove a former sponsor's

adage that “if you want to hide something from an alcoholic, put it in the Big Book.”

As most of us know, very little of what we hear in these rooms is original. I find myself sharing my story and using lines from the long-timers that were here when I came to the program. Some of what you find in *Walk Softly* are things you may have heard in the meetings you attend. Some you will find in our literature (perhaps presented in slightly different words) and some will be new for you to share with others.

I don't know what ever happened to Marie, but thirty years later, I know that she did what we do in these rooms. She carried a message to someone that suffers, a message that I still use every day of my recovery.

Penny P.

List Owner for As We See It

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/AsWeSeeIt/>

An on-line daily thought for the day for those in recovery.



Section One: *Slogans, Sayings, and Super One-Liners*



There's no elevator. You have to take the Steps.

This section is organized alphabetically by topic. Some listings will be under several headings because the message and emphasis is equally divided between concepts. Take this slogan: *Turn fear into faith through fellowship*. It is listed under *three* headings--Fear, Fellowship, and Faith.

Other sayings or phrases, even when they contain words that we have headings for, may not be under that heading because they are not about that subject...for example: Under the heading "Think" is the saying: *It's a lot easier to react than it is to think*. "Thinking" is clearly in the core of this saying. Another slogan: FOCUS FIRST, doesn't even contain the words "thinking" or "thought" but again has the act "to think" as its core theme. But take this saying: *You're probably an alcoholic if you think spilling beer is alcohol abuse*. The verb "thinking" facilitates the idea, but the saying is not about thinking so this one is not listed under the "Think" heading. It will be found under Abuse, Alcoholic, and Beer.

These slogans were popularized by YOU—so enjoy.

“A”

AA (Alcoholic's Anonymous): *Also see Slogans and Program Generic-Mix & Match*

AA does not teach us how to handle drinking it teaches us how to handle sobriety.

AA God Squad

AA is like a socket wrench, it fits any nut.

Alcoholic: If you drank enough to get to AA, you drank enough.

Alcoholism is a disease of degradation, AA is a process of regeneration.

All the God's send their drunks to AA.

Eventually every alcoholic will have his last drink. Those of us in AA get to talk about ours.

From Alcoholics Obvious to Alcoholics Anonymous.

God liked the first AA meeting so much, He hasn't missed one since.

High and Dry: An AA member who thinks they can still take drugs.

People who say you can't talk about drugs in an AA meeting are usually on them.

Protected by Smith & Wilson.

Soak up AA the way you used to soak up alcohol.

The Grapevine is the Swiss army knife of AA.

The highest you can get in AA is sober.

There are no "Big Shots" in AA, 'cause one shot, and we're all shot!

Worst feeling in the world: A head full of AA and a belly fully of booze.

Abstinence:

Abstinence makes the heart grow fonder.

Abstinence leads to sobriety. The program and 12 Steps lead to recovery.

Untreated abstinence will make our past our future.

White knuckle it.

Abuse:

Bullyproof yourself.

Drug-Use Is Life Abuse

Drug-Use Is Self-Abuse

If you always have to walk on eggshells around your partner, that's fowl play.

If you are constantly being mistreated, you are probably co-operating with the treatments.

If you can't love everybody today, at least try not to abuse everybody.

No abuse excuse!

Pain heals; abuse scars.

Refuse to be abused.

Take the bully by the horns.

The worst abuse excuse: it's not that bad *yet*.

Use your wit to amuse, not to abuse.

Walking on eggshells is for the birds.

It takes two to tangle.

When we abused mind-affecting chemicals, we abused people and when we abused people, we abused mind-affecting chemicals.

You're probably an alcoholic if you think spilling beer is alcohol abuse.

Accept(ance): *Also see Let Go*

Accept change because the possibilities are infinite.

Acceptance is about what IS, not about what ISN'T.

Acceptance is forgiveness.

Acceptance is knowing the past will never get better.

Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. Page 449.
(From the Big Book, 3rd edition now Page 417 from the 4th edition)

Acceptance is the Answer.

Acceptance is the Key

Acceptance is transcendence.

Acceptance: Life is 10% what you make it and 90% how you take it.

Acceptance: Stop barking and start biting.

Acceptance: They're just doing it, they're not doing it *to you*.

Do you expect a reward for accepting the greatest gift of your life?

Everyone must row with the oars they have.

Everything will be ok in the end. If it's not ok, it's not the end.

Gratitude and acceptance always help, no matter what the circumstances.

If you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it.

If you resist, it gets worse; if you accept, it gets better.

It ain't OK till it's OK just the way it is.

Just accept, don't expect.

Misery is an option. But acceptance and gratitude did not come as standard equipment either.

No decision (right or wrong) is complete until it is fully accepted.

People who relapse usually do so because they accepted the things they could have changed.

Reality can be as painful to accept as it was to escape.

Remember yourself as the whole person you are and accept yourself as you are.