

STEP THREE: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

All the time you've been an addict, your will, your life itself has been controlled by drugs. Your choices have always been determined by drugs. You've had to be where you could get them. You've had to be nice to whoever had them. You had to have the money to obtain them. Then, when you get your drugs and the search is over for a few hours or a few days you eat, drink, inhale or inject your drug. Then your mind, your body, your soul--your total being is dominated by that drug. For a while, it may be pleasurable, at least in the early stages of addiction but ultimately, the effect begins to wear off and the drug begins to show its other side. One of the strange facts about drugs is that the higher they get us when they come on, the lower they bring us when we're coming down. When our nerves begin jangling like a fire alarm, we have two choices. We can live through a period of discomfort or we can take more drugs. For an addict, at some point in their career, there is no longer a choice. We get more drugs. Can you see that whether we steal these drugs or buy them we are being controlled by them? Whether we are under the influence of drugs, trying to find drugs or leaving town because of something you did in your effort to stay loaded, your actions, your will and your very life are being directly controlled by drugs.

Our way did not work, so we are going to try another way. We are going to try to let God, as we understand Him, care for and direct our lives. In the Third Step we snatch our life away from drugs and put it where it belongs.

This Step requires a basis in belief and if it or any Step gives you trouble, go back to the one before it. Generally, if we are fearless and thorough enough, we can find something that we have left out and having then completed that Step we are ready to go on to the next. Obviously we can't turn our lives and will over to the care of a god we don't believe in, or a god we don't trust to restore us to sanity.

This is a giant Step. But anyone can take it. You don't have to be religious. You have only to believe what you see with your own eyes in the transformed lives of NA members and have a desire to stay clean. That's all it takes--an open mind. If the word "God" bothers you--substitute recovery or good or love or NA or peace--anything positive, just so you mean it.

None of these Steps work by magic. You don't say the words of the Steps like a stage magician pulling rabbits out of a hat. They work when they are lived. But they are easier to live by than the law of the needle or the law of the pill or the law of the bottle. If you want to stay clean, if you are willing to do the few simple things, if you will be honest with yourself in this endeavor; it is guaranteed that you will recover.

Nobody expects one of us to stumble into this program brimming with love, honesty or open-minded willingness. All that is required is that we try. If we give it our best go, it will work for us as it has worked for others. The Third Step does not say "We turned our will and our

lives over to the care of God", it says "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." We made a decision. Drugs did not make that decision. Our family, our probation officer did not make that decision. We did. This is the first action we take in this program. For the first time we make a decision for ourselves. If you understand God to be simply whatever keeps the rest of us clean and sober that's fine. Ask that power to take care of you as it cares for us--even if it makes you feel stupid. Go off by yourself and say silently, "God, I've made a mess of my life. I can't solve my problems so I'm asking you if you'll take care of me and show me how to live a happy life."

If you honestly try it, it will work. Many of us start our day with that or a similar plea: "Thy will be done." The tension of letting go and letting God helps us develop what works here and now. We can adjust this tension in our personality daily by using the NA program.

In this Third Step, we simply recognize that there is a force for good in the world and we cooperate with that force. We let good things happen to us. Every action we've ever taken in regard to drugs was taken in an effort to get comfortable. And it didn't work. Our way did our work. So we are going to try another way. We are going to try to let God, as we understand Him, care for and direct our lives.

If we have come this far in the NA program, we have already noticed some change in our lives. Of course, the change is probably not as fast

nor as dramatic as we could wish. We turned to drugs in the first place because we were people who wanted instant happiness or instant comfort and the drugs seemed for a time, to provide it. We may be impatient for change. Impatience may be one of our life problems. Many of us expect that as soon as we stop taking drugs, all of our other troubles are going to disappear. If you have been around long enough to get through the first three Steps, you have probably discovered this isn't so. There are still bills to be paid, people to get along with or without, fears and ills to be dealt with. In fact, now that we are facing life without a periodic anesthetic, these life problems may seem at first to be more difficult and painful than ever. They can appear to be impossible and overwhelming. That's why we have Step Four.

We suddenly have the right to discontinue our old ways and try new ways. We surrender our lives and our wills to the care of a power greater than ourselves and become a part of that Higher Power. We must stop fighting losing battles if we are to win the battles that we must fight.

This Third Step is so important to us. As we use this Step, the insanity of daily living evaporates.

The reliance in God is possible because we no longer have a drug separating our consciousness from Higher Power consciousness.

Drugs act as a roadblock to God and consciousness, causing the hopeless and helpless feeling of inadequacy most addicts experience.

Inadequacy leaves when we stop using because we no longer have a drug shutting us off from the sunlight of the Higher Power.

With the reliance in a Higher Power, we become a part of the whole design for living free. The feelings of hopelessness and helplessness begin to disappear.

Now we have natural highs, and the occasional lows are not as heavy as before our conscious contact with God. In NA these highs and lows of living clean eventually even up and balance themselves into a casual, easy does it, live and let live, and daily enjoyment of life. And for this clean living, we may be eternally grateful to our Higher Power.