

On the bottom of page 31 in the Big Book it says, "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."

What's most important about this statement is not said in the statement, but is the fact that the Big Book authors have FIRST given us 40 pages of information about what an alcoholic is & what an alcoholic is not. THEN they say, after we have now given you all this information, if you're still not sure if you're an alcoholic or not, why not try some CONTROLLED drinking to see if your experience matches that of an alcoholic.

Marty Mann was one of the first women to get sober in AA. Below is a great example of how to do the controlled drinking test:

THE MARTY MANN TEST FOR ALCOHOLISM

(Excerpt from Marty Mann's "New Primer on Alcoholism", 1981 (First Owl Book Edition), in the chapter "Who Is Not An Alcoholic?", pages 83-86.)

There is a simple test which has been used hundreds of times for this purpose. Even an extremely heavy drinker should have no trouble in passing it, whereas an alcoholic, if able to complete it at all, could do so only under such heavy pressure that his life would be more miserable than he thinks it would be if he stopped drinking altogether. The chances are a hundred to one, however, against a true alcoholic's being either willing or able to undertake the test.

The Test: Select any time at all for instituting it. Now is the best time. For the next six months at least decide that you will stick to a certain number of drinks a day, that number to be not less than one and not more than three. If you are not a daily drinker, then the test should be the stated number of drinks from one to three, on those days when you do drink. Some heavy drinkers confine their drinking to weekends, but still worry about the amount they consume then. Whatever number you choose must not be exceeded under any circumstances whatever, and this includes weddings, births, funerals, occasions of sudden death and disaster, unexpected or long-awaited inheritance, promotion, or other happy events, reunions or meetings with old friends or good customers, or just sheer boredom. There must also be no special occasions on which you feel justified in adding to your quota of the stated number of drinks, such as a severe emotional upset, or the appointment to close the biggest deal of your career, or the audition you've been waiting for all your life, or the meeting with someone who is crucial to your future and of whom you are terrified. Absolutely no exceptions, or the test has been failed.

This is not an easy test, but it has been passed handily by any number of drinkers who wished to show themselves, or their families and friends, that they were not compulsive drinkers. If by any chance they failed the test, showing that they were alcoholics, they showed themselves, too, that they were, whether they were then ready to admit it openly or not. At least it prepared them for such an admission, and for the constructive action which normally follows that admission.

It is important to add that observers of such tests should not use them to try to force a flunkee to premature action. This may well backfire and produce a stubborn determination on the part of the one who has been unable to pass the test, to prove that it is not alcoholism that caused the failure. He can and does do this in several ways: by stopping drinking altogether for a self-specified time (when this is over he usually breaks out in even worse form than before, and with an added resentment toward those who "drove" him to it); by instituting a rigid control over his own drinking, which produces a constant irritability that makes him impossible to be with, coupled with periodic outbreaks of devastating nature; or by giving himself a very large quota and insisting that he has remained within it, even when he has obviously been too drunk to remember how many drinks he had. In extreme cases, he may even give himself a quota of so many drinks, and take them straight from the bottle, calling each bottle "the" drink. The backfiring from too great outside pressure may also cause a complete collapse: knowing and admitting that he cannot pass the test and is therefore an alcoholic, he will resist efforts to force him to take action by saying in effect, "So I'm an alcoholic, so I can't control my drinking, so I'll drink as I must," and go all out for perdition. This last, despite the expressed concern of some people (who believe that admitting alcoholism to be a disease, and alcoholic drinking to be uncontrollable drinking, is simply to give alcoholics a good excuse to continue), very rarely happens. Nevertheless the possibility must be taken into account by those who are trying to help an alcoholic to recognize his trouble and take constructive action on it. If he is left alone after failing such a self-taken test, the failure will begin to work on him - it has planted a seed of knowledge which may well grow into action.

The "occasional drunk" usually comes from the ranks of heavy drinkers, sometimes social drinkers. Rarely is he an abstainer between his bouts, as is generally the case with periodic alcoholics. Sometimes called "spree drinkers," these are the ones who every now and then deliberately indulge in short periods of drinking to drunkenness, usually at sporadic intervals. They talk of the "good" it does them to have a "purge" once in a while, or to "let down their hair" or to "kick over the traces" and have "all-out fun." Unfortunately for them they sometimes get into trouble during these sprees, and their drinking habits are thus brought to public attention. But they can and do stop such indulgences if they find it is costing them too much, for their sprees are their idea of fun, and not a necessity. "Occasional drunks" are most often found among youthful drinkers, whose ideas of "fun," for one reason or another, have come to center around drinking and the uninhibited behavior which excessive drinking allows.