

# **Walk Softly & Carry a Big Book**

The Original Gold Standard: Official & Unofficial 12-Step  
Slogans, Acronyms, Prayers, and Oldtimer Tales

Day By Day Recovery Resources  
Day-By-Day.org  
A Montana independent publisher

**WalkSoftlyandCarryaBigBook.com**

Second Edition  
First Global Printing 2025  
Copyright © 2008–2025 by Shelly Marshall  
Compiled by Shelly Marshall

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author/publisher, except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles.

This book claims no copyright on individual slogans, sayings, or phrases, only on their selection, arrangement, organization, and presentation as a compiled collection.

ISBN: 978-1-934569-01-6 (Paperback – First Edition)  
ISBN: 978-1-934569-72-6 (Paperback – Second Edition)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008928483



Many thanks to Penny Pennington and Recovery Emporium for their personal collection(s) of recovery and self-help slogans, quotes, and anecdotes. This work drew heavily upon their foundation.

Additional thanks to:

*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.

# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	IV
<b>FORWARD</b> .....	V
<b>SECTION ONE: SLOGANS, SAYINGS, AND SUPER ONE-LINERS</b> .....	1
<b>SECTION TWO: I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GROUPVINE</b> .....	141
ABOUT AL-ANON AND CO-DEPENDENT STUFF.....	141
ABOUT CHARACTER (DEFECTS AND OTHERWISE).....	142
ABOUT DRINKING AND DRUGGING.....	145
ABOUT MEETINGS.....	148
ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS.....	149
ABOUT SLIPS.....	149
ABOUT SPIRITUALITY.....	150
ABOUT SPONSORS.....	152
ABOUT WORKING THE PROGRAM & RECOVERY.....	153
ABOUT WORKING WITH OTHERS.....	158
<b>SECTION THREE: ACRONYMITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL OUR ORAL TRADITIONS</b> .....	161
ACRONYM ANECDOTES.....	161
ALPHABET ACRONYMS.....	161
STANDARD ACRONYMS.....	162
<b>SECTION FOUR: FREUDIAN SIPS</b> .....	171
MISQUOTED SLOGANS.....	171
BIG BOOK BITES.....	171
HELLO, MY NAME IS.....	173
WATCH YOUR STEPS & TRIPDITIONS.....	173
<b>SECTION FIVE: HIGHER POWERED PAGES</b> .....	177
ABOUT PRAYER.....	177
ABOUT THE SERENITY PRAYER.....	178
PRAYERS WE LIKE IN RECOVERY.....	181
STEP PRAYERS.....	184

## INTRODUCTION

In our 12-Step rooms of recovery, we've boiled down hard-earned recovery lessons into pithy slogans, one-liners, acronyms, prayers, and Oldtimer tales. This book packs the most complete collection you'll find—straight from what we say to each other around the tables, in pitches, and to wide-eyed newcomers. Some are profound, some hilariously simple, and a few might even seem dim at first. But that's the beauty: what hits like genius at 30 days can crack you up at three years.

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

Alphabetically organized treasures—the heart of our shared shorthand. Use these to amuse, start a meeting, create a bumper sticker, or kick off a therapy group.

### **Section Two: Heard It Through the Grapevine**

Quotes and sayings we've borrowed, twisted, and loved in the fellowships (plus a few amazing, and widely recognized, adages we can't stop repeating).

### **Section Three: Acronymy**

Our playful (and foundational) acronym inventions—guaranteed chuckles since Bill and Dr. Bob's 1935 Akron meetup.

### **Section Four: Freudian Sips**

Those glorious slips of the tongue that leave us rolling on the floor.

### **Section Five: Higher Powered Pages**

How we approach prayer in recovery—as well as a bit of our spiritual history—simple, heartfelt, and powerful.

This isn't one person's book—it's *yours*. Thousands of us have repeated, refined, and laughed over these words. So grab a coffee, flip through, chuckle, and reminisce. This is our collective wisdom in bite-sized, meeting-ready doses. Enjoy the ride!

## FORWARD

At one of my early meetings, Don H. described the Big Book perfectly: the front is the "meat of the program," and the personal stories are the "hamburger helper."

I'm a Big Book and Step study regular—where I hear the solution straight up. But I also hit discussion meetings for that "hamburger helper": real-life shares that bring the pages alive.

*Walk Softly & Carry a Big Book* is pure hamburger helper. Shelly has gathered those tidbits we toss around the tables—little nuggets that grab attention, shift perspective, spark a laugh, or reveal another slice of the solution.

When I was new, I went to meetings with Marie. One night she admitted her brain was foggy and started taking notes on what resonated. I loved the idea (as a frustrated writer) and began jotting down one-liners I heard—lines that helped me or others. Those notebooks became my little collection, *As We See It*.

Years later, I realize much of that "profound" oldtimer wisdom was already in our literature. As my sponsor used to say, "If you want to hide something from an alcoholic, put it in the Big Book."

Little in these rooms is truly original—we pass it forward. You'll recognize plenty here from your meetings or books (sometimes rephrased), plus fresh gems to share.

I never knew what happened to Marie, but thirty years on, her simple act carried the message—and I still use it daily.

Enjoy this shorthand wisdom from our rooms.

Penny P.

List Owner, *As We See It*

(An online daily recovery thought)

# **Slogans, Sayings, & Super One-liners**



## Slogans, Sayings, & Super One-liners

### Section One: *Slogans, Sayings, and Super One-liners*

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.

**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 full 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

## Walk Softly

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.  
SHIFT HAPPENS  
Take two aspirin and adjust!  
This too shall pass, out!  
This too shall pass.  
Unless you accept your faults, you will be overwhelmed with your virtues.  
Unless you accept your virtues, you will be overwhelmed with your faults.  
Until you make peace with who you are, you'll never be content with what you have.  
Wear life as a loose garment.

## **Slogans, Sayings, & Super One-liners**

What is, is.  
What will be...will appear.  
What you resist persists.  
When the horse dies, dismount.  
When you accept others, you accept yourself.  
Willingness is the key to acceptance.  
You are right where you are supposed to be.

### **Accident(s):**

Accidents aren't planned—slips are.  
Live life on purpose, not by accident  
Nothing is by accident.  
Sobriety is never an accident.

### **ACOA (Adult Children of Alcoholics):**

Act, don't react.  
Adult Child of Alien Invaders.  
ALL "shoulds" are a lie.  
Be Kind to Yourself  
Boundaries create freedom.  
Come out of the closet, you've been hung-up long enough.  
Don't "Should" on yourself.  
Don't just do something. Stand there!  
Feelings are not facts.  
Focus on the program, not the problem.  
Formula for failure: try to please everyone.  
How important is it?  
How you respond is your responsibility.  
If you are eating a shit sandwich, chances are, you ordered it.  
In order for someone to "give" you a bad day, you have to "take" it.  
Never, ever criticize yourself.  
Nobody 'gives' you a bad day without your permission.  
Pain heals; abuse scars.  
Practice makes it better.  
Refuse to star in their psychodrama.  
Rule 62: Never take yourself too seriously!  
Set boundaries: keep boundaries.  
TRUST HAPPENS  
We're responsible for the effort, not the outcome!  
When in doubt, leave it out.  
When the horse dies, dismount.  
When we remove *me* from "blame" all that's left is bla. bla, bla....  
When you feel needy, feel needy.  
You deserve more.  
You matter.

### **Act(ions):** *Also see Inaction and Reaction(s)*

Act as if...  
Act the way you want to be, so that one day you will be the way you act.

## Walk Softly

Act, don't react.

Action alleviates anxiety.

Action Not Distraction

Action: Utilize, don't analyze.

Actions speak louder than words.

Align your actions so they are in agreement with the picture you paint of yourself at meetings.

An action beats a feeling.

Being an alcoholic does not give you the excuse to act alcoholically.

Change your action; change your attitude.

Courage is fear in action.

Courage is not the absence of fear; it is the ability to act in the presence of fear.

Faith is spelled: A C T I O N

Faith without action is like sitting on a dictionary to learn how to spell.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite criticism.

Good actions, not good acting.

If faith without works is dead then; willingness without action is fantasy.

If it is to be, it is up to me.

If you take right actions, you'll get right results.

It is when you act on faith that you actually have it.

Just because you're an alcoholic doesn't mean you have to act like a drunk.

Learn to act as if...and eventually you're not acting any more.

Listening is love in action.

Love is less a feeling than a thousand tiny acts of kindness.

Make it happen.

Never mistake motion for action.

Put one foot in front of the other.

Service is gratitude in action.

Sometimes our individual actions damage the group.

Stay put and act in your own best interest.

Step over bodies if you have to.

Take responsibility for your attitude, not my actions.

Take the action and turn over the results.

The difference between feeling grateful and being grateful is action.

This is a program of action.

We find that the smallest deed is better than the grandest intention.

You can't think yourself into right action, but you can act your way into right thinking.

You have to act right in order to feel right, not feel right in order to act right.

You reap what you sow.

**Addict(s):** *Also see* Alcoholic(s)

Addicts end up in one of three houses: The Big House, the Bug House, or the Ice House.

Alcoholics and addicts – fast talkers, slow thinkers.

Alcoholics and addicts are in a class by themselves. Everyone else has graduated.

An addict alone is slumming.

An addict is a sick person trying to get well, not a bad one trying to be good.

An addict is someone who wants to be held while isolating.

An addict is someone whose feet are firmly planted in thin air.

An addict may be helpless at times, but never hopeless as long as they keep a phone list of people in the fellowship.