AA Step 1 Worksheet

Powerless and unmanageable: five Stoic exercises for surrender

A Stoic Sobriety
astoicsobriety.com

Name _____ Sobriety date _____ Date started _____

> *"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable."*
>
> Step One · Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book), Chapter 5, p. 59

How to use this worksheet. Step 1 asks you to admit two things: you can't reliably control your drinking once you start, and your life became unmanageable because of it. Answer in writing, honestly and without punishing yourself. Work the exercises in any order, then go over your answers with your sponsor or someone you trust.

Part A · Powerless

Powerlessness isn't weakness. It means willpower hasn't worked, and it has already cost you.

1. Describe times you planned to have "just one" or to stop at a set point. What actually happened?

2. What rules have you made to control your drinking (only beer, only weekends, never before 5)? How long did each one last?

3. Once you start, what happens in your body and mind that doesn't happen to other drinkers?

Part B · Unmanageable

We are like tornadoes in our own lives. Nobody wants to add it all up, but adding it up is what makes the word real.

Area of life	What drinking has cost or damaged here
Family & relationships	
Work & money	
Health & safety	
Legal / driving	
Self-respect & values	

① Call it what it actually is

Addiction thrives on romanticizing the drink. Marcus Aurelius described fine wine as nothing more than grape juice (*Meditations* 6.13). Strip off the flattering story.

What I call it ("a night out," "stress relief")	What it actually is for me

② Sort it into two piles

Epictetus: "Some things are in our control and others not" (*Enchiridion* 1.1). You can't control the allergy, meaning how your body reacts to alcohol. You can control the decision to pick up the first drink.

Up to me (my actions, my choices today)	Not up to me (the allergy, the past, other people)

③ Play the tape forward

The Stoics called it negative visualization. When "just one" sounds reasonable, don't stop the tape at the first drink. The craving only shows you the first frame. Write what really comes next.

The first drink →	The second →	The tenth →	The morning after →	The call I'd have to make

④ Embrace your bottom (*amor fati*)

Treat your bottom as the foundation for rebuilding, not proof that you're a victim. Say it plainly, with no excuse and no self-punishment.

One loss my drinking caused:

What is that loss asking me to do differently today?

5 Start each morning with the 24-hour view

You can't promise sobriety for a lifetime. You can promise the next twenty-four hours. Before your feet hit the floor, say: **"Today, I don't pick up the first drink."** Check off each morning you said it.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7

What am I still arguing with?

Some part of you is probably pushing back on the word "powerless." That's normal. Check any that sound familiar.

- ☐ I've quit before; I can quit on my own.
- ☐ I haven't lost as much as other people.
- ☐ Surrender just means giving up.
- ☐ I'm not that bad; I still have my job.
- ☐ I only drink because of stress or other people.
- ☐ I haven't hit rock bottom yet.

The argument I keep making, in my own words:

None of these prove you're not powerless. They're what powerlessness sounds like from the inside. And you don't need a spectacular bottom; it's just the point where the excuses run out.

My Step 1 admission

Write your own version of Step 1: what you're powerless over, and how your life became unmanageable.

My signature & date

Reviewed with (sponsor / trusted person) & date