



**A MAN'S WAY THROUGH
THE TWELVE STEPS**



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by Dan Griffin, M.A.

Hazelden®

Hazelden
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hazelden.org

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Editor's note

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“The Guy in the Glass” was written by Dale Wimbrow, © 1934. Reprinted from www.theguyintheglass.com.

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*This book is dedicated to
the memory of my father,
Dr. Owen Martin Griffin,
who never got the gift of recovery;
the men upon whose shoulders I stand;
those who walk the path with me today;
and those yet to find their way.*

The Guy in the Glass

by

Dale Wimbrow (1895–1954)

When you get what you want in your struggle for pelf,*

And the world makes you King for a day,

Then go to the mirror and look at yourself,

And see what that guy has to say.

For it isn't your Father, or Mother, or Wife,

Whose judgement upon you must pass.

The feller whose verdict counts most in your life

Is the guy staring back from the glass.

He's the feller to please, never mind all the rest,

For he's with you clear up to the end,

And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test

If the guy in the glass is your friend.

You may be like Jack Horner and "chisel" a plum,

And think you're a wonderful guy,

But the man in the glass says you're only a bum

If you can't look him straight in the eye.

You can fool the whole world down the pathway of years,

And get pats on the back as you pass,

But your final reward will be heartaches and tears

If you've cheated the guy in the glass.

* pelf — riches, gold

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PREFACE

In 1995, at the age of twenty-three, I was just over a year sober and my father had just died from complications due to chronic alcoholism. At the wake, some men from one of my father's AA meetings invited me to attend a recovery retreat, even paying for my airfare and registration.

The disappointment started as soon as the men picked me up. One of the men immediately started complaining about his wife and then told a derogatory joke about women. Laughter filled the car like smoke and I laughed, too, though hesitantly. The conversation went on to span relationships, sports, recovery—from the mundane to profane to the inane. As we arrived at the retreat center, I could see water from a small lake in the distance with tall trees quietly swaying back and forth, welcoming us and promising solitude. Shortly after we arrived one of the men told an offensive and racist joke. This time I did not laugh. Walking away down toward the water, I thought to myself, “Is this the best we can do as men? Is this what I have to look forward to in my relationships with men in recovery?” That day I made a commitment to myself that I would not cheapen my recovery by compromising my values just so that I could fit in. Easier said than done.

The path to who we can become is rocky and full of mistakes, but recovery offers us the opportunity to learn from

those mistakes, to grow, and to change how we live. When we need guidance on our path, we learn to look to others in recovery for help. Those who actively work the Twelve Steps know that when we challenge each other according to the principles of the program, we support each other in becoming the best that we can be.

As a man reading this book, you will ask questions about who you have been, who you are, and who you will become in recovery—and you will find that the answers are embodied in the principles of the Twelve Steps. You will see that some of what you have been told, learned, and even thought about men has been inaccurate. You will also see that there is no resource greater than the Steps to help affirm what is best about our masculinity and about being men. What we are experiencing in the Twelve Step culture is much bigger than the very personal transformation that we experience and witness in others. Every time we take a risk and share honestly from our hearts, we create an opportunity for others to do the same and transform how men live as men—one man at a time.



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This book started as an idea many years ago. To every man and woman who has supported me and the idea; to all of those with whom I have sat in the circles of recovery: thank you.

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To Mike Driscoll, Barb Hughes, Jon Harper, and Cathy

Huberty: you lit the lantern, carried the lantern, and then gave me the lantern and because of that I am no longer in the dark.

The Band of Seven Brothers: you carried me through this. Thank you.

Bill, you are the father I never had; Ben, you are the older brother I never had; and Eric, you are the sponsor I needed because you led me to myself.

Finally, they say that behind every successful man is a great woman. I am truly blessed to have three: My mom, Sherry, who never gave up on me; Dr. Stephanie Covington, I honor you for your courage in blazing the trail and your generosity in inviting me to walk with you—this book would not exist without you—thank you for believing in me; Nancy, my partner and soul mate, you are my love, my life. Thank you for loving me for who I am and teaching me how to do the same. My love always, LB.



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Each man put a part of his heart and soul in my hands, and I thank you for that. I hope that I have honored your life experience. Your collective experience, strength, and hope gave this book life. Thank you.

In memory of Ryane Frank, a young man who changed my life forever.

For all of the young boys in this world, that you may find peace and the courage, support, and love to be yourselves. Let nobody stand in your way.



INTRODUCTION

Regardless of your background and previous experiences, when you come into treatment or a Twelve Step program, you immediately experience a culture in which people communicate. You too are asked, even expected, to communicate in ways with which you as a man are probably neither familiar nor comfortable. Thus begins the most exciting and rewarding journey you will ever take on this earth: a man's journey through the Twelve Steps.

This book is written to all men in Twelve Step recovery. The “we” and the “you” I speak to in this book are all of us men charting the courses of our lives by the shining light of the Twelve Steps.

Many of us have never thought about what being a man has to do with our recovery. Unlike our female counterparts, we have not spent the last twenty years looking at what we need, taking care of ourselves, and learning to live full lives. Even the Twelve Step community has been reluctant to discuss the freedom of expression for men inherent in the philosophy of the Twelve Steps. Many still assume that “men are the way they are,” and they don't see the pain, struggles, and limitations of men suffocating in the “box of masculinity” as it's been defined by our society.

So it is that *A Man's Way through the Twelve Steps* has

some history in the Women's Movement, a time when women began to look at their lives and the effect society's "rules" had on how they were raised. Because of that important and historical work, women today have a deeper and clearer sense of what it means to be female and how social messages have limited and restricted them. The concept of gender and the socially created roles for males and females have evolved. The rules and expectations for men have changed. Today it's easier to recognize how the ways we are raised create limitations for *both* men and women.

A Man's Way also has its history in the Men's Movement. When women began looking at their lives through the lens of gender, some courageous men concluded that we needed to do the same. Far less work has been done on the impact of gender on men's lives, particularly in relation to addiction and recovery. This book helps to fill that void. *A Man's Way* is about creating gender awareness for men in recovery. It will help you look more closely at the realities of your life, and address and respond to the challenges we face as men in Western society.

Who am I? When you ask that question at the beginning of your recovery journey, you are probably able to say with total honesty: "I don't know."

What does it mean to be a man? As a man, you may accept certain ways of thinking, talking, and acting as just who you are. You probably don't see that our culture has a set of rules for being a man. You may not realize you are following a kind of script. You put on your costume and act out the

