

**Response from the Stepping Together Group, Gaithersburg, Maryland**

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**Questionnaire  
2006 4th edition Blue Book**

***1. Do the language and tone of the book feel welcoming to you, whatever your 12-Step affiliation may be? If not, what is missing?***

No comments.

***2. Is the treatment of the topics balanced? If anything is given too much or too little emphasis, please specify what that is.***

As a general matter the endings of the long-form of the steps are weak in the 3rd edition. While the 4th edition makes some attempt to strengthen the endings, more work is needed. The ending of the first step is vitally important, yet it remains very weak. The summary and ending is just one phrase: “Having surrendered thus far ... .” Those working the steps, particularly those doing it for the first time, need more guidance from the fellowship.

***3. Is there anything in this revised Blue Book you find offensive? What would you like in place of this if anything?***

**Offensive:**

(1) The end of the third step: We find the citation to the first-century Greek stoic philosopher to be offensive. The entire quotation and citation should be deleted.

(2) The arbitrary use of the past tense, even when it makes no sense, is incorrect to the point of being offensive: e.g., “We had a history...” How do you lose your history?

(3) The ungrammatical use of plurals for abstract nouns is so bad as to be offensive. See below additional details on this point in the expanded answer to question 13, below at pages 3 to 4.

***4. Please tell us of changes from previous editions you like and don’t like.***

**Like:** The moving of the presentation on Contracts from Step Seven and the making of an entire new section for this presentation. But, the use of Contracts should be added to the list of RCA tools. Unfortunately what remains in Step Seven needs to be strengthened.

**Dislikes:** (1) Absolutely opposed to the deletion of “How it Works: Parts One and Two” and of the “Promises.” Permission was given to RCA long ago to use these adapted material, with proper acknowledgment of the source and the adaption. (2) The choice of past tense is a big mistake and is addressed elsewhere in these comments. (3) The formatting used for the 4th edition is non-standard for any quality publication. The block formatting without paragraph indentation may be acceptable for computer manuals, but it is not acceptable for a book of the stature that should be accorded to the RCA Blue Book

***5. Has there been anything significant in your couple's recovery, particularly of a spiritual nature, that is not mentioned somewhere in the Blue Book?***

No comments.

***6. Do you have a practice or "Tool" not described in the Blue Book?***

We think that "contracts" are so important that they deserved their own section in the book. But they should also be included in the list of RCA tools.

***7. Has there been anything in your meeting's success that is not mentioned in the Traditions in the Blue Book such as socializing outside meetings or other meeting practices?***

No comments.

***8. In what ways could the spirituality of the program be better expressed?***

No comments.

***9. In what ways could the RCA Blue Book better support your meeting or help you start a new meeting?***

No comments.

***10. Some RCA members want the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Blue Book available. Would you purchase the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Blue Book in preference to this 4<sup>th</sup> edition if you could do it over? Would you use both? Is there a place for the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition if it meets AA guidelines?***

The wording of this question is offensive and extremely biased. RCA was given permission for the adaption of the AA materials included in the Blue Book (3rd edition). It is too late for AA to change its mind. The RCA traditions call for **unity, not uniformity**. Under the concepts that are a part of the fundamental underpinning of 12-step fellowships, each local group is to be given a wide latitude how it functions. Each group must be given the freedom to choose which edition it uses. A central-control mind set has absolutely no place in a 12-step fellowship.

***11. Should the stories be retained if the couple has split up? Would you write your couple's story? Should real names be or not be included in the stories?***

Stories of couples who have split should be retained if the story provides experience, strength, and hope that can be supportive to other couples. We are split on the use of real first names and last initials. Some are okay with not using real names and think it is actually better. Others feel strongly that the use of fictitious names is too close to dishonesty and runs counter to the 12-step requirement of rigorous honesty. Do any other 12-step groups have a policy on this issue?

***12. Is the writing in the Blue Book consistent with and supportive of RCA and its traditions?***

No comments.

**13. Do you find the grammar, person, and tense of the Blue Book clear, comfortable, and without gender discrimination?**

We have problem with the use of the past tense and with the unnecessary and ungrammatical use of plurals such as: Higher Powers; dysfunctions, and coupleships.

**Tense:** The long-form of the steps in first edition was in the present tense, the second edition was in the past tense, and the third edition was changed back to the present tense although not consistently. The fourth edition should not just be arbitrarily changed back to the past tense as continuation of this nonsensical changing back and forth.

As a general matter the steps should be in the present tense for two major reasons: First, use of the present tense emphasizes the fact that the steps are a process that needs to be continually practiced and re-traced in the life of most of those in recovery. The steps are not a quick one-time, first-time fix. It is false and misleading to suggest that “we worked through the steps once, and now we are cured.” The present tense emphasizes the necessity to continue to return to and rework the steps.

The second reason for having the steps generally presented in the present tense (except of course where accurate meaning requires the use of the past tense or the future tense or a perfect tense) is that many in recovery have had major problems with living in the present – much wasted time has been spent living in the past or in the future. The general use of the present tense in the steps reinforces the need to live in the present.

**Point of View:** The tense, person, and number of the presentations in the Blue Book should be of an experienced RCA couple speaking to an individual couple. Even if speaking to a group of couples, the presentation should be directed to individual couples. Addressing groups of couples in the plural is major defect in the 4th edition.

**Ungrammatical use of plurals:**

The way the 4th edition is presently worded (repeated references to Higher Powers) one is left with the confusing and disturbing image of a circus of gods from ancient Greek mythology. Usage and grammar authorities refer to the use of plurals as employed in the 4th edition as ungrammatical and use the labels of either “**overrefinement**” or “**hypercorrection**” to describe the error. The follow references address this matter:

**I. References relied on for these comments:**

[1] *The Elephants of Style: A Trunkload of Tips on the Big Issues and the Gray Areas of Contemporary American English*, Bill Walsh (2004, McGraw Hill) (Walsh is the Copy Chief at the National Desk of *The Washington Post*).

[2] *Garner’s Modern American Usage*, Bryan A. Garner (2d ed. 2003 , Oxford University Press) (Garner is widely recognized as a leading authority on usage and style and is the author of the “Grammar and Usage” chapter in the 15th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (2003).).

[3] *The Careful Writer: A Modern Guide to English Usage*, Theodore M. Bernstein (1965) (Bernstein was an editor at *The New York Times* and a professor of journalism at Columbia University.).

[4] *Line by Line: How to Improve Your Own Writing*, Claire Kehrwald Cook (1985, Houghton Mifflin) (book of The Modern Language Association of America).

[5] *Word Court: Wherein verbal virtue is rewarded, crimes against language are punished, and poetic justice is done*, Barbara Wallraff (2000, A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Inc.).

## II. Basic Principle:

Abstracts like mass nouns are singular.

## III. Where the issue is discussed in each reference.

[4] at page 96, 1st full para., abstract quality characteristics and figurative words remain singular with plural subjects.

[3] at p. 304, **Number** (8).; p. 322, **Overrefinement** (4).

[1] p.91.

[2] p. 618, **J. Mass (Noncount) Nouns**; p. 417-18, **Hypercorrection C.**; p. 175 , **Concord at C. Subject-Complement Disagreement: Mismatched Number in Cause and Effect** (last paragraph).

[5] p. 127-28.

### 14. What would you like to see added to the Blue Book? Why?

Step One is critical to those coming to RCA for the first time. There needs to be a wrap-up that provides encouragement and support. The simple phrase, “Having surrendered thus far ...” just isn’t sufficient. Look at CODA steps, OA steps, or Pat Carnes’s book to see what a proper wrap-up requires. This same major deficiency is in the 3rd edition. The fellowship must have more to offer.

“How it Works, Parts 1 and 2” and the “Promises” must be added back in.

Step Three needs more of an answer. For example, Step 3 Part10 (as shown in the Side-by-Side comparison) needs expansion to talk about the “hope” part of the program.

### 15. What would you like to see deleted from the Blue Book? Why?

The end of the third step: We find the citation to the first-century Greek stoic philosopher to be offensive. The entire quotation and citation should be deleted.