

If we practice an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, soon the whole world will be blind and toothless.

–Mahatma Gandhi

ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON
OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GASSIN & ENRIGHT'S UNITS
AND ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS' STEPS
Chapter 6

The 12-Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous (referenced interchangeably throughout as AA) is tremendously successful at creating attitudes of forgiveness in those who actually work the program. And yet, within the main body of the text, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (AA, 1976) – which is contained in the first 164 pages of the book – the word is mentioned only six times; and then, with minor exceptions in intent, only in relation to needing to be forgiven or asking forgiveness.

Gassin & Enright's 20-unit process discussed in Chapter 4 focuses directly on forgiving; AA's 12 Steps focus only on amends or asking forgiveness. Yet, both are very successful at creating forgiving attitudes.

To illustrate the absence of focus on forgiving in the AA text, here are the six spots in the text where the word *forgive* or some form of it is used.

On page 70, in AA's text, in the chapter that describes how one goes about taking Step 4, which is making a "searching and

fearless moral inventory" (AAWS, 1976, p. 59), they talk about how this action affects your ability to stay sober.

In this section of the book, they assure the alcoholic that he will be forgiven if he has an honest desire to let his higher power help him toward better things, but that if you're not truly sorry for what you've done, then you are likely to end up drunk again.

On page 77, in the section of the chapter that talks about taking Step 9, making direct "amends to those we had harmed, except when to do so would injure them or others," and making those amends to someone has done you more harm than he has done to you, the book acknowledges that it *is* harder to make amends to an enemy than it is to a friend, but that their experience is that it is *much more beneficial to do so*.

This is a pretty strong indicator that AA's intention is to create a dramatic change in attitude, not just clean up some relationships. And so they encourage him to go to his offender in a helpful and *forgiving* spirit, confessing his former resentment and expressing his regret.

On page 79, in the section of the chapter that describes taking Step 9, making "direct amends to those we had harmed, except

when to do so would injure them or others," they give the example of a man who was seriously in arrears with his alimony.

Their suggestion to him that demonstrates the spirit of this Step was that he admit his faults to his ex-wife and ask her forgiveness, frankly explaining what he would do to rectify the problem in the future and explaining that he would be willing to go to jail if she insisted.

On page 86, in the section of the chapter that describes taking Step 10, "continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it," the alcoholic is encouraged to ask forgiveness from his higher power for those things he has concluded were resentful, selfish, dishonest or fearful behaviors or attitudes during the day.

On page 106, in the section of the chapter to the spouses who have lived with the disease, they mention past futile experiences with forgiving the alcoholic only to have him repeat his behaviors.

On page 134, in the section of the chapter that discusses the difficulties in reestablishing relations with your family afterward, they talk about how difficult it is for children hardened by their experiences

with an alcoholic parent to forgive even after the alcoholic has demonstrated a change in behavior and attitude.

And on page 140, in a chapter to employers of recovering alcoholics, they ask if they can forgive the absurdities of this alcoholic based upon an understanding of what has been explained in the book about the sickness of alcoholism.

As you can see, with the exception of three instances that discuss what others may have to contend with in trying to forgive the alcoholic, it doesn't ever say that the alcoholic *has* to forgive to stay sober. At least it doesn't say it in *those* terms.

What you *will* find, 28 times throughout those first 164 pages of the official text, is an admonishment about resentment. And in every instance – too many to cite here – the alcoholic is told that he cannot stay sober as long as he harbors any resentment. Though the focus of the Steps is not on *forgiving* it is unquestionably about resolving resentment. Isn't resentment what forgiving resolves?

Comparing the two processes should give us an opportunity to see what aspects of Gassin & Enright's process may be most critical to forgiving, and may provide enlightenment about what is actually being accomplished by AA's 12 Steps.

Perhaps by looking at two successful but different processes for achieving forgiving we'll learn what is essential to forgiving.

My hunch is that surrendered remorse, achieved through AA's process of surrendered self examination, opens one's heart and mind to love, bringing about a realization of the pain of the world, and that creates a lens through which the wrongs of others are seen with a forgiving attitude.

So, in comparing AA's program to the processes described by Gassin & Enright (1995), you might say that the recovering alcoholic gets the willingness to explore forgiveness directly out of it being a requirement for his sobriety.

Here, then, is a comparison of Gassin & Enright's 20 processes with the 12 Steps of AA's program. In looking at them side by side, the attempt is made to determine what they have in common, what they have that distinguishes them, and what they have that might be of value to the other.

The day the child realizes that all adults are imperfect, he becomes an adolescent; the day he forgives them, he becomes an adult; the day he forgives himself, he becomes wise.

–Alden Nowlan

Gassin & Enright's 20 Units	Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Steps	Explanation
Unit 10	Steps 1, 2 & 3	<p>The surrender of his life to a power greater than himself is the foundation of AA's 12 Steps. This is also the alcoholic's first step in the process of forgiving, because while in Step 1, he admits his powerlessness over alcohol, most important to this discussion of forgiveness is the fact that he admits that <i>his life has become unmanageable</i>.</p>

In effect he is admitting that he's got a lot of problems in addition to an inability to control his drinking, and by admitting that he is powerless over them, is conceding that what he's tried so far hasn't worked at making his life any better. He opens himself to a willingness to consider *any* alternative to his present way of thinking and acting.

This is a step that is inherent, but left unstated, in Gassin & Enright's 1st process, which suggests an examination of psychological defenses. In order for a person to even be willing to admit that they have psychological defenses and then to peel them back and look at them and under them, there has to be some level of surrender to the idea that what has been done in the past has not worked.

The fact that it is stated so clearly in the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous' is due to the fact that AA's program is founded on the idea that change comes through surrender, and that one must *remain* surrendered by first admitting it and by reinforcing that surrender by involvement in the remaining 11 Steps to reinforce the surrender that permits change. Forgiveness, in fact, creates the same ever-increasing surrender.

The question is, is this concept important enough to be included in the outline of processes identified by Gassin & Enright?

I think so. I don't know anyone who has made the decision to forgive another for a deep injury without being forced to it by the unmanagability of the misery of hatred and resentment.

AA's 2nd Step says that we come to believe that a power greater than ourselves will restore us to sanity.

It's such a great step, because it gives you reason to believe that there just might be something in the universe that can help make what you have to do next not only possible, but tolerable.

Few who are being tortured by the misery of their own resentments, and who have admitted that their way is not working, would ever question the issue of "sanity" here.

But many don't want to hear anything that smacks of God, let alone dependence upon one. One of the cleverer slogans in AA, born of this problem, is this play on the first three words of that 2nd Step:

Came
Came to
Came to believe

The point here being that most people arriving in AA are very resistant to the idea of a higher power, but are forced to willingness by their desperation at not being able to stop drinking. In fact, references to the will, willing and willingness are used 142 times in the main body of the text. If you add the stories, you can add another hundred or more.

In spite of its helpfulness, and in spite of the neutrality intended by AA's 2nd Step, I wouldn't encourage adding this Step to the process suggested by Gassin & Enright for the general public. But for anyone willing to consider it, it is a tremendous aid. It may be, for many, the only way to achieve the surrendered state of mind necessary to continue the process.

AA's 3rd Step says, "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him.*" Again, for the reasons discussed above, this is a tough call for the nonbeliever or for the believer who is angry at God or damaged psychologically by a religion. And it's very difficult to convince anyone except the dying and the addict trying to

escape his addiction that he can broaden the idea of what God is to suit his own needs.

But the *spirit* of this Step is very much a part of what Gassin & Enright are proposing in their 20 processes. This is the surrender to another way of thinking and acting that is so critical to being able to do all of the processes required to forgive. It produces the willingness to consider *anything* that will help the alcoholic stay sober, and for as long as the alcoholic stays surrendered, that willingness includes forgiving those who have harmed him.

I say that these first three Steps equate to Gassin & Enright's 10th rather than their *first* ten, because the alcoholic following the 12 Steps will do the first nine of Gassin & Enright's processes *after* he has developed the willingness to forgive that is created by those first three Steps.

In Gassin & Enright's process, you think your way into surrender. In AA's process, you drink yourself into it; you surrender yourself into a new way of thinking. It's not that alcoholics can't or don't think themselves into right behaviors and attitudes, but typically it doesn't happen that way.

The alcoholic almost always has suffered his way into a willingness to simply let go of his resistance and open himself to a new idea. At least for a while.

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

–Mahatma Gandhi

Gassin & Enright's 20 Units	Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Steps
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Explanation

Units 1-9 & 12 Step 4 The self examination that occupies the first nine units of Gassin & Enright's processes of interpersonal forgiveness bears the closest similarity to AA's 4th Step which instructs the alcoholic to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of himself.

To the unsundered soul, a look from the outside of AA's formula for self examination might look pretty rough in comparison to Gassin & Enright's process.

In their unit 1, Gassin & Enright suggest that we examine our psychological defenses. AA has a slightly different approach differing only in that it more explicitly throws a blanket of complete responsibility on the shoulders of the alcoholic. What is not seen by the casual observer is that the responsibility thus assigned is made more bearable because the focus (and the results) of working the 12 Steps is to place the alcoholic's suffering within a meaningful paradigm while (and by) requiring him to accept both his responsibility and his limitations. It has the effect of breaking his pattern of isolation and alienation (Flores, 1988).

The AA program suggests throughout, then, that our problems are “of our own making” (AAWS, 1976, p. 63) and they coach the alcoholic with a blanket summary that pretty much delineates for him the psychological defenses he will find upon self examination, by stating that alcoholics are “driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity” (AAWS, 1976, p. 63).

They advise that if we look closely enough at ourselves in relation to those whom we resent, we will find that “at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.”

AA’s is not as gentle as Gassin & Enright’s encouragement to look at yourself. AA’s is a broad, matter-of-fact statement that says, this is what we know our problem to be, and if you are like us, it’s your problem, too.

Getting the alcoholic to accept that attitude of responsibility is possible initially because 1) the alcoholic is trying to get out from under an addiction that won’t relent until he does these things and adopts certain attitudes; and 2) the AA program says to him, this is who *we* are; perhaps you are like us.

The AA program has plenty of “musts,” but they are couched in sharing what they’ve found to be necessary for them.

For those who *like* being in control, some relief can be found in seeing how we create our own problems because we begin to understand that we might be able to put an end to some of our grief.

In their unit 2, Gassin & Enright suggest confronting our anger. AA does too, in Step 4 with the same goal in mind: releasing the anger.

Where Gassin & Enright's program treats anger as one of many issues to be addressed, the program of Alcoholics Anonymous views anger (and excitement, fear, worry, self-pity, and foolish decisions) as dangerous for the alcoholic.

Anger is considered to "be the dubious luxury of normal men" (AAWS, 1976, p.66) and more than any other behavior, the alcoholic is encouraged to recognize that no matter how right he may be to be angry, remaining angry at "the wrongdoing of others, fancied or real," has the "power to actually kill" (AAWS, 1976, p.66).

"Resentment is the 'number one' offender" according to AA. They submit from their own experience that they have seen it destroy more alcoholics than anything else. To deal effectively with resentments, they must be set down on paper and studied in the light of why these things made the alcoholic angry, and what it was in the interaction that affected the alcoholic's self-esteem, pocketbook, ambitions, and / or personal relationships.

Here, as in Gassin & Enright's processes, the injured is encouraged to confront his anger, with the primary difference being that specific focus is overtly placed on owning the reasons for the anger and specifically eliminating any potential for self-righteous anger.

In their unit 3, Gassin & Enright address shame directly in their process for creating forgiveness. AA's program touches the issue of shame indirectly for the most part in spite of the fact that alcoholics are among the most shame-based people in treatment.

Since shame involves comparing a person's actions with an ideal standard of what is good, (Flanigan, 1987-b) some of the alcoholic's shame is eventually assuaged by his having taken responsibility for his life in a way not common in society. That in itself is a pretty powerful tool for shame.

The book talks directly about how alcoholics are often ashamed of having to have treatment for the illnesses induced by their drinking, and in their shame will deny that their medical need has anything to do with alcoholism, and it discusses that dishonesty as a hindrance to recovery.

It also talks about how the family, haunted by repercussions from the alcoholic's behaviors of the past, will impulsively want to "bury these skeletons in a dark closet and padlock the door" (AAWS, 1976, p. 123). It

views that behavior as “self-centered and in direct conflict with the new way of living” (AAWS, 1976, p. 123).

In effect, the program treats shame by saying be honest, trust your higher power with the results and focus on doing the right thing.

I’m personally not sure that is a totally effective treatment for shame for most addicts and alcoholics. I think that it ignores the shame-induced grief that requires gentle, caring attention in order to heal fully. I see Gassin & Enright’s “admittance of shame” as permitting or encouraging the opportunity to *feel* that shame.

And to both, though I believe this may be implicit in the instruction, I would only add language that describes the necessity of doing this in the most non condemning, caring, interested attitude possible.

In addition to bringing with them the childhood shame that creates many of their deep personality problems, Alcoholics often show up in A.A. beaten down by many years of deceitful behavior that was designed to keep access to alcohol available.

That guilt, which is real, gets transferred to shame in several ways. Our culture is disdainful of alcoholism, since it is still seen as a moral weakness. Even within the ranks of treatment for alcoholism, it is seen as a disease over which the alcoholic has a choice.

So, the cultural punishing attitude toward alcoholism reinforces more deceitful, shame-based behavior in the alcoholic. The alcoholic's defensive strategies against shame and guilt "include withdrawal, grandiosity, perfectionism, rage, and compulsive addictive behaviors" (Ramsey, 1987). And the cycle goes round and round.

An overt attitude of love in the face of real shame can be a healing factor when combined with the actions AA promotes to resolve the problem.

In their units 4 and 5, Gassin & Enright suggest that we become aware of cathexis and cognitive rehearsal of the offense. AA is staunch in its position about this. They call this combination of behaviors "resentment," and as stated earlier, fostering it (through cathexis and cognitive rehearsal) is considered an absolute guarantee that the alcoholic will drink again.

There is no gentle reminder or soft encouragement to become aware of it. There's a strong statement that says you've got it and you have to do something about it immediately. Keeping it is not an option.

So, they are both addressing the same issue. The difference, I think, is in the sense of urgency AA communicates in this area.

In their units 6, 7 and 8, Gassin & Enright suggest that the injured will come to a realization that they may well have been permanently and

negatively affected by their injury, that there may be an insight that the injured focuses on a comparison of herself with the injurer, and that life doesn't work the way it is supposed to.

AA acknowledges that people do us harm, but it tells the alcoholic that all he can do is sweep his own side of the street, and assures him that to do so is to ensure his own sobriety and well being.

AA is quite firm about this aspect of recovery. In the text, it makes no concessions otherwise. It tells the alcoholic that success is predicated upon not criticizing or arguing with the offender. Realizing that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until his own faults are rectified, he is admonished never to try telling the other guy what he should do. The offender's faults are not discussed. The alcoholic sticks to his own, and he does so in as calm, frank and open a manner as possible.

In their unit 9, Gassin & Enright suggest that as a result of the first eight units, the injured is going to experience a change of heart and new insights that what they've been doing in the past has not worked to bring relief.

This most closely parallels the 1st Step in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous where the alcoholic admits that his life has become unmanageable. For some alcoholics this is a slow awakening that takes

place over a long period of time; for many others it hits like the dawning of a new era.

So, at Gassin & Enright's unit 10 and AA's Step 4, we are pretty much even, give or take a few details that may or may not be worthy in each program, in addressing the issues required for forgiveness thus far.

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and
discover the prisoner was *you!*

–Unknown

Gassin & Enright's 20 Units	Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Steps	Explanation
Unit 15	Step 5	At its Step 5, AA diverges from Gassin & Enright's processes. AA's 5th Step instructs the alcoholic <i>to admit to God</i> (a higher power of his own choosing and understanding), to himself and to <i>another human being</i> the exact nature of his <i>own</i> wrongs. Here the focus of AA's Steps turns toward self examination, change and amends.

So, for starters, we can say that none of that is prescribed in Gassin & Enright's 20 unit process. Here we have a fundamental difference in instruction. The details, however, are worth examining.

Before continuing, it's worthwhile to reemphasize here that "God" can be anything or anybody you choose. AA implies an attitude, with this instruction, of surrendered being . . . of an inner attitude of submission to some power, any power, outside oneself.

Let's look at these three entities – God, ourselves and another human being – separately.

There is nothing in Gassin & Enright's processes that dictates this level of humility with a higher power or confession to another human being as a necessity to achieving a forgiving attitude.

I suspect that they specifically exclude it for the purpose of demonstrating actions that need to be taken and perhaps to demystify the process. I can't know what is in their minds about it, but it doesn't concern me that it is not a part of their process.

So, we might say, aha! It's the God thing that makes the difference. Maybe. But there are very surrendered, die-hard atheists in AA who adamantly refuse to believe there is any kind of God. What they *do* seem to demonstrate is the required attitude that self-sufficiency alone will not help (AAWS, 1976, p. 52).

I make this point to say simply that it may not be *what* you believe in that is at issue here, but the *attitude* you hold while you are believing whatever it is you choose to believe.

It's commonly heard in AA that you don't have to believe in God, but you'd better believe you're *not* God.

So, trimmed down to an attitude, it is still safe to say that adopting such a surrendered attitude is not a prescribed part of Gassin & Enright's 20 step process.

AA's 5th Step also suggests that the alcoholic admit the exact nature of his wrongs to himself. The 15th unit in Gassin & Enright's process instructs the injured to realize in a *general way* that she has needed forgiveness in the past. The difference is pretty obvious; AA is telling the

alcoholic to admit the *exact nature* of his wrongs. It seems that the clarity of understanding one's own wrongs brings one to a state of *remorse*.

It's purely conjecture on my part, though the opinion is supported by notable others, but I suspect that remorse creates a forgiving attitude. In spirit, however, both processes are suggesting the same thing.

Last, but not least, and certainly the most difficult for most AA's, is the requirement in the 5th Step that the alcoholic admit to *another human being* the exact nature of his wrongs. That essentially means sitting down and reading that 4th Step inventory to someone else.

Again, Gassin & Enright's process doesn't prescribe this. That doesn't say that it wouldn't be covered by default if their process were undertaken with the help of a therapist, but there is no overt instruction to involve anyone else.

I think it is valuable, so this would be a good time to go into Carl Jung's philosophy at some length. I do so because I place great value on his thought in general, but also because his views on this also manage to bridge the chasm between psychology and religion.

He states that people have a tremendous feeling of relief from telling another their wrongs – confession – because it brings us out of moral isolation and seclusion.

As an aside of some consequence: though Jung insists that it is essential that confession involve another human being who hears, accepts, and pardons -- thus bringing the penitent out of isolation and lessening his shame and guilt -- Joan Borysenko speaks in her lectures (1998) about research done by a criminologist who found that criminals who admitted their wrongdoings during lie detector tests showed profound changes in attitudes and warmth toward *him*. He was getting a lot of Christmas cards from people who had admitted to him what they'd done.

Curious, he researched the phenomenon and found that significant physiological improvements resulted in a study he devised where the penitents were instructed to confess to a person behind a shower curtain. However, there was no one there behind the curtain. And their belief had the physiological effects of reducing blood pressure and increasing evidence of immune response. But this *only* happened when the participant confessed *emotionally*. Intellectual confession did not accomplish this.

That fits with what Jung stated, that the "goal of the cathartic method is full confession -- not merely the intellectual recognition of the facts with the head, but their confirmation by the heart and the actual release of suppressed emotion" (Jung, 1961, p. 59)

It also supports what Jung said about holding back emotions and keeping secrets being “a psychic misdemeanor for which nature finally visits us with sickness” (Jung, 1954).

Now it’s a fair statement to make that Gassin & Enright’s process is focused on forgiving, not making amends. However, it does strike me as odd that there is no suggestion of involving another in the process. If it is truly important to come out of isolation (or as in the case of the study mentioned above, *believe* and have the *believed experience* that you have come out of isolation) the involvement of another person with whom the injured would share would be a valuable addition to Gassin & Enright’s process.

The Past: Our cradle, not our prison; there is danger as well as appeal in its glamour. The past is for inspiration, not imitation, for continuation, not repetition.

–Israel Zangwill

Gassin & Enright's 20 Units	Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Steps	Explanation
Unit none	Steps 6 & 7	Continuing with AA's Steps 6 and 7, there is no parallel in Gassin & Enright's process for the purely spiritual directive suggested by AA that the alcoholic be entirely ready to have God remove all the defects of character uncovered in the self examination and confession of the 4 th and 5 th Steps, and then, with humility, ask God to remove his shortcomings.

Gassin & Enright, as already discussed, are not including reliance upon a higher power as part of their process. But again, it is worth noting that although they are in the minority, there are surrendered, joyful members of AA who never come to a belief that there is a God.

They do, however, adopt the attitudes of deep humility that seem to create that. Maybe assigning "God" to the prescription is the way that AA manages to accomplish that quality of attitude. For this seems to be the common denominator that, though it is not expressly written in Gassin & Enright's process, ultimately brings the injured closer and closer to forgiving.

The secret of forgiving everything is to understand nothing.

–George Bernard Shaw

Gassin & Enright's
20 Units

Alcoholics Anonymous'
12 Steps

Explanation

Unit 11

Steps 8 & 9

Again, in AA's 8th and 9th Steps, there is no parallel to the instructions found in Gassin & Enright's processes. Gassin & Enright are focused on forgiving. AA is focused on *asking forgiveness*.

In Step 8, the alcoholic is instructed to sit down and make a list of everyone he has harmed, and then to *become willing* to make amends to them all. And then, in Step 9, he is instructed to make direct amends to everyone wherever possible unless doing so will injure them or others.

In unit 11 of Gassin & Enright's process, the injured commits to forgiving her offender. The alcoholic does the same thing in Steps 8 and 9 when he prepares himself to make amends for *his part* to people who have also harmed him.

Once again, I suspect that the *attitude of remorse* has some bearing on the alcoholic's developing a forgiving attitude, because the forgiving attitude happens while working on oneself in a different context.

How do we distinguish the authentic act of forgiving – that initiates the inner change of liberation from resentment and revengefulness – from the merely smug and self-deceptive play at magnanimity?

–Kauffman, 1984

Gassin & Enright's 20 Units	Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Steps	Explanation
Unit none	Step 10	In AA's Step 10, the alcoholic is instructed to continue taking personal inventory, and when he is wrong, to promptly admit it. This is saying that one must develop these disciplines of surrendered self examination and making amends as a way of life.

The promise is that living a surrendered life will keep the alcoholic's spirit in fit enough condition that drinking will be out of the question.

There's really no appropriate application of this to Gassin & Enright's process since theirs is focused on how to go about forgiving in a specific interpersonal crisis.

But we may see later on that the attitude of remorse and actions that promote that are beneficial to the process of forgiving.

The one who pursues revenge should dig two graves.

–Chinese proverb quoted in Benson, 1992

Gassin & Enright's
20 Units

Alcoholics Anonymous'
12 Steps

Explanation

Unit none Step 11 At Step 11 in AA's program, the alcoholic is instructed to seek to improve his conscious contact with whatever he construes God to be through prayer and meditation, and more importantly, he is specifically instructed to pray *only* for knowledge of God's will for him and for the power to carry that out.

A book all its own could be written on how meditation assists one in creating a forgiving, accepting attitude. Tons of literature exists about the psychological, physiological and spiritual benefits of this practice.

Though having nothing to do with amends or forgiving, this Step in AA's program is designed to promote living a centered, spiritually directed life.

How then would it apply to Gassin & Enright's process? It seems to me that it would work as an aid to creating the level of surrender required to do any of the units of the forgiving process in the first place.

Is it *necessary* to achieving the willingness to forgive? I don't think so. But certainly it is helpful.

If your forgiveness is offered with conditions, you are not forgiving.

–Ritzman, 1987

Gassin & Enright's 20 Units	Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Steps	Explanation
Unit none	Step 12	Again, there is no parallel in Gassin & Enright's 20 unit process for AA's 12 th Step.

AA's 12th Step says that since the alcoholic will have had a spiritual awakening as a result of taking the preceding 11 Steps, he is to make himself available to carry that message to other alcoholics who ask for his help, *and* to continue to practice the principles he has learned in all of his affairs.

Since Gassin & Enright's process is focused on achieving forgiveness toward one's injurer in a *single* interpersonal crisis, there is no appropriate place to put an instruction to continue to live that way.

AA's program is about making a new way of life. Gassin & Enright's is about resolving a single situation. The focuses are sufficiently different to make application of AA's inappropriate to Gassin & Enright's.

But what is AA saying here in this Step? It's saying that if you do all the things outlined in the first 11 Steps, you are going to have an awakening of your spirit.

That spiritual awakening is born straight out of almost unmerciful ego puncturing at great depth, and because the alcoholic is told that he cannot stay sober without releasing his resentments, and since the process of working through the middle Steps of the program in a surrendered way brings him to a great sense of remorse about his *own* life, he seems to inherit an attitude of acceptance about the actions of others who have wronged him.

We're not finished with our comparison yet, because Gassin & Enright have units left over that aren't addressed by AA's program.

Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness or forgiving another.

–Jean Paul Richter

Gassin & Enright's 20 Units	Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Steps	Explanation
Units 12-15	Steps 4-8? 11?	Gassin & Enright's 12 th step tells the injured to reframe the wrongdoer by viewing that person in context. As a result, in the 13 th step, the injured develops empathy toward her offender and in the 14 th becomes aware of an emerging compassion toward her offender and in the 15 th becomes aware of the times in the past when she has needed forgiveness.

Though not explicitly set out in any of AA's 12 Steps, it is impossible for the alcoholic to peel away what the other person did to him and look at his own part without ending up viewing that person in context of not only her whole life, but in context of her relationship to the alcoholic and his effect on her.

In so doing, the alcoholic who is keenly aware of his own need for forgiveness, develops empathy and compassion. So, in AA's program, these are byproducts of surrendered self examination.

There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness.

–Josh Billings

Gassin & Enright's 20 Units	Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Steps	Explanation
Unit 16	Step none?	Gassin & Enright explicitly state in unit 16 that the injured must absorb and accept the pain of her injury. This is a place where I think AA's 12 Steps fall short.

Though there is nowhere in the AA text that says, "ignore your pain," there is no place that talks about accepting and absorbing it, at least in the first 164 pages which are considered the official text.

In fact, pain is mentioned a couple of times, but only in reference to the family's painful remembrance of the experience of living with a drunk.

I can't say for sure how this affects men, but I've seen it make recovery very difficult for women and men who have a need to process feelings as part of recognizing their part in things.

There is a great deal of grief in the lives of alcoholics. Lest I paint the wrong picture, there is plenty of love and care from the fellowship of AA. But that is the fellowship. It is not a part of the Steps, and I believe the omission of an overt statement about absorbing and accepting the pain creates a dilemma, and it is evidenced in the life of the alcoholic consumed

with pain that doesn't go away when the Steps have been worked for a number of years.

Forgiveness is a strong steady rain washing
away drought.

–Miller, 1994

Gassin & Enright's
20 Units

Alcoholics Anonymous'
12 Steps

Explanation

Units 17 & 18 Step 12? I think AA's 12th Step exemplifies what Gassin & Enright are describing in their 17th unit when they say that the injured finds meaning in the suffering and in the forgiving process, and in the 18th unit when they say that the injured becomes aware of the fact that her life seems to have new purpose directly because of what happened.

That seems to be part of what it is to have a spiritual experience. And it is unquestionably evident in the 12th Step work of alcoholics who, after years of comfortable sobriety, continue to drag themselves away from the comfort of their homes in the evening to take a meeting to a prison or mental institution, or show up early to make sure a meeting room is unlocked and the coffee is made for a regularly scheduled meeting.

It shows in the hours spent on the phone, in coffee shops and leaning against the bumper of cars in the parking lot after a meeting, sharing their own sordid and painful experiences with other alcoholics who are new or who are having a difficult time in sobriety.

There is no question that AA's 12th Step demonstrates this event in the life of a person who has been through either of these processes.

Forgiveness replaces the need to anticipate fearfully with the capacity to accept gracefully and improvise brilliantly. It does not argue with fate, but recognizes the opportunities latent within it. If necessity is the mother of invention, forgiveness is the midwife of genius.

–Miller 1994

Gassin & Enright's
20 Units

Alcoholics Anonymous'
12 Steps

Explanation

Units 19 & 20 Step 12? Gassin & Enright's last two units say that the injured becomes aware of a decrease in negative feelings and an increase in positive feelings toward the injurer, and becomes aware of an internal emotional release.

To the extent that you can say that the words of AA's 12th Step, "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps . . . " is just another way to say what Gassin & Enright are saying in their units 19 and 20, you have an exact match.

In summary: We can make the following points:

13. One could expect widely divergent instructions in these two processes because one method is devoted to recognizing the processes that take place when one resolves resentment by forgiving, and the other is devoted to instruction on the steps required to resolve resentment by making amends.
14. Each appears to offer strengths not found in the other, and each might be improved by delineation of some of those strengths within its own format. For example:
 - a. Gassin & Enright's process would benefit from the inclusion of the delineation of a surrendered attitude as a prerequisite to doing the examination of psychological defenses.
 - b. Both Gassin & Enright's list, and AA's text would do well to mention the necessity of taking all these actions in the most non condemning, caring, interested attitude possible. In other words, in an atmosphere of love.
 - c. Gassin & Enright's process would benefit from the inclusion of getting support from a trusted friend or counselor.
 - d. The addition of meditation to Gassin & Enright's process would work as an aid to creating the level of surrender required to do any of the units of the forgiving process in the first place.

- e. There is no place in AA's Steps or in the text that discusses accepting and absorbing the pain. I believe the omission of an overt statement about absorbing and accepting the pain creates a dilemma for many alcoholics.