

Living to The Best of My Ability

In our recovery, we are often asked to do our very best, even if only one decision or one day at a time. In NA's "It Works: How And Why," (p.24), we read that we work the 12 Steps "to the best of our ability." A.A.'s Big Book (p.60) assures us that perfect adherence to spiritual principles is impossible, but that willingness is key to progress and success. This is great advice. But it's also easy to abuse.

When I am asked to do something "to the best of my ability," I automatically think in terms of minimal effort. "To the best of my ability" suggests to me that there will be no accountability, no one will check my work. No one knows the true extent of my ability. "To the best of my ability" says to me that I will make the grade so long as I do something and claim that I did my best.

I believe that "my best ability" means using all my resources; focusing on the task at hand; using the time allotted to me while still meeting deadlines, instead of rushing the job; being thorough; and checking my work. My inventory shows that I rarely, if ever, do anything to my best ability. Instead, I'm a lazy manipulator.

We have agreed to go to any length for our recovery. We are asked to be fearless and thorough "from the very start" (i.e., Step One). And we are warned that half measures avail us nothing. It's time that I shed this character defect. After all, it's my very life that is at stake.