

Get Up

A 12-Step Guide to Recovery for Misfits, Freaks & Weirdos by Bucky Sinister

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Excerpt

Finding Your Inner A-Team

In 1972 a crack commando unit was sent to prison by a military court for a crime they didn't commit. These men promptly escaped from a maximum security stockade to the Los Angeles underground. Today, still wanted by the government, they survive as soldiers of fortune. If you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find them, maybe you can hire the A-Team.

—From the show's opening

The A-Team was one of the best “And They Solve Crimes, Too” shows on television in the '80s. There were any number of these programs on then, within all kinds of parameters. A Guy Has a Super-Intelligent Car That Talks, A Trucker Has a Pet Monkey, A Guy Leads a Team of Stuntmen, and all of them solve crimes. But creator Stephen J. Cannell hit some sociological genius with *The A-Team*.

Every plot in the series was full of holes, but the lessons learned were solid. The team, supposedly in hiding, drove around in a very distinctive customized van. Murdock routinely escaped from various institutions but was never so insane as to jeopardize a mission. And, most unbelievably, for the thousands of rounds they fired, they never hit a single person. But what we have to learn from them will help us socialize with the Normies.

Interacting with the Normies is a difficult part of sobriety. If we'd gotten along with them in the first place, we probably wouldn't have started using in the first place. Since you didn't learn how to deal with them the first time, you'll have to learn to deal with them now.

Normies, at first viewing, seem like strange creatures. They leave beers unfinished. They open a bottle of scotch, have a drink, and don't drink from the same bottle again for months. They can keep a stash of wine in the cellar. They don't drink if they're about to drive or operate heavy machinery. They take the prescribed dosage on the side of the bottle instead of the whole bottle at once. Weird, huh? But wait, it gets weirder and weirder. Normies socialize sober. They go out on dates, to dinner parties, celebrate holidays without ever taking a drink or smoking pot. Many of them don't drink unless they're at a wedding, and they only go to weddings to which they're invited. I know, it sounds like an urban legend, like the story about the old lady who tried to dry off her poodle in the microwave, but it's totally true.

I hesitate to say our personalities are incomplete; rather, I'd say they're underdeveloped. You have all the tools you need to get by inside of you, but some of them are in a frozen state, like when Darth Vader froze Han Solo in Carbonite. Your ability to go out on a date sober was frozen since the age of fifteen, when you went on your first date by getting plowed on two wine coolers first. Instead of developing those social skill sets, you were getting drunk or high. But there still is time to develop said skills.

I won't underplay this. It's going to be scary. But really, if you think of all the scary things you've been through over the years that would make the average Normie crap his

pants, you'll see that you're a brave one. You've been in bad drug deals, been abandoned while passed out; some of you have flatlined in the back of ambulances. If you've been legally dead ever in your life and come back, you're tough enough to learn how to hang out with a group of strangers.

The first thing I suggest you do is diagnose your weak points, and then desensitize yourself to your fears. People with phobias are often made to confront their fears gradually, by slowly getting higher on a ladder, rung by rung, over a period of months, or by meeting a series of progressively larger dogs, or by hiring hookers that dress like nuns. The best way to diagnose your personality type is by using the A-team.

Hannibal

Hannibal is the planner of the team. He's a master of disguise, rarely spotted by his enemies whilst walking among them.

If you're a Hannibal, your life is orderly. You know where everything is. You don't lose important items. You make appointments and keep them, never showing up late. You can't stand indecisiveness on a group level. Your polar opposite is Murdock.

As an Addict

You were the one who kept the scale and weighed everything out perfectly. When it was time for a beer run, you designated what would be purchased and collected the money from everyone. You rarely ran dry. You were an overachieving alcoholic, showing up first to work, often in a managerial position, and leaving last.

As a Recovering Addict

You're going to be happiest with service work. You need to run meetings, have sponsees, and be a part of organizational activities. It irritates you when you see meetings being run in an inefficient manner. Step work makes sense to you, but you like to break each step down into twelve more steps, and add other steps that were left out.

Pros

Hannibal's organizational skills are of good use. Paperwork, forms, and responsibility comes natural to the Hannibal. Less likely to relapse if kept busy. Confident, assertive, and enthusiastic.

Cons

You have a hard time taking direction. Asking for help is your biggest problem. You think your way is best, and it's hard for you to conceive otherwise. Idleness is unbearable. Stubborn.

B.A.

B.A. is the muscle of the outfit. When it's time to duke it out, this is the man who's called on. He's also the driver and mechanic. However, B.A. has a debilitating fear of flying.

If you're a B.A., people are intimidated by you. You usually get your way, without an argument. Earlier in life, you were likely tormented by a parent, sibling, or neighborhood bully, but once you surpassed that, no one would dare cross you. Your polar opposite is Face.

As an Addict

No one dared burn you in a drug deal, although some of them were afraid you were a cop. You were a bouncer or doorman, and broke up many more fights than you've ever been in. You've made bongs out of everything but other bongs. Some of those bongs had mechanical

parts.

As a Recovering Addict

It's hard for you to find a sponsor who will be straight with you. You need to be pushed, but many people are afraid of your demeanor. When you find your right sponsor, your progress will be rapid. You have a hard time in job interviews, mostly because you scare the person interviewing you.

Pros

When there's something you want, you go directly after it. There's no hesitation or pussyfooting around. Your goals, once realized, are targeted and achieved.

Cons

Fear, ironically enough. While few things will scare a B.A., what does scare you completely dominates you in the situation. Your strength is thus rendered helpless. Has trouble with intimacy. Refuses to back down in situations even when it would greatly benefit you to do so.

Murdock

Murdock was the pilot of the bunch. On the show, he served as comic relief as the Hilarious Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Guy. Aren't shell-shocked vets *hilarious*?

Murdock is the prankster, the artist, the performer, and the jester. Everyone loves having you in the group. Your polar opposite is Hannibal.

As an Addict

You did copious amounts of drugs that were given to you by those who loved having you around. You were the "fun" drunk. You likely had a nickname that people shouted when you entered the bar. Though you angered many people who were the brunt of your pranks, you escaped without a scratch.

As a Recovering Addict

Chaos still rules. You have poor organizational skills, are late often, and lose important items. A creative outlet is imperative for your sobriety, but you may have a hard time acquiring the necessary items, bookings, or gallery space in which to showcase your talents. People think the stories of your bottom moments are hilarious.

Pros

There's always room for Murdock. Social groups accept you quickly. You have enormous amounts of creative and artistic talent. People love to hear you talk in meetings.

Cons

Are rarely taken seriously as a person with wants and needs. As a heterosexual man, women often want you around but just as a friend. It's hard for you to find a job, even though your friends love having you around.

Face

Face is the charmer. He was the one who talked the A-team in and out of any situation. No matter the situation, how high security it was, Face always found his way through locked doors and restricted access areas.

You can talk anyone out of anything, and you always get your way in the end. You

get jobs based on the strength of your interview, whether or not you said you were qualified. Your polar opposite is B.A.

As an Addict

You were never arrested. Stopped by the police, yes, but always managed not to go downtown. Dealers fronted you drugs, even when they didn't want to; somehow you convinced them.

As a Recovering Addict

When told what to do by a sponsor, you may not be able to resist bargaining for something else. You'll be able to reenter society, as people treat you as a hero for kicking your addictions.

Pros

Despite your checkered past, people trust Face when you asks for responsibility, loans, or gifts. You're the first one to get a second chance.

Cons

Acquiring positions in life and material items, Face is never satisfied. You can't enjoy them; you only enjoy talking people into giving them up. There are never enough toys or joys for Face. Finding emotional value in life is difficult. You may find yourself in a position in which you do not have the skills to succeed and must further talk your way out of a situation.

Yo, dude, all this is great, but how the hell am I supposed to use this knowledge?

You see, you're supposed to have aspects of all four of these characters to be a complete person. Without your Hannibal, you'll never be able to get things done. Without your B.A., you'll be walked on by others and not be able to improvise in difficult situations. Without your Murdock, you'll never be able to live in the moment and truly enjoy life. Without your Face, you'll have trouble getting people to trust you.

Figure out which area is weak, and make that team member exercise. Start small.

If your Hannibal is weak, make paying your bills and being on time your priority. Clean your room; it needs it. Even if it's cleaner than it was when you were a junkie, it's not clean enough. Just because there are no trash cans filled with puke doesn't mean it's clean.

If your Murdock is weak, take up a creative endeavor. Play an instrument or start a journal. You don't have to make it public; you don't need go so far as to do a poetry reading or sign up for open mike night with all the Dylan wannabes. There's a real danger of thinking, "Because It Happened to Me, It's Interesting." Many artists fall into this trap, and write boring memoirs and screenplays.

If your B.A. is weak, you need to work on your physical body. Whether it's yoga, martial arts, or weightlifting, you'll get more in touch with your physical assertiveness. It's very common to gain a lot of weight in sobriety. This weight gain, especially after years of drug-induced skinniness, can lead to an inferior self-image. Getting in shape will positively affect how you see yourself, and thus, how the world around you sees you.

If your Face is weak, be more social. Make a new friend. Reunite with an old one. As an addict, there was so much socialization done around drugs and alcohol, it'll be good for you to relearn how to talk about normal things. Be patient. Some of your friends will rattle on incessantly about how brilliant their kid is even if he can't use a toilet, or about how expensive owning a house can be. Remember the stoner who, every single time he got high, talked about a particularly good bag of pot he bought ten years before?