

# **KING BABY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Dr. Harry Tiebout used "His Majesty, the Baby," the words of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, to describe an inborn attitude. The term King Baby could just as well be Queen Baby, because we all probably have this infantile ego in our unconscious minds. Chemically dependent people must be especially aware of King Baby characteristics, for these attitudes and behaviors can interfere with recovery.

In our Twelve Step programs, we repeatedly see the need and make the attempt to surrender-to turn our lives and our will over to the care of God. We have slogans that emphasize the necessity and rewards of the Third Step: *Let go and let God, what's turned over turns out*. The recognition of powerlessness is the basis of surrender, but the act of surrendering comes with the total acceptance of that powerlessness. Many of us who have difficulty

with the First Step may recognize our powerlessness but be unwilling to accept it. In other words, we are able to see and understand it, but our need for control prevents us from committing ourselves to this very necessary act of surrender. Our egos interfere. Our immaturity demands we retain control. Our King Baby mentality insists we direct our lives and control our wills. In doing so, King Baby obstructs our healthy recovery.

In this document, we will learn to identify the infantile King Baby ego within us. Our childish personality traits must be surrendered before our disease can be fully arrested. The compulsive King Baby personality can accelerate addiction or lead to relapse. We must maintain our awareness of these tendencies as we work our Twelve Step recovery program in Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous.

## **WHO IS KING BABY?**

To understand King Baby, let's imagine for a moment we're returning to the womb. Here we feel

warmth, security, comfort, freedom, and power. All our needs are taken care of. We are the center of our universe. We are cared for just because we exist, and we are perfectly content. Infancy also encourages our King Baby attitudes. Our loud demands for food, attention, and care are answered immediately. We are again the center of a vast kingdom: our wishes are all-important. Through the natural maturing processes of childhood and adulthood, most of the King Baby mentality is discarded and replaced by more appropriate coping skills.

Some of us, however, advanced through the stages of physical growth without shedding this immature creature-King Baby. For us, King Baby never forgets the wonderful. warm security of prenatal and infant life and will try repeatedly to experience it. King Baby strives to recapture the total contentment of every need being met immediately.

# KING BABY CHARACTERISTICS

In attempting to regain the security of infancy, King Babies continue to function with the same feelings that gratified them so long ago. Tiebout says that "when infantile traits continue into adulthood, the person is spoken of as immature" and this immaturity is tied to the traits of feelings of omnipotence, inability to accept frustrations, and doing things hurriedly. \*

King Babies share a wide range of personality traits. None of us has all these traits, but we will probably find many that describe us.

\* Harry 1\1. Tiebout. "The Ego Factors in Surrender in Alcoholism," Quarterly journal of Studies 011 Alcohol 15, no. 4 (December 1954): 610-21

## **King Babies may show these characteristics:**

1. often become angry at or afraid of authority figures and will attempt to work them against each other to get their own way
2. seek approval and frequently lose their own identities in the process

3. can make a good first impression but are unable to follow through
4. have difficulty accepting personal criticism and become threatened and angry when criticized
5. have addictive personalities and are driven to extremes
6. are self-rejecting or self-alienated
7. are often immobilized by anger and frustration and are rarely satisfied
8. are usually lonely even when surrounded by other people
9. are chronic complainers who blame others for what's wrong with their lives
10. feel unappreciated and think they don't fit in
11. see the world as a jungle filled with selfish people who "aren't there" for them
12. see everything as a catastrophe, a life-and-death situation
13. judge life in absolutes: black or white, right or wrong
14. live in the past while fearful of the future
15. have strong feelings of dependence and exaggerated fears of abandonment

- 16. fear failure and rejection and don't try new things that they might not do well
- 17. are obsessed with money and material things
- 18. dream big plans and schemes and have little ability to make them happen
- 19. cannot tolerate illness in themselves or others
- 20. prefer to charm superiors and intimidate subordinates
- 21. believe rules and laws are for others, not for themselves
- 22. often become addicted to excitement, life in the fast lane
- 23. hold emotional pain within and lose touch with their feelings

## **THE FRIGHTENED CHILD AND KING BABY**

Within many addicted people is a scared, lonely, shamed boy or girl who whispers self-defeating thoughts based on a lifetime of negative messages. We constantly compare ourselves to others and feel we don't measure up. These feelings of worthlessness, self-blame, and I-don't-belong

become a central part of our personalities. King Baby-a selfish, demanding being-emerges as a reaction to these feelings of shame and inadequacy. As we childishly strive to be accepted and to please other people, we begin to seek things from the outside to feel better inside. Designer clothes, fast cars, attractive girlfriends or boyfriends, drugs, and the excitement of life in the fast lane help salve our pain. We develop attractive, magnetic, charming exteriors to get our way. Pleasure-seeking, power-seeking, and attention-seeking devices are used to fill the void, but the void remains. No amount of love, status, money, or fame is enough for the scared little child in us. Seeing this as a weakness, the King Baby part of us will try to destroy, attack, and push aside our scared little child. By denying these feelings, King Baby ultimately blocks out the fact that the scared little child exists.

### ***The Inner Struggle***

Understanding King Baby is difficult because things are never as they appear on the surface. There are two prime motivating factors for our behavior: first, the scared, lonely, child who does not want to

be hurt anymore and, second, the King Baby who is never satisfied. When the frightened child in us hears the word no, an inner message tells us we are bad. We feel loved when we are pampered, and unloved when we are disciplined or scolded. When we are criticized, our immaturity insists on the right to have our own way and argues that if we are loved, others should give us our way. Often, our manipulations allow us to win. Both drives-the frightened child and the demanding King Baby-are temporarily satisfied if we create the person, we believe others want us to be. However, long-term recovery is based on the scared little child regaining self-worth and learning to control the King Baby behavior.

### ***The Problem***

Recovering people usually are aware of the many threats to their sobriety. Twelve Step programs are designed to help us confront and overcome our character defects. Immaturity, a problem for many of us, is a stronghold of the King Baby in each of us. We may need to recognize this defect and overcome it if we are to continue in our recovery.



The King Baby in us tells us we're right—the others are wrong. Many of us have defended our rightness everywhere and anywhere we've felt threatened. King Babies often act as their own Higher Power, making judgment decisions for themselves and others. The King Baby in us tells us we should be able to succeed at anything we want to do. There is a feeling of being destined for greatness.

## **THE KING BABY MYTH**

The King Baby mentality is driven by three motives—power, attention, and pleasure. By being overly friendly and charming, we try to win friends. We may be clinging. We often try to control or dominate. Almost everything we do has strings attached and creates indebtedness to us. We fear rejection of our real selves, so we present a false, invented person to the world. This protects us from being hurt. Each personality or game we invent is based on a false promise or myth.

## *Popular Me*

Myth: If I am charming, attractive, magnetic, and the life of the party, you will want to be my friend.

Truth: By being all things to all people, we lose our true selves in the process. The end of the game comes when others realize there is nothing behind the phony smiles.

## *Tyrant/Dictator*

Myth: If you obey me and place yourself in my complete control, I will protect you from chaos.

Truth: If we believe we are born leaders capable of handling any crisis, we expect others to trustingly place themselves in our hands. Masters of sarcasm, we keep our subjects in place with cruel comments. The end of the game is when the "subjects" refuse to obey.

## *The Love Conqueror*

Myth: I am irresistible to others. Part of my attractiveness is my lack of respect for other people. I expect love, attention, wealth, and power for the privilege of my company.

Truth: We are in deadly competition for center stage and are incapable of commitment to a relationship. The end of the game is when others recognize the shallowness of the conqueror.

### ***Beautiful Me***

Myth: Youthfulness, a beautiful body, and an attractive face are the essential qualities for me to be liked and accepted.

Truth: We have tried to get by on looks alone; the end of the game is when others tire of the child who requires continuous reassurance of his or her attractiveness.

### ***The Entertainer***

Myth: If I can entertain you with my music, my wit, or any other talent, you will worship and adore me.

Truth: We experience acceptance only if others rave about our talents and seek our company to be entertained. The game is up when others tire of always having to be a fan or realize we have no warm, human qualities to contribute to a relationship.

## ***The Perfectionist***

Myth: I am not worthwhile unless I succeed at being the best in what I do.

Truth: No one is always the best or the most successful, but we try to gain self-worth by doing certain things well. The end of the game comes either when we realize the futility of such high expectations or when others tire of our competitiveness.

## ***Sweetums***

Myth: If I am nice and sweet to everyone, they will like me.

Truth: Our fear of rejection causes us to constantly seek approval from everyone. The end of the game is when we realize we can't make everyone happy or when others tire of our wishy-washy attitudes.

## ***The Rebel***

Myth: I must get my way or else. Rules are for other people. If you tell me not to do something, you are waving a red flag in my face and challenging me to do it.

Truth: We rebel's usually get the consequences or punishment we deserve or ask for. The end of the game is when we weary of paying the price the outlaw must pay and abandon this behavior.

### ***The Martyr***

Myth: I deserve to suffer. I don't count. Nobody understands. Poor me. I see your pity as an expression of love.

Truth: We confuse love with pity and believe sacrificing<sup>13</sup> ourselves will protect us from abandonment. The end of the game is when we get tired of suffering and realize we deserve better.

### ***The Dropout***

Myth: If you won't play the game my way, then I won't play the game at all.

Truth: Paralyzed by fear of failure and rejection, we attempt nothing and feel the world owes us. We are so discouraged and pessimistic, we give up before we even start. The end of the game comes when others get tired of providing a free ride. \*

## THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

Every one of these games began with some promise of success but slipped into frustration and failure. A King Baby's life becomes a series of extreme highs and lows. New beginnings are always followed by painful endings. These Babies become addicted to the thrill of success and, more important, to the pain of failure. King Babies can't stand the boredom of things going too well and will rock the boat or create a crisis. A life of turmoil clouds the issues and<sup>14</sup> lessens their responsibility for failures. The chaos even keeps them from seeing their constantly lessened self-esteem. The fact that it is not fun anymore is lost in the total absence of any feelings. It's predictable that the King Baby personality will be addicted to something. It is only a matter of time.

\* John Powell, *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?* (Allen, TX: Argus Communications, 1969); Janet Geringer Woititz, *Struggle for Intimacy*

(Pampano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1985).

## **THE FATAL COMBINATION**

Addicted to a life of excess and driven by feelings of low self-worth. the immature person experiences life as frustrating and unrewarding, but not necessarily fatal. But something happens to the chemically dependent person when the King Baby lifestyle and low self-worth are combined with the experience of getting high. This "something" can be fatal. That<sup>15</sup> warm. comfortable, confident feeling of infancy-something we have been looking for all our lives-is captured again. The comforting, fear-dispelling effects of a chemical are exactly what our King Baby egos have been searching for. As the love affair with getting high takes over, all aspects of our lives progressively slip into more excessive, immature behavior.

# THE CATALYST

The King Baby defense system of denying almost any problem is already well established, and it accelerates the chemically dependent person's descent to the bottom. The enemy is within us, and our drug use releases the pent-up frustrations, angers, resentments, fears, and doubts like a rocket ship taking off for the moon. The wonderful feeling of the womb returns. and the Baby is radiant within and without, excited and confident about this newfound high.

The ego becomes a raving maniac demanding to be constantly fed in a series of fun parties and excitement that speeds us through the progression of chemical dependency at a record pace. We become chemically dependent quickly, reaching bottom in a fraction of the time it took our elders.

Blinded by the wonderful feeling of that perfect high, the Baby in us throws away what's left of the conscience and value system. Having a set of built-in blinders, earplugs, and tunnel vision for our delusion and denial system, we are able to remain totally ignorant of how far we have gone.



# **SICK AND TIRED OF BEING SICK AND TIRED**

Exhausted from a lifestyle of needing everything in a hurry, scheming to win, frantically trying to gain the upper hand, fearing outcomes and endings, and trying to be all things to all people, the Baby in us often comes to a screeching halt. When that sick, panicky feeling of butterflies in the stomach becomes a raging fear and terror that totally consumes us, we hit bottom. The Baby cannot imagine life without chemicals and is fearful of going on and on in this never-ending rat race. Locked into the pattern of this repeated behavior and never trying anything different, King Baby is too paralyzed by fear to face the next day. Recovery can be delayed by the immature ego, which still insists on being right: "I can do anything. I don't need help." Timing is everything, for now the Baby is vulnerable and can be helped.

## **ADMIT DEFEAT, FACE REALITY**

Admitting our way didn't work and facing failure will open the floodgates to a world of pain. In an instant our King Baby will go from feeling we need help to feeling hopeless, from being optimistic to believing we can't change. We will stay stuck in our swamp of despair, waiting to be rescued while demanding a guaranteed blueprint for success before we will face our fears and begin to act. At this time, we can accept the hand of AA or NA reaching out to us in the form of another King Baby alcoholic or drug addict, reassuring us that the Twelve Steps work. Before the First Step is taken, King Baby needs the hope of "If others can do it, so can I."

The way out of the King Baby trap is "I can't, we can" thinking. Surrendering to the Twelve Step way of life can harness the power of King Baby and can help us find a Higher Power that will work for us. We can learn the true meaning of forgiveness, humility, and gratitude. We can learn to avoid the pitfalls of King Baby and tune in to the Twelve

Steps. We can learn to have fun again while gaining a new, deeper understanding of life.

## **HEALING OUR SCARED LITTLE CHILD**

Using all the love and support from our Twelve Step Group, we must begin an inward journey to meet that scared "bad" boy or girl part of us, so long ignored. We can let ourselves imagine walking into his or her room and seeing the child huddled and crying in the corner. We can become loving, caring parents to that child within each of us. As any attentive parent would do, we encourage the child to come, sit close, and explain what is wrong. Then by holding that child, saying "It's all right," and gently wiping away the tears, we can let this youngster know that he or she is loved, is a beautiful human being, and is safe.

## **THE NURTURING WITHIN AA AND NA**

A soft, warm, secure feeling exists in Twelve Step Groups, and it reaches out to newcomers with the message "You are loved just because you exist,

and I will love you even before you become lovable." This is the promise of AA and NA-love with no strings. The only expectation is a sincere desire to stop drinking or using. This is the warm, radiant womb that the Baby has been looking for all along. The warm, caring Twelve Step Family is genuine and stands in sharp contrast to the false security of alcohol and other drugs.

## **SELF-LOVE**

Slowly, the recovering Baby begins to gain self-respect through the Twelve Steps. It's hard work changing one's whole life, but AA and NA are always there as guides. In these programs, an awareness of personal dignity begins to bloom. It happens through self-discovery, self-discipline, self-forgiveness, and self-acceptance. Gradually the scared little child takes the opportunity to develop self-love.

## **TO LOVE AND BE LOVED**

It makes no difference if the people in our Twelve Step groups loved us before we loved ourselves. The key is that now we are loving ourselves more. Gradually, we will explore and discover all the wonderful assets we have. It's like a celebration for a sponsor to watch a sponsee discover his or her wonderful and unique talents. Each one learns from the other while going through the trials of early sobriety. Sponsors do this so they can stay sober; but, in doing so, they reinforce all that they have learned. Watching the newcomer come alive again is a thrill that is reward enough.

## **FREEDOM**

Coming alive again with a sense of self-dignity and becoming connected with a sponsor will prepare us for the next stage. Our immaturity has forced us to spend our lives attracting outside power to feel good inside. Selling ourselves for a smile was slavery. Good feelings do not come from people, places, or things, but from the inside. Claiming

personal power comes by first admitting powerlessness over others. We all need to take responsibility for our own self-worth and dignity. Self-worth does not depend upon what others say or do, but instead on how a person reacts to what others say or do. There are choices about the way to react. Reacting with fear, anger, or resentment tends to make a person feel worthless. Accepting the fact that everyone is not going to agree with us, and perhaps not even like us, is reality.

## **SURRENDER: BE GOD OR BELIEVE IN GOD**

22

It's quite a relief to be free from trying to run the whole universe. In surrendering, we turn the job back to a Higher Power who, in turn, fills our souls with the warmth, comfort, and serenity we've been seeking so long. Once again, it is similar to the feelings of the womb.

Before Surrender  
frustrated  
angry

After Surrender  
Safe  
cared for

tense  
nervous  
cornered  
panicky  
afraid  
guilty  
ashamed  
uncertain  
defeated  
resentful  
empty

relaxed  
grateful  
open  
teachable  
willing  
honest  
hopeful  
peaceful  
serene  
tolerant  
full

## **FORGIVENESS**

God doesn't make junk. Each one of us is a special and unique person-a somebody, not a nobody. In all the world there is not another one like us. We must become fascinated by ourselves and realize how tough we are. The King Babies within us have developed a wide variety of strengths coupled with God-given talents, and we must learn

to appreciate those strengths. We can learn from the past and let it go. We can stop being judge, jury, and executioner condemning ourselves. We know our Higher Power forgives us. Now it is time to let Him. We must stop judging ourselves and get out of His way.

## **HUMILITY**

"Oh, Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way. When Mac Davis sang those words, King Babies everywhere blushed, knowing he was singing about them. It is now obvious that pride is a large part of the King Baby problem. What we need to learn is that pride can be positive. Humility is not being meek and fearful. Rather, humility is an acceptance of being equal, not better or worse. To be equal is to also be honest, open, and vulnerable, which is difficult but now possible. Feeling free to be ourselves, we can face reality. Humility helps us to be teachable and flexible. To continue growing and avoid relapse, humility must be constantly maintained.



## **GUILT**

King Baby's guilt machine, or conscience, is broken. King Babies whitewash their behaviors and lose their value systems in the process. Realizing this, they overreact and beat themselves constantly for being human. Until the King Baby in us finds a balance and a new set of values, we will need to rely heavily on our sponsors. A good rule of thumb is if we feel guilty, we shouldn't do it. We need to find out what we believe in and live by it.

25

## **USING OUR ADDICTIVE PERSONALITIES**

We know we have addictive personalities. Why not try being addicted to something that is positive for us? We can pick some mini-goals or things that we can do each day. We can develop a fun, positive, even passionate love affair with some kind of exercise program. If we want to, we can go back to school.

# **DEVELOPING A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR HIGHER POWER**

We should ask ourselves what kind of a Higher Power we have and how we are going to contact Him as we read our daily meditations. We can pick a theme to live each day by, remembering that a positive attitude is not automatic, but comes from practice and hard work. The more our expectations are lowered, the more our serenity increases. We can practice acceptance of ourselves and others.

## **DAILY INVENTORY**

Each evening, we should record the positive things we did and the good things that happened to us. This focuses on giving ourselves some credit for what we accomplish. We can gently review our mistakes and promptly admit where we were wrong.

# ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Our recovery is seriously jeopardized by getting into a relationship too soon. While hurting with the growth pain of recovery, the King Baby in us often seeks new relationships to ease the pain of growth. If allowed to happen, it is like a moth being drawn to the flame, and King Baby too often creates an addictive relationship, using the relationship like a drug high. This puts our recovery on hold, or-even worse-it may encourage relapse. Our immaturity may have prevented us from knowing what a healthy relationship is or how to have one. All we have known is to possess, invade, demand, attack, and conquer. We love the honeymoon but have been incapable of sustaining the nuts and bolts of a relationship. The powerful emotions of a new relationship could cause us to lose our newfound sobriety.

# "YOU'VE GOT TO CHANGE YOUR WHOLE LIFE," THE SPEAKER SAID

Imagine for a moment a permanent stereo headset with one ear listening to **K-BABY** and the other listening to **W-AA**. Our call letters will be K-BABY and W-AA for the "we" in AA. We have a choice to tune in either K-BABY or W-AA. K-BABY represents stinking thinking or the thoughts that will lead us to relapse, while W-AA represents recovery. If we challenge K-BABY thinking and tune in W-AA, we can begin to change our behaviors.<sup>28</sup>

## King Baby Stinking Thinking

Living in the past and worrying  
about the future

Continuing to run away from fears  
and apprehensions

Try to handle it my way

Overreacting when things don't  
happen the way I think they should

## We in AA Slogans

One day at a  
time

Easy does it

Let go and let  
God

Live and let  
live

Trying to rewrite the Big Book, the  
Steps, and the Traditions choosing the  
parts I want to work

Forgetting that staying sober  
and AA/NA are my number  
one priority

Complicating it into “analysis  
paralysis”

Taking others' inventory, pointing out  
when they're wrong

Little white lies are okay

Justifying grudges and holding on to  
them

Telling people what you think they  
want to hear

If it works,  
don't fix it

First things  
first

Keep it  
simple

Take your  
own  
inventory

It's an honest  
program

Don't carry  
resentments

Tell it like it  
is

29

## **Compare the Symptoms of Relapse to the Principles of AA/NA**

### **King Baby Symptoms of Relapse**

Dishonesty

### **We in AA Principles**

Honesty

Doubt	Hope
Procrastination	Action
Fear	Courage
Taking the easy way out	Integrity
Complacency	Willingness
Cockiness	Humility
Expecting too much from others	Brotherly Love
Letting up on discipline	Self-discipline
Quitting the meetings	Perseverance
Forgetting the gratitude	Spiritual Awareness
Omnipotence	Service

## THE ATTITUDE IS GRATITUDE

Eventually, we learn to take on the task of supporting, nourishing, and stroking our scared little child. We even make a truce with the King Baby part of ourselves and become able to monitor what is going on within. It never occurred to King Baby that a person could be self-disciplined and live a normal life and still be really turned on and alive. We now can develop an inner serenity King Baby never

thought possible. There's a beautiful poem called "The Request and the Response" that describes the feelings King Baby has upon realizing that through all this suffering he or she has been most richly blessed...

## **The Request and the Response (A Universal Prayer of Thanksgiving)**

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,  
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.  
I asked for health, that I might do greater things,  
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.  
I asked for riches, that I might be happy,  
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.  
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,  
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.  
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,  
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.  
I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I had hoped for,

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were  
answered,  
I am among all men, most richly blessed.