

Our Devilish Alcoholic Personalities

By The Author of "The Little Red Book"

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Dedication: *This book is dedicated to A.A. members worldwide. To the newcomers who are the life blood of our fellowship and to the oldtimers who are its backbone. Ed W.*

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This is not an official A.A. book, but it does deal with practical application of The Twelve Steps which have brought sobriety and peace of mind to many members, including the author. For this, I am deeply indebted to the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous.

ODAP: The Alcoholic Monkey (pages 28 – 58)

The year was 1935. An historical event of international consequence was in the making. The principal characters were two sick men whose addiction to alcohol superseded all other interests in life.

Now these men were total strangers who lived several hundred miles from each other. One's name was Bill and the other's was Doctor Bob.

In May of 1935, as though moved by some miraculous power, they met in the city of Akron, Ohio, where they founded a fellowship known to this day as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Their purpose was to keep sober and by the example of their sobriety to help kindred sufferers recover from alcoholism. They accomplished this by living a simple Twelve Step program which treated the physical, mental and spiritual symptoms of their illness.

Although medical treatment was required, the crux of their incredible success depended upon the spiritual condition of each member. *Will Power was not a factor of recovery, as their only will was to drink.*

Faced by this grave extremity, they decided that their help must come from some power greater than alcohol. So they chose the only alternative of desperate, dying men – help from "God as they understood HIM."

It was an honest, sincere choice, but it presented many obstacles as it called for surrender of certain character defects, such surrender was hard to achieve by men subservient to the daily dictates of a lower alcoholic power for so many years.

So it came to pass that a hostile little MENTAL MONKEY named ODAP subtly invaded the ranks of A.A. where he still clings to the shoulders of its members whispering harmful anti-sober temptations into their ears.

Now "ODAP'S" appearance in A.A. was not exactly coincidental. Actually he was an offspring of OUR DEVILISH ALCOHOLIC PERSONALITIES. None of us was born with these personalities. We developed them throughout many years of uncontrolled drinking.

ODAP's name was coined from the first letter of each of those four words. Namely: "O" from *Our*, "D" from *Devilish*, "A" from *Alcoholic*, and "P" from *Personalities*. Added in proper sequence these letters spell "ODAP."

So, it goes without saying that “ODAP” was well qualified to keep our members fearful and unhappy, in spite of their best efforts to avoid him. His daily inroads upon their sobriety caused some members to drink again.

It was a most confusing situation. A.A. advocated that sobriety came from GOD, as the members understood Him; whereas, it seemed that drunkenness must come from some other power. Among the serious thinking members a big question arose. Was it possible that there were *two powers* in A.A.? *A Higher Power and A Lower Power?*

Obviously, the answer was – Yes. But the members then and now often fail to recognize this fact.

Too often each member fights a battle against himself, with that diabolical monkey ODAP clinging to his shoulder whispering urges to drink in his ears.

When an alcoholic seeks help from A.A. to recover from his illness, ODAP cries out in a loud voice against it.

“Don’t get mixed up with that bunch of low-browed, degenerate weaklings. Use your own will power. You can stop drinking if you want to. Try a little controlled drinking.”

“Try anything, but stay out of A.A. If you join that group of reformers you’ll have to stop drinking entirely and you certainly won’t like that.”

His bad counseling keeps too many helpless alcoholics out of A.A. Some die needlessly as he inflates their egos with absurd opinions of their importance and superiority over other drunks.

Those who do get into A.A. and acquire daily sobriety for awhile, feel safe, but it is a false security with ODAP constantly inciting them to fall off the wagon.

At this point I will no longer generalize upon the matter but will give you my personal experience with this detestable little ape, in A.A.

Step One infuriated him. He jumped up and down upon my back pounding me upon my head yelling his objections into my ears.

“You are not sick! You are not powerless! Your life is not unmanageable! Suppose you did drink too much. All you need is some food and a good night’s rest, then you’ll be Okay.”

Finally in utter desperation, I admitted that alcohol had me licked and that my life was out of control. It took this despicable situation to give me the needed humility to accept Step One and to seriously consider working Step Two.

Step Number Two enraged ODAP. He used all of his underhanded, cunning technique to discourage my acceptance of this Step.

He raged and raved, and strangely enough, some of his objections made good sense to my jittery, bewildered mind.

“You’re not insane,” he told me. “There’s nothing wrong with your mind and don’t let those A.A. nitwits tell you otherwise. It’s a silly, insulting program, to say the least.”

“They are as crazy as that policeman you ran into at a highway intersection while you were driving without a license on the wrong side of a two-way street. You are not insane. That could happen to anybody.”

ODAP was in constant disagreement with all my best efforts to live the Twelve Steps, Step Three especially. This Step “bugged” him severely, and he emphatically told me so.

“You’ve done lots of idiotic things, but nothing like turning your life over to the care of God,” he advised me.

“What are these people? They must be a bunch of holy-rollers. Have no part of their fellowship.”

“You don’t need God. What you need is a good psychiatrist. He’ll give you the cause of alcoholism, *providing, of course, you really are an alcoholic.*”

“First Things First – easy does it. Don’t rush into this spiritual business too fast.”

He had me as mixed up as the English alcoholic female that a rescue squad found one night during the war. She was nude and drunk in the basement of a bombed London building. She stood there muttering to herself.

“I don’t understand. I don’t understand.”

“What is it that you don’t understand?” they asked.

“Well I was a bit intoxicated, so I took my bottle with me and got into the bath tub. I finished my bath, took a last drink, reached over and pulled out the bath plug and the whole bloody house fell down on me. I don’t understand - I just don’t understand!”

I didn’t understand either with ODAP around telling me that A.A. was nothing more than a religious organization, and at first, I believed him.

So I listened to his advice. This put me on the wrong track and prevented my immediate acceptance of Step Three.

“Read less and less in that A.A. Book, and more and more on medicine and psychology. They have all your answers,” ODAP told me.

This sounded reasonable, but I noticed later that members who followed his advice came to know more and more about less and less until they knew nothing about anything, except *getting drunk*.

From their sad experiences, I decided that the founders of A.A. knew what they were doing when they put Step Three into our program. So I accepted it wholeheartedly.

Personally, I never did look upon A.A. as a religion. In my opinion, it represented a spiritual way of life by which alcoholics could recover from their physical and mental illness.

My early religious training, as I understood it, was intended to save souls. A.A. had no such objective, it’s main purpose was to save lives, and to unite families.

ODAP gave strong disapproval when I decided to carry out the provisions of Step Four. At this point he had me half agreeing with him that a written inventory was unnecessary, giving the following reasons to substantiate his disapproval.

“Better think hard before you act on this step, old buddy, you can’t record all your bad actions. That’s a negative approach – psychologically, it’s the wrong thing to do.”

“A.A. is apparently misnamed. It’s not a recovery program. It is a defeatists program. You don’t have to make a written inventory. A mental inventory is just as good.”

“You have no flaws in your make-up. You are not a weakling like the other drunks in A.A. Be positive. Don’t admit defeat.”

“But if you are too weak-willed to fight the issue, so ahead, write an inventory. Leave out the bad points. Just list the good ones. You’ve got lots of them.”

I was so accustomed to this sort of alcoholic rationalization that I delayed taking Step Four as long as possible.

Finally, I did make my inventory. It undoubtedly wasn't the best in the world, but it served to overcome my obstinacy and to lessen my battle against surrender.

Step Five brought out ODAP's real demoniacal impulses. He struck out at me with his best verbal punches to stop any attempt I might make to take Step Five.

"You can't trust your drinking history with another human being," he told me. "Your record is too bad. You'll be lucky if they don't put you in jail."

"Why risk it? Why humiliate yourself? Why not forget this whole silly matter about confiding with another human being?"

"You are the only one who knows anything about your past behavior. Let the memories die a natural death. Why tell some disinterested clergyman about them?"

"Skip the matter. Who is going to be the wiser if you don't disclose the wrongs you have committed? You have admitted them to yourself. That's enough."

Id ODAP had any redemptive characteristics they are unknown to our members. We must admit, however, that his tenacity to louse up our attempts to keep sober, and happy, is beyond all powers of human conception.

His hypnotic power to dull our spiritual enthusiasm over Steps Six and Seven becomes a threat to our hopes for daily progress in A.A.

He does this in a clever, most convincing manner after we have taken the first Five Steps, by advising us to ease up on our efforts.

His plan often works out, but to our loss, as he encourages us to believe that because we no longer drink, that we are now cured of alcoholism.

He talks to us about the things we love to hear, and tells us that there is no need for further concern and instructs us the battle is won.

"You've gotten rid of the alcoholic termite," he says, "Don't become too concerned over a few helpless cockroaches."

"Slow up a bit. Remember the A.A. motto, "Easy does it." All you joined A.A. for was sobriety. You've got it now, so stop taking yourself so seriously."

"You're not supposed to become a saint. Don't try to grow wings. Act natural, so grumble and raise a little hell once in awhile. Everyone else is doing it."

"You've been in A.A. quite awhile. You're entitled to an occasional slip. Go ahead – have fun."

"God knows you're human. He'll forgive you if you get drunk."

"You've got it made now. There's nothing to worry about any more. You owe your drinking customers more entertainment than they have received lately. Don't ostracize yourself from them, or you won't have any customers left."

"In fact, you can do a little social drinking when your business demands it. Drinking is no longer a problem for you. You've proved that you can take it or leave it alone."

ODAP knows this isn't true. He knows it is a lie, yet he tricks many gullible, recovering alcoholics into believing it, and in this manner transforms their sober thinking into drinking thinking.

Procrastination is a cunning trick he uses to promote drinking. Step Eight gives ODAP an excellent opportunity to get in his hatchet work on newcomers. Few of them are anxious to list the people they have harmed, and even less anxious to consider making amends to them. ODAP encourages their reluctance to comply with such action.

“You are not ready to take this step. What’s your hurry?” he asked me. “Suppose you make such a list and your wife accidentally finds it. What happens then?”

“Your wife is pretty nosy, you know. She’s bound to find that list, sooner or later. Remember her suspicious nature? You’ll be subject to her nagging the rest of your life.”

“Don’t take the chance. Don’t make a list. Whatever harm you have done is over. Carry in your mind the old adage; never put into writing anything you don’t want the whole world to know about.”

“A written list could boomerang upon you, and become a future source of trouble and embarrassment. Be smart, and don’t jeopardize your reputation. This step may be okay for other alcoholics, but that list is not for you.”

Those were the thoughts that ODAP constantly put into my mind. Being new in A.A., at that time, I had no inclination to record any names. My crafty alcoholic practice of omission is still alive, and stayed alive, until I followed the advice of an older member, and made up my list. It wasn’t too hard to do once I became submissive enough to realize the need for compliance with this step. It was really an adjunct to contentment in living a life without alcohol.

Step Nine was difficult for me to carry out, but it was made to order for ODAP. He had ready objections to making any restitutions to the people my drinking had injured. So, naturally, he was not worried about the injury it might cause them if I did try to make restitutions. His advice was definite and to the point.

“Don’t complicate your effort to carry out this step by calling upon a lot of individuals. They are not interested in you, so stay away from them. They would only ridicule you, and perhaps kick you out of their homes, if you did call.”

You are the only one to whom amends can be made, and you make them by showing your old friends that you can drink with them like any normal person.

“Be a man, show the world that you can handle your liquor without getting into trouble. A.A. says you can’t. You show them you can.”

“Thousands of social drinkers have no trouble. Drink, if you wish to, *but observe this one precaution – never drink the morning after.* You’ll be safe if you follow this simple advice.”

ODAP knows all the mental gimmicks that disrupt contented sobriety for A.A. newcomers. This was quite evident when I considered making amends to my family.

“It’s not wise to get too concerned about them,” he cautioned me. “Remember how they kept you in the doghouse during your drinking years? You are sober now, what more can they ask for? Do they expect perfections?”

“The Big Book says, You shouldn’t dodge your creditors. Don’t get all carried away with that idea. Pass them all up. Let them wait for their money. You have more important problems to contend with.”

Today, ODAP’s dishonest rationalization is apparent. But from my own experience, I can fully sympathize with the newcomer who is still pledged by his misleading advice.

It was an aggravating period in my life, a period in which I was belligerent and unhappy much of the time.

That sinful little monkey rode my shoulder day and night, always interfering with my inclinations to live the Twelve Steps as successful A.A. members lived them.

He was viciously intolerant of Step Ten. "What now?" he grumbled in sharp antagonistic tones. "More inventories? Will they never end?"

"Who is kidding who? You made an inventory in Step Four. You listed names in Step Eight, and considered making amends in Step Nine. Must you become an A.A. accountant to succeed in this program?"

"How come Step Ten has to drag out the action so long? Aren't you becoming rather sanctimonious by admitting your mistakes to everybody?"

"It seems that you are trying to out-clergy the clergymen. Few of them adhere to such strict regimentation as Step Ten demands from you."

At times, I shared ODAP's aversion to the daily practice of Step Ten. The suggestions in this step seemed too hard to follow. My attempts to follow them were far from perfect. Even so, whenever I tried, they rewarded me with feelings of partial accomplishment and a sense of well-being. There is an old A.A. adage which tells us that we either progress or that we retrogress in living out program. Some members learn this the hard way. Other members follow Step Ten's suggestions and thus retain their sobriety.

At first, I carried a middle of the road attitude which made me question the advisability of total adherence to any of the Twelve Steps. This half-hearted effort divorced me from alcohol, but made me irritable and unhappy.

Although my attitude did not directly oppose the practice of Step Eleven, it did lack sufficient stimulus for deep reflection upon God's will, or the way in which I was to carry it out. My habit of living upon self-will was too well established to submit to His will without a struggle.

An alcoholic's decisions are most inconsistent. He can accept and reject a decision almost instantaneously. He decides to stop drinking, throws away his bottle, and in five minutes he calls the liquor store for another bottle. A.A. used my inconsistencies for a better purpose, which was the case with Step Eleven.

My opposition to Step Eleven was overcome by thoughts of my helplessness and desperation before A.A. I discussed this with my sponsor, who advised me to continue praying many times each day. My first attempts were feeble, but they got me started upon a daily spiritual procedure, which I believe was the difference between success and failure.

There was no delayed action after I gave Step Eleven a fair trial. It was truly a stimulating experience. Over-night, my whole concept of life started to change for the better. It gave me a zest for living, honestly and unselfishly, which I never had before. It filled my mind with a desire for future sobriety and service to all alcoholics.

Surely these were worthy motives, but since they were based upon single experiences they were misleading. I assumed they would always stay with me. I soon learned that they were not my permanent possession, but that they must be renewed daily.

ODAP, who had been hiding in the shadow of my insane behavior for so many years, knew my weakness and my inconsistency to carry out a good intention. So he waited for an opportune time to intercept my Eleventh Step efforts. He didn't have to wait long. He seized upon daily meditation as the weapon with which to deter my well-intentioned advance towards successful application of this step. He presented facts and logic with which my confused mind could not always cope.

The Big Book suggested that upon awakening I plan the twenty-four hours ahead. That I ask God to keep my mental faculties free from self-pity, dishonesty or self-seeking motives. That I have my wife or friends join me in morning meditation, and at night to constructively review the day, asking God's forgiveness for my errors.

My work required written reports each day, and they were never completed before midnight. At seven o'clock the next morning I started getting ready for work again. As a result, I was not too alert mentally in the morning, and ODAP capitalized upon this condition.

"Why don't you put off this early morning prayer business until noon?" he asked. "You'll be able to do it then and you can kill two birds with one stone by reviewing your day and at the same time asking God's forgiveness for your errors."

"Forget about having your wife or friends join you in silent meditation. That's impossible! You travel and live in hotels where the guests would think you were off your rocker if you did such things in public."

"What about God's will? Did he ever get you any big business accounts, or did you get them yourself by drinking with your customers? You'd better give this matter some thought. You're A.A. principles could easily lose business for you."

"Be realistic. Is it possible your personality could have changed so much in a few months, or are you kidding yourself?"

"Wouldn't it be better for your business if you paid more attention to it, rather than devoting so much time to A.A.?"

ODAP never quits. These thoughts must have come from him. Certainly they did not come from the God I understood. The God who had provided me contented sobriety, up until that time. So I prayed to Him to protect me from ODAP's evil influence. My prayer was answered each day. This brought me real peace of mind, and sustained my desire to help other alcoholics as suggested in Step Twelve.

Step Twelve, I found, was most specific, and precisely formulated. First it stipulated a condition under which it would work, and then, it suggested the work to be done. In fact, it seemed to embrace most all of the Twelve Step program.

Step Twelve predicts real spiritual attainment for members who live the A.A. program. It suggests that we work with other alcoholics, and continue a spiritual way of life in all of our daily activities.

For the newcomer in A.A. there is so much to learn, and do, that full acceptance of Step Twelve seems impossible. To be quite factual, it is hard to practice in the beginning.

This does not mean, of course, that a new member cannot benefit from the practice of Step Twelve, or share his sobriety with an alcoholic who calls for help, providing he wishes to do so. He should use every available A.A. opportunity to gain as much experience as possible. If he is quite new in A.A., he will be wise to make the call with an older member.

Being spiritually awakened (even though it be a slight awakening) opens the door for us to a happier sober life. Through it we are given faith that God will use us as instruments to carry out His will. Our job is to be willing and ready to accept the opportunities as they present themselves to us.

He does not promise to remove all of our problems, but when we put our trust in Him, He does make possible a harmonious way to either overcome them, or avoid them.

God does not force us to live the Twelve Steps, He simply grants us sobriety if we are consistent in their daily practice. If failure results it is because we will not yield to their simple requirements, or because we will not make an honest admission of our alcoholic addiction to ourselves.

Fear, dishonesty, resentment and reservations are a few of the mental blocks which impede our progress in the A.A. way of life. These emotions often cause us to drink again.

ODAP knows this. He is well aware of these weak spots in our character, and he always selects the proper time to weaken our defense against them.

Always in opposition to better achievement of our Twelve Step objectives, his ironic logic can temporarily delay, and sometimes prevent, much needed contemplation of necessary A.A. action. Step Twelve presents a favorite field of malicious sabotage for him.

“What do you know about spiritual awakening? Aren’t you just using an expression which you heard in AA?” he asked me.

“The only spirits you are familiar with are those you got from alcohol and they put you to sleep, they didn’t awaken you. Remember?”

“If you are so spiritual minded, why do you still pad your expense account? I don’t blame you though. Your company doesn’t pay you enough to live on.”

ODAP resorted to every possible trick to thwart my attempts of sponsorship. He preyed upon my desire for anonymity as an excuse for avoiding an experience which our Big Book says, “We must not miss.”

Using his deceptive reasoning as justification for bypassing sponsorship, he offered the following mental escape devices to my credulous, unsuspecting mind.

“Aren’t you falling for a lot of A.A. double talk?” he asked me. “They lead you to believe that your identity will be protected – then they ask you to call upon prospective members, and expose it.”

“What about this idea of Carrying the Message to a lot of drunks you’ve never heard of before? How are you going to stay anonymous doing that?”

“Have you no concern for the reputation of your family? What will your neighbors think when they learn you are an alcoholic?”

“You’d better watch out calling on these drunks at all hours of the day and night – some of them live in pretty tough neighborhoods. You might end up with a cracked skull some night.”

“A lot of these would-be members are not going to stay sober. They’ll only get you into family quarrels and make you an easy touch for financial help.”

“Let some other member help them. You’ve got your sobriety. It’s up to them to take care of themselves. Are you trying to qualify for the role of Good Samaritan? Let the older members take that role.”

“Some members say that A.A. is a selfish program. You’ve got yourself to look after. Why spoil your own chances wet-nursing a lot of drunken strangers?”

“As for practicing the Twelve Step principles in all your affairs, it can’t be done, so why wear yourself out trying to achieve such an improbable undertaking?”

That crook ODAP, just deals in half truths. None of us can be perfect, we only work toward perfection, but our smaller efforts, if sincere, are sufficient to keep us sober.

He has given some members the opinion that our Twelve Step program is a selfish program. If living a contented, sober life in which we help other alcoholics to escape insanity and alcoholic death is selfish, then the meaning of the word has been changed without Webster’s knowledge.

Webster’s current definition of selfish is: “Caring unduly for oneself, regarding one’s comfort at the expense of that of others.” SO here again, ODAP gives us a half-truth.

It seemed that every time I took a step up the A.A. ladder ODAP tried to kick it out from under me.

He is the Devil’s chief advocate and he keeps the pressure on all A.A. members Twenty-Four Hours a day. We are never free from it.

Every move we make in the right direction – ODAP stands ready to throw his monkey wrench into our A.A. machinery.

Our problem is that we don't recognize these monkey wrenches, for they don't resemble monkey wrenches.

He inflicts us with mental drunkenness which comes in the form of fear, anger, dishonesty, resentment, jealousy, hatred and mental or physical exhaustion.

It's a smooth, tricky approach, but ODAP often makes it work. When we find a member indulging too heavily in any type of mental drunkenness, we know his sobriety is at stake.

Now, I've mentioned just a few of the ways in which ODAP throws up road-blocks to hinder our recovery from alcoholism.

There are many other ways in which he uses emotions from OUR DEVILISH ALCOHOLIC PERSONALITIES TO DRIVE US BACK TO THE BOTTLE.

He conjures up all sorts of excuses to keep us from reading THE BIG BOOK, and to keep us from A.A. meetings.

These are both very serious matters, for when we find enough excuses that we consider legitimate, to stop reading the book, and to keep us away from meetings – we are in real trouble.

Alcoholics form bad habits easily, and we quickly form the habit of not reading the book, or coming to meetings at all.

ODAP plays upon all our weaknesses. He eggs us on to gossip and find fault, or other harmful things, which will spread dissension in an A.A. group.

His strategy is to keep us on dry drunks. For he knows that a member who is mentally drunk has the bad habit of getting physically drunk, and quite often, of dropping out of A.A.

The Big Book assures us that our sobriety depends upon the daily help we receive from a Higher Power. ODAP prompts us to ignore this fact and to depend upon self-will instead.

SELF-WILL. Under the spiritual inspiration and guidance afforded us as we practice the Twelve Steps, will power becomes a source of constructive energy in a member's life. Without this spiritual help, however, self-will takes over and becomes a short cut to renewed drunkenness.

ODAP fill us with self-pity and resentment over the assumption that we are not getting enough recognition for our work, and efforts in A.A.

He tries to convince us that we are not appreciated enough at home for the great sacrifices we are making to keep sober.

At times, he convinces some members that they have really mastered the A.A. program, that graduation is at hand, and in this manner he gets these members out of A.A., only to start drinking again.

Thanks to God, who is the Higher Power in A.A., there is a much brighter picture than that devilish monkey ODAP allows his followers to see.

In fact, his followers are but a small minority compared to the thousands of successful members in our wonderful fellowship.

All of us in A.A. are subject to harmful urges and temptations, but for the members who study the Big Book, who become honest with themselves and try to follow the path of our Founders, *the miracle of A.A. is at work.*

It's at work in spite of ODAP's best efforts to stop it. ODAP still clings to our shoulders and whispers dishonest thoughts into our ears. But by this time he has lost much of his hypnotic power.

The Twelve Steps have taught us a daily way of life with which we can combat our harmful emotions and devote the strength of our minds to attaining happy, contented sobriety.

For the purposes of identification and comparison, I have used the analogy of two opposite powers in the A.A. fellowship to emphasize the help of a Higher Power, and the barriers which ODAP builds up to obstruct our efforts to live a normal, sober life.

Successful members soon learn to recognize these barriers as they study the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous," and try to live the Twelve Steps, as thousands of sober members have done since the inception of A.A.

These are the same barriers which unsuccessful members are either ignorant of, or too full of self-centered interests to try to correct.

This brings us to a cross-road in our recovery progress. From here on, we either "sink or swim," for God as we understand Him, now gives us a choice in the matter.

Our decision is a crucial decision at this point. We can either drink ourselves into alcoholic oblivion, or we can acquire happy, sober loves in A.A.

We will have problems – many problems, but through belief in God, and the practice of our A.A. principles we will sublimate these problems, which might, otherwise, send us back into the slavery of alcoholism.

We are still alcoholics. Sometimes, we get grandiose ideas, and by sheer will-power we attempt to combat our problems singlehanded.

This is a bad practice, for experience has taught us that will-power is a tricky, unreliable source of help for alcoholics. A.A. recommends that we try a daily practice of the Twelve Steps instead.

That is the way we find strength. For by their practice, we can eventually overcome the many urges and emotions which stand between us and contented sobriety.

Even so, let us always keep in mind this simple A.A. paradox: by daily practice of our Twelve Step program, we are never in real danger of drinking. But with that dishonest little monkey ODAP around, we are never entirely safe.