

*Mission Hills Step Study*  
*Workbook*

*2014*

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## **Introduction**

The Mission Hills Committed Step Study began in 1983 and over the years various facilitators compiled materials to help participants work the twelve steps. This workbook represents the accumulation of almost thirty years of such step work materials. The material is drawn from many sources, including *The Big Book of Alcoholic Anonymous*, the *12&12*, the *Little Red Book*, and others. Whenever possible, the material's source is noted, but alas after many years, the original source of some material has been lost. We offer our sincerest apologies to those authors we have not credited. Please bring the omission to our attention and we will correct it in the next edition.

We hope that you use this workbook to work your steps and that your work provides you with serenity and peace of mind as you trudge the road of happy destiny.

*It is a tradition in the recovery community, "to give freely, that which was given freely"  
and thus the only charge for this material is the cost to reproduce it.*

## **Step One: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.”**

### **Brief Outline**

1. Every “natural” instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness (defects of the thinking mind).
2. We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first step toward liberation and strength (making the admission we are unmanageable by us).
3. Until we so humble ourselves (accept the devastating weakness and all its consequences) our sobriety, if any, will be precarious.
4. The Principle: We shall find no-enduring strength until we first admit complete defeat (that probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism).
5. We are victims of a mental obsession—thinking (drinking is only a symptom)—so subtly powerful that no amount of human willpower could break it.
6. By going back in our own drinking histories, we could show that years before we realized it, we were out of control, that our drinking even then was no mere habit, that it was indeed the beginning of a fatal progression.
7. Few people will sincerely try to practice the AA program until they have hit their bottom through utter defeat.
8. In order to practice AA’s remaining eleven steps *we must adopt new attitudes and take new actions!*
9. We must become as open-minded to conviction and as willing to listen as the dying can be.

## First Step Guide

Step One consists of two distinct parts: (1) the admission that we have a mental obsession to drink alcohol and this allergy of the body will lead us to the brink of death or insanity, and (2) the admission that our lives have been, are now, and will remain unmanageable by us alone.

The first half of the first step—we admitted we were powerless over alcohol—is the beginning of the AA program which we strive to perfect on a daily basis. Since alcohol is but a symptom of our disease, we must realize that the thinking mind with its acquired traits, habits, and character defects allowed itself to develop this obsession of the mind—to drink. “By going back in our own drinking histories, we could show that years before we realized it we were out of control, that our drinking even then was no mere habit that it was indeed the beginning of a fatal progression.” (12&12)

This idea of personal powerlessness goes against what the thinking mind is telling us. Only through utter defeat (having hit our own bottom), are we then able to take the first step toward liberation and strength. This utter defeat is necessary so we can become convinced, beyond any doubt, that we are powerless and life is unmanageable by us alone; until we so humble ourselves (accept the devastating weaknesses and all their consequences), our sobriety, if any, will be precarious.

The fact that our lives were unmanageable is apparent, else why would we be involved in “AA”? However, it is not readily apparent to most of us that, even now, our lives are still unmanageable by us alone. This fact must be driven home. This realization, within our lives on a daily basis—that we cannot manage our own lives—forms the basis for taking each of the twelve steps of AA in sequence.

In the process of accepting our powerlessness and unmanageability, we must be willing to put aside false pride, the pride that nearly killed us. Although the doing of Step One can be painful to the thinking mind, the road to recovery begins with surrender.

The facts of your life are just that—facts. It is not the purpose of this step to judge where you have been right or wrong. Therefore, the purpose of writing out the first step is to admit to yourself honestly that you are powerless and your life is unmanageable by your thinking alone.

Go through the following examples and be as honest and specific as you can. Give five specific examples and situations from your own life. Write down the facts—what, where, when, how much—as they have occurred in your life. Try to see in your life how your disease has progressed.

***Do it Now!***

## Alcohol/Addiction History

Answer the questions below specifically—dates, amounts, places, feelings, etc.—use another sheet if you need to.

1. Age and circumstances of first drink (first time affected by drug/alcohol use) —how did you feel?

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2. Age and circumstances of first loss of control—what happened? How did you feel?

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3. Age when you were first concerned about your (others) drinking/using—what, if anything, did you do about it?

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4. Others who have been concerned about your (others) drinking/using —Who? When? Why?

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5. What feelings did you get from drinking/using? When did you not obtain those feelings? How did you feel then? How much did you (they) drink/use regularly? What was your (their) longest period of abstinence and how did you/they accomplish this?

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## Powerlessness

At some point in your history you became alcoholic, became *powerless* over alcohol, a mood-altering chemical. It happened over a period of time. Define the process as it happened to you by answering the questions below. You will discover how your disease *affected* you and *changed* you so that you compromised your basic values.

1. What did you drink, how much, how often? How and when did this change as time went on?

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2. Growing tolerance: Did it take more to make you feel good? Did it finally take more just to make you feel normal? Did you gulp drinks? Order stiffer drinks? Protect your supply? Hide your supply—at home, in the car, at your job? What hangover symptoms did you have?

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3. Growing preoccupation: Thinking, planning or scheming now to drink or set up situations to drink. Were you preoccupied with drinking even when sober? What and how? (Day times, vacations, increased drinking time). Did your other activities then get in the way of your drinking? Did you increase your drinking during times of stress? (Job /family/personal). Did you begin to drink at particular times more regularly? (After work, weekends, before going to bed, before leaving the house, morning drinking).

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4. What accidents were caused by your drinking? What dangerous situations did your drinking get you into?

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5. How and when did you attempt to cut down or control your use of alcohol? How did you feel as a result of your attempts to control or stop your drinking?

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6. Loss of Control: You used alcohol and then it started to use you! That's when you lost control. Give specific examples of each of the following:

❖ Family: Broken promises, drunken embarrassing behavior in front of your family, sacrificing family for your drinking, physical and verbal abuse of yourself and your family.

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❖ Legal: Drunk driving, drunk and disorderly, divorce, jail, bankruptcy, theft, etc.

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❖ Social: Loss of friends/hobbies/community activities? Problems with sexuality?

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❖ Job: Were you absent? Lose promotions? Were you fired from your job(s) or threatened with it? Did you quit your job(s) due to your drinking? What were the impacts of going to work hung over? Or of drinking while at work?

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- ❖ Physical: Were you hospitalized, or told by your doctor to cut down on your drinking? Were you using alcohol and/or other drugs as a medicine to sleep or relieve stress? What were your withdrawal symptoms? Did you have blackouts?

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Self-help questions on *powerlessness* (From Hazelden *Step 1: the Foundation of Recovery*):

1. How has alcohol placed your life or lives of others in jeopardy?

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2. How have you lost self-respect due to your alcohol usage?

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3. What is it about your behavior that your spouse/family/friends object too most?

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4. How have you tried to control your consumption of alcohol?

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5. How has powerlessness revealed itself in your own personal experience?

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6. What type of physical abuse has happened to you or others as a result of your drinking?

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7. What is your current physical condition?

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8. What's the difference between admittance and acceptance?

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9. What convinces you that you no longer can use alcohol safely?

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10. Are you an alcoholic?

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## Unmanageability

Drinking or not, your *entire life* began to show signs of your disease. The harder you tried to “manage,” the worse it became. Give examples of how your life has been and is now unmanageable.

1. What is your present physical condition? Is it what you want you want it to be? Can you manage your own body? When did you last have a physical? Dental checkup? Are you willing to improve your nutrition?

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2. Emotional and feeling life:

- ❖ What is your self-image? Do you think you can manage yourself into being the person you want to be?

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- ❖ Try to see behavior patterns of unmanageability—suppressing your feelings (with or without alcohol), setting unrealistic expectations and goals for yourself and others. Setting yourself up to fail—perfectionism. Irresponsibility, procrastination, harboring resentments, self-pity, grandiose beliefs, guilt, anger.

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- ❖ Are you aware that your drinking caused you to blame others for your problems? What special problems do you think caused you to drink? (Of course, nothing can make us drink – but what was your delusion?)

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- 3. Spiritual life: Are you aware that you, may be “spiritually bankrupt,” paranoid, suspicious, resentful, envious, untrusting, fearful, greedy, withdrawn, self-centered?

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- 4. Social and family life: How has your drinking affected your family? How is your communication with your family? How much time do you spend with any of your family members? How do you feel about that?

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- 5. Occupational life: How are you handling your present job? Other jobs you’ve had? Your career? Your education?

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- 6. Financial matters: Give examples of your irresponsibility with money—borrowing, writing Bad checks, misuse of credit cards, not paying your bills on time, whatever applies to you.

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Self-help questions on **unmanageability** (From Hazelden, *Step 1: the Foundation of Recovery*):

- 1. What does unmanageability mean to you?

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2. What could you identify as your social unmanageability?

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3. How is your sober life unmanageable?

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4. What goals have you set for your life?

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5. Prior to coming to AA, how did you try to achieve these goals?

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6. What feelings did you try to alter by drinking?

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7. How have you tried to change your image while drinking?

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8. What crisis besides the one that got you to AA would have eventually happened?

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9. What is different about you from other people?

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10. Why should you continue in AA?

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### Summary

Are you convinced that you are powerless over alcohol and that your life is unmanageable, even when sober? What am I going to do about the fact that I am powerless? What am I going to do about the fact that my life is unmanageable by me?



## Key Concepts for Step One

*Step One: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—  
that our lives had become unmanageable."*

- Key 1: Who cares to admit complete defeat—practically no one, of course? Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit that, glass in hand; we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only an act of providence can remove it from us.
- Key 2: Upon entering AA we soon take quite another view of this absolute humiliation. We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength. Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.
- Key 3: The principle that we shall find no enduring strength until we first admit complete defeat is the main taproot from which our whole society has sprung and flowered.
- Key 4: So far as alcohol is concerned, self-confidence is no good whatever; in fact it was a total liability. We are the victims of a mental obsession so subtly powerful that no amount of human willpower can beat it. There is no such thing as the personal conquest of this compulsion by the unaided will.
- Key 5: The tyrant alcohol wielded a double-edged sword over us: First, we were smitten by an insane urge that condemned us to go on drinking, and then by an allergy of the body that insured we would ultimately destroy ourselves in the process.
- Key 6: Alcoholics almost never recover on their own resources.
- Key 7: Even the "Last gaspers" often had difficulty in realizing how hopeless they had been. But a few did, and when these laid hold of AA principles with all the fervor with which the drowning seize life preservers, they almost invariably got well. By going back in our own drinking histories, we could show that years before we realized it we were out of control, that our drinking even then was no mere habit, and that it was indeed the beginning of a fatal progression.
- Key 8: When one alcoholic has planted in the mind of another the true nature of his malady, that person can never be the same again. (Only a drunk can tell another drunk this and a drunk will listen only to a fellow drunk.)
- Key 9: Why all this insistence that every AA must hit bottom first? The answer is that few people will sincerely try to practice the AA program unless they have hit bottom. For practicing AA's remaining eleven steps means the adoption of attitudes and actions that almost no alcoholic (or non-alcoholic) who is still drinking can dream of taking. Who wishes to be rigorously honest and tolerant? Who wants to confess his faults to another and make restitution for harm done? Who cares anything about a higher power, let alone meditation and prayer? Who wants to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry AA'S message to the next sufferer? No, the average alcoholic, self-centered in the extreme, doesn't care for this prospect...unless he has to do these things in order to stay alive himself.
- Key 10: Under the lash of alcoholism, we are driven to AA, and there we discover the fatal nature of our situation. Then, and only then, do we become as open-minded to conviction and as willing to listen as the dying can be. We stand ready to do anything, which will lift the merciless obsession from us.

**Commitment**

Do you admit you are powerless over alcohol...that your life has become unmanageable? Are you prepared to be (how) honest, open-minded, (how) willing, and give this workshop your best effort and the next nine months of your time?

**Home Study**

*Big Book:* Read the preface, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Forwards, The Doctor's Opinion, and Bill's Story.

*12& 12:* Read the Forward and Step 1.

**First Step Word Definitions**

Write down definitions for the following words: first, define them mentally to yourself, in terms of what you believe each word means. Then refer to a dictionary for definitions. Using the meanings that are appropriate to a self-inventory, jot down two to three sentences for each.

From the *Big Book*:

1. Avocation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Malady: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Recovery: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Chronic: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Phenomenon: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Altruistic: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Impunity: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Psychic: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Craving: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Faith: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

From the 12&12:

1. Society: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Rapacious: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Subtly: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Allergy: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Sacrifice: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Additional Step One Readings

### *NA Basic Text (page 19)*

As a result of attending a few meetings, we begin to feel like we finally belong. It is in these meetings that we are introduced to the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. We learn to work them in the order they are written and to use them on a daily basis. The steps are our solution. They are our survival kit. They are our defense, for addiction is a deadly disease. Our steps are the principles that make our recovery possible.

### *The Recovery Book (page 4)*

- ❖ Alcoholism/addiction is a disease.
- ❖ This disease strikes all kinds of people—young and old, rich and poor, educated and illiterate.
- ❖ Having the disease does not mean you are immoral or weak-willed.
- ❖ Recovery from alcoholism/addiction, like recovery from most diseases, is gradual.
- ❖ Swearing off alcohol and drugs is the easy part of recovery. The hard part is living happily ever after. Abstinence will not automatically make your life better; a better life will come only with time, patience, and hard work.
- ❖ Although this book can guide you through the maze of recovery, it is highly unlikely that you can have a successful recovery without additional support. A lot of that support will come from other recovering alcoholics and addicts, but the help of a trained professional may also be needed.

### *The Recovery Book (page 113)*

**Summary.** If a year or two down the road you feel that you have worked hard on these Steps, yet find you do not still have a fulfilling life, it will probably be because you have left out some important element. To avoid this, be sure you don't allow your denial (page 15) to hoodwink you into skipping one or more Steps or attending to them halfheartedly. Don't allow shame or guilt (page 150) to freeze your feelings and make you unable to look at yourself, as the Steps require. And be sure you don't try so desperately to over compensate for past wrongs (you now want to be the best employee, best spouse, best parent, best child in the world) that you leave yourself no time to work on your recovery.

### *The Recovery Book (page 6)*

#### A Drug by Any Name

It doesn't matter whether your drug of choice has been alcohol, cocaine, Valium, or another mood-altering substance. The problems you face in recovery will, for the most part, be the same. To bring this fact home, we refer throughout this book to the disease of 'alcoholism/addiction' and to anyone afflicted with it as an 'alcoholic/addict.' We occasionally use 'mood-altering chemical,' 'chemical substance,' or just plain 'drugs' to mean all drugs, including alcohol. Alcohol, of course, is a drug. But since so many people tend to separate it out—probably because it is legal and so widely used—and so that alcoholics won't feel ignored, we most often specify 'alcohol and drugs.' Though some of the questions and concerns raised by people in recovery throughout this book refer to one or another by type of drug, the answers are generally relevant to everyone. When we mention AA, we mean it to

represent all the Twelve-Step substance-abuse fellowships (Narcotics Anonymous, Pills Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, and so on), unless otherwise noted.

Keep in mind that if you have had a problem with one or more of these substance, switching to another in recovery—from alcohol to pot for example, or from pills to booze—will intensify, not sure, your problem. If you have trouble with one mind-altering substance, you will have trouble with all of them.

*The Dark Night of Recovery by Edward Bear (page xiv)*

“Sounds like you’re about to enter the dark part of the forest. The part where the real work begins. You ready to go back to school?”

“I did the steps already,” said Bob.

“Good. Once more won’t hurt. And try not to be defensive. I’m on your side.”

“I’m not being defensive.”

“You’re being defensive,” said Tyler. “Trust me on this; I know defensive when I see it. Now, it would seem that the preliminary work is done—you have hit bottom sober—very important. And now you are about to enter the Dark Night, the Great Desert, where you will either fall by the wayside and die, go mad, or survive and experience real recovery.”

“Those are the only choices?”

“All spiritual journeys contain elements of death and transformation. Recovery’s no different. It’s just part of the deal.”

“Sounds like major surgery,” said Bob.

“True. But the alternative is to stop growing and join those who linger in that gray limbo of semi-recovery, not drinking or using or feeling their other addictions, but not really living either, dispensing Advice and Tough Love to defenseless newcomers, glumly counting birthday as if the sheer number might guarantee a certain amount of happiness. You want that?”

“No,”

“You want to be free?”

“I want to be free.”

*La Hacienda*

The Twelve Step tradition is a time-tested method of recovery from various obsessive-compulsive behaviors, which the affected individuals believe have made their lives unmanageable. These simple tools for living have been used by millions of people to successfully change their lives and recover from negative and even life threatening behaviors. They are based on a set of Spiritual (not religious) principles originally created by Alcoholics Anonymous in the United States in 1935. Anonymity as a Spiritual principle is the underpinning of the Twelve-Step way of life. Sharing and supporting in groups with like-minded individuals and ongoing fellowship is a major ingredient in the success of the program.

12 Step Editorial ([www.patiencepress.com/samples/3rdIssue.html](http://www.patiencepress.com/samples/3rdIssue.html))

**Editorial: The 12 Steps and Me:**

The first time I read the 12 steps I was really irritated and annoyed. They seemed so wishy-washy. Where were the directions? Why were they so—so—nebulous? What did it mean, “Came to believe?” How would “humbly asking” God, in whom I didn’t believe, to remove my shortcomings make me perfect? Bull. Drunks might be able to get something out of this, but not me. I didn’t need them.

Later when I began attending an Adult Children of Alcoholics group, some of us decided to work the steps in an ACOMA workbook, *The Twelve Steps: A Way Out*. I found it appallingly God oriented. Luckily, a friend who had been sober in AA for 7 years with Ozzie Osborne as a higher power told me I could take anything as my higher power. I didn’t have to say God or believe in God to work the steps. As a sort of joke, I took Lee Iacocca as a higher power. I think he’s a jerk, but I turned Bob and Jack over to him and stopped doing a lot of the stuff I thought they couldn’t live without. Naturally Lee Iacocca wasn’t calling Jack every morning to see if he’d gotten a job or telling Bob not to be depressed. As a matter of fact, he never called. And guess what? Bob and Jack were fine! It was pretty humbling, and my life got better.

Some of the steps really scared me like Step 9, amends. I was sure I didn’t owe any but that I would be required (by the step police, no doubt) to say I was sorry for a lot of stuff that wasn’t my fault because they deserved it. Someone said the most important amends for her were living amends, because when she was working her program, she could be there for her family in healthy ways that hadn’t been available to her before. That really hit me hard. Could I be there for Bob and Jack without trying to control, manage, be right? Maybe the steps would help me do it. They certainly had helped her. That’s how I got the key to the steps: willingness.

Take what you like and leave the rest was another concept that helped me.

Working through that step book, imperfectly, taking what I liked and leaving the rest, transformed my life. Later when I went to two other 12 step programs that experience gave me the capacity to ignore a few vocal old-timers who were telling newcomers their opinions (Read the conference approved literature for the program’s suggestions) as rules, saying you have to do the steps once perfectly the way it says in *The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*. I knew they were wrong because I had already done the steps half-assed, not in order, and out of another book, and they had transformed my life. Later I did them *Big Book* style, and found that experience extremely helpful. The *Big Book* explains the program. I suggest that anyone who gets into a program read AA’s *Big Book* and the conference-approved literature for the program they are in. When you read the literature, you find that everything in a twelve-step program is suggested. Today I track my own recovery by whether I’m saying ‘you have to...’ (Advice giving is not recovering) ‘we have to...’ (Recovering a little), or ‘I have to...’ (Real recovery). I share my experience strength and hope).

In the *Big Book* there is a section called *Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict*. On the bottom of page 449, he says:

“For years, I was sure the worst thing that could happen to a nice guy like me would be that I would turn out to be an alcoholic. Today, ***I find it’s the best thing that has ever happened to me. This proves I don’t know what’s good for me. And if I don’t know what’s god for me, then I don’t know what’s good or bad for you or for anyone.*** So I’m better off if I don’t give advice, don’t figure I know what’s best, and just accept life on life’s terms, as it is today—especially my own life as it actually is. ***Before AA I judged myself by my intentions, while the world was judging me by my actions.***”

The emphasis is mine. These are most telling words a codependent or addicted person can read. We all have good intentions. Do our actions empower people or do they hurt people, cripple, control, people please, predict, judge, know best?

One reason why I continue to work a twelve step program is that I couldn't tell that by telling Bob 'don't be upset,' I was discounting and minimizing his feelings and being controlling. I thought I was being nice. I still have trouble identifying other unhealthy actions I take with the best of intentions. If you feel burnt out by your own addiction or PTSD, by veterans or other survivors, working the twelve steps will help. It won't be fast, it won't necessarily bring you where you want to go, but my experience has been that things got better in ways I never imagined. It has happened for me.

As I've done the steps more times and more thoroughly, my life has gotten better and better because I am living my life, not Bob's life. As they say in program, the only way to do the Twelve Steps wrong is not to do them at all. I am now also able to deal with painful feelings in healthy way instead of burying them with compulsive behaviors. I have all my feelings back and even when I'm in a great deal of pain, I am grateful that I can feel it instead of being numb. I know this too shall pass, because I've had the experience of it passing before. I also have days of joy.

When you read the 12 Steps on the first page of this issue, I bet they don't look like anything that can transform your life. It is one of the paradoxes of the program that by admitting powerlessness and taking these steps, you gain the power to change. You are no longer helpless in the grip of reactions you don't understand and would prefer not to even see in yourself. Help is available.

Working the steps causes a shift inside you from hopeless embitterment as you struggle to control your drinking, PTSD symptoms, or whatever, 'pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization' as it is called in the *Big Book*, to the peace of knowing you are going to be all right whatever happens because you have support and steps you can take to deal with any problem that arises. This change is often a slow process, done one day at a time, but that is how human beings change: slowly. Don't quit before the miracle happens. 12 Step programs are not societies of white-knuckled control-freak goody-goodies dying for a drink or whatever. They are groups of people who are happy joyous and free of the compulsions that once made life hell. The people are full of fun, laughing about things that hurt a lot when they happened, and grateful for today. Today is what it is all about. AA shows you how to put together a long string of single days of not drinking by taking the actions AA suggests. It is the same in other 12 Step programs. By working the steps your obsession will be lifted. This works whether you are an atheist like me or believe in God. You won't be sitting there dying for a drink, or a drug, or a Twinkie, or obsessing about what you or someone else ought to be doing, but somehow able to "be good," to control the desire or the obsession. The desire or obsession will be gone.

The human capacity to become compulsive to avoid pain is phenomenal. If you or a loved one has become addicted to a substance or behavior, the twelve steps can free you from that addiction. If you work them, you will find a power greater than yourself that works for you, whether it is the group, Ozzie Osborne, nature, or a personal God. Finding something outside your own head, which will help you with your problem, is the whole point. Your compulsion to repeat actions, which have damaged you in the past, will be lifted.

When I first read the steps, I wanted rules, and I wanted proof it would work. Someone told me that my misery would be freely refunded if the steps didn't work. That cracked me up, so I gave them a try. As the first steps began to work in my life, I came to trust the steps, even the ones that I thought I'd never do like Step Four (the fearless and thorough moral inventory) and Step Nine (making amends). Willingness rose up in me to do what the program suggests. Sometimes I think that the steps are not only a blueprint for changing your

life, but also a description of what will happen to you if you are willing to keep coming back to meetings. I was constantly pissed off and depressed when I got to my first meeting. Today I'm full of joy. I feel like I'm green and growing, flowering all over the place. I do have bad days, hours, minutes but they don't last. I used to have bad years.

*The Basic Text of Narcotics Anonymous (pages 19–22)*

We didn't stumble into this fellowship brimming with love, honesty, open-mindedness, or willingness. We reached the point where we could no longer continue because of physical, mental, and spiritual pain. When we were beaten, we became willing.

The physical aspect of our disease is the compulsive use of drugs: the inability to stop using once we have started. The mental aspect of our disease is the obsession, or overpowering desire, which leads us to using even when it has destroyed our lives. The spiritual part of our disease is our total self-centeredness. We felt that we could stop whenever we wanted to, despite all evidence to the contrary. Denial, substitution, rationalization, justification, distrust of others, guilt, embarrassment, dereliction, degradation, isolation, and loss of control are all results of our disease. Our disease is progressive, incurable, and fatal. Most of us are relieved to find out we have a disease instead of a moral deficiency. ***We are not responsible for our disease, but we are responsible for our recovery.*** Un-employability, dereliction, and destruction are easily seen as characteristics of an unmanageable life. Our families generally are disappointed, baffled, and confused by our actions and often have deserted or disowned us. Becoming employed, socially acceptable, and reunited with our families does not make our lives manageable. Social acceptability does not equal recovery. However, none of the steps work by magic. We do not just say the words of this step; we learn to live them.

We have found hope. We find that we can learn to function in the world we live in. We, too, can find meaning and purpose in life and be rescued from insanity, depravity, and death. When we admit our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives, we open the door for a Power greater than ourselves to help us. It is not where we were that counts, but where we are going.

*Overeaters Anonymous (pages 6–7)*

As long as we refuse to recognize that we have this debilitating and ultimately fatal disease, we are not motivated to get the daily treatment for it, which brings about our recovery. Denial of the truth leads to destruction. Only an honest admission to ourselves of the reality of our condition can save us from our destructive eating.

The same principle applies to our unmanageable lives. As long as we believe that we already know what is best for us, we cling to our habitual ways of thinking and acting. Yet these ways of thinking and acting got us into the unhealthy, unhappy condition we were in when we came to OA. In Step One, we acknowledge this truth about ourselves: our current methods of managing have not been successful, and we need to find a new approach to life. Having acknowledged this truth, we are free to change and to learn.

Once we have become teachable, we can give up old thought and behavior patterns, which have failed us in the past, beginning with our attempts to control our eating and our weight. Honest appraisal of our experience has convinced us that we can't handle life through self-will alone. First we grasp this knowledge intellectually, and then finally we come to believe it in our hearts. When this happens, we have taken the first step and are ready to move ahead in our program of recovery.



*12&12*

We know that little good can come to any alcoholic who joins AA unless he has first accepted his devastating weakness and all its consequences. (Page 21)

Then we had been told that so far as alcohol is concerned, self-confidence was no good whatever; in fact, it was a total liability. (Page 22)

The tyrant alcohol wielded a double-edged sword over us: first we were smitten by an insane urge that condemned us to go on drinking, and then by an allergy of the body that insured we would ultimately destroy ourselves in the process. Few indeed were those who, so assailed, had ever won through in single-handed combat. It was a statistical fact that alcoholics almost never recovered on their own resources. (Page 22)

Many less desperate alcoholics tried AA, but did not succeed because they could not make the admission of hopelessness. (Page 23)

Since Step One requires an admission that our lives have become unmanageable, how could people such as these take this Step? (Page 23)

By going back in our own drinking histories, we could show that years before we realized it we were out of control, that our drinking even then was no mere habit, that it was indeed the beginning of a fatal progression. (Page 24)

We stand ready to do anything, which will lift the merciless obsession from us. (Page 25)

*The Basic Text of Narcotics Anonymous (page 22)*

However, none of the steps work by magic. We do not just say the words of this step; we learn to live them. We see for ourselves that the Program has something to offer us. We have found hope. We find that we can learn to function in the world we live in. We, too, can find meaning and purpose in life and be rescued from insanity, depravity, and death.

When we admit our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives, we open the door for a Power greater than ourselves to help us. It is not where we were that counts, but where we are going.

*It Works: How & Why of Narcotics Anonymous (pages 11–16)*

The process of surrender is extremely personal for each one of us. Only we, as individuals, know when we've done it. We stress the importance of surrender, for it is the very process that enables us to recover. When we surrender, we know in our hearts that we've had enough. We're tired of fighting. A relief comes over us as we finally realize that the struggle is over.

Many of us begin the process of surrender when we identify ourselves at an NA meeting with our name and the words, "I am an addict." Once we admit that we are addicts and that we cannot stop using on our own, we are able to stay clean on a daily basis with the help of other recovering addicts in Narcotics Anonymous. The paradox of this admission is evident once we work the First Step. As long as we think we can control our drug use, we are almost forced to continue. The minute we admit we're powerless, we never have to use again. This reprieve from having to use is the most profound gift we can receive, for it saves our lives.

Through our collective experience, we have found that we can accomplish together what we cannot do alone. Because long-lasting change in recovery happens slowly, we will turn to the First Step again and again.

The disease of addiction can manifest itself in a variety of mental obsessions and compulsive actions that have nothing to do with drugs. We sometimes find ourselves obsessed and

behaving compulsively over things we may never have had problems with until we stopped using drugs. We may once again try to fill the awful emptiness we sometimes feel with something outside ourselves. Any time we find ourselves using something to change the way we feel we need to apply the principles of the First Step.

By honestly looking at what we have become in our addiction, we recognize the powerlessness and unmanageability of our lives. Moving beyond our reservations, we accept our addiction, surrender, and experience the hope that recovery offers. We realize that we can no longer go on as we have been. We are ready for a change. We are willing to try another way. With our willingness, we move on to Step Two.

## Step Two: “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

### Brief Outline

1. None but a Higher Power *can* remove our obsession (acquired defects of character and the controlling old thinking mind).
2. Step Two is the beginning of the end of our old life (old ways of thinking—false self), and the beginning of our emergence into a new life (transformation of the false self through elimination and change of our old ways of thinking).
3. Prerequisites for Step Two:
  - ❖ Alcoholics Anonymous does not demand that we believe anything.
  - ❖ To get sober and to stay sober, we do not have to swallow all of Step Two right now.
  - ❖ All you really need is a truly open mind.
4. When we stop arguing over a Higher Power, Step Two will gently and very gradually begin to infiltrate our life.
5. The roadblocks of indifference, fancied self-sufficiency, prejudice, and defiance will, if we allow them, to impede our progress in Step Two.
6. The dilemma of the wanderer from faith is that of profound confusion (the old thinking still controlling our lives).
7. Humility and intellect can be compatible, *provided* we place humility first (the thinker is meant to be God’s servant, not our master).
8. Remember, winners are always positive, and losers are negative.
9. Defiance is the outstanding characteristic of many an alcoholic (so it’s not strange that we have defied God also).
10. At few times had we asked what God’s will was for us, instead we had been telling God what it ought to be.
11. Belief means reliance, not defiance.
12. We supposed we had humility when really we hadn’t.
13. We remained self-deceived (praying, if we did, for our wishes instead of “Thy will be done”) and so incapable of receiving enough grace to restore us to sanity.
14. “Sanity” is defined as “soundness of mind.” Yet no alcoholic, soberly analyzing his destructive behavior, can claim “soundness of mind” for himself.
15. True humility and an open mind can lead us to faith which is an assurance that God will restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to God.
16. The main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than his body.
17. Lack of power is our dilemma. We need to find a power by which we can live, and it has to be a ***Power greater than ourselves.***
18. We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results.
19. Self-sufficiency cannot solve all our problems (the thinker can get us into situations but can not get us out of them).

## Second Step Guide

In Step One, we first made the admission that we were, are now, and will remain powerless over alcohol, which implies, in no uncertain terms, that we have an obsession to drink and an allergy of the body that leads either to death or insanity. Secondly and more importantly, we came to recognize that our lives have been, are now, and will remain unmanageable by us alone. This conviction that we are alcoholics and that our lives are unmanageable by us alone leads us naturally into Step Two.

Once again, Step Two can be viewed as having two aspects. The first aspect concerns the beginning of our spiritual development, which is the foundation of the AA program. Since we recognized that our lives have been, are now, and will remain unmanageable by us alone (having completed a thorough Step One), we must now come to grips with the fact that we need a new Manager, as the old one (the thinking mind, with its *acquired* defects of character) led us into the depths of deep despair, self-centeredness, loneliness, and a separation from our True Self. We found that the thinking mind could not solve our problems. Thus, the conclusion that we must start to find a new Manager of our life (a Power greater than ourselves) is paramount if we want to become happy, positive and as loving as we are meant to be.

We came to believe—that a Power exists which is greater than ourselves—and this belief is absolutely necessary if we are to honestly complete the remaining ten steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. At this point, all you really need is a *truly open mind*.

Thus, Step Two can become the springboard on which we can begin the journey toward spiritual awakening. Remember, all that is needed is willingness, open-mindedness, and rigorous honesty.

The second aspect of Step Two concerns sanity. “Sanity” involves living sanely. Since this step is about the restoration of sanity, how can this occur? We may not relate with “soundness of mind,” but we surely can identify with insanity as being unsoundness of mind. The True Self is sane, whereas the false self (the thinker with its *acquired* character defects) has not usually been an example of *sane* living. The problem facing us then is how can we regain the sanity, which is the True Self? By *eliminating* the acquired insane ways of living, we are left with the True Self and its sanity.

Step Two, properly approached, *worked*, and lived, will start the beginning of the end of the old life, and the beginning of our emergence into a new life.

The purpose of *writing* the second step is to help us become *aware* of the *acquired, destructive thinking that has wrecked our lives*.

Having done Step 1, where do we go from here? The book describes six types of people and their thinking:

1. ***Belligerent One***—says he won’t believe! Way of life, which places man first (at center) is threatened.
  - ❖ AA doesn’t demand you believe anything; suggestions only.
  - ❖ You don’t have to swallow all of Step 2 right now.
  - ❖ All you need is a truly open mind.
  - ❖ Stop fighting and practice the rest of the program as enthusiastically as you can.
  - ❖ Make AA itself be your higher power (use substitution).
2. ***Wanderer/Drifter***—had faith but lost it. Difficult because of barriers: indifference, fancied self-sufficiency, prejudice, and defiance.
  - ❖ Rediscover value of spiritual by looking within AA.
3. ***Intellectually Self-sufficient***—intellect is primary; values science, knowledge. Usually intellectually bright.

- ❖ Remember humility and intellect can be compatible, provided you place humility first.
4. ***Disgusted with Religion and its Works***—sees religions as hypocrites, bigots, self-righteous (We substituted negative for positive thinking; saw the problems, not the benefits.)
    - ❖ Through AA learned self-righteousness was our own besetting evil; this phony form of respectability was our undoing.
  5. ***Defiant Ones***—defies God himself; personal calamity, problems in life led to feeling God hasn't delivered, has deserted us. God did not even stop our drinking.
    - ❖ Realized we had been telling him what to do, not asking what was His will for us. Belief meant reliance, not defiance.
    - ❖ Proof of God revealed by what others have gained in AA.
  6. ***Full of faith still on alcohol***—believes in God, suspects God does not believe in him. Tries to fight alcohol, imploring God's help to no avail.
    - ❖ Quality, not quantity of faith is the answer. Supposed he had humility when he hadn't.
    - ❖ Was only superficial in religious practices.

Few practicing alcoholics, recognizing their irrationality, can bear to face it. Sanity is defined as "soundness of mind." No alcoholic can claim this for themselves.

1. Step Two is a rallying point —we can stand together.
2. True humility and an open mind can lead us to faith. Observing AA itself is assurance that God will restore us to sanity.

## Spiritual Development/Attitudes/Sanity

Answer the questions below specifically. Indicate how you are trying to understand your spiritual history or lack of it.

1. Have you ever believed that the thinking mind is all-powerful and that it could solve all your problems?

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2. Have you ever considered yourself an atheist or agnostic? If so, describe why.

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3. Have you ever rejected organized religion? If so, what were your reasons for doing so?

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4. Did you, at any time, consider the idea that a Power greater than yourself might exist? If so, describe the attributes of that Power.

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Answer the questions below as honestly as you are able to *at this point*. Remember, this Power, greater than yourself, is *your own concept*. All that you really need is willingness and a *truly open mind*.

1. Are any of the following roadblocks to coming to believe present in your life? (a) indifference, (b) fancied self-sufficiency, (c) prejudice, or (d) defiance.

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2. AA and its suggested twelve steps have a spiritual foundation. What does it mean to you?

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3. What do you consider the *most* important thing in your life today?

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4. Do you doubt the existence of a Power greater than yourself? Explain.

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5. What is your mental image of God?

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6. Does a Power greater than yourself play a part in your daily life?

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“Sanity” is defined as “soundness of mind.” What we are concerned with now is becoming aware of the old patterns of insane thinking (the reactions toward people, places and things that caused havoc in our lives). Answer the questions below honestly and with a *truly open mind*. Remember, insanity is not a part of your True Self. Insanity exists in the *acquired* false self, who is *not* a part of the real you, so dig deep.

1. Do you have any fears in your life today? (Fear of people, emotional insecurity, financial insecurity, etc.) List these fears.

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2. Can you recognize self-centeredness in your life? If so, give examples.

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3. Do you believe “The main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than his body”? Why or why not?

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4. What areas of your life do you feel that you have little or no control over? (Family, job, AA spiritual or emotional). Why do you feel you have little or no control over these areas?

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5. Describe how the following feelings or attitudes got you into trouble: (a) anger, (b) resentment, (c) jealousy, and (d) pride.

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6. Do you consider yourself as a positive person? In what areas of your life are you positive?

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7. Do you consider yourself as a negative person? In what areas of your life are you negative?

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8. What is your idea of the false self (the old self with its *acquired* defects of character that attempts to control your life)?

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9. What do you think is your True Self and how do you find it?

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10. Do you believe that a Power greater than yourself could restore you to sanity? How?

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11. How am I going to live Step Two—"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity"—in my life on a daily basis?

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12. Write a summary of “picture” of yourself as you see yourself now (your good and bad points). Remember: the good points (assets) are the real you, and the bad points (liabilities) are the false you.

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***Do it Now for You!***

List all the people that you thought were powers greater than yourself that you have turned to:

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List all the things that you thought were powers greater than yourself that you have used to make you feel better:

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## Key Concepts for Step Two

*Step Two: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

- Key 1: Some of us won't believe in God, others can't and still others who'd believe that God exists have no faith whatever. Remember, this is the beginning of the end of your old life, and the beginning of your emergence into a new one. So take it easy, the hoop you have to jump through is a lot wider than you think.
- Key 2: AA does not demand that you believe anything. All its twelve steps are but suggestions.
- Key 3: To get sober and to stay sober, you don't have to swallow all of step two right now.
- Key 4: All you really need is a truly open mind. Just resign from the debating society.
- Key 5: It wasn't AA that had the closed mind, it was I. The minute I stopped arguing, I could begin to see and feel. Right there, Step Two gently and very gradually began to infiltrate my life. I had only to stop fighting and practice the best of AA's program as enthusiastically as I could.
- Key 6: AA's tread innumerable paths in their quest for faith. If you don't care for the one I've suggested, you'll be sure to discover one that suits you if only you look and listen. You can, if you wish, make AA itself your higher power. Even this minimum of faith will be enough.
- Key 7: We found many in AA who once thought as we did. They helped us to get down to our right size. By their example they showed us that humility and intellect could be compatible, provided we placed humility first. When we began to do that, we received the gift of faith, a faith that works. This faith is for you.
- Key 8: We had substituted negative for positive thinking. We had to recognize that this trait had been an ego-feeding proposition. Self-righteousness, the very thing that we had contemptuously condemned in others, was our own besetting evil. This phony form of respectability was our undoing, so far as faith was concerned. But finally, driven to AA, we learned better.
- Key 9: As psychiatrists have often observed, defiance is the outstanding characteristic of many an alcoholic. So it's not strange that lots of us have had our day at defying God himself.
- Key 10: When we encountered AA, the fallacy of our defiance was revealed. At no time had we asked what God's will was for us. Instead we had been telling him what it ought to be. No man, we saw, could believe in God, and defy him, too. Belief means reliance not defiance. In AA we saw the fruits of this belief. Men and women spared from alcohol's final catastrophe. We saw them meet and transcend their other pains and trials. We saw them calmly accept impossible situations, seeking neither to run nor to recriminate. This was not only faith; it was faith that worked under all conditions. We soon concluded that whatever price in humility we must pay, we would pay.
- Key 11: The answer has to do with the quality of faith rather than its quantity. We supposed we had humility when really we hadn't. We had been asking something for nothing. We really hadn't cleaned house so that the grace of God could enter us and expel the obsession. We had always said, "Grant me my wishes" instead of "Thy will be done." The love of God and man we understood not at all. Therefore we remained self-deceived, and so incapable of receiving enough grace to restore us to sanity.
- Key 12: Few indeed are the practicing alcoholics who have any idea how irrational they are or seeing their irrationality, can bear to face it. Some will be willing to term themselves "problem drinkers," but cannot endure the suggestion they are in fact mentally ill. They are abetted in this blindness by a world, which does not understand the difference between sane drinking and alcoholism. Sanity is defined as soundness of mind. Yet no alcoholic, soberly

analyzing his destructive behavior can claim this for himself. True humility and an open mind can lead us to faith. Every AA meeting is an assurance God will restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to him.

**Home Study**

*Big Book:* Dr. Bob's Nightmare and Stories 1 and 2

*12&12:* Read Step 2.

**Second Step Word Definitions**

Write down definitions for the following words: first, define them mentally to yourself, in terms of what you believe each word means. Then refer to a dictionary for definitions. Using the meanings that are appropriate to a self-inventory, jot down two to three sentences for each.

1. Trudge: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Believe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Sanity: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Rationalization: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Integrity: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Bankrupt: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Spirit: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Ego: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Humility: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Humble: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Meek: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Additional Step Two Readings

### *Autobiography in Five Short Chapters*

By Portia Nelson

- I. I walk down the street.  
    There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
    I fall in.  
    I am lost...I am helpless.  
    It isn't my fault.  
    It takes forever to find a way out.
  
- II. I walk down the same street.  
    There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
    I pretend I don't see it.  
    I fall in again.  
    I can't believe I'm in the same place.  
    But it isn't my fault.  
    It still takes a long time to get out.
  
- III. I walk down the same street.  
    There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
    I see it is there.  
    I still fall in... It's a habit.  
    My eyes are Open.  
    I know where I am.  
    It is my fault.  
    I get out immediately.
  
- IV. I walk down the same street.  
    There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
    I walk around it.
  
- V. I walk down another street.

**Sanity**

1. He accepts criticism gratefully, being honestly glad of an opportunity to improve.
2. He does not indulge in self-pity. He has begun to feel the laws of compensation operating in all of life.
3. He does not expect special consideration from anyone.
4. He controls his temper.
5. He meets emergencies with poise.
6. His feelings are not easily hurt.
7. He accepts the responsibility of his own acts without trying to “alibi.”
8. He has outgrown the “all or nothing” stage.
9. He recognizes that no person or situation is wholly good or bad.
10. He is not impatient at reasonable delays.
11. He has learned that he is not the arbiter of the universe and that he must often adjust himself to other people and their convenience.
12. He is a good loser.
13. He can endure defeat and disappointment without whining or complaining.
14. He does not worry unduly about things he cannot help.
15. He is not given to boasting or “showing off” in socially unacceptable ways.
16. He is honestly glad when others enjoy success or good fortune.
17. He has outgrown envy and jealousy.
18. He is open-minded enough to listen thoughtfully to others.
19. He is not a chronic “faultfinder.”
20. He plans things in advance rather than trusting to the inspiration of the moment.

Last of all we think of spiritual maturity.

1. He has faith in a Power greater than himself.
2. He feels himself an organic part of mankind as a whole, contributing his part to each group of which he is a member.
3. He obeys the spiritual essence of the Golden Rule: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

PROF DR C G JUNG

KUSNACHT ZURICH  
SEESTRASSE 228  
January 30, 1961

Mr. William G. Wilson  
Alcoholics Anonymous  
Box 459 Grand Central Station  
New York 17, N.Y.  
=====

Dear Mr. Wilson,

your letter has been very welcome indeed.

I had no news from Roland H. anymore and often wondered what has been his fate. Our conversation which he has adequately reported to you had an aspect of which he did not know. The reason was, that I could not tell him everything, was that those days I had to be exceedingly careful of what I said. I had found out that I was misunderstood in every possible way. Thus I was very careful when I talked to Roland H. But what I really thought about, was the result of many experiences with men of his kind.

His craving for alcohol was the equivalent on a low level of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in mediaeval language: the union with God.

How could one formulate such an insight in a language that is not misunderstood in our days?

The only right and legitimate way to such an experience is that it happens to you in reality and it can only happen to you when you walk on a path, which leads you to higher understanding. You might be led to that goal by an act of grace or through a personal and honest contact with friends, or through a higher education of the mind beyond the confines of mere rationalism. I see from your letter that Roland H. has chosen the second way, which was, under the circumstances, obviously the best one.

I am strongly convinced that the evil principle prevailing in this world, leads the unrecognized spiritual need into perdition, if it is not counteracted either by a real religious insight or by the protective wall of human community. An ordinary man, not protected by an action from above and isolated in society cannot resist the power of evil, which is called very aptly the Devil. But the use of such words arouse so many mistakes that one can only keep aloof from them as much as possible.

These are the reasons why I could not give a full and sufficient explanation to Roland H. but I am risking it with you because I conclude from your very decent and honest letter, that you have acquired a point of view above the misleading platitudes, one usually hears about alcoholism.

You see, Alcohol in Latin is "spiritus" and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: spiritus contra spiritum.

Thanking you again for your kind letter

I remain  
yours sincerely



"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so  
panteth my soul after Thee, O God." (Psalm 42, 1)

*Hazelden Step 2 Pamphlet (page 3)*

***Now that we've gotten sober what's next?***

The difference between Step One and Step Two is the difference between getting sober and living sober. To get sober we needed to admit our powerlessness over the mind-altering and mood-altering substances we trusted with our lives.

To live sober we need to trust something outside ourselves. We need to draw on a power that won't destroy us as alcohol and other drugs did. Living sober means finding a loving, guiding power we can really trust.

*Hazelden Step 2 Pamphlet (page 4)*

***Spiritual awareness-why do we need it?***

Spiritual awareness as practiced by recovering addicts and alcoholics is remarkably practical. It helps us remember that we are not the center of the universe, the creator of all problems, the one responsible for all solutions. Faith can give us a constant comfort and strength when everything and everyone else seem to fail us. There's nothing blind about our faith. It's what keeps us sober.

*The Recovery Book (page 111)*

STEP TWO: If you take the first step and accept that you can't control your drinking, what next? You can either give up entirely or you can make the leap of faith that says there is hope, that you need not continue living with the insanity that is alcoholism (or addiction). You're hoping, praying (or just plain betting), there is some power out there-it may be God, or your AA group, a counselor or sponsor, or just some unnamed entity-that can help restore you to sanity.

*It Works: How & Why (page 18)*

Many of us felt that insanity was too harsh a word to describe our condition. However, if we take a realistic look at our active addiction, we'll see that we have been anything but sane. For the most part, our perceptions were not based in reality. We viewed the world around us as a hostile environment. Some of us withdrew physically and had little, if any, contact with anyone. Some of us went through the motions of life but allowed nothing to touch us emotionally. Either way, we ended up feeling isolated. Despite evidence to the contrary, we felt that we were in control. We ignored or didn't believe the truths that were staring us in the face. We continued to do the same things and expected the results to be different.

*The Basic Text of NA (page 23)*

The First Step has left a vacuum in our lives. We need to find something to fill that void. This is the purpose of the Second Step.

*Doctor Bob's Nightmare (page 18)*

If you think you are an atheist, an agnostic, a skeptic, or have any other form of intellectual pride, which keeps you from accepting what is in this book, I feel sorry for you. But if you really and truly want to quit drinking liquor for good and all, and sincerely feel that you must have some help, we know that we have an answer for you.



*Alcoholics Anonymous Number Three (page 186)*

The next thing they wanted to know was if I thought I could quit on my own accord, without any help, if I could just walk out of the hospital and never take another drink. If I could, that was wonderful, that was just fine, and they would very much appreciate a person who had that kind of power, but they were looking for a man who knew he had a problem and knew he couldn't handle himself and needed outside help. The next thing they wanted to know was if I believed in Higher Power. I had no trouble there because I have never actually ceased to believe in god and tried lots of times to get help but hadn't succeeded. Next they want to know would I be willing to go to this Higher Power and ask for help, calmly and without any reservations.

*Alcoholics Anonymous Number Three (page 192)*

I've heard people get up in meetings and say it—is this statement: “I came into AA solely for the purpose of sobriety, but it has been through AA that I have found God.”

*Gratitude In Action (page 194)*

You might think I'd tell myself, “If alcohol causes so much harm, I will stop drinking.” But I found countless reasons to prove to myself that alcohol had nothing to do with my misfortunes. I told myself it was because of fate, because everyone was against me, because things weren't going well. I sometimes thought that God did not exist. I thought, “If this loving God exists, as they say, He would not treat me this way. God would not act like this.” I felt sorry for myself a lot in those days.

*Gratitude In Action (page 199)*

I have all these wonderful things—people who mean more to me than anything in the world. I shall keep all that and I won't have to drink, if I remember one simple thing: to keep my hand in hand of god.

*12&12 (page 31)*

“When we encountered AA, the fallacy of our defiance was revealed. At no time had we asked what God's will was for us; instead we have been telling Him what it ought to be. No man, we saw, could believe in God, and defy Him, too. Belief meant reliance, not defiance. In AA we saw the fruits of this belief: men and women spared from alcohol's final catastrophe. We saw them meet and transcend their other pains and trials. He saw them calmly accept impossible situations, seeking neither to run nor to recriminate. This was not only faith; it was faith that worked under all conditions. We soon concluded that whatever price in humility we must pay, we would pay.”

*Basic Text (page 24)*

Ask yourself this question: Do I believe it would be insane to walk up to someone and say, “May I please have a heart attack or a fatal accident?” If you can agree that this would be an insane thing, you should have no problem with the Second Step.

*Basic Text (page 24)*

We talked and listened to others. We saw other people recovering, and they told us what was working for them. We began to see evidence of some Power that could not be fully explained. Confronted with this evidence, we began to accept the existence of a Power greater than ourselves. We can use this Power before we begin to understand it.

*Basic Text (page 24)*

Our understanding of a Higher Power is up to us. No one is going to decide for us. We can call it the group, the program, or we can call it God. The only suggested guidelines are that this Power be loving, caring, and greater than ourselves.

*It Works: How & Why (page 24)*

During these times, relying on the second step provides us with hope and reminds us that we are not alone. If things don't feel right, we take time to think and seek suggestions from our sponsor. We trust that, with help from other recovering addicts and a Power greater than ourselves, we can be restored to sanity in all areas of our lives. We draw upon what we have learned from going to meetings and following directions. We accept that life on life's terms may not always been to our liking or, more importantly, to our understanding. Sanity often means that we don't act on our first impulse. We begin to make choices that help us rather than harm us. What worked for us in the beginning remains applicable, no matter how many years we have been clean. Once again, we reapply ourselves to the basics of this program: going to meetings, reaching out for help, and working the steps. Although we may feel despair, there is hope; a Power greater than ourselves is always available to us.

*It Works: How & Why (page 25)*

By being open-minded, we've opened ourselves to new ideas. We stepped away from the problem and toward a spiritual solution.

*12&12 (page 26)*

First, Alcoholics Anonymous does not demand that you believe anything. All of its Twelve Steps are but suggestions. Second, to get sober and to stay sober, you don't have to swallow all of Step Two right now. Looking back, I find that I took it piecemeal myself. Third, all you really need is a truly open mind. Just resign from the debating society and quit bothering yourself with such deep questions as whether it was the hen or the egg that came first. Again I say all you need is the open mind." The sponsor continues, "Take, for example, my own case. I had a scientific schooling. Naturally I respected, venerated, even worshipped science. As a matter of fact, I still do—all except the worship part. Time after time, my instructors held up to me the basic principle of all scientific progress: search and research, again and again, always with the open mind.

*12&12 (page 27)*

Many a man like you has begun to solve the problem by the method of substitution. You can, if you wish, make AA, itself your 'higher power.' Here's a very large group of people who have solved their alcohol problem. In this respect they are certainly a power greater than you, who have not even come close to a solution. Surely you can have faith in them. Even this

minimum of faith will be enough. You will find many members who have crossed the threshold just this way.

*Overeaters Anonymous (page 16–17)*

Whatever the case, after years of making vows and saying prayers but then the eating compulsively again, we were left without faith that God could restore us to sanity about food. We believed intellectually that God could do anything, but deep in our hearts we “knew” God couldn’t help us with this area of our lives. It was this negative perception about God we had to change if we were to find recovery. How could we do this? We became willing to start fresh with our Higher Power. Our heartfelt concept of God wasn’t working, so we became willing for it to be changed. Just like the atheist or the agnostic, we could begin to do this by asking ourselves what, exactly, we needed and wanted God to be to us and to do for us. Then we acted as if God were really exactly what we wanted and needed are Higher Power to be. We became willing to let go of any concept about God, which wasn’t helping us to recover from compulsive eating. We had to replace our old ideas about God with a faith that worked. This was both humbling and frightening for us, but once we became willing to do it, surprising things began to happen. For all of us—atheists, agnostics, and religious ones alike—coming to believe was something that happened as we began taking action which others told us had worked for them. Whether or not we believed these actions would work for us didn’t seem to matter. Once we took the action and saw it work we began to believe. Then we tried other suggestions and our lives began to be transformed.

*Robert Fulghum, Unitarian Universalist minister, in his book, UH-OH*

“Do you believe in god, Mr. Fulghum?” (The journalist interviewing me has shifted scale suddenly from details of dailiness to the definition of the Divine.)

“No, but I do believe in Howard.”

“Howard? You believe and Howard?”

“It has to do with my mother’s maiden name.”

“Your mother’s maiden name...”

“Was Howard. She came from a big Memphis clan that was pretty close and was referred to as the Howard family. As a small child, I thought of myself as a member of the Howard family because it was often an item of conversation as in ‘the Howard family is getting together,’ and ‘The Howard family thinks people should write letters to their grandmother.’ The matriarch, my grandmother, was referred to as Mother Howard.

“And you thought... she... was... god?”

“No, no. I just wanted you to first no how it was that Howard was a name that was important to me from early on in my life. What happened was that I got packed off to Sunday School at around age four and the first thing I learned was the Lord’s Prayer, which begins ‘Our Father, which are in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.’ And what I heard was, ‘Our Father, which are in heaven, HOWARD be Thy name.’ And since little kids tend to mutter prayers anyhow, nobody realized that I was saying, so I went right on believing that God’s name was Howard. And believing I was a member of his family— the Howard’s. Since I was told that my grandfather had died and gone to heaven, God and my grandfather got all mixed up my mind as one and the same. Which meant that I had a pretty comfy notion about God. I knelt beside my bed each night and prayed, ‘Our Father, which art in heaven, Howard be Thy name,’ I thought about my grandfather and what a big shot he was because, of course, the prayer ends with ‘For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.’ I went to

bed feeling pretty well connected to the universe for a long, long time. It was a Howard Family Enterprise.”

“You’re not putting me on, are you?”

“Not at all. All human images of the ultimate ground of being are metaphors, and as metaphors go, this is a pretty homey one. I thought it for so long that even when I passed through all those growing-up stages of skepticism, disbelief revision, and confusion—somewhere in my mind I still believe in Howard. Because at the heart of that childhood image there is no alienation. I belonged to the whole big scheme of things I lived and worked and had my being in the family store.”

“So. Do you still believe in...Howard?”

“ I’ll give you what may seem to be an enigmatic evasion, but it’s truly the only answer I have to your question. It’s a line from the writings of the thirteenth century Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart. ‘The eye with which I see God is the very same eye with which God sees me.’ That’s what I believe.”

“Does that mean that you are God?”

“ Yes and no. It depends. In some cultures if a man says, ‘I am God,’ he will get shunned or even locked up as crazy. And some other cultures if a man says, ‘I am God,’ people will say, ‘What took you so long to find out?’ if you say you pray and talk to god, we will think of you as religious. If you say god talks to you, we will think of you as a looney.”

“ I’m not sure I understand.”

“Consider it this way. It makes a big difference if you think of God is transcendent or imminent; as up there somewhere or present here.”

“Yes.”

“Howard is a transcendent image of God. The God of childhood. The man in the long white beard on the throne in heaven up there, somewhere else, separate from us... transcendent. On the other hand, if God is imminent, then there is no place God is not, and I’m not separate from God. Hence, ‘The eye with which I see God is the very same eye with which God sees me.’ No boundaries between God and me.”

There was a long silence between us. The journalist smiled. I smiled. She changed the subject. None of this discussion about Howard appeared in her article. I understand. Some things are hard to write about...Hard to think about...Hard to sort out. Maybe when she asked the first question, I should’ve just said, “Yes” as a favor to her. But the truth is I haven’t finished thinking about God, and the God of my childhood, and the God of my middle age are mixed in with the god of the wisdom that may yet come to me in my later years. Howard would understand

On a long flight from Melbourne to Athens, an Australian carpenter, an Indian college professor in hydrology, and I had a memorable late-night theological discussion. The three of us were seated in one row, and the subject of God came up because our meals were accompanied by a little card on which was printed a short prayer of thanksgiving.

The professor made some remarks about *not* being thankful to *any* of the gods for this particular food. The carpenter composed a prayer of complaint. And the discussion was off and running.

The carpenter declared his theology had a lot to do with fleas and a dog.

Arguing whether or not a God exists is like fleas arguing whether or not the dog exists. Arguing over the correct name of God is like fleas arguing over the name of the dog. And arguing over whose notion of God is correct is like fleas arguing over who owns the dog.

We three ate our meal in silence for a while digesting the godforsaken meal and the Australian version of theological Truth.

\* \* \*

Later on, the Indian professor and I stood in the forward alcove of the 747 where the galley and rest rooms are, comparing the route map with what we could see out the porthole in the door.

Across Australia, Indonesia, to Singapore; across Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and into Athens. Much of what we crossed was ocean.

Theology again. The Indian professor of hydrology this time. Hydrology is “the scientific study of the properties, distribution, and effects of water in the atmosphere, on the earth’s surface, and in soil and rocks.” He had this printed on his business card since he always had to explain about hydrology. In sum, a water expert.

He noted that we had just left a country where people worshiped the sun-on the beach with most or all of their clothes removed. And we were flying over countries whose people believed it was the will of Allah that women should be completely covered, even on beaches. The name of God varied from country to country; the holy book was not the same; the rituals and dogmas and routes to heaven were not the same. And so certain were the followers of the different religions of their rectitude, they would gladly war with one another—kill each other—to have their beliefs and metaphors prevail. Yet in this same plane, flying peacefully along, are these same people.

Clearly this troubled the professor—grieved him.

He shook his head and asked why this must be so. Why? Why?

The professor pointed out the Indian Ocean beneath us at the moment.

He spoke of water, his specialty.

“Water is everywhere and in all living things—we cannot be separated from water. No water, no life. Period. Water comes in many forms-liquid, vapor, ice, snow, fog, rain, hail. But no matter the form, it’s still water.

“Human beings give this stuff many names in many languages, in all its forms. It’s crazy to argue over what its true name is. Call it what you will, there is no difference to the water. It is what it is.

“Human beings drink water from many vessels—cups, glasses, jugs, skins, their own hands, whatever. To argue about which container is proper for the water is crazy. The container doesn’t change the water.

“Some like it hot, some like it cold, some like it iced, some fizzy, some with stuff mixed in with it-alcohol, coffee, whatever. No matter. It does not change the nature of the water.

“Never mind the name or the cup or the mix. These are not important.

“What we have in common is thirst. Thirst!

“Thirst for the water of Life!”

As it is with water, so is it with God.

“I don’t know much about God,” said the professor of hydrology. “All I know is water. And that we are momentary waves in some great everlasting ocean, and the waves and the water are one.”

He poured us each a paper cup full of water and we drank.

\* \* \*

Emily, six, has become a grace fanatic; or, in her own terms, “a great amenner.”

Though her family is not particularly religious and has not previously had a tradition of prayer before meals, Emily is now committed to the custom. Her father, my friend Willy, isn’t sure where she got the idea, but the family doesn’t want to squash rectitude in their youngest child. So they dutifully hold hands I and bow heads at dinnertime while Emily, the high priestess of her own sacred mystery cult, holds forth in prayer:

*“Hello. This is Emily. I’m fine, how are you?”*

*Thanks for the sky and birds and stuff*

*Actually, I’m having a pretty good week.*

*And thanks for the mashed potatoes, but not for the lima beans.*

I thank you really much for the meatloaf. And thanks for the chairs, and the tables, and the doors, and the couch and the television and the walls and the roof and the bed and the bathroom and the towels and the grass and the clouds and the street and…”

(By now her eight-year-old brother, who says his prayers in private, is beginning to grit his teeth and roll his eyes into the back of his head as he endures what he thinks is a shameless shuck on Emily’s part—and Emily knows she’d better shut up now or she will suffer later, so she ends.)

“Take care. Amen, from Emily.”

Her parents think of this daily vesper as the Emily Report. She’s found a way to get her family to sit still and listen to her—something that doesn’t happen too much during the daily traffic of family life.

As she prays, her father peeks at his six-year-old. He wants to be sure he sees her. He wants to remember his youngest child like this—as she heads out the door of innocence into the world-as-it-is. He wants to be there as she makes her announcement of self to the mystery of existence.

These times of quiet grace calm his spirit. Unlike Emily’s brother, her father is in no hurry to have the prayer end. These times go by once and all too quickly.

*“Hello. This is Emily. It’s a good day here, after all.*

*I’m really sorry for what I did and I won’t ever do it again.*

*Please help Poppy. Thanks for dogs and cats.*

*Thanks, again, for more mashed potatoes.*

*Please try to do something about lima beans.*

*I really want to thank you especially for my birthday, which is coming soon.*

*Thanks for friends. But not for people who are jerks [looking at her brother].*

*Take care and keep in touch. Amen. From Emily. “*

Sometime soon I should tell Emily about Howard. Howard is Emily’s kind of guy. And vice versa.

\* \* \*

In my childhood I was told that God was all-powerful and lived far, far away. And that I could not see Him until after I died. When I asked why, if God was so powerful, there were children starving in Mexico, I was told it was the will of God and that I should not worry about it. Instead, I should be concerned about making sure I didn’t attend the upcoming high school prom, because dancing was a sin and I should try not to sin.

Now I am older. And I know that God is everywhere and in all things. There is nowhere that God is not, even in me. I also know that starving comes from not having enough food, and that is a human problem about which something can be done.

I know now that dancing comes from having much joy.

And when everyone has enough to eat, everyone will dance, especially Howard.

It took me fifty years to figure that out.

Pass it on. Come to the dance.

## Step Three: “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

### Brief Outline

In the preceding steps, we were engaged in reflection. In Step One, we saw that we were, are now, and will remain powerless over alcohol. Also in Step One we came to recognize that our lives have been, are now, and will remain unmanageable by us alone. Step Two made us aware that we could be restored to sanity by a Power greater than ourselves if we rightly relate ourselves to this Power. These conclusions did not require action; they required only acceptance. At this point, we should have accepted the unmanageability and insanity of our lives.

The first requirement in doing Step Three is that we become convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. The first two steps show, in no uncertain terms, the confusion caused by using self-will (self-will is part of the acquired false self). Self-will includes selfishness—self-centeredness. This self-centeredness is the root *of* our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. We invariably 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 (*Big Book*, page 62). So our troubles are basically of our own making. Above everything we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us. We found that we could not reduce the self-centeredness much by wishing or relying on our own power. Thus, we had to quit playing God. It did not work. We had to let God be our Director. It is our self-will that gets in the way of this. Will is nothing more than our mind and our thinking. Our lives are our actions in the various areas of our existence, e.g., drinking life, financial life, and relationships.

Step Three calls for affirmative action, for it is only by action that we can cut away the self-will, which has always blocked the entry of God into our lives. The key that will allow God to enter our lives once again is willingness. The thinking mind and its self-will may block the entry of God into our lives again, as it frequently does. However, the key of willingness will always open the door.

The thinking mind, using instinct and logic to bolster egotism, would have us believe that, if we turn our will and our life over to the care of God, we become nothing. The truth is—the more we become willing to depend upon a Higher Power, the more independent we actually are. Therefore, dependence, as AA practices it, is really a means of gaining true independence-of the spirit

Step Three asks us to make a decision to turn’ our will and our lives over to the care *of* God .as we understand Him. This decision can only be made by us, all by ourselves, being convinced that self-will has ruined our lives; we need to develop the quality *of* willingness. By becoming willing, we now can make the decision to exert ourselves. Doing this is an act *of* our own will.

Remember; all *of* the steps require sustained and personal exertion to conform to their principles and to God’s will.

The effectiveness of the whole AA program will rest upon how well and earnestly we try to come to “a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him,” The other steps of the AA program can be practiced with success only when Step Three is given a determined and persistent trial. Thus, we try to make our will conform with God’s so that we can begin to use it rightly.

Once we are convinced that we have no choice but to turn our will and our lives over to God, then it is easy to begin the practice of Step Three. In times of confusion, we pause quietly and say: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine, be done.”



## Some Notes on Step Three

### *The Little Red Book*

Step 3 offers no compromise with reservation or delay. It calls for a decision, here and now. How we surrender our alcoholic personality defects to God is of no immediate concern. The important thing is our willingness to try.

When we have made this crucial decision, our mental attitude changes rapidly from negative to wholesome, constructive thinking as we lose our uncertainty and fear. Strife and rebellion disappear. Somehow we gain a vague understanding of God's will for us.

Relaxation helps us maintain physical, mental, and spiritual balance. The alcoholic must learn to relax whenever he becomes upset; when over activity brings him feelings of mental and physical exhaustion, when he becomes extremely impatient, when he experiences anger, when he is bored, and when he is resentful.

Step 3 confuses us only when we reverse its suggested application. The step has three parts. First, we make a decision. Second, we try to determine what constitutes our life and will. Third, we seek an understanding of God by placing them in his care.

### *Hazelden, Step 3: Turning It Over*

While Step Two can be considered a promise of hope, Step Three clearly calls for an act of faith. Step Two suggests a Higher Power; Step Three narrows the definition to "God as we understood Him." It appears that we are faced with two very difficult propositions. One is to be out of the driver's seat and stop trying to be our 'Own ultimate authority. The other is to decide we need God in our lives. This is a big risk—it takes an act of faith.

Step 3 simply assumes that there is a God to understand and that we each have a God of Our own understanding For the time being we should try to accept the definition suggested in the Traditions of AA: a loving God as He may express himself in our group conscience.

AA is a program of action. The program works for those of us who are capable of being honest because we work the program. Step Three's turning over process requires us to be aware of what our past thinking and attitudes were and how we must change them.

There are many instances every day that provide us with the opportunity to test the sincerity of current surrender. We should ask ourselves the following:

1. If we are faced with a situation that provides us with the option, of being either selfish or unselfish, which option do we choose?
2. Do we allow ourselves to be concerned about the needs and welfare of someone else or do we instinctively put our own needs first?
3. Do we ever wonder whether our spouse or other family members are happy or sad, sick or well, or are we still preoccupied with ourselves?
4. Are we taking the risk of expressing and presenting ourselves honestly or are we still trying to be people pleasers in order to gain approval from other people even at the expense of our own dignity and self-respect?
5. Are we being tolerant of the shortcomings and mistakes of others or are we being judgmental?
6. Are we exercising patience in our daily affairs or are we still childishly hanging on to the "want what I want when I want it" approach to life?
7. Are we beginning to accept the irresponsibility for our own behavior and are we promptly admitting when we are wrong, or are we continuing to alibi, justify, or blame others for our mistakes?

8. Are we dealing with current problems today or do we find ourselves still tending to manipulate or procrastinate without considering how our lack of action can affect others?
9. Are we looking at life situations and ourselves realistically or are we still expecting more of ourselves and our life than we have a right to, thus risking disappointment, frustration, and a return to alcohol?

In evaluating our progress in turning over our will and our lives to the care of God as we understood Him, we can't expect perfection. However, if we make a wholehearted effort and bear in mind the *Big Book's* admonition that half measures will avail us nothing, we should see continuous improvement.

### Third Step Guide

**Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.**

The purpose of writing the third step is to help us to “make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

**“Self-Will Run Riot”**

The *Big Book* says that until we are convinced that a life run on self-will won’t be a success (page 60), we are like an actor who wants to run the whole show. Who are the people whom you have tried to control and who play the other characters in your “show”? By each person’s name, write what you tried to get him or her to do. In other words, how have you tried to run each person’s life?

**Turning It Over—What’s Ahead?**

The idea of turning your will and lives over to a Higher Power can be a very frightening one. Think about what areas of your life will be the hardest to turn over to a Higher Power. In the following list put a “1” by the most difficult thing to turn over, and then number the rest of the items to 13, which will be the least difficult thing to turn over. If there is something (or things) in your life more difficult to turn over than those listed, you may add to or substitute for the items below. .

- \_\_\_ self-serving sexual gratification
- \_\_\_ need to be different (special)
- \_\_\_ friends who drink and use
- \_\_\_ need to be nothing but the best (perfectionism)
- \_\_\_ need to have things always go my way
- \_\_\_ idea that I can drink or use other drugs normally
- \_\_\_ self-pity
- \_\_\_ resentments over past harm
- \_\_\_ need for control over family members, co-workers, or friends
- \_\_\_ the high and all the rituals for getting there
- \_\_\_ career or employment
- \_\_\_ finances
- \_\_\_ health
- \_\_\_ other

Starting with the areas of your life (from this list) that you think will be the hardest to turn over to a Higher Power (#1), describe In a few words what you are afraid will happen If you turn each of these over.

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This fear of giving your will and lives to a Higher Power is not unusual. Yet as alcoholics, we have already given our will and our lives to something—alcohol. It often determined where we went, with whom we associated, who we slept with, and how we spent our money. We have a disease of the body and mind that will end in insanity or death unless we make the decision required in Step Three.

Compared to turning our lives over to alcohol, deciding to turn our will and our lives over to a Higher Power should be far less frightening. And Step Three only asks us to *make the decision* to turn our will and lives over to our Higher Power. The actual turning over of our will and lives occurs naturally in the course of working the next eight steps.

Go through the following examples and be as honest and specific as you able to be at this time. Give specific examples and situations from your own life. **YOU ARE IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING A DECISION.**

1. Are you aware that drinking and problems in your life are a result of the acquired thinking mind?

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2. In what way does Step Three call for action on your part?

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3. Have you blocked God from your life? Give examples.

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4. Explain your understanding of God at this point in the program.

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5. What do you think your self-will is? List some ways it has caused havoc and ruin in your life.

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6. "Dependence on God is really a means of gaining true independence." What does this mean to you?

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7. What does the "Serenity Prayer," as found on page 42 of the *I2&I2*, and the Third Step Prayer, as found on page 63 of the *Big Book*, mean to you?

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8. How did Steps One and Two prepare you for Step Three?

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9. Do you feel that you are now truly willing to turn your will and life over to the care of God, as you understand Him? Explain.

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10. What action are you going to take to live Step Three?

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11. Now using the Prayer as found on page 63 of the *Big Book*, take this spiritual step with an understanding person.

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In taking the Third Step, as the *Big Book* says (page 62), you put in place the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which you will pass to freedom.

***MAKE THE DECISION DAILY!!!***

**Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.**

One of the important aspects of this step, as with all the steps, is the implied, but unwritten word 'WE'. We are not doing this alone.

## Key Concepts for Step Three

### *Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood him.*

- Key 1: Practicing Step Three is like the opening of a door, which to all appearances is still closed and locked. All we need is a key, and the decision to swing the door open. There is only one key, and it is called willingness.
- Key 2: Step Three calls for affirmative action, for it is only by action that we can cut away the self-will which has always blocked the entry of God—or, if you like, a Higher Power—into our lives. Faith, to be sure, is necessary, but faith alone can avail nothing. We can have faith, yet keep God out of our lives.
- Key 3: The effectiveness of the whole AA program will rest upon how well and earnestly we have tried to come to “a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.”
- Key 4: A beginning, even the smallest, is all that is needed. Once we have placed the key of willingness in the lock and have the door ever so slightly open, we find that we can always open it some more.
- Key 5: The more we become willing to depend upon a Higher Power, the more independent we actually are. Therefore dependence, as AA practices it is really a means of gaining true independence of the spirit.
- Key 6: How persistently we claim the right to decide all by our selves just what we shall think and just how we shall act. We are certain that our intelligence, backed by willpower, can rightly control our inner lives and guarantee us success in the world we live in. This brave philosophy, wherein each man plays God, sounds good in the speaking, but it still has to meet the acid test: How well does it actually work? One good look in the mirror ought to be answer enough for any alcoholic.
- Key 7: Therefore, we who are alcoholics can consider ourselves fortunate indeed. Each of us has had his own near-fatal encounter with the juggernaut of self-will, and has suffered enough under its weight to be willing to look for something better. So it is by circumstance rather than by any virtue that we have been driven to AA, have admitted defeat, have acquired the rudiments of faith, and now want to make a decision to turn our will and lives over to a Higher Power.
- Key 8: So how, exactly, can the willing person continue to turn his will and his life over to a Higher Power? He made a beginning, we have seen, when he commenced to rely upon AA for the solution of his alcohol problem. By now, though, the chances are that he has become convinced that he has more problems than alcohol. Surely he must now depend upon somebody or something else. At first that “somebody” is likely to be his closest AA friend. He relies upon the assurance that his many troubles, now made more acute because he cannot use alcohol to kill the pain, can be solved too.
- Key 9: The other steps of the AA program can be practiced with success only when Step Three is given a determined and persistent trial.
- Key 10: But now it appears that there are certain things, which only the individual can do. All by himself, and in the light of his own circumstances, he needs to develop the quality of willingness. When he acquires willingness, he is the only one who can make the decision to exert himself.
- Key 11: It is when we try to make our will conform with God’s that we begin to use it rightly. To all of us, this was a most wonderful revelation. Our whole trouble had been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it

into agreement with God’s intention for us. To make this increasingly possible is the purpose of AA’s Twelve Steps, and Step Three opens the door.

Key 12: Once we have come into agreement with these ideas, it is really easy to begin the practice of Step Three. In all times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in the stillness simply say: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference—Thy will, not mine, be done.”

**Home Study**

*Big Book:* Chapter 4, Pages 60 to 64, and Stories 3, 4, and 5.

**Third Step Word Definitions**

Write down definitions for the following words: first, define them mentally to yourself, in terms of what you believe each word means. Then refer to a dictionary for definitions. Using the meanings that are appropriate to a self-inventory, jot down two to three sentences for each.

1. Decision: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Will: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Life: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Care: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Understand: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Juggernaut: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Director: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Conform: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Persistent: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Determine: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## The Third Step Prayer

### *Original Version*

**God**, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!

### *Alternative Versions*

**God**, I offer myself to you—to build with me and to do with me, as you will. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do your will. Take away my difficulties, that Victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your Love, and Your Way of life. May I do Your will always!

**Goddess**, I offer myself to You—to guide me and build me to Your perfection. I pray for the insight to see my path. Let me draw Your Power and Your Strength to overcome my difficulties that I might be an example of how empowering it is to work through my problems. Please grant me the insight to see the lessons in my path. I am now willing to be an instrument in the enlightenment of others. May Your Will be done!

**Inner Spirit**, I remind myself and call upon myself to be open to the Higher Power within, to listen to that inner wisdom, to be willing to learn the lessons presented to me today through the circumstances and people I encounter. I seek ever to take the time to be still that I might hear and be transformed, to seek to walk gently in the world, striving to be the best part of me, and to act from love and acceptance, in recognition of my connectedness with all things.

**God**, I offer myself to Thee— to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me *of* the bondage *of* self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help *of* Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way *of* life. May I do Thy Will always!

**God**, I offer myself to you—to build with me and to do with me, as you will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help pf *Your* Power, Your Love, and *Your* Way of life. May I do *Your* Will always!

**Goddess**, I offer Myself to You to guide Me and to build Me to Your perfection. I pray for the insight to see My path. Let Me draw Your Power and Your Strength to overcome My difficulties that I might be an example of how empowering it is to work through my problems. Please grant Me the insight to see the lessons in My path. I am now willing to be an instrument in the enlightenment of others. May Your W ill be done!

## Additional Step Three Readings

### **Qualities of God**

God is the One Presence and One Power everywhere equally present, expressing as certain qualities or attributes. These qualities are already the essence of our nature, because our essential nature is God. As we bring forth these qualities from within and welcome them into expression in all areas of our lives, we find ourselves living our true nature living the Life of God.

**Abundance:** plentifulness, profusion... An ample or overflowing quality—the state of having more than enough.

**Balance:** Equilibrium and harmony... An aesthetically pleasing integration of elements; enough energy and time to do everything that is important to you.

**Beauty:** Loveliness... The quality in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses; or pleasurable that exalts the mind and spirit.

**Freedom:** Liberation, independence, ease... The absence of necessity, coercion of constraint in choice or action.

**Joy:** Delight, gaiety, bliss... A state of happiness, the emotion evoked by well, being, success, good fortune or by the expectancy of good.

**Love:** The self-givingness of GOD to ITS creation... Affection, devotion, unselfish concern that freely accepts another and seeks his or her good.

**Order:** Regular or harmonious arrangement and organization... A straightening out so as to eliminate confusion.

**Peace:** A state of tranquility or quiet... Freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions, harmony in personal relations.

**Power:** Possession of control, authority, or influence... The physical, mental, or spiritual ability to act or produce an effect.

**Unity:** Oneness... Accord, continuity without deviation or change.

**Wisdom:** Knowledge, insight, good sense—The ability to discern inner qualities and relationship.

**Wholeness:** The state of being complete, perfect, restored, unhurt, healed... Having all parts or components.

### ***Achieving Peace of Mind***

1. Talk It Out. Confide your worry to some levelheaded person.
2. Escape For A While. Sleep, read, draw, etc. Be prepared to come back and deal with the problem.
3. Work Off Your Anger. Do something physical. It will help intellectually.
4. Give In Occasionally. Everyone has to be on top sometime. Yield, others will too.
5. Do Something For Others. It will give you a better feeling.
6. Take One Thing at A Time. While under pressure, an ordinary workload is painful. Take one task at a time; don't overestimate the importance of things, or your own importance!
7. Shun The Superman Urge. Perfection is an invitation to failure. Decide the things you do well and put major effort into them. Give other tasks the best of your ability BUT don't take yourself down if perfection isn't reached.
8. Go Easy With Criticism. Some people expect too much of others, then feel let down, disappointed, frustrated when another person doesn't measure up. Each person has a right to develop as an individual. People who feel let down by the shortcomings (real or otherwise) of others are really let down about THEMSELVES.
9. Give The Other Fellow A Break. People under tension feel they have to get there first no matter how trivial the goal. Everything becomes a race. Competition is contagious but so is cooperation. Give the other fellow a break, and then you won't be a threat to him, nor him to you.
10. Make Yourself Available. Many people feel left out, slighted, neglected. Often it is imagined. Instead of withdrawing, it is healthier and more practical to make overtures. There is middle ground.
11. Schedule Recreation. If it's hard to take time out, put it on a schedule and throw yourself into it forgetting all work.

### ***Peace of Mind is Good Mental Health***

**Letting Go...**

To “Let Go” does not mean to stop caring it means I can’t do it for someone else

To “Let Go” is not to cut myself off; it is the realization that I can’t control another

To “Let Go” is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences

To “Let Go” is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is out of in my hands

To “Let Go” is not to try to change or blame another; it is to make the most of myself

To “Let Go” is not to care for, but to care about

To “Let Go” is not to fix, but to be supportive

To “Let Go” is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being

To “Let Go” is not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes, but to allow others to affect their destinies

To “Let Go” is not to be protective; it is to permit another to face reality

To “Let Go” is not to deny, but to accept

To “Let Go” is not to nag, scold, or argue, but instead to search out my own shortcomings and correct them

To “Let Go” is not to adjust everything to my desires, but to take each day as it comes, and cherish myself in it

To “Let Go” is not to criticize and regulate anybody, but to try to become what I dream I can be

To “Let Go” is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future

To “Let Go” is to fear less, and love more.

*I would Pick More Daisies*

If I had my life to live over, I'd dare to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax. I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would take more trips. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but have fewer imaginary ones.

You see I'm one of those people who live sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments and if had it to do over again I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments one after another instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat and a parachute. If I had it to do again, would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies.

Nadine Stair, 85 years old  
Louisville, Kentucky

*Big Book (page 62)*

This is the how and the why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life; God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most Good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom. When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all-powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our own little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.

*The Recovery Book (page 111)*

## STEP THREE:

Admitting you can't control your addiction and believing there is help somewhere are not enough. You have to follow this up with a decision to take action, to actually relinquish control to some Higher Power. Turning the reins over won't be easy. You'll find yourself chafing at the bit every time you want to take one road and your Higher Power directs you down another. Learn to relax and let things happen. You'll find you'll get to where you really want to go in the end. The first three steps are sometimes paraphrased: "I can't. He can. Let Him."

*12&12 (page TBD)*

Like all the remaining Steps, Step Three calls for affirmative action, for it is only by action that we can cut away the self-will which has always blocked the entry of God—or, if you like, a Higher Power—into our lives. Faith, to be sure, is necessary, but faith alone can avail

nothing. We can have faith, yet keep God out of our lives. Therefore our problem now becomes just how and by what specific means shall we be able to let Him in? Step Three represents our first attempt to do this. In fact, the effectiveness of the whole AA program will rest upon how well and earnestly we have tried to come to “a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” To every worldly and practical-minded beginner, this Step looks hard, even impossible. No matter how much one wishes to try, exactly how can he turn his own will and his own life over to the care of whatever God he thinks there is? Fortunately, we who have tried it, and with equal misgivings, can testify that anyone, anyone at all, can begin to do it. We can further add that a beginning, even the smallest, is all that is needed. Once we have placed the key of willingness in the lock and have the door ever so slightly open, we find that we can always open it some more. Though self-will may slam it shut again, as it frequently does, it will always respond the moment we again pick up the key of willingness.

*Overeaters Anonymous (page 24)*

What is God’s Will?

How will I know if I am acting in god’s will or my own? How will I know when to make a decision? The answers to these questions are quite simple.

God’s will is: love, acceptance, tolerance, compassion, kindness, forgiveness, honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, humility, patience, hope, faith, courage, etc. God’s will is not: pride, envy, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, sloth, dishonesty, hatred, intolerance, cheating, gossip, fear, indifference, resentment, self-centeredness, prejudice, obsession, self-righteousness, impatience, etc.

If I make decisions based on the spiritual principles listed above then I am acting in God’s will.

Another tool is to make decisions based on what is best for the group and not on what I think is best for me alone. If I make decisions based on what’s best for us, the group, me and my partner, etc. then we all win. When I make decisions based on self-will then only I receive the results and they aren’t always positive.

Inexperienced in this way of living, many of us have asked, “How do I reach this decision to turn my will and life over to a Higher Power? What exactly do I have to do?” *It* helps to understand that once we make this decision, our approach to all choices will be like our approach to our food and eating choices. We will no longer simply do what we feel like doing or what we think we can get away with. Instead, we will earnestly seek to learn God’s will for us, and then we will act accordingly. We give up fear and indecision, knowing that if we are sincere, our Higher Power will give us the knowledge of our best course in life, along with the willingness and ability to follow that course, even when it seems difficult and uncomfortable.

## Step Four: “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

### Brief Outline

#### ***A Guide to the Inventory Steps of AA***

The 4th, 5th and 10th Steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous recovery program are commonly called the Appraisal Steps. These Steps are vital for the true alcoholic to take seriously and without any reservations. The purpose of these notes is to provide a guide for the 4th Step written inventory and subsequent 10th Step written inventory. This guide is based on notes from AA step study meetings as well as previous Committed Step Study Workshops. Here are some questions that may come to mind relative to these Steps.

#### ***Why must the 4th Step Inventory be a written one?***

The principles of our AA Program are contained in the book, Alcoholics Anonymous. The “*Big Book*” emphasizes that the 4th Step Inventory is *written*. It is by the physical act of writing that we are able to penetrate to the innermost self or subconscious where the negative aspects of our lives are stored. Only the act of writing demonstrates positively that we are completely willing to open our past to the clear light of day and to start afresh on a new way of living. It is important that we write down all we can recall. You can rarely overwrite. In making the 4th Step written inventory you will note from page 76 of the *Big Book* that we also are making up our 8th Step list: people to whom we will make amends.

#### ***What is the purpose of the 5th Step?***

The 5th Step is the one, which permanently removes our obsession to drink and puts us in contact with a Higher Power. In order to gain these results you must be as thorough as humanly possible in your written effort. In taking the 5th Step with another person, simply read what you have written. Remember, the removal of the obsession depends on writing. Just simply “remembering and talking” will not bring results.

#### ***Who should I take my 5th Step with?***

Most people like to worry about who this person might be long before they even start on the 4th Step. Experience indicates that when you have completed the written 4th Step, the person who should hear your 5th Step will become apparent to you. If it is not revealed immediately, be patient and you will soon find the person and invariably he or she is the right one.

#### ***What is done with the written inventory after the 5th Step?***

Make certain you keep an “8th Step List” of people you have harmed. This list is then used in carrying out the 9th Step in making your amends. The 4th Step inventory itself can be destroyed, though many people keep it for later reference.

#### ***What is the purpose of the 10th Step?***

The purpose of the 10th Step is twofold. The first is to list items of our past, which we failed to uncover in our 4th Step Written Inventory. Second, to list any negative aspects of our lives, which have occurred after our 4th Step Inventory. In order for the 10th Step to be effective, it again should be written and discussed with another human being and our Higher Power.

Before beginning Steps 4 and 5, a comment is in order relative to the Sex Inventory. Many people with strict religious upbringing are shocked by the list presented. It must be remembered that our fellowship is made up of people from all walks of life with a complete range of sexual experiences. What may appear abnormal to one person would actually be part of another person’s experience. It is also important that “desires” be fully written down since these are just as deep in our subconscious minds as the acts themselves.

Our Sex Inventory list is as complete as possible in the interest of thoroughness in removing the obsessions that beset us. In seeking a person to hear our 5th Step, it is important to find someone who will understand the purpose of the 4th Step and especially the sexual inventory. Remember, the purpose is to remove the inner feelings of guilt and shame and not to stir them up.

# HUMILITY

Humility is perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despise, it is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my father/mother in secret and be at peace.



## Pre-Step Four Self-Examination of Defects

### Introduction

In preparing to take your 4th Step, it's helpful to examine some of the character defects (and their opposites) that are seen in many people, particularly alcoholics/addicts. This handout involves examining some of these qualities in the light of your own experience.

Your task is to read each definition and attempt to recall specific examples or instances in your own life that fall under that quality. Take your time; this self-examination is intended to "set the stage" for doing your 4th Step and it's important to be thorough. If you feel that your examples are too numerous to list, consider only the most recent past (4-5 instances). If you can't think of ever having had the quality, list 4-5 reasons why you lack it instead.

USE YOUR NOTEBOOK FOR THIS WORK. By writing things down, we help to clarify our own thoughts and ideas, and this is important!

- A. **PRIDE:** From AA's view, this refers to excessive pride-being so thin-skinned that we have trouble admitting any human weakness at all. Another word for this kind of pride is grandiosity. Pride is one of the Seven Cardinal Sins and a serious character defect. Pride can manifest itself through ego-centeredness; inordinate self-esteem, arrogance, bragging, and the belief that our viewpoint is "the only correct one." List instances where pride has interfered with an honest appraisal of yourself-kept you from accurately looking at your own behavior.

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- B. **HUMILITY:** Now that we're learning that it is safe to admit we're powerless and life has been unmanageable, we should find it easier just to be human. Being humble doesn't mean being weak. It means accepting ourselves-our strengths as well as our weaknesses. Humility is demonstrated by being less defensive about our views, accepting the strengths of others, and a willingness to admit when we are wrong. Cite some instances of humility in yourself.

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C. **PROCRASTINATION:** Simply defined as “putting things off”, this quality seems to get in the way of progress. What we set aside may never get done. We leave assignments to the last minute—when are you working on this assignment? Is it just before the workshop? Are you working on it to get it done or to grow personally from it? Procrastination often prevents our gaining self-knowledge and experience because we end up working under pressures of time. Write some examples of where you decided, “I’ll do it tomorrow,” things just barely got done, or you never got around to doing something.

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D. **PLANNING/ACTION:** This *involves* thinking about a task, how it should be done, and getting the job done. Action usually means completing work before it is due, with time to examine it and make changes if needed. What are some instances where you have used Planning and Action?

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E. **PERFECTIONISM:** We are often unwilling to accept human mistakes, whether our own or those of others. When we are afraid of criticism, we set unrealistic standards for ourselves and we are frustrated when we can’t meet them. Perfectionism leads to impatience with family, friends, and co-workers when they don’t meet our standards; it also means frustration in ourselves that can lead to procrastination (since we’re unsure we can meet the standard we set, we don’t get around to doing a task). In what ways are you a perfectionist?

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F. **ADMITTING MISTAKES:** Many of us have not had much experience in admitting mistakes and admitting when we are wrong. We seem to give ourselves only two choices: being absolutely perfect or being totally worthless. None of us is really perfect and the ability to honestly admit we have defects and imperfections is a part of this quality. Think of examples where you have been wrong and admitted it.

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G. **SELF-PITY:** This personality defect is a danger signal to look out for. We seem to get bogged down in “circular reasoning” about what’s wrong with our lives, our feelings, our behaviors. We look at others with envy for what they have that we lack. Our focus is inward on ourselves and we often experience depression (Self-pity is one symptom of possible impending relapse). Write instances where you experienced self-pity.

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H. **FEELING GOOD ABOUT OURSELVES:** When we are working toward personal growth, we can begin to feel good about ourselves. If we’re able to respect ourselves, we are able to give love to others and that’s a basic part of feeling worthwhile — not feeling better or worse than others (avoiding excessive pride and self- pity). Illustrate this concept with some cases where you’ve felt good about yourself.

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I. **ALIBIS:** This is a highly developed art of justifying our behavior through mental gymnastics. Psychologists call it “rationalizing” but the term carries with it a sense of “lying” to ourselves as well as others to make things appear okay. Alcoholics seem to have a wealth of experience in making alibis during their drinking days. List examples of rationalizing/alibi making.

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J. **INTOLERANCE:** This links to Humility, above, and pertains to our refusal to put up with beliefs (religious or political), practices, customs, or habits that are different from our own. Whereas humility usually pertains to ourselves and other individuals, intolerance is manifested through global feelings about others and/or groups of people. List some examples of where you have been intolerant.

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K. **ACCEPTANCE:** As acceptance of ourselves grows, so does our acceptance of the world around us. We don't have to be so fearful and defensive because there's not so much to worry about. We know that we can only do our best and, after that, what will be will be. Acceptance involves a "live and let live" attitude, willingness to "to turn it over," and "easy does it," all in one concept. Write instances where you've shown acceptance.

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L. **IMPATIENCE:** Technically, this is unwillingness to experience delay, opposition, pain, bother, and/or irritations in a calm manner. We often think of impatience as a matter of "time" (things taking "too" long) although time may be a rationalized reason (see above) for explaining impatience.

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M. **SELFISHNESS:** This refers to taking care of one's own comforts and wants first (even though they aren't needs). "I want what I want when I want it." Do you spend a lot of time worrying about your desires (food, people, things, and other material possessions)? When you have something—be it physical, mental, or spiritual—do you prefer to hold on to it rather than share it? Selfishness can result in a lot of energy expended to get our own way. It also can result in hurting others. Recall instances where you've been selfish.

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N. **SHARING:** When we're feeling good about ourselves, we begin to care about the welfare and happiness of others, too. Are you able to care about others as well as yourself? Do you know how to respond to their needs? When you "give" do you feel good or deprived? List some instances where you've shared and felt good about it.

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- O. **PHONINESS:** This links to false pride—a form of lying—putting out a false front for others to see. As a form of dishonesty, it gets in the way of feeling comfortable with ourselves as we are. When the image we try to project differs from who we are, we experience guilt, self-deceit, and lowered self-esteem. How have you been phony?

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- P. **DISHONEST THINKING:** Another form of lying. We may even take truths or facts and use them to fit our distorted thinking. This frequently occurs when we've made up our minds about conclusions and use facts to justify them. Interestingly, this phenomenon is often difficult to spot when it happens but becomes apparent when we have a chance to later examine our behaviors and actions.

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- Q. **HONESTLY RESPONSIBLE:** Today you're doing something important—being honest and responsible. Honest responsibility involves feelings about yourself and also how others see you—as you are, with ups, downs, faults, strengths, frailties, imperfections, etc. List some examples of being honestly responsible.

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**Qualities**

- 1. What qualities do you actually have in yourself that you like people to see? (List at least 10.)

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2. What qualities, in addition to those above, would you like to gain as you work on the 12 steps?  
(List at least another 10.)

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3. What qualities do you now have that you are afraid others will see?

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4. How do the qualities in #3 affect your relationships with others?

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## Key Concepts for Step Four

### *Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of us.*

- Key 1: Creation gave us instincts for a purpose; without them we wouldn't be complete human beings. So these desires for the sex relation, for material and emotional security, and for companionship, are perfectly necessary and right, and surely God given.
- Key 2: Yet these instincts, so necessary for our existence, often far exceed their proper functions. Powerfully, blindly, many times subtly, they drive us, dominate us, and insist upon ruling our lives. Our desires for sex, material and emotional, and for an import place in society often tyrannize us. When thus out of joint, man's natural desires cause him great trouble, practically all the trouble there is. When that happens, our great natural assets, the instincts, have turned into physical and mental liabilities.
- Key 3: Step four is our vigorous and painstaking effort to discover what these liabilities in each of us have been, and are. We want to find exactly how, when and where our natural desires have warped us. We wish to look squarely at the unhappiness this has caused others and ourselves. By discovering what our emotional deformities are, we can move toward their correction. Without a willing and persistent effort to do this, there can be little sobriety or contentment for us. Without a searching and fearless moral inventory, most of us have found that the faith, which really works in daily living, is still out of reach.
- Key 4: Every time a person imposes his instincts unreasonably upon others, unhappiness follows.
- Key 5: Alcoholics especially should be able to see that instinct run wild in themselves is the underlying cause of their destructive drinking. We have drunk to drown feelings of fear, frustration, and depression. We have drunk to escape the guilt of passions, and then have drunk again to make more passions possible. We have drunk for vain glory—that we might the more enjoy foolish dreams of pomp and power. This perverse soul sickness is not pleasant to look upon. Instincts on rampage balk at investigation. The minute we make a serious attempt to probe them, we are liable to suffer severe reactions
- Key 6: We learn that if we are seriously disturbed, our first need is to quiet that disturbance, regardless of whom or what we thought caused it.
- Key 7: There is plenty wrong with us alcoholics about which plenty will have to be done if we are to expect sobriety, progress, and any real ability to cope with life.
- Key 8: To avoid falling into confusion over the names these defects should be called, lets take a universally recognized list of major human failings—the seven deadly sins of pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth. It is not by accident that pride heads the procession: For pride, leading to self- justification, and always spurred by conscious or unconscious fears, is the basic breeder of most human difficulties, the chief block to true progress. When the satisfaction of our instincts for sex, security, and society becomes the sole object of our lives, then pride steps in to justify our excesses.
- Key 9: All these failings generate fear, a soul-sickness in its own right. Then fear, in turn, generates more character defects. Unreasonable fear that our instincts will not be satisfied drives us to covet the possessions of others, to lust for sex and power, to become angry when our instinctive demands are threatened, to be envious when the ambitions of others seem to be realized while ours are not. These fears are the termites that ceaselessly devour the foundations of whatever sort of life we try to build.
- Key 10: So when AA suggests a fearless moral inventory, it must seem that more is being asked of him than he can do. Both his pride and fear beat him back every time he tries to look within himself. Pride says, "You need not pass this way" and fear says, "You dare not look." Both pride and fear turn out to be bogeymen.

Key 11: By now the newcomer has probably arrived at the following conclusions: that his character defects, representing instincts gone astray, have been the primary cause of his drinking and his failure at life; that unless he is now willing to work hard at the elimination of the worst of these defects, both sobriety and peace of mind will still elude him; that all the faulty foundation of his life will have to be tom out and built anew on bedrock. He will ask, "How do I take inventory of myself?"

**Home Study**

Big Book: Chapter 5 and personal stories 6 to 11

12&12: Read Step 4

**Fourth Step Word Definitions**

Write down definitions for the following words: first, define them mentally to yourself, in terms of what you believe each word means. Then refer to a dictionary for definitions. Using the meanings that are appropriate to a self-inventory, jot down two to three sentences for each.

- 1. Searching: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Pride: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Fearless: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Fear: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Morale: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Anger: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Inventory: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Resentment: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Greed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10. Gluttony: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 11. Envy: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 12. Sloth: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 13. Lust: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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14. Vanity: \_\_\_\_\_

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15. Criticism: \_\_\_\_\_

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16. Jealousy: \_\_\_\_\_

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17. Self-pity: \_\_\_\_\_

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18. Hatred: \_\_\_\_\_

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Ego-centered pride tells us: “I need not look, I’m well enough, I’m not drinking.”

We begin to search the instant we can even temporarily set aside self-pride.

This self-centered pride drives our whole lives, blinding us, making us totally unable to clearly see our liabilities, and how seriously we are hurting ourselves, those closest to us, and others. If we are having trouble finding a chink in this ego-built wall, a brief talk with our sponsor will help let in the light.

Fear says: “The truth may hurt me, so I won’t look.”

As it is impossible to be fearless in looking at our own fears, we must surrender each time we sit down to write. We have faith in our Higher Power, belief that this has helped others and knowledge that the truth will set us free.

Reaffirm your Step 3 decision at each sitting. Use the prayer on page 63 of the *Big Book* or a similar affirmation of your choice. Be sure you have thoroughly read and understand pages 63 through 67.

## Step Four—Suggested Procedure

### I. Resentments

*Big Book*, page 64: “Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stems all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions, or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were “burned up.”

- a. Review the definitions of **anger** and **resentment** you wrote in your notebook. Consider a resentment to be a continuing anger.
- b. List every person, every institution, and every principle you have ever been angry at. You may also carry a small note pad with you to speed this work. This is your resentments “source” list (see below). Consider 50 resentments as a minimum.
- c. In a four-column format, like the worksheet with this guide (Attachment A at the end of this chapter), insert your answer, as you do the following:
  1. List a “source” from the above list (“I’m resentful at...”)
  2. Write down why you were angry (“The-cause”)
  3. Enter how it affected you (“Your injury,” which should be one of these: self-esteem, security, ambitions, fear, personal or sex relations)

**Note:** It may be helpful to fill in columns 1 through 3 each time you enter a resentment and do column 4 later, if you prefer.

4. Fill-in the, “Where was I to blame” column. Consider our guidance from the *Big Book* (page 67):

“Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened”?

“Where were we to blame”?

“Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes... The inventory was ours, not the other man’s. Where we saw our faults we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.”

- d. Prepare a **separate** list of faults, or character defects, based on what you write above.

More defects will occur to you as you work the remainder of Step 4. See the list of Defects Some People Report below. Based on the entire Step, your defects can be identified from: Resentment List (columns 3 and 4), Sex Problems (column 1), and Fears

***Some Sources of Resentments***

The following list of people, institutions, and principles may be helpful to you in examining your resentments:

**People:**

Mother	Bosses	Spouse(s)
Father	Co-workers	Ex-spouse(s)
Sisters	Subordinates	Children
Brothers	Doctor(s)	Nieces
Cousins	Clergymen	Nephews
Uncles	Other races	In-laws
Aunts	Other nationalities	Customers
Childhood friends	AA members	Teachers
School friends	Step study facilitator	Clerks
Drivers	Girlfriends	Bartenders
Sponsor(s)	Boyfriends	Landlord
Grandparents	Lawyer(s)	Psychiatrist(s)
Politicians	Famous people	Royalty
Rich People	Men-in-general	All people
Poor People	Women-in-general	Yourself

**Institutions:**

Churches	Schools	Jails
AA Fellowship	Recovery homes	Hospitals
Government agencies	Clubs	Businesses
Phone companies	Banks	IRS (Income Tax)
Answering machines	Insurance companies	VA (Veterans)
DMV	Prospective employers	Unemployment Office

**Principles:**

Death	Starvation	Suffering
Retribution	God/Deity	After life
Injustice	Pain/Sickness	Morality

***Defects Some People Report***

The following is only a partial list of defects one might have. It should be used as a sample listing. The step asks for the exact nature and you probably have others not listed below.

Resentful	Self-pitying	Having false pride
Dishonest with oneself	Intolerant	Lazy
Distrustful of others	Fearful	Carelessness
Critical/Prone to criticism	Temperamental	Procrastinating
Sarcastic	Impatient	Negative thinking
Jealous	Hateful	Suspicious
Withdrawn	Self-righteous	Conceit
Despondent	Ungrateful	Prone to gossip

## II. Fears

*Big Book*, page 68: “We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn’t go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn’t fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.”

- a. Write from three to six sentences about each of 25 of your worst fears that you have experienced, especially those that you think no longer bother you. See the suggested Fear List Format below. Note that you may pick up some fears from your resentment list. And be sure to list those fears where there are NO resentments. The following list is only a partial guide and should serve to bring up many more personal fears.
- b. In a three-column format, like the worksheet with this guide (Attachment B), write down your fear inventory Column 1—“My Fears,” Column 2—“Why I Have Them” and Column 3 — “Solution.”

In writing, ask yourself

- ❖ “Why do I have this fear?”
- ❖ “Is it caused by relying on self”
- ❖ “Would total trust/faith relieve me of this fear?”
- ❖ “If I were busy tending to business, would this fear have a hold on me?”

Some Fears that People Report:

Death	Snakes	Drugs
Insanity	Height	Gambling
Religion	Water	Obsessions
God	Dark	War
People	Claustrophobia	Insects
Institutions	Public Speaking	World’s End
Principles	Failure	Animals
Insecurity	Success	Phobias
Rejection	Inferiority	Old Age
Disease	Desires	Spiders
Cancer	Accidents	Bankruptcy
Venereal disease	Marriage	Self-honesty
Tuberculosis	Self-appraisal	Rheumatism
Arthritis	Sex-misconduct	Impotence
Responsibility	Past crimes	Police
Authority	Suffocating	Ego-deflation
Alcohol	Being laughed at	AIDS

### III. Assets

*12 Steps and 12 Traditions*, page 46: “The sponsor probably points out that the newcomer has some assets which can be noted along with his liabilities. This tends to clear away morbidity and encourage balance. As soon as he begins to be more objective (considers both weaknesses and assets), the newcomer can fearlessly, rather than fearfully, look at his own defects.”

In order to discover the very best we can be, to give us purpose, and to encourage emotional balance we now direct the searchlight to those events in our lives where something went right. These events are a reflection on those qualities, which make us special. It is these qualities, or character traits, that make us uniquely useful to ourselves, to others, and to our Higher Power.

- a. In your notebook write fifteen to twenty accomplishments (achievements) in your life, using the following criteria:
  - ❖ You feel you did it well
  - ❖ You enjoyed having done it; and,
  - ❖ You feel self-respect (honest pride) for having done it.
- b. Note the age at which each achievement occurred (within 1 to 2 years), searching gaps for any additional ones. All that matters is that YOU felt a sense of accomplishment. What others may think is not at all important.
- c. For each of your accomplishments, write:
  1. The problem(s) or objective(s)
  2. The solution(s) or method(s) used (don't get too complex)
  3. The skills, traits, qualities, special abilities, character attributes, or personality characteristics that contributed to this success.

The quality attributes or success factors that we use in our achievements are our character assets. Expanding on these assets and your basic personal values is called character building. Character building improves your ability to be of service and thereby reap the rewards of emotional and financial security. We have now begun to find a true purpose for our lives.

#### IV. Sex

*Big Book*, page 69: “We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we *have* done instead? We put this all down on paper and looked at it.”

- a. In a four-column format, like the worksheet with this guide (Attachment C), write down your sexual inventory.
  1. *Column 1: Review of my own conduct over the past (Situation):*  
 Ask yourself: Where was I selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?  
 Where had I aroused jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness?
  2. *Column 2: Whom did I hurt? (Person)* “We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided we do not bring about still more harm in so doing.”
  3. *Column 3: What should I have done instead? (Behavior)* “We asked God to mold our ideals and help us live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were: God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.”
  4. *Column 4: Solution. (How to deal with it)* “We asked God—in meditation we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. God alone can judge our sex situation.”

If you are currently experiencing problems in this area, these prayers may *prove* helpful to you:

“Higher Power (God), grant that I may see the right ideal for my life. Guide me in each questionable situation. Allow me sanity, and the strength to do the right thing.”

“This is a sick man (woman). How can *I* be helpful to him/her? God *save* me from being angry. Thy will be done.”

As we write, we’ll most likely see fear of intimacy in each relationship or discover that we’ve never understood the difference between intimacy and sex. Whether we ran from close relationships because of fear or because we had been hurt over and over again, we search out the common threads that appear in all of our relationships.

We may find that our sexual beliefs and behavior have caused problems in our relationships. We may have settled for sex when we really wanted love. We may have used sex to get something we wanted or believed that, by having sex, we could extract a commitment from an unwilling partner. We ask ourselves if our sexual behavior has been based in selfishness or in love. We may have used sex to fill the spiritual void we felt inside. Some of us felt shame as a result of our sexual practices. After years of compulsively acting on our fears and misguided beliefs about sex, we want to be at peace with our own sexuality. This is a very uncomfortable topic for most of us. However, if we want something different than what we’ve had, it’s necessary that we begin the process of change by writing about it.

Some of us were abused. We may have been victims of incest or rape. We may have had terrible childhoods of deprivation and neglect. Experiences like these may have led us to inflict the same abuse on others. We may have prostituted ourselves or allowed other forms of degradation because we didn’t feel that we deserved anything better. Though painful and sad, the past cannot be changed. However, the warped beliefs we have developed about ourselves and others can be changed with the help of our Higher Power. We write about events like these so that we can be free of our most painful secrets and get on with our lives. We don’t have to be the lifelong victims of our past.

To experience serenity, we must begin to alter the self-defeating patterns that have prevailed in our lives. The Fourth Step helps us identify those patterns. We begin to see how we have maneuvered through life, perhaps not consciously planning our own misery but making choices, which resulted in our lives becoming unmanageable. Most of us have blamed various people for the prices we paid for our addiction. We didn’t want to accept that our addiction had a negative impact that we alone were

responsible for. Some of us committed crimes and then complained about the consequences. Some of us were irresponsible at work and then objected loudly when we were held accountable. We beat a hasty retreat whenever life caught up with us. Our inventories will help us identify our responsibility for our actions and find those circumstances where we tend to place blame elsewhere.

In what ways have we been lazy and slothful? Have we been procrastinators? If so, we write it down, along with incidents in which we have procrastinated. Are we perfectionists? Do we delay starting things we are afraid we can't do to perfection? Or, on the other hand, do we carelessly rush into things without due thought? Are we impatient?

- ❖ How about lust? What problems has sex caused us?
- ❖ Have we pursued sex in ways that damaged our self-esteem? Have we been promiscuous?
- ❖ Have we spent hours fantasizing about sex when we might have been building better relationships?
- ❖ Have we been interested only in our own pleasure, never seeking to please our sexual partner as well?
- ❖ Have we ever sought to satisfy our sexual impulses at the expense of others?
- ❖ Have we slept with another person's spouse or lover? Have we cheated on our own spouse or lover?
- ❖ Have we ever forced or manipulated anyone to have sexual contact with us?
- ❖ Have we ever sexually molested anyone? Have we ever had sexual contact with a child or with anyone who was not fully capable of resisting?
- ❖ Have we ever abused a position of trust to get sex from someone who sought our help?
- ❖ Have we used intimidation to get sex? Have we abused a position of power? Have we ever threatened or sought revenge against someone who wouldn't go along with our sexual advances?
- ❖ Have we used sex or pregnancy to trap someone in a relationship?
- ❖ Have we ever gotten someone pregnant and not shared responsibility for it?
- ❖ Have we transmitted a disease when we knew we were infected?
- ❖ In what other ways have we misused our sexual drives? Compulsive eating has made many of us uninterested in sex. Have we been unfair to our partners and ourselves, preferring isolation and food to the risk of physical intimacy?

## **Additional Step Four Readings**

### *Big Book (pages 64-70)*

Taking commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or un-salable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values.

We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up, which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.

In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions, or principle with who we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships, (including sex) were hurt or threatened.

On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?

We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty.

We turned back to the list, for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look for it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than alcohol.

This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, "This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."

Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.

Notice that the word "fear" is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer, and the wife. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives.

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them.

We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test -was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.



If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience, and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

*Basic Text (pages 27-29)*

As we approach this step, most of us are afraid that there is a monster inside of us that, if released, will destroy us. This fear can cause us to put off our inventory or may even prevent us from taking this crucial step at all. We have found that fear is a lack of faith, and we have found a loving, personal God to whom we can turn. We no longer need to be afraid.

We write our inventory without considering the fifth step. We work step four as if there were no step five.

**The way to write an inventory is to write it!** Thinking about an inventory, talking about it, theorizing about the inventory will not get it written. We sit down with a notebook, ask for guidance, pick up our pen, and start writing.

A basic rule of thumb is that we can write too little, yet we can never write too much. The inventory will fit the individual. Perhaps this seems difficult or painful. It may appear impossible. We may fear that being in touch with our feelings will trigger an overwhelming chain reaction of pain and panic. We may feel like avoiding an inventory because of a fear of failure. When we ignore our feelings, the tension becomes too much for us. The fear of impending doom is so great that it overrides our fear of failure.

An inventory becomes a relief, because the pain of doing it is less than the pain of not doing it.

*It Works: How and Why (pages 36-37)*

Why work a fourth step? After all, we've been able to stay clean so far. But some of us are still haunted by a driving obsession to use drugs. Others find that the feelings of discomfort are more subtle: a nagging feeling that something isn't right, a sense of impending doom, or feelings of fear and anger that have no apparent reason. Still others may think we're doing just fine without a fourth step. However, our experience as a fellowship has shown that, sooner or later, members who don't work this crucial step relapse. For many of us, our motivation to work the fourth step is quite simple: We're working a program of recovery and we want to continue. Because our disease involves much more than our drug use, recovery involves more than simple abstinence from drugs. The solution to our problem is a profound change in our thinking and our behavior.

*12&12(pages 42-49)*

Creation gave us instincts for a purpose. Without them we wouldn't be complete human beings. If men and women didn't exert themselves to be secure in their persons, made no effort to harvest food or construct shelter, there would be no survival. If they didn't reproduce, the earth wouldn't be populated. If there were no social instinct, if men cared nothing for the society of one another, there would be no society. So these desires—for the sex relation, for material and emotional security, and for companionship—are perfectly necessary and right, and surely God-given.

Yet these instincts, so necessary for our existence, often far exceed their proper functions. Powerfully, blindly, many times subtly, they drive us, dominate us, and insist upon ruling our lives. Our desires for sex, for material and emotional security, and for an important place in society often tyrannize us.

Before tackling the inventory problem in detail, let's have a closer look at what the basic problem is. Simple examples like the following take on a world of meaning when we think about them. Suppose a person places sex desire ahead of everything else. In such a case, this imperious urge can destroy his chances for material and emotional security as well as his standing in the community. Another may develop such an obsession for financial security that he wants to do nothing but hoard money. Going to the extreme, he can become a miser, or even a recluse who denies himself both family and friends.

Alcoholics especially should be able to see that instinct run wild in themselves is the underlying cause of their destructive drinking. We have drunk to drown feelings of fear, frustration, and depression. We have drunk to escape the guilt of passions, and then have drunk again to make more passions possible. We have drunk for vain glory—that we might the more enjoy foolish dreams of pomp and power. This perverse soul-sickness is not pleasant to look upon. Instincts on rampage balk at investigation. The minute we make a serious attempt to probe them, we are liable to suffer severe reactions.

All these failings generate fear, a soul-sickness in its own right. Then fear, in turn, generates more character defects. Unreasonable fear that our instincts will not be satisfied drives us to covet the possessions of others, to lust for sex and power, to become angry when our instinctive demands are threatened, to be envious when the ambitions of others seem to be realized while ours are not.

### *The Little Red Book (pages 50–52)*

#### **Resentment**

Resentment is common among all alcoholics. We are never safe from it and, as intangible as it may seem, it does payoff in material ways with destructive force and energy. Resentment is dynamite to the alcoholic.

In studying *Alcoholics Anonymous*, we are reminded, “resentment is the ‘number one’ offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have not only been mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick.”\* Resentment is pure mental drunkenness. We must treat it mentally and spiritually to remain physically dry.

“...In dealing with resentments we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions, and principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were ‘burned up:’ \* \*

Make up your grudge list, decide who is enclosed in your circle of hatred, and determine why you hold them there. Has your life been any happier because of this resentment? Were they really the offenders?

The founders of Alcoholics Anonymous answer the question with the definite statement: “It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while.” \*\*\*

They explain that resentment dwarfs the maintenance and growth of spiritual experience, which is the only hope of the alcoholic.

\*Read *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Chapter Five, page 64. See *Stools and Bottles*, pages 80-81.

\*\* Alcoholics Anonymous, Chapter Five, pages 64-65.

\*\*\* Alcoholics Anonymous, Chapter Five, page 66.

Here's a passage from *Winnie-the-Pooh*. He's talking to Eeyore the donkey:

"How are you?" said Pooh.

"Not very how," said Eeyore. "I don't seem to have felt at all how for a long time."

"Meaning...?" said Bob.

"It takes a while before we have a clue about how we really feel. We've been hiding that information from ourselves for a long time."

"Huh."

"You get that sign up on the bathroom mirror yet?" asked Tyler. "The 'Do not take thyself too seriously'?"

"Just yesterday. I haven't noticed any difference yet."

"What'd you expect?" said Tyler.

"I don't know. Something. You're the one who told me to put it up. What am I supposed to expect?"

"It's supposed to help you lighten up; get out of the heavy- does-it business."

"Well, it's not working."

"Give it time, counselor. Time. Trust me-the shell will crack. How's the Fourth Step going?"

"Don't ask."

"The rocky road to recovery. You know next time we meet we'll be doing the Fifth Step. Need I remind you that that will entail sharing your Fourth Step, which, of course, you will have finished by then."?

"I'm struggling a bit."

"And why is that?"

"Well...I mean I've done this before, Tyler. The Fourth Step."

"So?"

"So I've done it already."

"What's that supposed to mean? So you've done it before. Now you're going to do it again. Ought to be easier. You're getting down to causes and conditions this time. Liquor was but a symptom. Remember?"

"How can I possibly forget?" said Bob. "I'm into this stuff twenty-four hours a day."

"Good," said Tyler. "Tell me what the *Big Book* says about resentments."

"Resentment is the number one offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. And, a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness."

"Futility and unhappiness," said Tyler. "What a combination. And just what is this resentment stuff that seems to be destroying us? Webster says: 'A feeling of persistent ill will or indignant displeasure at something regarded as wrong or offensive.' And just think of all the offensive things out there. Think of all the offensive people, for chrissakes."

"Hundreds."

"More like thousands. They're everywhere. Notice that resentment is defined as a feeling, counselor. Don't forget that. Next time somebody ridicules feelings at a meeting, next time somebody would have you believe that it's only about God and whiskey, or God and cocaine, or God and chocolate cake, remember that the thing that destroys more addicts and alcoholics

than anything else is a feeling. Feelings are our connection to earth life. Very important. Go on.”

“In dealing with resentments we set them on paper. We asked ourselves why we were angry.”

“What’s the difference between being angry and being resentful?” said Tyler.

“Time?”

“Explain.”

“Anger becomes resentment if we hold on to it too long.”

“Very good,” said Tyler. “Here’s what Yoda says: ‘Beware of anger, fear and aggression. The Dark Side are they. Easily they flow, quick to join in the fight. A heavy price is paid for the power they bring.’”

“The Dark Side, eh?”

“And how does the *Big Book* say we deal with resentments?”

“Your memory going, Tyler? I just read it: We set them on paper. “

“Ah, yes. It’s coming back to me now. Set them on paper, which is what you’re doing.”

“Which is what I’m very slowly doing.”

“Well, you probably work better under deadline pressure anyway, being a lawyer and all. Because you still have your fear inventory and your sex inventory to do. All in two weeks. Plus some minor things.”

“What minor things?”

“Minor research items,” said Tyler...

“Like what?”

“All in good time counselor.”

“Tyler, I really have what you might call a full plate. Plus a trial coming up in two weeks that I absolutely have to prepare for.”

“That all?” said Tyler. “I thought it might be something important.”

“It is something important. It’s my goddamn livelihood.”

“No, counselor, this is your livelihood: your work in recovery. That other stuff is what you do to make money. Don’t get the two confused. If you take care of your number one problem, the rest of your problems will take care of themselves. You ever hear that?”

“Don’t treat me like some kind of—”

“Now: what important information did you get from the *Twelve and Twelve*?”

“It’s Relentless Tyler on the move again, crushing the opposition as he goes. I scanned it—the *Twelve and Twelve*. It was the best I could do.”

“Committing every word to memory thanks to your Deluxe, Reconditioned Big Brain.”

“Not exactly.”

“I’ll help then,” said Tyler. “I’ll read some of the important parts. You might want to take notes. When we suggest a fearless moral inventory, it must seem to every newcomer that more is being asked than he can do. His pride and fear beat him back every time he tries to look at himself. Just stop me if any of this rings a bell.”

“Don’t bother me,” said Bob. “I’m busy taking notes.”

“Of course.”

“And I’m not a newcomer.”

“For our purposes, we’ll pretend you’re a newcomer. Just pretend. But once we have a complete willingness to take inventory, a wonderful light falls upon this foggy scene. “

“Possibly the dawn, boss?”

“Don’t get ahead of yourself. As we persist—take note of the word persist, counselor—a new kind of confidence is born, and the sense of relief at finally facing ourselves is indescribable.”

“Hallelujah,” said Bob.

“And just to let a little air out of the balloon, we have this: The primary fact we fail to recognize is our total inability to form a true partnership with another human being. “

“You think that’s true?” said Bob.

“I do.”

“I’ve been married for eighteen years. Something was going on.”

“You think you know your wife?”

“Of course I know my wife.”

“I don’t mean her bra size, or what kind of movies she likes. I mean really know her?”

“Sure.”

“What’s her biggest fear?”

“Oh, probably something like...uh...”

“If she had only one wish, what would it be?”

“Well, I’m not sure she actually...”

“Case closed,” said Tyler. He resumed reading. “Self-centered behavior blocked a partnership with anyone of those about us. Of true brotherhood we had only small comprehension. “

“I don’t know if that’s especially true,” said Bob. “Or if even any of it’s-”

“My guess is that you’re carrying so much extra baggage at the moment that a real relationship is out of the question.”

“Baggage like what?”

“Like fear, anger, resentment, self-pity, et cetera. Yoda says that anger and hate lead to the Dark Side.”

“And if Yoda says it, it’s certainly good enough for me,” said Bob sarcastically, “Would he lie? A Jedi Master?”

“Look to the principle, counselor. The messenger is of little importance. You’ll miss a lot of messages of you worry about who brings them.”

“Now what did you find in The House on Pooh Corner that relates to the Fourth and Fifth Steps?”

“Took a while, but I got it.

“Pooh began to feel a little more comfortable, because when you’re a Bear of Very Little Brain and you Think of Things, you sometimes find that a thing which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out in the open and has other people looking at it.”

“Bingo, counselor,” said Tyler.

“Nailed it, eh? Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

“Perfecto, And very Thingish.”

“We’re as sick as our secrets?”

“Only sometimes?”

“No guarantees, counselor.”

“No? I’m trying to find some solid ground here, Tyler, some place to stand, and here you are all over the map.”

“If you’re looking for guarantees, you’re looking in the wrong place. You want safety, solid ground, buy more insurance or build a bomb shelter. You want Life, open the door, and take your chances. You want a gold ring, get on board. Life is beckoning, counselor. The illusion of safety is like the illusion of control—all smoke and mirrors. No such thing. Were I a religious person, I would say that you will have to learn to have faith, faith in the Process. Since I’m not, I’ll suggest that you learn to trust. Day at a time. Hour at a time. Trust. Open the door and trust. A spiritual path doesn’t offer safety; it offers life. Not the same thing. Remember it’s a journey. And at some level you’ve already arrived at your destination.”

“Already arrived, eh?” said Bob. “This going to be another one of those sound-of-one-hand-clapping things?”

“Here’s what Thomas Merton says. This is from his *Reflections on Prayer*:

“You start where you are and you realize that you’re already there. We already have everything, but we don’t know it and we don’t experience it.”

“That certainly clears everything up,” said Bob dryly. “And if it’s true that I’m already there, why don’t I feel like it?”

“Because, counselor, the awareness that you’re already there is hidden under a lot of excess baggage and a really lousy belief system. Turns out you got a lot of bad information as you were growing up.”

### 12&12 (pages 44–45)

Instincts on rampage balk at investigation. The minute we make a serious attempt to probe them, we are liable to suffer severe reactions.

If temperamentally we are on the depressive side, we are apt to be swamped with guilt and self-loathing. We wallow in this messy bog, often getting a misshapen and painful pleasure out of it. As we morbidly pursue this melancholy activity, we may sink to such a point of despair that nothing but oblivion looks possible as a solution. Here, of course, we have lost all perspective, and therefore all genuine humility. For this is pride in reverse. This is not a moral inventory at all; it is the very process by which the depressive has so often been led to the bottle and extinction.

If, however, our natural disposition is inclined to self-righteousness or grandiosity, our reaction will be just the opposite. We will be offended at AA’s suggested inventory. No doubt we shall point with pride to the good lives we thought we led before the bottle cut us down. We shall claim that our serious character defects, if we think we have any at all, have been caused chiefly by excessive drinking. This being so, we think it logically follows that sobriety—first, last, and all the time—is the only thing we need to work for.

We also clutch at another wonderful excuse for avoiding an inventory. Our present anxieties and troubles, we cry, are caused by the behavior of other people—people who really need a

moral inventory. We firmly believe that if only they'd treat us better, we'd be all right. Therefore we think our indignation is justified and reasonable—that our resentments are the “right kind.” We aren't the guilty ones. They are!

*The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying (pages 216–217)*

To the man who cried out: “Do you think God will ever forgive me for my sins?” I would say: “Forgiveness already exists in the nature of God; it is already there. God has already forgiven you, for God is forgiveness itself. ‘To err is human, and to forgive divine.’ But can you truly forgive yourself? That's the real question.

“Your feeling of being un-forgiven and unforgivable *is* what makes you suffer so. But it only exists in your heart or mind. Haven't you read how in some of the near-death experiences a great golden presence of light arrives that is all forgiving? And it is very often said that it is finally *we* who judge ourselves.

“In order to clear your guilt, ask for purification from the depths of your heart. If you really ask for purification, and go through it, forgiveness will be there. God will forgive you, just as the father in Christ's beautiful parable forgives the prodigal son. To help yourself to forgive yourself, remember the good things you have done, forgive everyone else in your life, and ask for forgiveness from *anyone* you may have harmed.”

Not everyone believes in a formal religion, but I think nearly everyone believes in forgiveness.

*12&12 (page 49)*

In the Fourth Step, it is important to take a good hard look at how fear has worked in our lives. Our experience tells us that self-centered fear is at the root of our disease. Many of us have pretended to be fearless when in fact we were terrified. Fear has driven us to act rashly in trying to protect ourselves. We have often been paralyzed into inaction because of our fears. We may have resorted to scheming and manipulating because we feared the future. We went to extremes to protect ourselves from what we saw as potential loss, disaster, and a constant lack of what we needed. In the past, we had no faith that a Higher Power would care for us; therefore, we attempted to take control of our lives and everything around us. We used people, we manipulated, we lied, we plotted, we planned, we stole, we cheated, and then we lied some more to cover up our schemes. We experienced envy, jealousy, and deep, gut-wrenching insecurities. We were alone. As we drove away the people who cared about us, we used more drugs, trying to cover up our feelings. The lonelier we felt, the more we tried to control everything and everybody. We suffered when things didn't go our way, but so strong was our desire for power and control that we couldn't see the futility of our efforts to manage events. In our new lives, we have faith in a loving God whose will for us is better than anything we could manipulate or control for ourselves. We need not fear what might happen.

So when AA suggests a fearless moral inventory, it must seem to every newcomer that more is being asked of him than he can do. Both his pride and his fear beat him back every time he tries to look within himself. Pride says, “You need not pass this way,” and Fear says, “You dare not look!” But the testimony of AA's who have really tried a moral inventory is that pride and fear of this sort turn out to be bogeymen, nothing else. Once we have a complete willingness to take inventory, and exert ourselves to do the job thoroughly, a wonderful light falls upon this foggy scene. As we persist, a brand-new kind of confidence is born, and the sense of relief at finally facing ourselves is indescribable. These are the first fruits of Step Four.

### Attachment A: Review of Resentments

<b>Instructions for Completion:</b> 1. In dealing with resentments we set them on paper (Complete Column 1 from top to bottom. Do nothing on Columns 2, 3 or 4 until Column 1 is complete.) 2. We asked ourselves why we were angry. (Complete Column 2 from top to bottom. Do nothing on Columns 3 or 4 until Column 2 is complete.) 3. On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions or our sex instinct which had been interfered with? (Do each column within Column 3 from top to bottom, starting with Self-Esteem and finishing with Ambitions. Do nothing on Column 4 until Column 3 is complete.) 4. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened, and inconsiderate? (Asking ourselves these questions, we complete each part of Column 4.) 5. Reading from left to right, we now see the resentment (Column 1), the cause (Column 2), the part of self which had been affected (Column 3), and the character defect within us that allowed the resentment to surface and blocks us off from God's will (Column 4).			Column 3								Column 4					
			Affects My:													
			(Which Part of Self Caused the Harm?)													
			Social Instinct		Security Instinct		Sex Instinct		Ambitions				What is the exact nature of my wrongs, mistakes, defects, etc.?			
			Self-Esteem	Personal Relationships	Material	Emotional	Acceptable Sex Relations	Hidden Sex Relations	Social	Security	Sexual	Selfish	Dishonest	Self-seeking & Frightened	Inconsiderate	
Column 1 I'm Resentful at:			Column 2 The Cause:													
1.																
2.																
3.																
4.																
5.																
6.																
7.																
8.																
9.																
10.																
11.																
12.																
13.																
14.																



15.																			
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**Attachment B: Review of Fears**

<b>Instructions for Completion:</b> 1. In dealing with fears we put them on paper. We Listed people, institutions or principles we feared. (Complete Column 1 from top to bottom. Do nothing on Columns 2, 3 or 4 until Column 1 is complete.) 2. We asked ourselves why we were fearful. (Complete Column 2 from top to bottom. Do nothing on Columns 3 or 4 until Column 2 is complete.) 3. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, or our sex instinct, which caused the fear? (Do each column within Column 3 from top to bottom, starting with Self-Esteem and finishing with Ambitions. Do nothing on Column 4 until Column 3 is complete.) 4. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened, and inconsiderate? (Asking ourselves these questions, we complete each part of Column 4.) 5. Reading from left to right, we now see our fears, (Column 1), why we were fearful (Column 2), the part of self which caused the fear (Column 3), and the character defect within us that allowed the fear to surface and blocks us off from God's will (Column 4).		Column 3								Column 4			
		Affects My:								What is the exact nature of my wrongs, mistakes, defects, etc.?			
		(Which Part of Self Caused the Harm?)											
		Social Instinct		Security Instinct		Sex Instinct		Ambitions					
Self-Esteem	Personal Relationships	Material	Emotional	Acceptable Sex Relations	Hidden Sex Relations	Social	Security	Sexual	Selfish	Dishonest	Self-seeking & Frightened	Inconsiderate	
Column 1 I'm Fearful of:	Column 2 The Cause:												
1.													
2.													
3.													
4.													
5.													
6.													
7.													
8.													
9.													
10.													
11.													
12.													
13.													

14.																	
15.																	

### Attachment C: Review of Our Sex Conduct

<b>Instructions for Completion:</b> 1. We listed all people we harmed. (Complete Column 1 from top to bottom Do nothing on Columns 2, 3 or 4 until Column 1 is complete.) 2. We asked ourselves what we did. (Complete Column 2 from top to bottom. Do nothing on Columns 3 or 4 until Column 2 is complete.) 3. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, or our sex instinct, which caused the harm? (Do each column within Column 3 from top to bottom, starting with Self-Esteem and finishing with Ambitions. Do nothing on Column 4 until Column 3 is complete.) 4. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we looked for our mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened, and inconsiderate? (Asking ourselves these questions, we complete each part of Column 4.) 5. Reading from left to right, we now see the harm (Column 1), what we did (Column 2), the part which caused the harm (Column 3), and the character defect within us that blocks us off from God's will (Column 4).		Column 3								Column 4				
		Affects My:								What is the exact nature of my wrongs, mistakes, defects, etc.?				
		(Which Part of Self Caused the Harm?)												
		Social Instinct	Security Instinct	Sex Instinct		Ambitions								
		Self-Esteem	Personal Relationships	Material	Emotional	Acceptable Relations	Hidden Sex Relations	Social	Security	Sexual	Selfish	Dishonest	Self-seeking & Frightened	Inconsiderate
		Column 1 Who Did I Harm?:	Column 2 What Did I do?:											
1.														
2.														
3.														
4.														
5.														
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## **Step Five: “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”**

### **Brief Outline**

1. Choose a person with whom you are willing to confide. This can be your sponsor, but not necessarily so. \*
2. Make an appointment, making sure that the person understands the mission—what is to be accomplished.
3. Choose a serene place, allowing plenty of time. Have no pending commitments that might rush either of you or not allow your partner to share with you.
4. Keep the appointment, making a beginning, even if you are unable or unwilling to do it all. Your 4th Step can be used as a reminder. (You may want to read from your 4th Step, but leave things open enough for discussion.)
5. IMMEDIATELY AFTER the meeting, follow the instructions given at the bottom of page 75 in the Big Book. Review all your material written to this point. Write a short paragraph on how you did each step to this point. If you have answered the questions “yes” to your own satisfaction, you are ready to go on to Step 6.

\* A comment is in order relative to the Sex Inventory. Many people with strict religious upbringing are shocked by the list presented. It must be remembered that our fellowship is made up of people from all walks of life with a complete range of sexual experiences. What may appear “abnormal” to one person would actually be part of another person’s experience. It is also important that “desires” be written down (and discussed) since these are just as deep in our subconscious minds as the acts themselves.

Our Sex Inventory list is as thorough as possible in the interest of completeness in removing the obsessions that beset us. In seeking a person to hear our 5th Step, it is important to find someone who (will understand the purpose of the 4th Step and especially the Sex Inventory. Remember, the purpose is to *remove* the inner feelings of guilt and shame and not just stir them up.

## Some Notes on Step Five

### *The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*

We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path. We have admitted certain defects; we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is; we have put our finger on each of the weak items in our personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part, which when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects.

This is perhaps difficult—especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further. We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first:

***If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking.***

Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only *thought* they had lost their egoism and fear; they only *thought* they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness, and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they had told someone else *all* their life story.

We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world.

When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it... We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator... We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

### *The Fifth Step: A Guide to Reconciliation by Edward C. Sellner*

A GOOD FIFTH STEP STARTS WITH THE FOURTH. Beginning with an admission of powerlessness in Step One and ending with a sharing of the AA message in Step Twelve, the Twelve Steps of AA have become part of a process which can lead to a spiritual awakening, defined by AA as a personality change. This process unfolds one step at a time. Thus, when we consider what contributes to a positive experience of the Fifth Step, we must first look at the Fourth Step.

Step Four is concerned with a searching and fearless moral inventory. It is an effort to discover the truth of our lives. Such a task is not easy; it demands honesty, thoroughness, and balance.

While in the process of preparing a Fourth Step, we should begin considering a listener with whom to take the Fifth Step. Almost anyone will do; however, certain attributes in a listener will contribute to the likelihood of a positive experience:

- 1) The person should have the ability to keep things in confidence
- 2) The person should have an understanding of the Twelve Steps of AA
- 3) The listener should have a degree of wisdom and maturity based on personal experience of constructively dealing with alcoholism.

With whomever we take the Fifth Step, we should keep in mind that we are not there to please the listener, but to heal ourselves. Nor should we be afraid of shocking, surprising, or scandalizing the listener with the sharing of past deeds or incidents. He has probably been there.

Step Five is the telling of our story in the context of the insights regarding our liabilities and assets, which emerged in Step Four. The important thing is to tell ALL that needs to be told. If there is anything in the writing of Step Four that we would consciously prefer not to share, that is precisely what needs to be acknowledged.

*The Little Red Book*

The metamorphosis from the alcoholic to the new AA personality becomes more evident upon completion of Step Five. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can begin to feel the nearness of God.

The step is a direct challenge to our sincerity, inasmuch as we have been promised humility, a spiritual experience, and loss of fear.

This is the only step that advises us what to do when we have completed it: "Returning home we find a place where we *can* be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our hearts that we know Him better. We carefully read the first five steps to see if we have omitted anything.

## Key Concepts for Step Five

### *Step Five: Admitted to God, ourselves, and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

- Key 1: All of AA's Twelve Steps ask us to go contrary to our natural desires they all deflate our egos. When it comes to ego deflation, few steps are harder to take than Step Five. But scarcely any step is more necessary to long-term sobriety and peace of mind than this one.
- Key 2: AA experience has taught us we cannot live alone with our pressing problems and the character defects, which cause or aggravate them. If we have swept the searchlight of Step Four back and forth over our careers, and it has revealed in stark relief those experiences we'd rather not remember, if we have come to know how wrong thinking and actions have hurt us and others, then the need to quit living by ourselves with those tormenting ghosts of yesterday gets more urgent than ever. We have to talk to somebody about them.
- Key 3: But of the things which really bother and burn us, we say nothing. Certain distressing or humiliating memories, we tell ourselves, ought not to be shared with anyone. These will remain our secret. Not a soul must ever know. We hope they'll go to the grave with us.
- Key 4: This is not only unwise, but is actually a perilous resolve. Few muddled attitudes have caused us more trouble than holding back on Step Five. Some people are unable to stay sober at all, others will relapse periodically until they really clean house. Even AA old-timers, sober for years, often pay dearly for skipping this step. They will tell how they tried to carry the load alone; how much they suffered of irritability, anxiety, remorse, and depression; and how, unconsciously seeking relief, they would sometimes accuse even their best friends of the very character defects they themselves were trying to conceal. They always discovered that relief never came by confessing the sins of other people. Everybody has to confess his own.
- Key 5: This vital step was also the means by which we began to get the feeling that we could be forgiven, no matter what we had thought or done. We first felt truly able to forgive others, no matter how deeply we felt they had wronged us. We inwardly knew we'd be able to receive forgiveness and give it, too.
- Key 6: Another great dividend we may expect from confiding our defects to another human being is humility it amounts to a clear recognition of what and who we really are, followed by a sincere attempt to become what we could be.
- Key 7: More realism and therefore more honesty about ourselves are the great gains we make under the influence of Step Five.
- Key 8: It was most evident that a solitary self-appraisal, and the admission of our defects based on that alone, wouldn't be nearly enough. We'd have to have outside help if we were surely to know and admit the truth about ourselves. Only by discussing ourselves, holding back nothing, only by being willing to take advice and accept direction could we set foot on the road to straight thinking, solid honesty, and genuine humility.
- Key 9: Until we actually sit down and talk aloud about what we have so long hidden, our willingness to clean house is still largely theoretical. When we are honest with another person, it confirms that we have been honest with ourselves and with God.
- Key 10: Going it alone in spiritual matters is dangerous. How many times have we heard well-intended people claim the guidance of God when it was all too plain that they were sorely mistaken? Lacking both practice and humility, they had deluded themselves and were able to justify the most arrogant nonsense on the ground that this was what God had told them.
- Key 11: The real tests of the situation are your own willingness to confide and your full confidence in the—one with whom you share your first accurate self-survey.

Key 12: Provided you hold back nothing, your sense of relief will mount from minute to minute. The dammed-up emotions of years break out of their confinement, and miraculously vanish as soon as they are exposed. As the pain subsides, a healing tranquility takes its place. And when humility and serenity are so combined, something else of great moment is apt to occur. Many an AA, once agnostic or atheist, tells us that it was during this stage of Step Five that he first actually felt the presence of God. And even those who had faith already often became conscious of God, as they never were before.

Key 13: This feeling of being at one with God and man, this emerging from isolation through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of guilt, brings us to a resting place where we may prepare ourselves for the following steps to a full and happy sobriety.

**Home Study**

*Big Book:* Chapter 6, pages 72 to 75, Story 12 in *Pioneers of AA*, and Stories 1, 2, and 3 in *they stopped in time*.

*12&12:* Read Step Five.



## Additional Step Five Readings

This is perhaps difficult, especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further. We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk.

We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination, which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it.

If we cannot or would rather not do this, we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend. Perhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person.

Notwithstanding the great necessity for discussing ourselves with someone, it may be one is so situated that there is no suitable person available. If that is so, this step may be postponed, only, however, if we hold ourselves in complete readiness to go through with it at the first opportunity. We say this because we are very anxious that we talk to the right person. It is important that he be able to keep a confidence; that he fully understand and approve what we are driving at; that he will not try to change our plan. But we must not use this as a mere excuse to postpone.

When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste not time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.

We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page, which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

### *Get Found Kid Story by Robert Fulghum*

In the early dry dark of an October's Saturday evening, the neighborhood children are playing hide-and-seek. How long since I played hide-and-seek? Thirty years, maybe more. I remember how. I could become part of the game in a moment, if invited. Adults don't play hide-and-seek. Not for fun, anyway...too bad.

Did you have a kid in your neighborhood who always hid so good, nobody could find him? We did. After awhile we would give up on him and go off, leaving him to rot wherever he was. Sooner or later he would show up, all mad because we didn't keep looking for him. And we would get mad back because he wasn't playing the game the way it was supposed to be played. There's *hiding* and *there's finding*, we'd say. And he'd say it was hide-and-seek, not hide-and-

give-UP, and we'd all yell about who made the rules and who cared about who, anyway, and how we wouldn't play with him anymore if he didn't get it straight and who needed him anyhow, and things like that. Hide-and-peek-and-yell. No matter what, though, the next time he would hide too good again. He's probably still hidden somewhere, for all I know.

As I write this, the neighborhood game goes on, and there is a kid under a pile of leaves in the yard just under my window. He has been there a long time now, and everybody else is found and they are about to give up on him over at the base. I considered going out to the base and telling them where he is hiding. And I thought about setting the leaves on fire to drive him out. Finally, I just yelled, "GET FOUND, KID!" out the window. And scared him so bad he probably wet his pants and started crying and ran home to tell his mother. It's real hard to know how to be helpful sometimes.

A man I know found out last year he had terminal cancer. He was a doctor. And knew about dying, and he didn't want to make his family and friends suffer through that with him. So he kept his secret. And died. Everybody said how brave he was to bear his suffering in silence and not tell everybody, and so on and so forth. But privately his family and friends said how angry they were that he didn't need them, didn't trust their strength. And it hurt that he didn't say good-bye.

He hid too well. Getting found would have kept him in the game. Hide-and-peek, grown-up style. Wanting to hide. Needing to be sought. Confused about being found. "I don't want anyone to know." "What will people think?" "I don't want to bother anyone."

Better than hide-and-peek, I like the game called Sardines. In Sardines the person who is It goes and hides, and everybody goes looking for him. When you find him, you get in with him and hide there with him.

Pretty soon everybody is hiding together, all stacked in a small space like puppies in a pile. And pretty soon somebody giggles and somebody laughs and everybody gets found.

Medieval theologians even described God in hide-and-peek terms, calling him *Deus Absconditus*. But me, I think old God is a Sardine player. And will be found the same way everybody gets found in Sardines—by the sound of laughter of those heaped together at the end.

"Olly-olly-oxen-free!" The kids out in the street are hollering the cry that says, 'Come on in, wherever you are. It's a new game.' And so say I. To all those who have hid too good. *Get found, kid!* Olly-olly-oxen-free.

"You ready for the Fifth Step?"

"Ready as I'll ever be."

"Is that thick notebook there filled with atrocities dredged from the nightmare past of your drinking and drugging, days?"

"Inventories for every occasion," said Bob. "Long ones, short ones, ones about fear, about sex, something for everyone. Step right up and..."

"You take a look at the Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve?"

"I did."

"And what did it say about the Fifth Step?"

"If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking."

"You believe that?" said Tyler.

"I'm not sure. What I think is that I'm willing to believe."

“Good. Also says somewhere in there that the practice of admitting one’s faults to another person is part of an ancient tradition.”

“I’m not interested.”

“It’s history.”

“Maybe. Or maybe it’s horseshit, Tyler.”

“Then why are you doing it?”

“Because it’s the next thing. It’s in front of me. I’m Bill W’s version of Pavlov’s dog.”

“I like that,” said Tyler. “What other gems did your reading provide?”

“Something to the effect that we often try to convince ourselves that certain humiliating experiences are best kept secret.”

“True. I’m as sick as my secrets.”

“You believe alcoholics are tortured by loneliness?” asked Bob. “It says that in the Twelve and Twelve.”

“I could believe that. Right after that comes one of my favorite lines:

“It was as if we were actors on a stage suddenly realizing that we did not know a single line of our parts.”

“And why is it we don’t know any of the lines, boss?”

“No script,” said Tyler. “We’ve been winging it for so long, we don’t have a clue about what our part really is. And of course asking is out of the question. Someone might discover that we don’t know everything. Or anything. We’re life’s chameleons, counselor, adapting to our surroundings with lightning speed, finding the required role, picking up the lingo, the body language-emotional quick-change artists. What do you want me to be today?” Tyler continued. “Just name it. You want the Intellectual? That’s me. The Tough Guy? Mr. Blue Collar? No problem I can do a role a day. Easy. A role an hour. I’m a survivor, man. This is life’s road show and I’m on the road. But if you want to know who I really am, what my part is, what my lines are, you’re out of luck. I don’t have a clue.”

“The actor again,” said Bob. “Moving the lights, the scenery, the players. If only people would do what we wanted, everything would be okay. You ever get another sponsor?”

“No.”

“Why?” said Bob.

“I thought I was supposed to be the one asking the questions.”

“You said it was a two-way street.”

“Have to be more careful about what I say,” said Tyler. “The answer to the question is, I don’t know.”

“Come on, Tyler. You know.”

“Well...mostly stubborn, I guess, that more than anything. I wanted to do it my way. I don’t recommend it.”

“Book says that going it alone in spiritual matters is dangerous.”

“Book’s right,” said Tyler. “You made it.”

“I didn’t say it was impossible; just dangerous. No need to have everyone be stupid and arrogant. It helps to have someone point out the obvious hazards. ‘Downhill: Trucks Use Low Gears-

Winding Road.’ The signs are everywhere. That’s the good news. Bad news is that we often can’t see them.”

“Hidden?”

“Worse. They’re out in plain sight.”

“Then why can’t we see them?” said Bob.

“I think it’s because we’re looking for something else.”

“Like what?”

“I’m not sure. But one day you’ll see a sign that says, ‘It’s an Inside Job,’ or ‘You’re a Child of the Universe,’ and you’ll know that the sign has always been there, that the information is true and has always been available to you, but somehow you couldn’t see it till you got to a certain place in your life. A certain time. It’s one of those you-can’t-see-it-till-you-see-it-deals. But it’s always been there. Always.”

“We were looking for something else?”

“Maybe we were looking for signs that said, ‘People Are No Damn Good,’ or ‘Life Is Really Tough.’ Anything to reaffirm old beliefs that help keep us sick and crazy.”

“Thirty miles of bad road.”

“At least thirty,” said Tyler. “Add to that the tunnel vision that most of us have and you come up with a very limited view of life.”

“It’s a wonder any of us make it.”

“It is. Somewhere in the literature it says that Step Five is the beginning of true kinship with man and God.”

“Don’t underestimate the power of despair, counselor. If you are true to the process, true to yourself, and keep moving through it no matter how bad it hurts or how frightening it gets, you will eventually reach a place where you will understand that it has all been worth it.”

“Eventually,” said Bob.

“Eventually. The pain will diminish and you will realize that you hold in your hand the Pearl of Great Price.”

“I have to lose my mind to get it? This Pearl of Great Price? You sure this isn’t the old dinosaur turd trick again?”

“Big brains don’t work in the spiritual life,” said Tyler.

“You know that. They’re actually a handicap. Stop trying to figure it out.”

“Yes, master.”

*The Essential Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks, HarperCollins Publishers, 1995*

A night full of talking that hurts,  
my worst held-back secrets. Everything  
has to do with loving and not loving.  
This night will pass.  
Then we have work to do.

## **Step Six: “Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”**

### **Brief Outline**

Step 6 is a step of willingness... to let God remove from you all the things you have admitted are objectionable. These things are the blocks to your usefulness. They block your ability to be good to yourself and others.

1. Place a checkmark by each and every item in your inventory that you are willing to let God remove.
2. Those items that you have chosen to keep for now are, of course, of no value to you or anyone else, so you ask God to help you be willing. Affirm this willingness with a checkmark.

This attitude of being entirely ready is our way of beginning this lifetime job. We must try Step 6 on all our faults, REPEATEDLY.

3. What is the “measure of our character defects”?
4. Add the word CHARACTER to your vocabulary list, using the meaning or meanings you believe are used in the term “character building.”
5. What do you think is meant by “we want to aim at the very best we can know or learn”?
6. Step 6 discusses becoming “...ready to aim at spiritual and moral perfection” “ [the] “goals toward which we look, and the measuring sticks by which we estimate our progress.” What, in this regard, is the most urgent thing?
7. How is aiming for perfection different from perfectionism?
8. Are you ready to raise your eyes toward perfection?

Are you ready to walk in that direction?

Are you entirely willing to pursue excellence, aiming for perfection?

*The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*

We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things, which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all—every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

*Notes on Step Six from “Ready, Willing, and Able”—a Hazelden Guide*

When we come to Step Six, the most important thing to understand is this: we have been unable to change on our own. Whether we have hidden these defects from ourselves or jostled with them all our lives, the fact is that we alone cannot overcome old ways of thinking and doing. Our ways of handling life are forged by factors like genetics and personal history, factors out of our conscious control. That is why it takes the gift of an altered personality to respond to our world in new and different ways. And this is one reason why Step Six was separated from Step Seven: in order to ask God to remove these defects of character, we must completely accept that we cannot do it for ourselves.

We might think of ourselves as driving a bumper car at an amusement park. We have a steering wheel, and so we think we should be able to control our path. But in fact, the steering wheel barely helps us. There are so many magnetic fields within and around us that we are destined for collision after collision. So it is with our behaviors. We think that because we have a “steering wheel,” a strong will that enables us to choose our paths in life, we can do away with our defects. If only we could drive ourselves hard enough! But in fact, our unconscious motivations, life’s circumstances, and the struggles of others are like magnetic fields, insidiously and inevitably pulling us back into our old patterns. And like the driver in the bumper car, we have no brakes. ***We simply cannot stop ourselves.***

This absolute inability to change ourselves on the deep unconscious level gives us a whole new sense of surrender. Out of this realization of hopelessness, hope is born. We become entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character because we can now see how the practice of these defects fed our addiction. We turn our thoughts to God. We accept that God can remove all our defects of character—all of them! We become willing to act differently—not that we can act differently, but that we are willing to have a Higher Power control our behaviors.

We go down the list of our inventories and imagine God taking away all our shortcomings. Many times we find it’s the little ways in which we are lazy or thoughtless, intolerant or untruthful, that are the hardest to give up. Often this is because we may not have paid much of a price for practicing these behaviors. This is the sort of attitude we have to confront head-on in Step Six. We have to know that as long as we think we can get away with something, we are holding on to a remnant of our sickness.

Becoming entirely ready is an act of faith. After all, who would we be without our defects? We are becoming ready to ask God to change us, having no idea just how we will be changed or what we will be like afterwards. At this point we might engage in a meditation of who we would like to be. We can think of the qualities we would most like to have, the things we would most like to do, the values we would most like to live by. We focus on that vision and let it expand. We find that our dream need not be a reproachful mirage of something we can never achieve, but a gift from God that shows our true potential. We turn to our Higher Power to reach the depths of our being, to transform us in ways that our conscious mind cannot.

As we feel ourselves becoming entirely ready to have God remove our defects, we might find it helpful to perform a meaningful personal ritual to signify letting go of our inability to change ourselves. An action performed for Step Six can anchor us in the commitment that we are ready to be transformed, knowing that we cannot transform ourselves.

The ritual may come in the form of burning our inventories in a fireplace and watching the flames and cinders rise. We may want to “cremate” our inventories and spread the ashes over a place that’s meaningful to us. Or we may write down our readiness to be free of our defects, attach the

slip of paper to a helium balloon, and let it loose across an open field on a windy day. We may perform such a symbolic action alone or with a loved one as a witness. We are saying, "I cannot change my faults, but I am willing to let every one of them be removed. I am willing to become my highest self, the self God wants me to be."

*Notes on Step Six and Seven from The Little Red Book*

It is only after we have completed Step Five, when humility has been experienced that we are in a suitable spiritual condition to sincerely carry out the provisions of Steps Six and Seven.

This action brings a new feeling of moral strength. For the first time we are facing our real selves—the selves whose withered roots have touched and are now drawing up an unending source of assurance, power and security.

We find in the consummation of these Steps a new peace, a release from tension and anxiety as we now are laying our misconceptions and defects of character in God's hands. We are asking Him to rid them from our lives. We are exerting great mental cooperation with God. We feel an intense humility that cries out for recognition and divine help.

The several objectives of Steps Six and Seven are:

1. To become honest and humble. To become willingly to seek God's help without reservation.
2. To perfect ourselves in the practice of unselfish prayer.
3. To be aware of our defective character traits.
4. To desire their removal.
5. To surrender completely all defects of character.
6. To believe God can remove them.
7. To ask Him to take them all away.

The results we expect from the pursuit of these objectives are:

1. A reconciliation to God's way of doing business. We become "fed up" with our way and with further practice of trying to run the show ourselves.
2. A willingness to work out a plan for suppression of self-centeredness through faith and a conscious contact with God.
3. To experience dissatisfaction as a result of our alcoholic practices and to seek a spiritual inspiration that will bring us an inner sense of peace and security.
4. Increased faith, clean hearts and minds, ability to offer unselfish prayer.
5. A spiritual courage that is fearless in its outlook on life; a desire to make restitution to those our drinking has harmed.
6. A desire to quit bluffing and honestly give God a chance to remove from our lives all that stands in the way of our usefulness to Him and to others. True humility.
7. Elimination of our defective character traits, acquisition of peace of mind, and sobriety.

Knowledge of our illness, alcoholism, prompts us to turn to God for help. The alcoholic must pray. There is no standard form of prayer to use. Our remorse over past mistakes and a genuine desire to correct them will indicate how we shall pray.

We all come before God as sick people. We offer no alibis. We have no defense. We stand before Him subject to the weakness of alcoholism. We ask for an understanding of this illness and for his strength and help in arresting it. We wish to arrest it, but only for unselfish purposes. We ask forgiveness for the wrongs we have committed. We ask for protection from self-pity, from resentment, from all selfishness. We ask for wisdom and understanding to know His will. We ask

for spiritual and physical strength to execute His will. Acknowledging our shortcomings, we sincerely pray to God that He will remove them.

There is latent power within each of us that develops through conscious contact with God. It replaces alcoholic fear and weakness with spiritual strength and understanding. Through it the miracle of AA is possible. These two Steps contain the forge that heats and forms the separate links that go into the new personality chains we are building.

Without them our rehabilitation is impossible.



## Seven Deadly Sins

If the preferred approach is to look at the seven deadly sins, let them be considered realistically as follows:

**Pride** is not always a negative. Pride of heritage, pride of country, pride of hard-won successes; all are positive attributes and the pride of exaggerated self-esteem melts away in the light of humility. (It is important to view humility in its true light of self-acceptance rather than as a mid-Victorian pseudo-modesty.)

**Covetousness** is a normal state for one whose disintegrating personality causes him or her to resent that the success and happiness, which comes to others always seems to be out of his or her grasp. Greed is part of this consideration. It needs to be recognized as a characteristic of the unfulfilled child's nature, which is so much a part of the practicing alcoholic's personality.

**Lust** most often is the search for someone to care. Though it frequently finds expression in sexual excesses, the nature of this drive needs to be explored. In sobriety, this search can be converted into a lust for life—heighted enthusiasms and pleasures in the freedom of a sober, productive existence.

**Anger** perhaps is one of the most misunderstood, maligned, and misinterpreted emotions. Webster describes anger as a feeling of displeasure, which results from injury, mistreatment, opposition, etc. Usually anger reveals itself in a desire to fight back at the presumed source of this feeling. Clearly, evil intent is not implied while

Judgment certainly is implied. And here is where one of the most dangerous pitfalls for the alcoholic surfaces—that of resentment. When the alcoholic drinks, his or her judgment is impaired and anger turns to rage at those people or things, which inflict pain and oppose his wishes. In recovery, the skills of creative assertion are practiced to eliminate the conditioning, which has prompted the practicing alcoholic to respond with destructive aggression to that, which frightens him or her.

**Gluttony** obviously can be equated with the phenomenon of craving which is a dominant factor in the disease of alcoholism. Social drinkers often feel confusion about the excesses demonstrated by the alcoholic which leads to value judgments and makes the non-alcoholic incapable of understanding the alcoholic's physiological craving for this chemical. Often in recovery, the craving for alcohol will be diverted into a craving for sugar.

“Candyholics” usually return to a normal appetite for sweets in a relatively short time. However, care should be taken not to divert this characteristic into becoming a glutton for work. “Workaholics” frequently drive themselves into the same isolation booth occupied by the problem drinker.

**Envy** is much like greed. This “poor me” attitude is felt by the alcoholic who is deeply confused as to why he or she gets all the bad luck—while less deserving others get all the breaks. Rare is the human being who goes through life without feeling occasional envy, but in sobriety this feeling can be reduced from the obsessive to the normal.

**Sloth.** As the disease of alcoholism progresses, the ability to make decisions, to produce, to create and to communicate diminishes. Alcohol is a sedative, a tranquilizer, an anesthetic—therefore, it diminishes ambition and drive before finally rendering the victim incapable of carrying on most normal activities. Recovery takes time, and sometimes lethargy is slow to dissipate. Belief in one's self and practice in using both physical and mental skills surely will bring a return of energy and enthusiasm. Patience is the key word.

## Key Concepts for Step Six

***Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.***

(AA's way of stating the best possible attitude one can take in order to make a beginning on this lifetime job.)

- Key 1: "This is the step that separates the men from the boys..." Any person capable of enough willingness and honesty to try repeatedly Step Six on all his faults—*without any reservations whatever*—has indeed come a long way spiritually, and is therefore entitled to be called a man who is sincerely trying to grow in the image and likeness of his own Creator.
- Key 2: When I became willing to clean house and then asked a Higher Power, God, as I understood Him, to give me release, my obsession to drink vanished. It was lifted right out of me. Having been granted a perfect release from alcoholism, why then shouldn't we be able to achieve by the same means a perfect release from every other difficulty or defect? This is a riddle of our existence
- Key 3: It is nowhere evident, at least in this life, that our Creator expects us to fully eliminate our instinctual drives. So far as we know, it is nowhere on record that God has completely removed from any human being all his natural drives. Since most of us are born with an abundance of natural desires, it isn't strange that we often let these far exceed their intended purpose. When they drive us blindly, or we willfully demand that they supply us with more satisfactions or pleasures than are possible or due us, that is the point at which we depart from the degree of perfection that God wishes for us here on earth. That is the measure of our character defects
- Key 4: If we ask, God will certainly forgive our derelictions. But in no case does He render us white as snow and keep us that way without our cooperation. That is something we are supposed to be willing to work toward ourselves. He asks only that we try as best we know how to make progress in the building of character.
- Key 5: The key words "entirely ready" underline the fact that we want to aim at the very best we know or can learn, how many of us have this degree of readiness?" The best we can do, with all the honesty that we can summon, is to *try* to have it. Even then the best of us will discover to our dismay... a point at which we say, "No, I can't give this up yet." And we shall tread on even more dangerous ground when we cry, "This I will *never* give up!" Such is the power of our instincts to over-reach themselves. No matter how far we have progressed, desires will always be found which oppose the Grace of God.
- Key 6: What we must recognize now is that we exult in some of our defects. We really love them. Who, for example, doesn't like to feel just a little superior to the next fellow, or even quite a lot superior? We like to let greed masquerade as ambition... We speak love and feel lust... Self-righteous anger also can be very enjoyable. In a perverse way we can actually take satisfaction from the fact that many people annoy us, for it brings a comfortable feeling of superiority. Gossip barbed with our anger, a polite form of murder by character assassination, ...we are not trying to help those we criticize; we are trying to proclaim our own righteousness. Gluttony! Our world is riddled with envy.... we consume great amounts of time wishing for what we have not. Procrastination is really sloth in five syllables. Anyone of us could submit a good list of such defects and few would seriously think of giving them up, at least not until they cause us excessive misery.
- Key 7: We want to settle for only as much perfection as will get us by in life. So the difference between "the men and the boys" is the difference between striving for a self-determined objective and for the perfect objective, which is of God.
- Key 8: Only Step One, where we made the 100% admission we were powerless over alcohol, can be practiced with absolute perfection. The remaining eleven steps state perfect ideals. They are goals toward which we look, and the measuring sticks by which we estimate our progress. Seen

in this light Step Six is still difficult, but not at all impossible. The only urgent thing is that we make a beginning, and keep trying.

Key 9: If we would gain any real advantage in the use of this step on problems other than alcohol, we shall need to make a brand new venture into open-mindedness. We shall need to raise our eyes toward perfection, and be ready to walk in that direction. It will seldom matter how haltingly we walk. The only question will be, "Are we ready?"

Key 10: Looking again at those defects we are still unwilling to give up, we ought to erase the hard-and-fast lines that we have drawn. Perhaps we shall be obliged in some cases still to say, "This I cannot give up yet," but we should not say to ourselves, "This I will *never* give up." The moment we say, "No, never!" our minds close against the grace of God. Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be fatal. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives, and move toward God's will for us.

*Are you willing to let God remove all your defects of Character? (Commitment)*

### **Home Study**

*Big Book:* Chapter 6, Page 76, Chapters 7 and 8, and Stories 4, 5, 6, & 7 in They Stopped in Time.

*12 and 12:* Read the Step 6.

## **Additional Step Six Readings**

### *12&12 (pages 58–60)*

More realism and therefore more honesty about ourselves are the great gains we make under the influence of Step Five. As we took inventory, we began to suspect how much trouble self-delusion had been causing us. This had brought a disturbing reflection. If all our lives we had more or less fooled ourselves, how could we now be so sure that we weren't still self-deceived? How could we be certain that we had made a true catalog of our defects and had really admitted them, even to ourselves? Because we were still bothered by fear, self-pity, and hurt feelings, it was probable we couldn't appraise ourselves fairly at all. Too much guilt and remorse might cause us to dramatize and exaggerate our shortcomings. Or anger and hurt pride might be the smoke screen under which we were hiding some of our defects while we blamed others for them. Possibly, too, we were still handicapped by many liabilities, great and small, we never knew we had.

The second difficulty is this: what comes to us alone may be garbled by our own rationalization and wishful thinking. The benefit of talking to another person is that we can get his direct comment and counsel on our situation, and there can be no doubt in our minds what that advice is. Going it alone in spiritual matters is dangerous.

It is worth noting that people of very high spiritual development almost always insist on checking with friends or spiritual advisers the guidance they feel they have received from God. Surely, then, a novice ought not lay himself open to the chance of making foolish, perhaps tragic, blunders in this fashion. While the comment or advice of others may be by no means infallible, it is likely to be far more specific than any direct guidance we may receive while we are still so inexperienced in establishing contact with a Power greater than ourselves.

### *Overeaters Anonymous (pages 47–48)*

Once we have made the admissions to God and to ourselves, we may feel we have fully dealt with our past. What need is there, we may ask, to air our "dirty laundry" in front of another person? Won't this self-revelation simply humiliate us and further lower our already low self-esteem?

In practice, step five has the opposite effect. When we actually do our fifth step with another human being, we find that we are humbled without being humiliated. Many of us have always felt that we had to be better than everybody else or we were no good at all. Through the fifth-step process, we begin to see reality. All our striving to get ahead has been useless. We are neither above nor below the rest of the human race; we're a part of it, shaped by the same basic needs and desires as all our fellows. Those of us who have belittled ourselves or felt we were worse than others also gain a new perspective. In talking honestly with another person about ourselves, we begin to feel a sense of relief. Someone knows all about us and still accepts us unconditionally. We begin to forgive ourselves and see ourselves as capable, strong, and honest. And so we are; in taking step five we prove ourselves capable of accomplishing a difficult task and strong enough to be completely honest with another human being.

Indeed, admitting the exact nature of our wrongs to another human being has been a frightening prospect for most of us, for we've never before risked such complete openness with another person. Yet, we find that we haven't truly admitted our wrongs to ourselves until we speak about them with someone else. It is only through the process of discussing our shortcomings out loud with an understanding person that we can finally begin to know ourselves and accept ourselves. Nothing in us can be changed until we first accept it. Step five, by helping us to know and accept ourselves, makes it possible for us to change and recover.

*It Works: How and Why (pages 56–57)*

After working our Fifth Step, we may feel a little raw or emotionally vulnerable. We've taken a major step in the healing process of recovery. This process could be thought of as "surgery of the spirit." We've opened up old wounds. We've exposed our most carefully constructed lies for the deceptions they were, and we've told ourselves some painful truths. We've dropped our masks in the presence of another person. At this point, we may experience a dangerous urge to run from our new awareness and return to the familiar misery of the past. We may feel tempted to avoid our sponsor because he or she knows all about us now. It is very important that we resist such impulses. We must talk with other recovering addicts about our fears and feelings so we can hear the experience they have to share. We'll find that what we're going through is not unique and feel relieved when others tell us they went through the very same struggles after they worked their Fifth Step.

Our awareness of our patterns of relating with others and the risk we have just taken in admitting them to another bring about a momentous breakthrough in our relationships. Not only do we form a close bond with our sponsor, but the risk we take in trusting this person will help us develop close relationships with others as well. We've risked trusting one person with our secrets and our feelings, and we haven't been rejected. We begin to have the freedom to trust others. Not only do we find out that others are trustworthy and deserve our friendship, we find that we are also trustworthy and deserving. We may have thought we were incapable of loving or being loved or ever having friends. We discover that these beliefs were unfounded. We learn, from the example of our sponsor, how to be a more caring friend.

*Big Book (page 76)*

We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things, which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all, everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

*12&12 (pages 67–69)*

Some people, of course, may conclude that they are indeed ready to have all such defects taken from them. But even these people, if they construct a list of still milder defects, will be obliged to admit that they prefer to hang on to some of them. Therefore, it seems plain that few of us can quickly or easily become ready to aim at spiritual and moral perfection; we want to settle for only as much perfection as will get us by in life, according, of course, to our various and sundry ideas of what will get us by. So the difference between "the boys and the men" is the difference between striving for a self-determined objective and for the perfect objective, which is of God.

Many will at once ask, "How can we accept the entire implication of Step Six? Why—that is perfection!" This sounds like a hard question, but practically speaking, it isn't. Only Step One, where we made the 100 percent admission we were powerless over alcohol, can be practiced with absolute perfection. The remaining eleven Steps state perfect ideals. They are goals toward which we look, and the measuring sticks by which we estimate our progress. Seen in this light, Step Six is still difficult, but not at all impossible. The only urgent thing is that we make a beginning, and keep trying.

The moment we say, "No, never!" our minds close against the grace of God. Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be fatal. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives, and move toward God's will for us.

## Defects Picked up in Addiction

Human beings have a wonderful way of adjusting to their life situation in order to survive. Think about it: If you don't get enough food, your metabolism resets and burns what food you do get more slowly. In a tight situation, you get a burst of adrenalin to provide the energy needed to fight or flee. If you are drinking or using drugs, you develop a variety of character traits in order to guarantee that you get a supply of the substance you believe you need to survive—you become self-centered, learn to manipulate others, lie, cheat, cover up, and get by one day at a time.

You probably recognize some of that survival behavior. And maybe you've noticed that it hasn't entirely disappeared. You may even be clinging to it as an old friend; possibly believing that you can't live without it or that by now it's an entrenched piece of your personality. But you can, and it's not.

Now is the time to look at each of these traits individually and to decide which ones you want to hang on to and which ones you need to shed. You will probably notice and need to work on others, but these are the most common ones that people develop in addiction:

**SELF-CENTEREDNESS.** This probably was important to you not only in active addiction but in early recovery. It was what gave you the ability to stick to your program and to focus exclusively on getting better. It did its job; now you have to dump it. If you continue in the self-centered mode, you won't be able to heal relationships, improve your work life, or build a better social life. You could, in fact, U-turn right back into relapse. So stop singing that solo *mi-mi-mi* aria and join the chorus. Start focusing on the needs of others, listening to what they have to say, giving them help when they require it. Start thinking about your family, your neighborhood, your town, your country, and the world at large.

**DECEPTION AND DISHONESTY.** You wouldn't have survived active addiction if you had told the truth to your loved ones; your boss, your coworkers, your dealer. ("Sorry, Charlie, I used the \$500 I owe you to buy coke from another dealer" would not have been accepted graciously.) But you won't survive recovery if you don't start telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth now. Instead of covering up mistakes (everyone makes them), you have to learn first to acknowledge and then to learn from them. You can't continue to manipulate others, to lie to and deceive them, and still get better. Dishonesty and recovery are strange bedfellows. One of them has to get up, get dressed, and go home.

**ONE-DAY-AT-A-TIME LIFESTYLE.** Ironically, most alcoholics/addicts learned to live one day and one fix at a time during active addiction. ("I only have enough money for today's fix. I'll worry about tomorrow tomorrow." "I'm too hung over to go to work today. I'll try tomorrow.") That one-day-at-a-time philosophy is one to hang on to. It transfers easily to recovery. The difference is in the emphasis—from staying high one day at a time to staying sober.

Changing or redirecting these traits may not be easy. It will take conscious effort, thinking about each act each day. But do it you can. If you're to make recovery work, do it you must.

"I have a couple of things to say about character defects today. I have drawn this information from various sources, talks by Thich Nhat Hanh, the Zen Buddhist monk, and various speakers I have heard talk about the steps.

Character defects are like an old pair of shoes. They are very comfortable, they have been with us for a long time, we know just how they feel, smell, and how they act when we wear them. We can take these old pair of shoes off at any time and put them in the corner, when we have the willingness to remove them. They will always be there. We can put them on at any time, and they will be just as comfortable and act just the same as the last time we wore them. They never go away completely. Our willingness to leave them in the corner is what step six does for us."

"Next I would like to talk about how everything needs food and water to grow. We all have the seeds of love, compassion, honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, etc. within us. We also have the seeds of hatred, selfishness, egotism, intolerance, sloth, etc. within us. If we water the seeds of love and the rest, then they will grow within us. If we refuse to give water and food the seeds of hatred and the rest then

they will wither and die. We tend to stuff or ignore our anger and sadness. We need to accept and embrace the feelings and defects that we consider are negative. They are a part of us.

If a mother's child is crying then the mother will run to the child. The first action the mother will take is to embrace the child, then she will see why the child is crying. Is the child hungry, injured, needs their diaper changed? We can embrace our anger, self-centeredness, judgementalness, etc. and deal with these feelings, or they will continue to plague us."

"Another tool that I learned from my sponsor was to write down on a piece of paper one of my character defects and then put it in my pocket and carry it around with me all day. This helped raise my awareness of my defects and hopefully not to act on them as often."

The first time I read Step Six, I thought it meant I had to arrive at some angelic state of mind in which I would become-and forever remain-"entirely ready" to have God remove all my defects. (I had forgotten that AA promises "spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.")

*Twelve and Twelve* set me right. It calls Step Six "AA's way of stating the best possible attitude one can take in order to make a beginning on this lifetime job." To me, that means Step Six is not a one-time matter; it stretches over a lifetime of recovery. Even that "best possible attitude" is always just a beginning.

The 12 Steps are written in order for a reason. There's not much use in doing our amends in Steps 8 and 9 if there is no sign of our willingness to change by doing Steps 6 and 7. Some have called the Sixth and Seventh Steps the "forgotten steps" (because they aren't talked about that much. Others have called these Steps the most important.

By working the Sixth and Seventh Steps, we are less likely in recovery to stay stuck in old unproductive, negative behavior patterns. We gain more understanding on how all the Steps, although ordered for a reason, need also to be worked together. *This prevents us from falling into the trap of understanding only just enough of the Program to make us miserable and not enough to make us happy.*

After doing our Fifth Step, many of us were directed to go home and to read the paragraphs in the *Big Book* on the Sixth and Seventh Steps (a total of two paragraphs) then do the Steps. Who wouldn't want to be rid of those defects of character, especially after talking about them in the inventory process? All the pain and agony we dragged up, then told to another person and God, of course we wanted to be rid of those character flaws and habits. So, we prayed to let them go and humbly asked God for help. We thought we had done the Sixth and Seventh, and that was that.

Then, down the road, we started having the same difficulties and issues arising from defects that had plagued us before. We may not have practiced them or noticed them quite so much after doing a Fifth Step, but they returned with a force that scared and surprised us. We went back to our sponsor and said that perhaps we needed to do another Fourth and Fifth Step. We were feeling and acting very similar to ways we used to be. What should we do? Or, perhaps after years in the Program, things seemed to just have gone flat. There doesn't seem to be the same old spark and the meetings just aren't as interesting as they once were. We've drifted into a numb place, where there seems to be little growth and little reason to change.

Can we explain why we aren't entirely ready? Why can't we humbly ask? If not, what's in our way?

If our sponsor is a good one, perhaps he/she would respond that maybe it wasn't the Fourth or Fifth Step that needed repeating, but that it is time to take a real look at the Sixth and Seventh. Or, rather than blaming the Program and the people in it for the flatness in our life, it might be time to rejuvenate the growth process through a jump start of the Sixth and Seventh Steps, remembering the Program **helps those that help themselves.**

The lifelong process of the Sixth Step is just that-a process. We've started the process of becoming entirely ready, and we will strive to increase our readiness throughout our lifetime. Our job is to become entirely ready and to open our hearts and minds to the deep internal changes that can only be brought about by the presence of a loving God.

On this spiritual foundation we lay the principles of commitment and perseverance as we work the Sixth Step. We need the willingness to make a commitment to pursue our recovery despite the continued presence of character defects in our lives. We mustn't give up, even when we think no change has taken place. We are often blind to our own internal changes, but we can rest assured that what's happening inside us is evident on the outside to others. Our job is to keep on walking, even though it may feel as though each step requires more strength than we can muster. No matter how difficult our progress, we must persevere. We can make use of the sheer grit and tenacity it took to maintain our active addiction by being steadfast and strong in our efforts to sustain our recovery.

Take your list of character defects and make a list of your character assets and the qualities you would like to possess by writing the opposite of each defect you possess. Fill a glass with water completely to the top. This glass represents you as you are now, full. For every asset and quality on your list place a marble in the glass of water. The water is your preconceived notions, what you know, what you have been taught, and your character defects. The marbles, your assets replace, displace the defects. When we choose to act with our character assets they displace our character defects.

Grasshopper tells his wide-eyed, nameless questioner. "I served him a cup of coffee and continued pouring until it overflowed. 'Why do you continue to pour after the cup is full?' asked my visitor. 'To demonstrate,' I replied, 'that you are like this cup: so full of preconceptions that nothing can go in. I can't tell you about me until you have emptied your cup.'" Fair enough, oh transcendent one, we shall clear our minds, but who the hell's going to clean up this mess? My snow-white toga now has a big mocha spot in the lap.

In the third Step, it is the **decision** that is the key point—an active use of the will to turn it over, to align our will with God's. In the Sixth Step an even more active use of the will is required. We must act "as if" it has already taken place. We must have faith. Too many who take the Fifth Step make their confession and look around wondering where the solution lies.

The Sixth Step is the perfectly logical place to be after having completed a thorough Fifth Step. Asking ourselves, "Do I want to give this (defect) up?" is different than asking, "Do I want to be different?"

Regardless of what little I know about "being different," I must first ask, "Am I willing to believe that I *can* be different?" It is important to remember that Step Six doesn't say, "Became entirely ready to make myself different." It says, "Were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character." God, not me makes me different by giving me what it takes to change. It is *my* job to act and behave like the change has occurred. In doing this, the process of change happens. Frequently this involves emotional pain; ***the pain of living the way I have been becomes greater than the fear of change.***

The hardest aspect of Step Six is me not controlling it. It is me being *human* and *fallible*. Self-acceptance is more important than self-abuse. I cannot abuse myself into spirituality by shaming and ridiculing myself. I cannot open a flower with a sledgehammer-only God opens flowers. In Step Six, I must trust that Step Seven follows.

In Step Six our readiness to change comes from the awareness of how we are harming ourselves and therefore God. It is gained in Step Five.

In order to remind myself that it is God's job, not mine, I use this prayer: "God, I don't care what I sound like, or look like, who my partners are, or where I live. I just don't want to be like this anymore. On Your terms, in Your time, *please* remake me as You will. Thank You." I don't get to choose which defects God will remove, or when I do get to live with it. I find that living with my defects continues to teach me humility. I find that the defects that made me an active threat to society were pretty much removed at once.

In surrendering, we are saying our way hasn't worked (what a surprise!). We are willing to try it another way. We desire to be at peace with our beliefs. We are fortunate people. We have the opportunity to face the battle of understanding our lives. We have another go-round at a life once abandoned. We want to be winners, securely and absolutely. The willingness can be a sane and healthy choice or a reactive choice because of pain. We all get to choose—sooner or later, we get to choose. In looking at working the Sixth Step, it is this, approach that separates the winners from the losers. ***The winners actively seek and practice a new way of living. A new way of being. A new way of thinking. A new way of behaving. A new way of relating.*** The losers wait until they are in so much pain that the choice becomes obvious, and then they choose to participate in only enough to get the pain to stop.



The majority of us are very aware of defects of character, but often it isn't until we are "sick and tired of being sick and tired" that we become willing to change.

Acting "as if" the choice is already made and the changes in our lives are already in place puts the power of our will in line with the power of the universe so that we move forward more gracefully into living without defects.

Will it work? About as well as we surrender. Will it change our lives? Yes, without question.

Then I was made aware that character defects are like active addiction. I couldn't keep using and expect God to relieve my disease. ***Neither could I keep practicing my character defects and expect God to remove them.***

I was going to have to develop a new set of habits to work against who I thought I'd always been-and as I practiced these new habits, the old habits/character defects would begin to be replaced. This creates a period of grieving which doesn't make sense at first. Why should I hurt over the leaving (letting go/having removed) of behaviors that only harmed me?

The next thing he discovered was that his own resistance to surrendering was because his self-concept was that his personality was his character defects. If he gave up his shortcomings, he'd become the "hole in the donut." Which is the essence of faith-***it is trusting that God will reshape me into what I was meant to be in the first place.***

He also got me thinking about Steps Six and Seven. I was very afraid of losing those things that made me *me*. Would I give up my intensity and aggressiveness? Would I lose my edge? Would I become "spiritual" and monk-like? How would I handle life without some of my more important pieces? It caused me a great deal of discomfort and, occasionally, some outright fear.

In working through some of these issues with my sponsor and talking about them in meetings, I began to realize that the things that make me who I am are not defined by my actions. *I wasn't just attending meetings anymore to avoid doing what I needed doing outside of meetings.* All the defects that I have become glaringly obvious through my actions... but that does not define me as a person. I may act badly on occasion. That doesn't make me a bad person.

So, I started looking at giving up and releasing those parts of me-those habits of action-that were defective and self-defeating. Finally I was working on the Steps *outside* meetings instead of just talking about them *at* meetings. I saw my character defects as glitches to be corrected rather than major portions of my framework.

## **ACTION**

For many of us, working the Steps has meant going to meetings and talking about the Steps and what they've meant in our lives. Or working the Steps so we can talk about them in meetings. Occasionally, we've been forced into taking action, like doing a Fourth Step inventory or talking out a Fifth Step. Making amends calls for action. Usually, however, after taking those specific actions, we're done with it. Steps Six and Seven, in particular, become "nodders." We go to meetings where Six and Seven are discussed and nod wisely and serenely with almost every comment that is made. When it is our turn to talk we explain about getting into the Sixth and Seventh after doing our inventory and taking a Fifth Step. And, we all feel like we're working the Steps.

It is a challenge to take another look at that process. Talking about the Steps at meetings is much different than working them. Remember Chapter 6 in the *Big Book*, where these Steps are outlined, is called "Into Action." Having done a little work or action on a Step in the past is a far cry from continuing to work it now. Nodding at meetings in agreement with a particularly profound comment is not the same as doing what the speaker may have done to reach that awareness.

We must become willing to take action-continuous action-to become who we can become. It takes awareness to become entirely ready. Slow down, stop doing, and be. Feel it.

If I was sincerely willing to change, why did I remain so much the same? I realized that perhaps I had been paying lip service to the Sixth Step. Compared to most of the other Steps, the Sixth appeared simple. I believed this, because no overt action seemed required. There is none of the dramatic confrontation that exists when we do the Ninth Step, nor is there the feeling of accomplishment that comes with the Twelfth. The Sixth is not dramatic. There are no enthusiastic witnesses to rush up and shake one's hand. It's a rather solitary affair and hence seems simple.

The Sixth Step means facing ourselves, and that is usually more difficult than being honest with another person. I have found it difficult to lie to others because of practicing the principles of the Program, but still easily lie to myself. When I say, all too swiftly, "Of course I'm willing to change," I know I will ask myself, "Really?"

Who's kidding who?" ***The fact that I will daily question my willingness to change, will increase my ability to be increasingly willing.***

So, the first act is to become *aware*, second is *acceptance*, then third is to *surrender*.

The good character qualities I want to have are only demonstrated to me and others by my actions.

But the only way for me to get there, to get what I needed was to “act as if” I had it. The key word is “act.” I have discovered in my case that knowledge often follows action rather than vice versa. When I *faked* it in my early days, I found myself *making* it in later days.

In the beginning, I was asked to “act as if” I was I following instructions, trusting the Program, listening to my sponsor, and coming to believe. The amazing thing was soon I was doing those very things.

I was never able to think my way into recovery. My mind created a tremendous amount of trouble for me. I needed to turn my mind down (not off). I soon discovered the difference between doing and thinking. The key to “acting as if” is faith. The way to faith is *through* my fears. I have made progress and stay *entirely ready* when ***I turn fears over to my faith and simply “act as if.”***

Here are some of the things we can do to make this process move more quickly and easily:

1). We can develop or borrow a ritual to mark our surrender and choice to become ready. The power of ritual is incredible and we can use that power to help move into balance with our choice. Think about a candle ceremony, perhaps burning up slips of paper with your hesitations and fears and character defects written out on them. Or walk on the beach and write out in the sand at the water’s edge all the things that concern and trouble *you* about surrendering, then watch the waves erase the words and your cares. Perhaps put your thoughts and fears and feelings on slips of papers in bottles and set them sailing into the sunset at the ocean.

Following the example of an old- timer friend of mine whose quality of recovery I admired, I printed, in ink, each of my separate defects on a poker chip. Then all thirty chips went into a small pitcher. Every morning on awaking, I plunged my hand into it (like picking a number from a goldfish bowl) and came up with the “chip for today.” The defect might be anger, fear, pride, resentment, gossip, arrogance, self-pity, procrastination, anxiety, intolerance, and so on, but whichever one it was had to be concentrated on for the next 24 hours, and either reduced to a minimum or cast away.

How is our language used? Are we gaining maturity? Do we swear a lot and make crude remarks about the opposite sex and use biased and prejudiced language? Do we tell dirty or risqué jokes? Do we use violent language? We take a look at our language and see how it fits in with a spiritual approach to living and to becoming entirely ready.

Another area to look at closely is all other addictive practices. Language patterns can be addictive. Do you still smoke, binge on sugar, excessively drink coffee, recklessly gamble, abuse credit cards, act out sexually, drive over the speed limit...? How does that affect your ***movement toward God and spirituality?***

The first cleansing action suggested is to examine what we eat and drink. Pick a day. Use the day to examine our eating habits and drinking habits. Look at how you eat food and your rituals of eating.

Another cleansing action many find helpful is to have a day of silence. Don’t speak for twenty-four hours. Don’t listen to the radio or stereo. Don’t watch TV. Don’t distract yourself with any diversions. Just be quiet and open. Let the world enter you quietly. Contemplate this quote by Publius: “I have often regretted my speech never my silence.”

The last cleansing action suggested is to release the clutter in our life. We take a look in our storage areas and garage. Getting rid of the stuff we’ve been packing around for years every time we move. Giving it to a charitable organization. We take a look in our closets...possibly, if we haven’t worn it in a year or a year and a half, we give it away. ***The point is we quit holding on to things that are useless to us.***

When it comes to specifics, we’d rather hang on to a few of the choice ones.

For these reasons we’re tempted to rationalize the sixth step itself. “After all, nobody expects us to be perfect,” we say. “We strive for progress, not perfection.” Such reasoning only delays our recovery. The sixth step calls for us to be *entirely* ready to have God remove *all* our defects of character. Those of us who take this step with the total commitment required to make it work do indeed strive for the ultimate refinement of our character.

Even when we do approach it with complete willingness, another problem often arises with step six. Some of us misunderstand this step and act as if it’s up to us to remove our own shortcomings. In our attempts to be rid of dishonesty, for instance, we may try to reform and become honest. Or we see we’ve

been selfish, so we try to be generous. Anger is one of our problems, so we try never to get angry. Or we've heard that fear is incompatible with faith, so we try not to feel any fear.

All these are good efforts, but they often seem to get us nowhere. The harder we try to rid ourselves of our defects, the more they control us. Because we have misread step six, we are totally defeated in our attempts to work it. Thus we learn a key truth about ourselves and our twelve-step program. We are powerless over each of our defects of character, just as we are powerless over the food. It will be up to a Power greater than ourselves to remove them from us; we can't do it alone.

Does this mean we shouldn't try to change our behavior until our Higher Power changes us? Should we continue being dishonest, intolerant, and all the rest? Of course not. Being "entirely ready" means that we firmly turn our backs on the old self-destructive behaviors and make every effort to act and live by the principles embodied in the twelve steps. But we shouldn't become discouraged if we find that we aren't changing as quickly as we would like. We can't expect to be free of all our defects overnight. What we are asked to do in step six is to become entirely ready for this miracle of release to happen to us, no matter what it may cost us, no matter what in our lives may change.

We will not, however, achieve a state of spiritual perfection, regardless of how diligently we apply the Sixth Step to our lives. We will most likely see the defects we deal with today manifest themselves in a variety of ways throughout our lifetime. Even after years of recovery, we may feel devastated at the reappearance of some old defect we thought had been removed. We are humbled by our imperfection-but let there be no mistake; humility is the ideal state for an addict to be in. Humility brings us back down to earth and plants our feet firmly on the spiritual path we are walking. We smile at our delusions of perfection and keep on walking. We're on the right path, headed in the right direction, and each step we take brings progress.

We gain more tolerance for the defects of those around us as we work this step. When we see someone acting out on a defect that we have acted on ourselves, we feel compassionate rather than judgmental, for we know just exactly how much pain such behavior causes. Rather than condemning the behavior of another, we look at ourselves. Having experience in accepting ourselves, we can extend compassion and tolerance to others.

We ask ourselves if we are entirely ready to have God remove all of our defects—every single one. If any reservation exists, if we feel the need to cling to any defect, we pray for willingness. We open our spirits to the healing we've found in Narcotics Anonymous and use the resources of our recovery to do our best each moment. Although the process lasts a lifetime, we only live in the present day. We've taken a giant step forward in the process of recovery, but it must be followed with another to be truly lasting. With the readiness we have at hand today, we go on to Step Seven.

## Step Seven: “Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

### Brief Outline

This is the step where we make the change in our attitude, which permits us, with humility as our guide, to move out from ourselves toward others and toward God. The whole emphasis of Step 7 is on humility. It is really saying to us that we now ought to be willing to try humility in seeking the removal of our other shortcomings just as we did when we admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, and came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. If that degree of humility could enable us to find the grace by which such a deadly obsession could be banished, then there must be hope of the same result for any other problem we could possibly have.

Alcoholics tend to be “ME Focused.” Humility is a clear recognition of what and who you really are followed by a sincere attempt to become what you could be. *The basic ingredient of all humility is a desire to seek and do God’s will.*

#### *Character Building/Other Obsessions*

Character is your behavior pattern or personality; your essential quality, nature, or attributes; your degree of moral strength or self-discipline; your reputation. Serious character flaws must be dealt with to prevent a retreat into alcoholism. Some overwhelming compulsions and desires appear to be impossible to face while we may still enjoy keeping others. Nevertheless, we surely must try with a will, or else fall by the wayside. We must choose between the pains of trying and the certain penalties of failing to do so. In dealing with such obsessions and defects, we soon discover that humility is a healer of pain. We begin to fear pain less and desire humility more than ever.

#### *Values And Your Higher Purpose In Life*

A working faith is impossible (even if you believe that God exists) without anchorage to some permanent values and some willingness to see the true purpose in your life. You are only as close to your Higher power as you are to your higher purpose in life.

#### *Personal Objectives/Goals*

The satisfaction of our material desires [is] the means by which we live and function as human beings. True ambition is the deep desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God.

The reason so many individuals fail to achieve their goals in life is that they never set them in the first place or know what they are.

By setting goals and objectives for ourselves we know which direction to move in our programs of personal action. Both refer to some desired result or state of affairs at a future time in our lives. Goals tend to be broad in scope while objectives are more specific, usually supporting our goals.

## Some Notes On Step Seven

### *Step Seven from The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*

When ready, we say something like this: “My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character, which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.” We have then completed Step Seven.

### *Notes on Step Seven from “Ready, Willing, and Able” – a Hazelden Guide*

And so in Step Seven we turn to God. This Step tells us that the way we turn to god—humbly—is the key. We ask now that God perform nothing short of a miracle within us—remove all our shortcomings—yet we ask this in all humility.

Gradually we come to understand that humility is not humiliation, that there is no shame associated with true humility. Humiliation and shame make us feel that we are *wrong* at our very core, that we are not enough. When we humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings, we know we are not “wrong,” we are human. We are looking at what we have done more squarely than ever before, and yet we need not be filled with shame. We know now that we are loved and protected by a Higher power. We have been lifted up out of our addiction and given a whole new chance at life. Surely a Power who would do this for us would not consider us bad or wrong or unworthy at our core. We could never have been the recipient of such a gift if that were so. We know that we have done wrong simply because we are part of the human condition. We begin to sort *doing* wrong from *being* wrong. And so we are humble in the knowledge that we make mistakes but secure in the knowledge of our Higher power’s love and care through everything we do.

At this point, many of us experience what might be called a “softening” of attitude and approach that is essential to humility. We are able to take in new ideas and experience life in new ways. We allow our old ideas to be challenged. We are now becoming willing to revise our ideas of the way the world works. As we begin to tell our innermost, darkest secrets to others and meet with their non-judgmental love in return, this softening process continues. We’re letting our love, God’s love, and the love of another human being bring light into our darkest corners, and now we can see what we truly are: human beings struggling to find our way. We can see how fragile our egos are, how delicate our self-esteem. And with this new perspective comes an overwhelming sense of compassion for ourselves and for everyone in the human condition. In our compassion we become softer souls, and we know humility.

When we think of softness, we may also think of weakness, but we are surprised to experience in our softness exactly the opposite. We become stronger than we ever thought possible. The energy that we once spent defending ourselves against other people we now spend listening, praying, and experiencing. Because we trust our God-given sense of balance more and more, we do not need to prove or defend. We can afford to treat ourselves and all the people around us compassionately, and this gives us tremendous personal strength.

Humility means that we experience our connectedness to the human family. We find we no longer have an overwhelming need to hide from others. We can see that we have no need to compare ourselves with others. We are all finally human beings, engaged in a struggle that is both completely universal and completely individual.

Thus we approach God in all humility, asking that our shortcomings be removed. If we are not comfortable with the wording of the Seventh Step prayer (*Big Book*, page 76), we can make up the words that best express the surrender we have come to with our Higher Power. For example, we might say something like this: “I am willing to let down the barriers between me and the rest of the world. Please remove all my defects and help me to become my best self. I am ready to go out and do Your work, without the swords, and shields I thought I needed. Let me be Your ambassador, Your light, and Your child.” We may choose to pray alone, or with a sponsor or other loved one, in a church, a peaceful place

outdoors, on a starry night, or in the privacy of our bedroom. We speak to God from the heart, in words that work for us.

As with the other ten Steps of the program, we do Steps Six and Seven in a variety of ways and times over our lives as we are challenged in new ways and our awareness increases. When we have completed these steps to the best of our present ability, we may wonder what the results will be. How do we know that we have really taken them, since the result is neither drama nor perfection? As with Step Three, when we concentrated on the action of *making a decision*, so with Steps Six and Seven we focus on our part in the so-called action Steps. We *become entirely ready* and we *ask God*. We leave the results up to our Higher Power.

And in time, we do indeed see God's results. There will come a time when we find we won't be fighting our defects; they will simply never rise to the surface to be conquered. We will lose the need to act or react in old negative ways.

Steps Six and Seven are what might be called the "pivotal middle" of the Twelve Step program. They say, "Take this miracle you received in your release from addiction and apply it to every other area of your life." We have a Higher Power who can remove us from the prison of compulsion. We are free! But this is just the beginning. This same Higher Power can remove every obstacle within our personality that keeps us from being the people we want to be. These Steps invite us to our greatest maturity, our truest freedom, the very fullness of life.

### *Humility Prayer*

Lord, I am far too much influenced  
by what people think of me.  
Which means that I am always  
pretending to be either richer  
or smarter or nicer than I really am. Please prevent me from trying  
to attract attention.  
Don't let me gloat over praise on  
the one hand or be discouraged by criticism on the other.  
Nor let me waste time weaving  
imaginary situations in which the most heroic, charming, witty person present is myself.  
Show me how to be humble of heart  
like you.

## Key Concepts for Step Seven

### *Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*

- Key 1: The attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of AA's Twelve Steps. For without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all. Nearly all AA's have found, too, that unless they develop much more of this precious quality than may be required just for sobriety; they still haven't much chance of becoming truly happy. Humility, as a word and as an ideal, has a very bad time of it in our world. Not only is the idea misunderstood; the word itself is often intensely disliked. Many people haven't even a nodding acquaintance with humility as a way of life...talk we hear...and what we read, highlights man's pride in his own achievements.
- Key 2: In all these strivings our crippling handicap had been our lack of humility. We had lacked the perspective to see that character-building and spiritual values had to come first, and that material satisfactions were not the purpose of living. But whenever we had to choose between character and comfort, the character building was lost in the dust of our chase after what we thought was happiness. We never thought of making honesty, tolerance, and true love of man and God the daily basis of living.
- Key 3: for just so long as we were convinced that we could live exclusively by our own individual strength and intelligence, for just that long was a working faith in a Higher Power impossible. This was true even when we believed that God existed. We could actually have earnest religious beliefs, which remained barren because we were still trying to play God ourselves. As long as we placed self-reliance first, a genuine reliance upon a Higher Power was out of the question. That basic ingredient of all humility, a desire to seek and do God's will, was missing.
- Key 4: To get completely away from our aversion to being humble, to gain a vision *of humility as the avenue to true freedom of the human spirit*, to be willing to work for humility as something to be desired for itself, takes most of us a long, longtime. A whole lifetime geared to self-centeredness cannot be set in reverse all at once. Rebellion dogs our every step at first.
- Key 5: Still goaded by sheer necessity, we reluctantly come to grips with those serious character flaws that made problem drinkers of us in the first place, flaws which must be dealt with to prevent a retreat into alcoholism once again. We are obliged to choose between the pains of trying and the certain penalties of failing to do so. We may still have no very high opinion of humility as a desirable personal virtue but we do recognize it as *a necessary aid to our survival*.
- Key 6: But when we have taken a square look at some of these defects, have discussed them with another, and have become willing to have them removed, our thinking about humility commences to have a wider meaning. By this time in all probability we have gained some measure of release from our more devastating handicaps. We enjoy moments in which there is something like real peace of mind. Where humility had formerly stood for a forced feeding on humble pie, it now begins to mean *the nourishing ingredient, which can give us serenity*.
- Key 7: Our eyes begin to open to the immense values, which have come straight out of painful ego-puncturing. Until now, our lives have been largely devoted to running from pain and problems. We never wanted to deal with the fact of suffering. Escape via the bottle was always our solution. Then, in AA we looked and listened. Everywhere we saw failure and misery transformed by humility into priceless assets. We heard story after story of how humility had brought strength out of weakness. *In every case, pain had been the price of admission into a new life. We discovered humility to be a healer of pain.*
- Key 8: During this process of learning more about humility, the most profound result of all was the change in our attitude toward God. We began to get over the idea that the Higher Power was a sort of bush-league pinch hitter, to be called on only in emergency. Refusing to place God first

we had deprived ourselves of His help. But now the words “Of myself I am nothing, the Father doeth the works” began to carry bright promise and meaning.

Key 9: A great turning point in our lives came when we sought for humility as something we really wanted, rather than as something we *must* have. Our deeper objectives...each one of us would like to live at peace with himself and with his fellows. We would like to be assured that the grace of God can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We have seen that character defects based upon short- sighted or unworthy desires are the obstacles that block our path toward these objectives. We now clearly see that *we have been making unreasonable demands upon ourselves, upon others, and upon God.*

Key 10: The chief activator of our defects has been self-centered fear—primarily fear that we would lose something we already possessed or would fail to get something we demanded. Living upon a basis of unsatisfied demands, we were in a state of continual disturbance and frustration. Therefore, no peace was to be had unless we could find a means of reducing these demands. The difference between a demand and a simple request is plain to anyone.

*Will you humbly ask your Higher Power to remove your shortcomings?*

**Home Study**

*Big Book:* Chapter 6, Page 76, Chapter 9, and Stories 8, 9, 10, and 11 in They Stopped in Time.

*12&12:* Read the Step 7.

**Seventh Step Word Definitions**

Write down definitions for the following words: first, define them mentally to yourself, in terms of what you believe each word means. Then refer to a dictionary for definitions and jot down two to three sentences for each.

1. Humble: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Humility: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Additional Step Seven Readings

Though each of the Twelve Steps is a separate process unto itself, they all blend together to some degree as their parts interact with one another aspects of Step One fusing into Step Two, components of Step Four meshing into the following steps. Perhaps the finest line between two steps is the one between Steps Six and Seven. At first glance, Step Seven may seem almost an afterthought to Step Six. We spent a great deal of time and effort raising our awareness of our character defects in Step Six and getting to the point where we were entirely ready to have them removed; now all we need to do is ask, right? Not exactly. There's much more to this step than just filing a request with our Higher Power and waiting for a response. There's spiritual preparation. There's the need to develop an understanding about what "humbly" means in this context. There's the need to find a way of asking that fits into our individual spiritual paths. And there's the need to practice spiritual principles in the place of character defects.

### *Preparing to Work Step Seven*

We've already done much of the spiritual preparation we'll need to begin Step Seven. It's important that we draw the connection between the work we've done and the results that work has produced. The previous steps have all served to sow the seeds of humility in our spirits. In this step, those seeds take root and grow: Many of us have difficulty with the concept of humility, and while we began addressing this issue in Step Six, it merits attention in Step Seven, too. We need to understand what humility is for us and how its presence is revealed in our lives.

We should not confuse humility with humiliation. When we are humiliated, we are ashamed; we feel worthless. Humility is almost the complete opposite of this feeling. Through working the steps, we've been stripping away layers of denial, ego, and self-centeredness. We have also been building a more positive self-image and practicing spiritual principles. Before, we couldn't see our strengths because the good, healthy part of us was hidden behind our disease. Now we can. That is humility. Some examples of how humility is often revealed may help us understand this concept. We started out in recovery with fixed ideas. Since we've been in recovery, everything we believed in the past has been challenged. We've been barraged with new ideas. For instance, if we believed we were in control, just the fact that we've wound up in NA admitting our powerlessness was probably enough to change our outlook. Because of our addiction, we failed to learn the lessons that life itself would have taught us about how much control one individual has. Through our abstinence and the working of the first six steps, we have learned a great deal about how to live.

Removing ourselves from the arena in which such games are played exposed us to new ideas. We learned that it was okay to have feelings and to show them. We found out that the rules of the street only made sense on the street; in the real world, they were crazy and often dangerous. We became softer, more vulnerable. We no longer mistook kindness for weakness.

Changing these attitudes has a dramatic effect. Oftentimes, it even changes our physical appearance. Knotted brows and jaws relax into smiles. Tears flow freely out, uncovering our drowning spirit.

Many of us arrived in NA convinced that we were victims of bad luck, unfavorable circumstances, and conspiracies to thwart our good intentions. We believed we were good people, but profoundly misunderstood. We justified any harm we caused as self-defense, if we were capable of realizing that we caused harm at all. Feelings of self-pity went hand-in-hand with that attitude. We reveled in our suffering, and we secretly knew that the payoff for our pain was never, ever having to look at our part in anything.

But the first six steps get us to begin to do just that—we look at our part in things. Once we thought that certain situations happened *to* us; now we see how those situations were really created *by* us. We become aware of all the opportunities we've wasted. We stop blaming other people for our lot in life. We begin to see that where we've ended up has been determined mostly by the choices we've made.

Humility is a sense of our own humanness. If this is our first experience with the Seventh Step, this may be the point when we first feel a sense of compassion for our-selves. It's deeply moving to realize for the first time that we're truly just human and trying our best. We make decisions, both good and bad, and

hope things turn out okay. With this knowledge about who we are, we also realize that just as we're doing our best, so are other people. We feel a real connection with others, knowing that we're all subject to the same insecurities and failings and that we all have dreams for the future.

Now we need to acknowledge our own humility and explore how it makes itself known in our everyday lives.

Our work in the previous steps has helped us build a relationship with a God of our own understanding. That work will payoff in a big way as we proceed with Step Seven. In Step Two, we first began to think about a Higher Power that could help us find recovery from our addiction. From there, we went on to make our Third Step decision to trust our Higher Power with the *care* of our will and lives. We called upon that Power many times to get us through Step Four, and then in the Fifth Step shared with that Power the most intimate details of our lives. In Step Six, we discovered that the God of our understanding could do *more for* us than just keep us clean.

*Asking to Have Our Shortcomings Removed*

***So how do we ask the God of our understanding to remove our shortcomings? The answer is likely to depend a great deal on what kind of understanding we have of God. There are many; many different ways to understand God, so many that we couldn't possibly provide examples in this guide of how each person's individual spiritual path would influence his or her Seventh Step work. Suffice it to say that our step work should reflect our own spiritual paths.***

As individuals, we might pick a particular personal routine or ritual as our way of asking our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings. *For* the purposes of this guide, we will call that "prayer." The word "prayer" is widely accepted in our fellowship as a description of the way we communicate with our Higher Power. The tone of asking is captured in the word "humbly." Coming from the place in ourselves that is most honest, the place that's closest to our spiritual center, we ask to have our shortcomings removed.

How will I ask the God of my understanding to remove my shortcomings?

Can other recovering addicts help me figure out how I'm going to ask?

Have I asked them to share their experience, strength, and hope with me?

Have I asked my sponsor *for* guidance?

As with any other aspect of our program, we're not going to ask just once to have our shortcomings removed. We'll ask again and again throughout our lifetimes. The way we ask is certain to change as our understanding of God changes. Nothing we do at this point locks us into one way of working the Seventh Step forever.

Since this Step so specifically concerns itself with humility, we should pause here to consider what humility is and what the practice of it can mean to us.

Indeed, the attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of AA's Twelve Steps. For without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all. Nearly all AA's have found, too, that unless they develop much more of this precious quality than may be required just for sobriety; they still haven't much chance of becoming truly happy. Without it, they cannot live to much useful purpose, or, in adversity, be able to summon the faith that can meet any emergency.

Certainly no alcoholic, and surely no member of AA, wants to deprecate material achievement. Nor do we enter into debate with the many who still so passionately cling to the belief that to satisfy our basic natural desires is the main object of life. But we are sure that no class of people in the world ever made a worse mess of trying to live by this formula than alcoholics. For thousands of years we have been demanding more than our share of security, prestige, and romance. When we seemed to be succeeding, we drank to dream still greater dreams. When we were frustrated, even in part, we drank for oblivion. Never was there enough of what we thought we wanted.

In all these strivings, so many of them well intentioned, our crippling handicap had been our lack of humility. We had lacked the perspective to see that character-building and spiritual values had to come first, and that material satisfactions were not the purpose of living. Quite characteristically, we had gone all out in confusing the ends with the means. Instead of regarding the satisfaction of our material desires as the means by which we could live and function as human beings, we had taken these satisfactions to be the final end and aim of life.

True, most of us thought good character was desirable, but obviously good character was something one needed to get on with the business of being self-satisfied. With a proper display of honesty and morality, we'd stand a better chance of getting what we really wanted. But whenever we had to choose between character and comfort, the character building was lost in the dust of our chase after what we thought was happiness. Seldom did we look at character-building as something desirable in itself, something we would like to strive for whether our instinctual needs were met or not. We never thought of making honesty, tolerance, and true love of man and God the daily basis of living.

This lack of anchorage to any permanent values, this blindness to the true purpose of our lives, produced another bad result. For just so long as we were convinced that we could live exclusively by our own individual strength and intelligence, for just that long was a working faith in a Higher Power impossible. This was true even when we believed that God existed. We could actually have earnest religious beliefs, which remained barren because we were still trying to play God ourselves. As long as we placed self-reliance first, a genuine reliance upon a Higher Power was out of the question. That basic ingredient of all humility, a desire to seek and do God's will, was missing.

So it is that we first see humility as a necessity. But this is the barest beginning. To get completely away from our aversion to the idea of being humble, to gain a vision of humility as the avenue to true freedom of the human spirit, to be willing to work for humility as something to be desired for itself, takes most of us a long, long time. A whole lifetime geared to self-centeredness cannot be set in reverse all at once. Rebellion dogs our every step at first.

Where humility had formerly stood for a forced feeding on humble pie, it now begins to mean the nourishing ingredient, which can give us serenity.

During this process of learning more about humility, the most profound result of all was the change in our attitude toward God. And this was true whether we had been believers or unbelievers. We began to get over the idea that the Higher Power was a sort of bush-league pinch hitter, to be called upon only in an emergency. The notion that we would still live our own lives, God helping a little now and then, began to evaporate. Many of us who had thought ourselves religious awoke to the limitations of this attitude. Refusing to place God first, we had deprived ourselves of His help. But now the words "Of myself I am nothing, the Father doeth the works" began to carry bright promise and meaning.

The Seventh Step is where we make the change in our attitude, which permits us, with humility as our guide, to move out from ourselves toward others and toward God. The whole emphasis of Step Seven is on humility. It is really saying to us that we now ought to be willing to try humility in seeking the removal of our other shortcomings just as we did when we admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, and came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. If that degree of humility could enable us to find the grace by which such a deadly obsession could be banished, then there must be hope of the same result respecting any other problem we could possibly have.

The several objectives of Steps Six and Seven are:

1. To become honest and humble. To willingly seek God's help without reservation.
2. To perfect ourselves in the practice of unselfish prayer.
3. To be aware of our defective character traits.
4. To desire their removal.
5. To surrender completely all defects of character.
6. To believe God can remove them.
7. To ask Him to take them *all away*.

The results we expect from pursuit of these objectives are:

1. A reconciliation to God's way of doing business. We become "fed up" with our way and with further practice of trying to run the show ourselves.
2. A willingness to work out a plan for suppression of self-centeredness through faith and a conscious contact with God.
3. To experience dissatisfaction as a result of our alcoholic practices and to seek a spiritual inspiration that will bring us an inner sense of peace and security.
4. Increased faith, clean hearts and minds, ability to offer unselfish prayer.
5. A spiritual courage that is fearless in its outlook on life; a desire to make restitution to those our drinking has harmed.
6. A desire to quit bluffing and honestly give God a chance to remove from our lives all that stands in the way of our usefulness to Him and to others. True humility.
7. Elimination of our defective character traits, acquisition of peace of mind, and sobriety.

In OA we have discovered that humility is simply an awareness of who we really are today and a willingness to become all that we can be. Genuine humility brings an end to the feelings of inadequacy, the self-absorption, and the status seeking. Humility, as we encounter it in our OA Fellowship, ***places us neither above nor below other people on some imagined ladder of worth. It places us exactly where we belong, on an equal footing with our fellow beings and in harmony with God.***

If we have earnestly worked the first six steps of the program, we have already come a long way toward this new attitude of humility. We have admitted our need for help to live our lives, have begun to let go of self-will, have become willing to acknowledge our true selves- defects and all-and have become willing to have our self-defeating attitudes and traits changed. Before we can ask for these changes with genuine humility, however, there are several concepts, which it will be helpful for us to understand.

First, we are not asking God to remove our shortcomings so that we can be better than other people. This kind of self-righteousness would be a step backward.

Instead of approaching those who still suffer a similar problem with an attitude of superiority, we offer them hope. They may well say to themselves, "If she (or he) can change, surely I can too!" Obviously, this kind of humility is not something we can lay hold of simply by willing ourselves to be humble. Humility is a gift as surely as is our recovery from compulsive eating and the other miracles of healing we experience as we work the twelve steps. Our job is to be willing to let go of old attitudes, which block humility, such as low self-esteem, status seeking, and self-righteousness.

One day a grey-haired caterpillar hanging upside down on a branch surprised her he seemed caught in some hairy stuff. "You seem in trouble," she said. "Can I help?" "No, my dear I have to do this to become

a butterfly.” “How does one become a butterfly?” she asked pensively. “You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar.” “You mean to die?” asked Yellow remembering the three who fell out of the sky. “Yes and no,” he answered. “What looks like you will die but what really you will still live. Life is changed not taken away. Isn’t that different from those who die without ever becoming butterflies?”

## **Step Eight: “Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”**

### **Brief Outline**

Notice that this Step has two parts: First, make a list of persons harmed; second, become willing to make amends. Lets begin with the first part: making a list.

Making a list of the people you have harmed should be easy if you have thoroughly followed the *Big Book's* directions. Most of the people's names are probably on the lists you made in Step Four. Use the information on the personal inventories you have already done to fill in the lists on the following pages. If you have used another method to complete your Fourth Step inventory, you may now need to list the names of all the people you have harmed by the wrongs, defects of character, and shortcomings you have written down, admitted, and turned over in Steps Four through Seven.

First, write on a separate piece of paper the names of all the people you have listed on your Step Four inventory—the people you have harmed—and add any names that may have been left out somehow.

In exercises 1–4 you will take this complete list of people and break it down into four smaller lists.

## Eighth Step Guide

### Exercise 1: My Now List

The first list you will make will be the names of people you are willing to make amends to right away. These are people who will be the easiest for you to approach. We will call this first list of names the *Now List*.

Because this list, and all of the lists to follow, are ones you actually intend to use, put the information needed to get in touch with each person after his or her name. If you do not know a person's name address, or phone number, write in the last column the name of someone who could help you get that information.

It is important to remember that the information on the list, such as an address and phone number, is only to help you contact the person to set up a face-to-face meeting. "It means you will have everything you need to move ahead when the time comes. It does *not* mean that writing a letter or making a phone call will take the place of seeing the person you have harmed in person. That meeting must happen if at all possible.

*Complete the following Now List, which will consist of the names of people you are will to contact right away in order to make amends. Use extra paper if you need more room.*

#### List 1: My Now List

Name	Address and Phone Number	Who Could Help Me Find This Person?

### Exercise 2: My Sooner-or-Later List

Now it is time to write list two. Let's call this list the *Sooner-or-Later List*. Here you will write the names of people you may not feel you can talk to now about the harms you have done, but you know you will need to talk to them sooner-or-later

*Fill in the names and information on the Sooner-or-Later List as you did on the Now List.*

#### List Two: My Sooner-of-Later List

Name	Address and Phone Number	Who Could Help Me Find This Person?

**Exercise 3: My Maybe List**

Next comes list three, called the *Maybe List*, Where you will list people you are not sure you can ever make amends to.

*Fill in this list the same way you did the other two lists. Use more paper if needed.*

**List Three: My Maybe List**

Name	Address and Phone Number	Who Could Help Me Find This Person?

**Exercise 4: My Never List**

Finally, write the names on list four of people you feel you will never make amends to. This list will be called the *Never List*. Notice that the last column has become a space for you to write why you feel you can never make amends to each person on the list. (After you have worked through the first three lists, you will probably see the information in this column in a new light.)

*Fill in the names and information on the Never List.*

**List Four: My Never List**

Name	Address and Phone Number	Why Can I Never Make Amends?

**Exercise 5: Stop Signs**

The second part of Step Eight says that you must become willing *to* make amends *to* all of the people on your list-no matter which list they are on. What might stop you from being willing *to* make amends? You have given reasons on your Never List, but what else do you think some of the other people you need to talk to will do, say, think, or feel when you try to make amends?

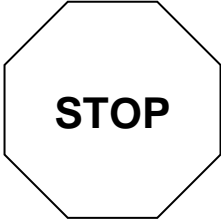
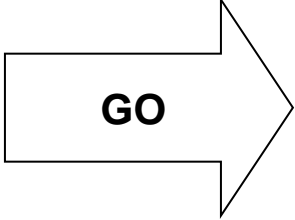
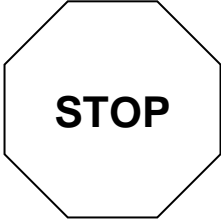
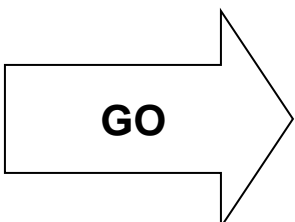
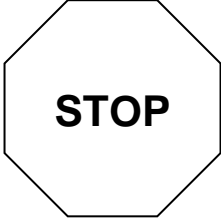
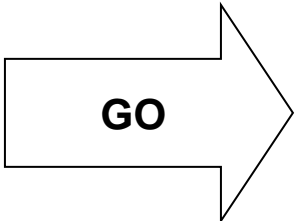


On the lines on the following chart, write one name from each of the lists you have completed, except for the Now List. Next to each name you will see the outline of a STOP sign. Inside that outline write what you think might stop you from going *to* see that person.

Some possible reasons are:

- ❖ You hate the person.
- ❖ You are divorced from the person.
- ❖ You think the person will call the police.
- ❖ You owe him or her money.
- ❖ You would be embarrassed.
- ❖ You feel the person hurt you so badly that you do not owe him or her anything.
- ❖ You do not want to talk about your recovery program.
- ❖ You do not want to get into an argument.

For now, write nothing in the outline of the “Go” arrows to the right of the STOP signs.

Names	What Stops Me From Going To This Person?	“Go” Arrow
List Two Names from your Sooner-or-Later List 1. _____ 2. _____		
List Three Names from your Maybe List 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____		
List Four Names from your Never List 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____		

**Exercise 6: Asking For a Higher Power’s Help**

Here’s what you have done so far with Step Eight:

- ❖ You have broken down your list of people to whom you have to make amends into four lists in order of difficulty.
- ❖ You have a smaller list, written on the STOP signs, of some of the things that might stop you from making amends.
- ❖ You also know that the second part of Step Eight is to become willing to make amends,

Willingness is, in fact, the key to the Whole Step. But how can you be willing when making amends is such a difficult thing to do? “

In the *Big Book* there is a statement that may be of help in your becoming willing to make amends. Fill in the rest of the thought from page 76, lines 24 to 25, of the *Big Book*.

“If we haven’t the will to do this, \_\_\_\_\_.”

In other words, pray to your Higher Power for willingness and courage until they come. Nowhere in the *Big Book* does it say you have to make amends to every one on your lists all at once. It will be a gradual, steady process in which you make amends to one person at a time.

That is why the four separate lists are important. You will start with the least difficult list (the Now List), and work your way to the hardest (the Never List). If at any time you need more courage, you can pray to your Higher Power and it will come.

When you begin to work with your lists, and as you understand the benefits that come from making amends, you will become more and more willing to make amends to everyone you have harmed.

### ***Step Eight from The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous***

Now we need more action, without which we find that “Faith without works is dead.” Let’s look at Steps Eight and Nine. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris, which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning we *would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol*.

### ***Notes on Step Eight and Nine from The Little Red Book***

The objective of Steps Eight and Nine is to *outline* and put into *practice* a working course of conduct, which will directly rectify the harm or injury our drinking may have imposed upon others. We can then start relating harmoniously to our Higher Power and to other people.

The practice of the AA philosophy adequately fulfills these requirements. It is a *proven way of life* by which the alcoholic corrects past mistakes and makes restitution to relatives, friends, or enemies. This is done while the alcoholic effects his or her recovery *from* the physical, mental and spiritual ravages of alcoholism.

Members do not arrest alcoholism or gain recovery by merely agreeing with the principles of AA philosophy—they *recover only if they live them*.

These Steps work in conjunction with each other. We have a list of those we have harmed, our grudge list and a list of financial obligations. Few of us realize that our own names head the lists of those we have wronged and that by living this program we are first making amends to ourselves, to our outraged bodies, to our confused minds, and to our troubled spirits.

The member is confronted with many obstacles in observance of this Step. We find procrastination a hindrance to some members. This should be avoided. On the other hand, there are those who are too ambitious to rebuild; they try to get the process over with at once. Some members, under inspiration of the new personalities they are creating, become emotional and act on the spur of the moment. Their hasty action is apt to fall short of accomplishment. Remember, in most cases you will require a lifetime to complete Step Nine. Pride is another barrier. Confusion, through improper interpretation of the purpose of Step nine, is a common handicap.

Meditation and prayer are necessary to make amends. No amend should be made that is not preceded by prayer as it will lack complete purpose and effectiveness. Conscious contact with God in making amends

will not only bring about a more satisfactory result, but it will aid you in avoiding amends that might injure others. Discretion in this connection is imperative.

God's presence in our lives now alters and sublimates our mental and physical activities. It gives us the humility we need to make amends and an incentive to get started. *We are trying to put our lives in order. We do this through maximum service to God and the people about us.* The main points to keep in mind are we are out to perform a duty, we will not be upset or discouraged by gruff or unpleasant receptions, the intent of our visit is *a harmonious one, and under no circumstances will we live in an angry or resentful mood.*

### **Summary**

We can hardly overestimate the importance of making amends. Most of us underestimate its power to change our attitude toward God, our fellow human beings, and everyday circumstances of sober living.

Our bid for a new lease on life, for the tolerance and forgiveness we expect *from* others, should prompt us to respond with tolerance, forgiveness, and amends. AA teaches us that to LIVE AND LET LIVE is to safeguard our sobriety.

Resentful attitudes held toward others will defeat our recovery. We correct this attitude in the practice of Step Nine. Amends integrate our personalities by harmonious, "helpful relations with God and the victims of our insane, alcoholic obsession. We cannot hate and make amends at the same time.

Admitting and rectifying wrongs is a regenerative process necessary to our rehabilitation. It brings us spiritual understanding and develops spiritual strength that contribute to contented sobriety.

The Twelve Steps are one big amend which we make to God and to ourselves. Self-preservation demands this. We pay our creditors. We come clean with God and make amends *to* loyal friends and relatives except when to do so might be harmful *to* them or others,

Attitudes of reservation and unwillingness are dangerous for us. They fill us with discontent and belligerency that result in our drinking again.

We are trying to put our lives in order. We do this through maximum service to God and the people about us. We believe this is the purpose of Steps Eight and Nine.

Most of us need to ask for help to have the honesty, courage, and humility necessary *for* making amends. The best way to ask for it is expressed completely in

#### The Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace  
 Where there is hatred, let me sow love  
 Where there is injury, pardon  
 Where there is doubt, faith  
 Where there is despair, hope  
 Where there is darkness, light  
 Where there is sadness, joy  
 Grant that I may not so much seek  
 To be consoled, as to console  
 To be understood, as to understand  
 To be loved, as to love  
 For it is in giving that we receive  
 It is in pardoning, that we are pardoned  
 It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

## Key Concepts for Step Eight

*Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

*The important part of this step is a list and Willingness; seasoned heavily with Honesty and Open-mindedness!*

- Key 1: Steps Eight and Nine are concerned with personal relations. First, we take a look backward and try to discover Where we have been at fault; next we make a vigorous attempt to repair the damage we have done; and third, having thus cleaned away the debris of the past, we consider how, with our newfound knowledge of ourselves, we may develop the best possible relations with every human being we know.
- Key 2: This is a very large order. It is a task, which we may perform with increasing skill, but never really finish. Learning how to live in the greatest peace, partnership, and brotherhood with *all* men and women, of whatever description, is a moving and fascinating adventure.
- Key 3: Many alcoholics agree with the effectiveness of our AA philosophy but fail to benefit from it because they have not properly evaluated their alcoholic illness. Not believing themselves to be sick, they see no reason *for* inconveniencing themselves to get well. Reservations as to their spiritual illness creates indifference to the “making of amends.”
- Key 4: Fear conspired with pride to hinder our making a list of all the people we had harmed. Though in some cases we cannot make restitution at all, and in some cases action ought to be deferred, we should nevertheless make an accurate and really exhaustive survey of our past life as it has affected other people.
- Key 5: Some of us tripped over a very different snag. We clung to the claim that when drinking we never hurt anybody but ourselves. This attitude, of course, is the end result of purposeful forgetting. It is an attitude, which can only be changed by a deep and honest search of our motives and actions.
- Key 6: We have to make a list of those we have harmed. We personally know the type of wrongs that bother us. We must make a list of the human wreckage we have left in our wake. Who did we hurt? In what ways? We know we caused physical, mental, emotional, financial, and spiritual damage to others. Be thorough and honest and willing.
- Key 7: What do we mean when we say that we have “harmed” other people. To define the word “harm” in a practical way, we might call it the result of instincts in collision, which cause physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual damage to people. Did our bad tempers arouse anger in others? Did we lie and cheat to deprive others not only of their worldly goods, but of their emotional security and peace of mind? Did our selfish sexual conduct excite jealousy, misery, or a strong desire to retaliate in kind? Were we possibly miserly, irresponsible, callous, or cold in our family lives? Were we irritable, critical, impatient, or humorless? Did we lavish attention on one member of the family and neglect the others? Did we try to dominate the whole family? Did we wallow in depression and self-pity and subject the same upon those around us?
- Key 8: When we take such personality traits as these into shop, office, and the society of our fellows, they can do damage almost as extensive as that we have caused at home. So list all areas of our experiences in sex, security, and society.
- Key 9: As we find that others may have harmed us, be forgiving. The pot should not call the kettle black. Our behavior, when drinking, aggravated the defects of those around us. Also, alcoholics are not the only ones bedeviled by sick emotions. *If* we are now about to ask forgiveness for ourselves, why shouldn't we start out by forgiving them, one and all?
- Key 10: In many instances we shall find that though the harm done others has not been great, the emotional harm we have done ourselves has. Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness. At the time of these occurrences,

they may actually have given our emotions violent twists, which have since discolored our personalities and altered our lives *for* the worse.

Key 11: Having carefully surveyed this whole area of human relations, and having decided exactly what personality traits in us injured and disturbed others, we can now commence to ransack memory for the people to whom we have given offense. We should avoid extreme judgments, both of ourselves and of others involved. When our pencil falters, we can fortify and cheer ourselves by remembering What AA experience in this step has meant to others. It is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and God.

Key 12: It is not difficult thing to list the people who suffered because we drank. Our real problem is to arrive at a state of mind that concedes the damage we have done and embraces a willingness to amend it.

*Will you make a list and try to become willing?*

**Home Study**

*Big Book:* Chapter 6, Pages 76 to 84, Chapter 10, and Stories 12 through 17 in They Stopped in Time.

*12&12:* Read the Step 8.

**Eight Step Word Definitions**

Write down definitions for the following words: first, define them mentally to yourself, in terms of that you believe each word means. Then refer to a dictionary.

Harm: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Amend: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Forgive: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Additional Step Eight Readings

Every AA has found that he can make little headway in this new adventure of living until he first backtracks and really makes an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage he has left in his wake. To a degree, he has already done this when taking moral inventory, but now the time has come when he ought to redouble his efforts to see how many people he has hurt, and in what ways. This reopening of emotional wounds, some old, some perhaps forgotten, and some still painfully festering, will at first look like a purposeless and pointless piece of surgery. But if a willing start is made, then the great advantages of doing this will so quickly reveal themselves that the pain will be lessened as one obstacle after another melts away.

These obstacles, however, are very real. The first, and one of the most difficult, has to do with forgiveness. The moment we ponder a twisted or broken relationship with another person, our emotions go on the defensive. To escape looking at the wrongs we have done another, we resentfully focus on the wrong he has done us. This is especially true if he has, in fact, behaved badly at all. Triumphant we seize upon his misbehavior as the perfect excuse for minimizing or forgetting our own.

Right here we need to fetch ourselves up sharply. It doesn't make much sense when a real tosspot calls a kettle black. Let's remember that alcoholics are not the only ones bedeviled by sick emotions. Moreover, it is usually a fact that our behavior when drinking has aggravated the defects of others. We've repeatedly strained the patience of our best friends to a snapping point, and have brought out the very worst in those who didn't think much of us to begin with. In many instances we are really dealing with fellow sufferers, people whose woes we have increased. If we are now about to ask forgiveness for ourselves, why shouldn't we start out by forgiving them, one and all?

Whenever our pencil falters, we can fortify and cheer ourselves by remembering what AA experience in this Step has meant to others. It is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God.

### *Tyler and Bob*

Polly and I can't manage to have a conversation without it turning into a shouting match. Donna. Money. The house. Everything. *Too* much old stuff. Old wounds. They won't heal."

"You ever make amends to *her*?"

"Sure. First time through the steps."

"You bought *her* some flowers, took *her* to dinner a couple of times and figured, 'Hey, I'm sober now; she ought to be delighted.' That how you made amends?"

"What's wrong with that?"

"Funny how unimpressed most people are when we finally get into recovery. They want to say, 'It's about time,' and we're going, 'Look! I'm clean and sober. Forty years old and I'm thinking about getting a real job. Ain't I somethin?' We want brass bands and telegrams from people telling us how wonderful we are *for* going to work and getting home at a reasonable hour. People have been doing that *for* years—going to work, coming home at night, taking care of sick kids, all that stuff. No brass bands. No telegrams. But we're sometimes a little disappointed if we don't get all the attention we think we deserve. Truth is, we're not all that big a deal to most people."

"I have something to tell you."

"Okay."

"This is very confidential," said Bob.

"I won't dignify that with a reply," said Tyler.

"I took Beverly home the other night."

“Is there more to that sentence?”

“And she spent the night. At my place.”

“Certainly didn’t have to be a fortune-teller to see that one coming.”

“It was obvious?”

“Inevitable,” said Tyler.

“God, I feel awful. Just awful.”

“Of course *now* you feel awful,” said Tyler. “Now there’s plenty of time for guilt and remorse. Your amends list seems to be getting longer each day.”

“Jesus.”

“And a nice segue into the Eighth Step—*Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.* There’s that word *willing* again.”

“You think I need to make amends?” said Bob.

“To Beverly?”

“Yeah.”

“What does the literature say?” said Tyler.

“We should make an exhaustive survey of our past as it affected other people.”

“Exhaustive, eh? As in thorough? And what does it say about harming other people? About what harm actually means?”

“Harm is ‘causing physical, mental, emotional or spiritual damage.’ “

“That should cover just about everything,” said Tyler.

“I used a condom.”

“I’m so relieved.”

“So you think I owe her an amend?” said Bob.

“Was she harmed?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Were you honest with her?”

“About what?”

“Well, that answers that question. What *didn’t* you tell her?”

“She didn’t ask many questions,” said Bob. “Maybe not any.”

“And you didn’t volunteer any information, like you were still married.”

“Why would I tell her any of that, for chrissakes? I hardly even know her.”

“I’m glad we’re recording this. I’d like to be around when you play it back and hear yourself say that.”

“Oh, you know what I mean,” said Bob.

“Of course I do,” said Tyler. “Maybe better than you realize.”

“Tyler, this lady is not the homecoming queen who lived in suburbia and burned the toast once or twice after a glass of champagne. She’s been around the block a few times.”

“So it’s okay to lie to her because she’s been around the block a few times?”



“I didn’t *lie* to her.”

“You just didn’t tell her the truth,” said Tyler.

“Jesus.”

“Keep in mind that she, like the rest of us, has in all likelihood suffered a fair amount of damage on her journey

“About this Beverly thing.”

“In your defense?”

“I haven’t done anything that needs to be defended,” said Bob.

“Go on.”

“Is it possible that you’re losing touch with what’s going on out there? Out in the real world? I mean, sex is not that big a deal anymore. Not like it was forty years ago. It’s more casual now. More natural.”

“More trivial?” said Tyler.

“There’s nothing in the program that says we can’t get a little from time to time. Nothing that says we have to live like monks. Nothing.”

“I knew I could depend on you to do the research, and cite a lack of precedent to legitimize your behavior.”

“Nothing wrong with my behavior,” insisted Bob. “We are two mature consenting adults.”

“Well, two adults anyway. We can leave the mature for later consideration. And you’re right; there’s nothing says we have to live like monks. What it does say is that *if our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to get drunk, quite sure, counselor.*”

“It says that in the *Big Book*?” said Bob.

“It does.”

“How could I have missed it?”

“Possibly selective reading,” said Tyler.

“You remember what H.O.W. stands for?”

“Sure. Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. The well-known essentials of recovery.”

“Well, this is one of the places where honesty counts. Counts a lot. We’ve already talked about willingness, and open-mindedness will come up later. Here’s what Bill W says about honesty: *The deception of others is nearly always rooted in the deception of ourselves.* “

“So you think I’m deceiving myself?” said Bob.

“What did we say last time about our capacity for self-deception?” said Tyler.

“You said it, actually: that it was enormous.”

“And you agreed.”

“You’re suggesting that I could have been more forthright with Beverly?”

“Something like that.”

“I may have been very forthright,” said Bob. “I may have told her absolutely everything.”

“Why do I think that highly unlikely?”

“Because you’re a very suspicious, untrusting person.”

“No,” said Tyler. “It’s because if you *had* told her what was going on before you invited her home to frolic on your Abby Rents bed, you’d feel a lot better about the encounter. A lot better than you do.”

“I used a condom.”

“You already said that.”

“I know,” said Bob. “It’s important, using condoms.”

“Sounds like that was the only thing you did right all night.”

“I don’t think I’m ready,” said Bob.

“Another side issue. Besides, if you wait till you’re ready, you’ll never do it. You make the list?”

“I did.”

“Long list?”

“Long enough,” said Bob.

“You ask for strength and direction?”

“I did. And the Great Pumpkin sent Beverly. I love the Great Pumpkin.”

“No wonder,” said Tyler. “Can I tell you something about women and love?”

“Can I stop you?”

“Of course not. You have to learn to love other men before you can possibly love a woman.”

“And just why is that?”

“Just seems to be one of those universal laws. Like gravity. Like you have to learn to live by yourself before you can live with anyone else. It has something to do with surrender.”

“Everything has something to do with surrender,” said Bob. “At least according to you.”

“Might be true,” said Tyler. “Tell me about your most spiritual experience.”

“What a question.”

“Your most...uplifting experience.”

“Besides Beverly?”

“I was involved with a woman once who said the most spiritual thing she ever did was make love.”

“TBD will open the door to the rest of it.”

“The rest of what?” said Bob.

“The rest of the Process. You remember the Process? We’ll get to more of it in the last three steps.”

“I don’t know if I can even *get* to the last three steps, Tyler.

I’m drowning. Suffocating. Every day is another day I can’t face, can’t get through. You don’t know what it’s like.”

“Ah, but I do,” said Tyler. “That’s the beauty of it. Do it in little pieces. Hour at a time. Ten minutes. Breathe out and in. Be where you are and don’t ever give up hope.”

“But I don’t *like* where I am,” said Bob. “I hate it.”

“Irrelevant, counselor. Accept it anyway.”

“I can’t accept something I hate. That’s irrational. And stupid.”

“Then you may be stuck in it for a while.”

“You know I hate this whole thing, Tyler. All of it. Nothing works. Nothing. I pray. Despite what I say, I actually do pray. I ask God for help and what do I get?”

“What’s in front of you?”

“Divorce. Financial ruin. You name it.”

“No, I mean right now.”

“Right now?” said Bob. “Today?”

“Right this very minute.”

“Right now there’s you and me. Talking.”

“Things okay right now?”

“Sure, right now. But next week I’ve got to see the tax guy and the school counselor and the…”

“But it’s always right now, counselor,” said Tyler. “You know that.”

“No, it’s not always right now,” said Bob heatedly. “Get real. This is another one of your stupid word games. See, I can’t afford to forget about next week, about the rest of my life. Guys who forget that stuff are doomed to”

“Rumi says, ‘The Sufi is the son of the present.’ “ “Well, screw Rumi. And the Sufis.”

“Serenity Prayer,” said Tyler.

“Serenity Prayer what?” asked Bob irritably. “Say it. Out loud.” “Jesus:

*“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”*

“Sometimes you need to hear yourself say the things you already know. As a reminder,” said Tyler quietly.

“This is all too hard, Tyler. Way too hard. I’m in over my head.”

“I remember a guy saying, ‘In order to experience the sunrise, you have to endure the night.’”

“Endure,” said Bob. “It’s like trudging. Like dying maybe.”

“Just like it,” said Tyler. “You remember to put yourself on the amends list?” “No.”

“You inflict any damage on yourself?” “Considerable.”

“Then you owe yourself some amends. You got the list with you?”

“Right here.”

“Let me see it.”

[Almost a minute and a half pass without speaking. Someone is humming “Amazing Grace” in the background.]

“Thirty-two,” said Tyler. “Thirty-three counting yourself.

The good news is that you don’t owe amends to them all.”

“I don’t?”

“No. Some of them are phantom amends. Ego amends. To lots of people we were just a minor annoyance.”

“How do I tell which ones are the phantom ones?”

“We talk about it, about the nature of the harm. You’ve heard the expression, ‘No harm, no foul’?”

“Sure.”

“Same principle. Pick the most difficult amend you have to make and do it before we meet next time.”

“Polly?”

“You decide.”

“Christmas is next week,” said Bob.

“Hark the herald angels si-i-i-i-ng . . .” “I don’t like Christmas.”

“You’re allowed. It’s one of the freedoms.”

“I’ll be alone,” said Bob. “First time in years. Polly and Donna are going over to her folks. ‘Be better if you don’t come,’ she said.”

“No need to be alone,” said Tyler. “The Salvation Army always needs food servers. The Midnight Mission has a feed. Central Office needs people.”

“Ahhhhh, I don’t feel like . . .”

“Just do it, counselor,” said Tyler. “Take the action. Do it. Those are your brothers and sisters out there. Remember: this is the beginning of the end of our isolation. And while you’re down at Central Office, pick up a pamphlet called *A Member’s Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous*. Very important. Should be required reading for everyone in

### 12&12 (pages 78–79)

When listing the people we have harmed, most of us hit another solid obstacle. We got a pretty severe shock when we realized that we were preparing to make a face-to-face admission of our wretched conduct to those we had hurt. It had been embarrassing enough when in confidence we had admitted these things to God, to ourselves, and to another human being. But the prospect of actually visiting or even writing the people concerned now overwhelmed us, especially when we remembered in what poor favor we stood with most of them. There were cases, too, where we had damaged others who were still happily unaware of being hurt. Why, we cried, shouldn’t by-gones be by-gones? Why do we have to think of these people at all? These were some of the ways in which fear conspired with pride to hinder our making a list of *all* the people we had harmed.

Though in some cases we cannot make restitution at all, and in some cases action ought to be deferred, we should nevertheless make an accurate and really exhaustive survey of our past life as it has affected other people. In many instances we shall find that though the harm done others has not been great, the emotional harm we have done ourselves has. Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness. At the time of these occurrences, they may actually have given our emotions violent twists, which have since discolored our personalities and altered our lives for the worse.

While the purpose of making restitution to others is paramount, it is equally necessary that we extricate from an examination of our personal relations every bit of information about ourselves and our fundamental difficulties that we can. Since defective relations with other human beings have nearly always been the immediate cause of our woes, including our alcoholism, no field of investigation could yield more satisfying and valuable rewards than this one. Calm, thoughtful reflection upon personal relations can deepen our insight. We can go far beyond those things, which were superficially wrong with us, to see those flaws, which were basic, flaws that

sometimes were responsible for the whole pattern of our lives. Thoroughness, we have found, will pay—and pay handsomely.

Whenever our pencil falters, we can fortify and cheer ourselves by remembering what AA experience in this Step has meant to others. It is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God.

*It Works: How and Why (Pages 77–78)*

Many of us are haunted by memories of our mistreatment of others. Those memories can creep up on us without warning. Our shame and remorse over our past actions are so deep that these recollections can cause us to feel unbearable guilt. We want to be free of such guilt. We begin by making a list of the people we've harmed.

Just thinking about our list may frighten us. We may be afraid that we've done so much damage that we can never repair it, or we may be afraid of facing the people we've harmed. We find ourselves wondering how our amends will be received. Our most hopeful projections probably entail being absolved of any wrongdoing. Our most nightmarish expectations may involve someone refusing to accept our amends, preferring instead to take revenge. Most of us have fairly vivid imaginations, but this is not the time to get ahead of ourselves. We must avoid projections, either negative or positive, about actually making our amends. We are on the Eighth Step, not the Ninth Step. At this point, making a list and becoming willing to make amends are our only concerns.

Working the previous steps has prepared us for the willingness we need to begin the Eighth Step. We've honestly assessed the exact nature of our wrongs and examined how our actions affected others. It was not easy to admit our wrongs. We had to believe in a Power that would supply us with courage and love us through the pain involved in reviewing the results of our addiction. The same honesty and courage we called upon as we wrote our inventory and shared it are just as vital in making our amends list. We've been practicing these principles all along and are quite familiar with them. The Eighth Step is simply a continuation of our efforts to find freedom by applying spiritual principles.

Making the list and becoming willing may be difficult unless we overcome our resentments. Most of us owe amends to at least one person who has also harmed us. Perhaps we haven't truly forgiven that person yet and find we are very reluctant to put her or his name on our list. However, we must. We are responsible for our actions. We make amends because we owe them. We must let go of resentments and focus on our part in the conflicts in our lives. We won't get better and be able to live the spiritual life we are seeking if we are still in the grip of self-obsession. We let go of our expectations, and we let go of blaming anyone for our actions. Our idea that we have been a victim must go. In the Eighth Step, we are not concerned with what others have done to us. We are concerned only with accepting responsibility for what we've done to others.

If we still bear anger toward some of the people in our past, we will need to practice the spiritual principle of forgiveness. Our ability to forgive comes from our ability to accept and be compassionate with ourselves. However, if we have difficulty. We can ask our Higher Power for help. We pray for whatever it takes to become willing to forgive.

Many of us had trouble seeing how we had harmed ourselves and may have been surprised when other addicts suggested that we add our own name to the list. Many of us have gone to extremes in matters of accepting responsibility for ourselves. Some of us have had a tendency to deny any responsibility, while others have taken on total blame for every disagreement. As we talk with our sponsor and other addicts, our flawed perceptions begin to fall away and we find the clarity we need to work the Eighth Step. With the help we have received, we start to develop a realistic view of where our responsibility truly began and ended.

Before we proceed in making a list, it is important that we understand what the word “harm” means in the context of the Eighth Step. We may be inclined to think of harm only in terms of physical suffering. However, there are many different forms of harm: causing mental anguish, property damage, or loss, inflicting long-lasting emotional scars, betraying trust, and so forth. Though we may exclaim, “But I never meant to hurt anyone”, this is beside the point. We are responsible for the harm we caused no matter what our intentions were. Any time when people were hurt in any way because of something we did, they were harmed. To gain a better understanding of how we may have harmed people, we may want to “put ourselves in their shoes.” If we can imagine what it felt like to be the victim of our reckless disregard for those around us, we shouldn’t have any trouble adding those names to our list.

In addition to understanding what harm means, we also need to understand what “make amends” means.

This step does not say that we become willing to say, “we’re sorry,” although that may be a part of our amends. Most of the people we’ve hurt have probably heard us say, “I’m sorry” enough to last a lifetime. In truth, we are becoming willing to do anything possible to repair the damage we’ve done, particularly by changing our behavior.

#### *Overeaters Anonymous (page 69)*

Many of us have found that our own name belongs somewhere near the top of our eighth-step list. Yes, we harmed other people, but we have also damaged ourselves with our self-destructive thinking, eating, and living habits. We have learned that a complete willingness to make amends to ourselves and to forgive ourselves for past mistakes has been essential to our recovery.

We will need to include the name of everyone we can remember having harmed, even those who hurt us first. It doesn’t matter how badly some of these people may have treated us; we now look with complete honesty at our side of each relationship. If we did those individuals any harm at all, we need to list them and the harm we did. It might help us to remember that our purpose in doing step eight is not to judge others, but to learn attitudes of mercy and forgiveness.

On the other side of the coin, we might mistakenly go to the other extreme and put on the list names, which don’t belong there. If someone hurt us or was rude to us and we feel badly toward that person, we certainly need to do ourselves the favor of forgiving. However, that individual’s name does not need to appear on our amends list unless we have also harmed him or her in some way. We’re not doing step eight to make other people feel better or like us better, we’re doing it for ourselves, so that *we* can recover

#### *Big Book (pages 76–83)*

Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris, which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.

The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. It may be he has done us more harm than we have done him and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us.

Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our drinking; they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not.

Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles, which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.

Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit.

Before taking drastic action, which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink.

The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised.

There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen—we sent them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone.

Some of our amends may be to people who also harmed us. These are usually the amends we have the most difficulty becoming willing to make. It seems like every time we think about these amends, we get so angry thinking about what *they* did to *us* that we forget all about making amends. But our recovery calls on us to practice the spiritual principle of forgiveness. Through prayer and any additional help we need to seek out, we *can* find it within ourselves to forgive the people who have also harmed us.

Amends that we can't ever see ourselves making may also be on our list. Maybe we're so unwilling that we don't even want to try praying for willingness; we can't imagine having any compassion for the people to whom we owe these amends. In this case, we just need to leave these amends on our list. We don't have to make all our amends in one day or in any set amount of time. It may take some time to become willing to make some amends. Every time we look at our Eighth Step list, we should ask ourselves if we've become willing to make *this* amends yet. If not, we can keep checking periodically.

### ***Spiritual Principles***

In the Eighth Step, we will focus on honesty; courage, willingness, and compassion. To practice the principle of honesty in the Eighth Step, we need to draw on our experience in the previous steps. We've admitted the nature of our problem-addiction-and affirmed the solution to that problem. This was an act of honesty we've taken a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves; doing so exercised our newfound honesty Extracting the nature of our wrongs from within the fabric of our personalities took our honesty to an even deeper level. So we have some experience separating our part in things from what others may have done. That's the level of honesty we'll need to call on in Step Eight. We have to forget about resentments, blaming others, believing we were innocent victims, and any other justification for the harm we caused. We simply need to *put it on the list!*

To practice the principle of courage in the Eighth Step, we have to put ourselves in God's care. We can't restrict our list to only those amends that we think will turn out okay we have to believe that our Higher Power will provide us with the fortitude, the humility; the inner strength, or whatever we need to get through any amends. Whether we need to face someone and we're afraid of how we'll feel, or we need to accept the consequences of a crime for which we are sought, we'll be able to handle it with the help of our Higher Power.

We've already talked a great deal about willingness in this step, especially becoming willing to make amends. But we need a certain amount of willingness to work this step that has nothing to do with making amends. First of all, we need the willingness to make our list. No matter what we're feeling about adding a certain name to the list, we need to become willing to add it. We also need the willingness to practice the other spiritual principles connected to this step. Developing a compassionate spirit becomes possible at this stage in our recovery. Before we did the work involved in the previous steps, we were too caught up in resentment, blame, and self-pity to think about others. Along with our ability to think of ourselves as ordinary human beings, we begin to see that others are doing the best they can with their humanness, too. We know we are subject to periodic doubts and insecurities about ourselves, and so are others. We know we are likely to speak before thinking, and so are others. We realize that they regret it as much as we do. We know we are prone to misreading situations and over, or under-reacting to them. As a result, when we see others act on a character defect today; we feel empathy rather than annoyance or anger, because we know what caused them to act as they did. Our hearts feel full when we think about how we share the same dreams, fears, passions, and faults as everyone else.

### ***Moving on***

Discussing every single one of the amends on our list with our sponsor is essential. It doesn't matter how long we've been clean or how much experience with making amends we have. Every one of us is liable to misjudge a situation when working alone, but we often find that we can see things more clearly when we look at situations from another point of view. We need our sponsor's insight. We need our sponsor's encouragement. We need our sponsor's vision and hope. It's amazing how much a simple discussion with our sponsor can do to help us tap into the quiet strength that lives in each one of us. When we've stripped away the distracting influences and have exposed that solid core of serenity, humility; and forgiveness, we're ready for the Ninth Step.



## **Step Nine: “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”**

### **Brief Outline**

The purpose of making amends is to help you get rid of the remorse, fear, and guilt that resulted from hurting people over the years. The *Big Book* clearly says that the alcoholic or addict needs to make *direct* amends. In other words, you need to make your amends face-to-face with people you’ve harmed. This doesn’t mean that amends can never be made over the phone or in a letter, but only when a face-to-face meeting is impossible.

There are several benefits of face-to-face contact:

- ❖ It opens up compassion and forgiveness in others.
- ❖ You will know you have made your best effort.
- ❖ You will have made amends in the same way you probably harmed others most- face-to-face.

## Ninth Step Guide

### Exercise 1: More About the Value of Face-to-Face- Contact

Unless you meet with someone face-to-face, you are never quite sure you have done your best to make things right with that person. There is something about talking to someone in person that makes things go better, sometimes better than you ever expected.

Think of a time in your life when you had to say something very difficult to another person and when meeting with him or her face-to-face made a difference. Maybe you had to say you were sorry or give the person bad news. Describe how being with him or her in person made it more meaningful.

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In the next exercise, you will look at the chart you made earlier (in Step 8) where you wrote one reason you might be stopped from making amends next to each of the three people you chose from your lists.

### Exercise 2: Go-Ahead Arrows

Read again carefully from line 18 on page 77 through line 13 on page 78 in the *Big Book*. You will find you are not alone in worrying about what people will do or say if you try to make amends. A wonderful thing about the *Big Book* is that the authors have been through what you have and are telling you exactly what worked for them.

Go back to your STOP sign concerns and worries in Step 8 and fill in the “GO” Arrows with any answers you have gained so that you can go ahead with your plan to make amends to each person. For example, if you wrote, “I hate this person” in the STOP sign, in the GO arrow you might write, “I will go to this person and be as helpful and forgiving as I can.” I can admit my bitter feelings and say I regret them.

### Exercise 3: Repaying Debts

Like making other kinds of amends, paying back money you owe does not have to happen all at once. But you do need to be open and honest about your debts and make specific efforts to repay them if you are to lose your fear of creditors. Otherwise, as the *Big Book* warns, you will be liable to drink again.

The following chart provides a way for you to be specific about how you can repay your debts. Complete the chart as soon as you work out a payment plan with each creditor. (Use more paper if needed.) As soon as you start repaying people, the fear associated with those people and your debts will disappear. Most creditors are happy to work with someone who makes a sincere effort to repay what is owed.

**Remember, the *Big Book* doesn’t say you “ought” to lose your fear of creditors; it says you must (page 78, line 23).**

Person or Institution	Amount Owed	Repayment Schedule How much per month, per week, etc.)	Date to be Paid Off By

**Exercise 4: Working the Second Part of Step Nine**

The *Big Book* says we must ask for the strength and direction to make proper amends to everyone we have hurt (page 79, lines 7–11 in the *Big Book*). Step Nine states that direct amends be made to people “except when to do so would injure them or others.” This might mean not telling someone about something you did to hurt him or her, because the confession might cause the person to be hurt even more. You, with your Higher Power’s guidance (that may come through a sponsor; counselor, or trusted friend), will have to be the judge. For those people on your lists who may be further harmed if you admit your wrongs to them, you will admit to yourself, your Higher Power, and another human being exactly what you have done wrong, and let it go at that.

There are also people on your list who absolutely will not see you, or who are impossible to see. The *Big Book* suggests an honest letter in such cases (page 83, lines 22-23).

*Write the names of any people on your lists who you think would be hurt if you tried to make amends. Explain how you think each person would be hurt.*

Name	How Will The Person Be Hurt?

*Write the names of any people on your lists who you definitely feel will not be willing to meet with you. Explain what makes you feel this way.*

Name	Why Won't The Person See You?

Write the names of anyone on your lists who you cannot see and explain why. Perhaps the person is dead or is living thousands of miles away.

Name	Why Can't You See This Person?

It is important to remember that almost all amends *can* be made. That means these last three lists should not be very long. With the very few people to whom you will never be able to make amends face-to-face, it is important to remember that you were willing to do so. Willingness is the key. If they refuse to see you or are physically unavailable to you, you will know you have honestly done your part. Once you have done what you can with these names you can cross them off your four main lists. However, sometimes one or more of the people you thought were unavailable may begin to show up in your life again. In this case, as the opportunity has arisen, face-to-face amends should be made.

You have now made four lists to use for making amends (Step 8), a schedule to repay your debts, and you've looked in the *Big Book*, and you've used your Higher Power's help, for an answer to every problem you thought might stop you from making amends. It is now time to begin contacting the people on your lists.

**Activity: Making Amends**

Take another look at the four lists you made, beginning with the Now List.

- ❖ Make amends to the first person on your Now List, followed by the second person, and so forth.
- ❖ Make amends to every person on your Now List. By the time you have finished, you will probably be ready to start on your Sooner or Later List.
- ❖ Do the same thing with your Sooner or Later List that you did with your first list. Start with the first name on the Sooner or Later List, and make amends to that person. Go down that list until you have finished.
- ❖ When you have finished with the Sooner or Later List, you ought to be ready to do your Maybe List.
- ❖ When you have completed your Maybe List, you will have the courage and compassion to go out and make amends to the people you thought you would never be able to face. So go ahead and begin with your final list, the Never List. Make amends to each of the people on this list.

Remember, all of this doesn't have to be and cannot be done all at once. Making amends is a slow, gradual process.

**Exercise 5: Promises**

From page 83 (line 29) to page 84 (line 11), the *Big Book* lists the wonderful things that will have happened to you when you have carefully worked these first Nine Steps.

Read those Promises again now. List at least five of those promises below, and describe how each of them is beginning to come true in your life. You may need to come back to this page as time goes by to fill in more examples of how your life is improving. If you wish to write about more of the promises, use a separate sheet of paper.

**Big Book Promise**

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**Example From My Life**

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**The Twelve Promises of AA**

1. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
2. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
3. We will comprehend the word serenity.
4. We will know peace.
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
8. Self-seeking will slip away.
9. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
10. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations, which used to baffle us.
12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

**Notes on Step Nine from The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous**

At this moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us. But our man is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. He is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.

The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. It may be he has done us more harm than we have done him and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.

Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply we tell him that we will never get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of

the street, realizing that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell him what he should do. His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.

Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well. It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam.

Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Arranging the best deal we can we let these people know we are sorry. Our drinking has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them.

Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles, which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.

Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit. Before taking drastic action, which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink.

The chances are that we have domestic troubles. We doubt if, in this respect alcoholics are fundamentally much worse than other people. Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated.

The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fit the bill at all. So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.

The spiritual life is not a theory. We *have to live it*.

There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone.

***The Person in the Glass***

When you get what you want in your struggle for self  
And the world makes you king/queen for the day,  
I Just go to the mirror and look at yourself  
And see what that man/woman has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or spouse,  
Who judgment upon you must pass:  
The person whose verdict counts most in your life  
Is the one staring back from the (looking) glass.

Some people may think you a straight-shooting chum  
And call you a wonderful guy:  
But the man/woman in the glass says you're only a bum  
If you can't look yourself straight in the eye.

This is the person to please, never mind all the rest  
For he/she is with you clear up to the end.  
And you've passed your most difficult, dangerous test  
When the man/woman in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years  
And get pats on the back as you pass,  
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears  
If you've cheated the man/woman in the glass.

## Key Concepts for Step Nine

*Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

- Key 1: Good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage; and prudence—these are the qualities we shall need when we take Step Nine.
- Key 2: ...the making of direct amends divides those we should approach into several classes. There will be those who ought to be dealt with just as soon as we become reasonably confident that we can maintain our sobriety.
- Key 3: There will be those to whom we can make only partial restitution, lest complete disclosures do them or others more harm than good.
- Key 4: There will be other cases where action ought to be deferred, and still others in which by the very nature of the situation we shall never be able to make direct personal contact at all.
- Key 5: Most of us begin making certain kinds of direct amends from the day we join A.A, The moment we tell our families that we are really going to try the program, the process has begun.
- Key 6: ...we usually want to sit down with some member of our family and readily admit the damage we have done by our drinking. Almost always we want to go further and admit other defects that have made us hard to live with. At this first sitting, it is necessary only that we make a general admission of our defects.
- Key 7: Good judgment will suggest that we ought to take our time. While we may be quite willing to reveal the very worst, we must be sure to remember that we cannot buy our own peace of mind at the expense of others.
- Key 8: Much the same approach will apply at the office or factory.
- Key 9: The generous response of most people to such quiet sincerity will often astonish us. Even our severest and most justified critics will frequently meet us more than halfway on the first trial.
- Key 10: The temptation to skip the more humiliating and dreaded meetings that still remain may be great. We will often manufacture plausible excuses for dodging these issues entirely. Or we may just procrastinate; telling ourselves the time is not yet, when in reality we have already passed up many a fine chance to right a serious wrong. Let's not talk prudence while practicing evasion.
- Key 11: Amends should always be forthright and generous.
- Key 12: There can only be one consideration which should qualify our desire for a complete disclosure of the damage we have done, That will arise in the occasional situation where to make a full revelation would seriously harm the one to whom we are making amends. Or—quite as important—other people. It does not lighten our burden when we recklessly make the crosses of others heavier.
- Key 13: When you have doubts and questions ask your sponsor, and earnestly ask God's help and guidance. Be honest, open-minded, and willing.
- Key 14: Be sure we do not delay because we are afraid. For the readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step Nine.

***Will you get started and make at least one amend this week?***



**Home Study**

*Big Book:* Chapter 11, and Stories 1 thru 6 in They Lost Nearly All.

*12&12:* Read the Step 9.

## **Additional Step Nine Readings**

*12&12 (pages 84–87)*

Good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage, and prudence—these are the qualities we shall need when we take Step Nine.

After we have made the list of people we have harmed, have reflected carefully upon each instance, and have tried to possess ourselves of the right attitude in which to proceed, we will see that the making of direct amends divides those we should approach into several classes. There will be those who ought to be dealt with just as soon as we become reasonably confident that we can maintain our sobriety. There will be those to whom we can make only partial restitution, lest complete disclosures do them or others more harm than good. There will be other cases where action ought to be deferred, and still others in which by the very nature of the situation we shall never be able to make direct personal contact at all.

Most of us begin making certain kinds of direct amends from the day we join Alcoholics Anonymous. The moment we tell our families that we are really going to try the program, the process has begun. In this area there are seldom any questions of timing or caution. We want to come in the door shouting the good news. After coming from our first meeting, or perhaps after we have finished reading the book “Alcoholics Anonymous,” we usually want to sit down with some member of the family and readily admit the damage we have done by our drinking. Almost always we want to go further and admit other defects that have made us hard to live with. This will be a very different occasion, and in sharp contrast with those hangover mornings when we alternated between reviling ourselves and blaming the family (and everyone else) for our troubles. At this first sitting, it is necessary only that we make a general admission of our defects. It may be unwise at this stage to rehash certain harrowing episodes. Good judgment will suggest that we ought to take our time. While we may be quite willing to reveal the very worst, we must be sure to remember that we cannot buy our own peace of mind at the expense of others.

There can only be one consideration, which should qualify our desire for a complete disclosure of the damage we have done. That will arise in the occasional situation where to make a full revelation would seriously harm the one to whom we are making amends. Or—quite as important—other people. We cannot, for example, unload a detailed account of extramarital adventuring upon the shoulders of our unsuspecting wife or husband. And even in those cases where such a matter must be discussed, let’s try to avoid harming third parties, whoever they may be. It does not lighten our burden when we recklessly make the crosses of others heavier.

Many a razor-edged question can arise in other departments of life where this same principle is involved. Suppose, for instance, that we have drunk up a good chunk of our firm’s money, whether by “borrowing” or on a heavily padded expense account. Suppose that this may continue to go undetected, if we say nothing. Do we instantly confess our irregularities to the firm, in the practical certainty that we will be fired and become unemployable? Are we going to be so rigidly righteous about making amends that we don’t care what happens to the family and home? Or do we first consult those who are to be gravely affected? Do we lay the matter before our sponsor or spiritual adviser, earnestly asking God’s help and guidance—meanwhile resolving to do the right thing when it becomes clear, cost what it may? Of course, there is no pat answer, which can fit all such dilemmas. But all of them do require a complete willingness to make amends as fast and as far as may be possible in a given set of conditions.

Much the same approach will apply at the office or factory. We shall at once think of a few people who know all about our drinking, and who have been most affected by it. But even in these cases, we may need to use a little more discretion than we did with the family. We may not want to say anything for several weeks, or longer. First we will wish to be reasonably certain that we are on the AA beam. Then we are ready to go to these people, to tell them what AA is, and what we are trying to do. Against this background we can freely admit the damage we have done

and make our apologies. We can pay, or promise to pay, whatever obligations, financial or otherwise, we owe. The generous response of most people to such quiet sincerity will often astonish us. Even our severest and most justified critics will frequently meet us more than halfway on the first trial.

As soon as we begin to feel confident in our new way of life and have begun, by our behavior and example, to convince those about us that we are indeed changing for the better, it is usually safe to talk in complete frankness with those who have been seriously affected, even those who may be only a little or not at all aware of what we have done to them. The only exceptions we will make will be cases where our disclosure would cause actual harm. These conversations can begin in a casual or natural way. But if no such opportunity presents itself, at some point we will want to summon all our courage, head straight for the person concerned, and lay our cards on the table. We needn't wallow in excessive remorse before those we have harmed, but amends at this level should always be forthright and generous.

Above all, we should try to be absolutely sure that we are not delaying because we are afraid. For the readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step Nine.

#### *Big Book (pages 83–84)*

This desire to make amends should be the primary motive for working the Ninth Step. Making amends isn't something we do simply because our program of recovery suggests it. To be certain our motives are based in spiritual principles, we find it helpful to reaffirm our decision to turn our will over to the care of the God of our understanding before making each of our amends. A Power greater than ourselves will provide us with the guidance we need.

We should not expect a "pat on the back" or praise for living in accordance with the principles of recovery. People may respond to our amends in many different ways. They may or may not appreciate our amends. The relationships we have with those people may get better, or they may not. We may be thanked, or we may be told, "It's about time you did this." We must let go of any expectations we have on how our amends will turn out and leave the results to the God of our understanding. It is very important that we do our absolute best to make amends. Once we have done that, however, our part is finished. We can't expect our amends to magically heal the hurt feelings of someone we have harmed. We may humbly ask for forgiveness but, if we don't receive it, we let that expectation go, knowing we have done our best. As we are making amends, we ask ourselves if we are doing this because we are truly sorry and have a genuine desire to make reparations for what we've done. If we answer "yes" to this question, we can be assured that we are approaching our amends in the true spirit of humility and love.

Keeping our humility in focus, we ask for help from our sponsor. Whenever possible, we discuss each of our amends with our sponsor *before* we set out to make it. We tell our sponsor what we are making amends for, what we are planning to say, and what we intend to offer to set the situation right. What we intend to offer as amends should be appropriate to the harm we caused. For instance, if we borrowed money from someone and never paid it back, we don't merely apologize; we pay the money back. We talk directly to the person we harmed and amend exactly what we did wrong.

When we make amends to those we have held a resentment against in the past an attitude of humility is imperative. We don't want to go to someone, intent on making amends, and end up in a shouting match over who was injured more severely. Even though we are sure to have amends to make to people who have also harmed us, we must set our hurt feelings aside. Our responsibility is to make amends for what *we* have done wrong, not to force others to admit how they have wronged us.

In our experience, making amends is a two-stage process. Not only do we make amends to the person we've harmed, we follow up on those amends with a serious change in our behavior. We mend our fences and we mend our ways. When we make our amends, we not only apologize to the person and replace or repair the damage; we back that up by repairing our attitudes. Changing the way we live is a lifetime process and is perhaps the most significant amends we can make. Some of the people we've harmed, like our families or others we've been close to for a long time have suffered for years. Amends of this nature can't be made in a five-minute apology, no matter how heartfelt. Although an admission of wrong and an apology may be the starting point, we need to go on by making a concerted daily effort to stop hurting our loved ones. If we have neglected our families, we start spending time with them. If we have been thoughtless, always forgetting birthdays and anniversaries, we begin to be thoughtful instead, remembering those important events. If we have been inconsiderate, always wrapped up in what we wanted and needed, we now begin to be sensitive to the needs of others. Of course, we may not have an ongoing relationship with some of the people we have harmed. For instance, if we are divorced from a spouse with whom we had children, we may owe child-support payments. Making such amends does not require that we rekindle an emotional relationship with our ex-partner.

The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept he home in turmoil. We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough. He is like the farmer who came up out of his cyclone cellar to find his home ruined. To his wife, he remarked, "Don't see anything the matter here, Ma. Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowin'?"

Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.

The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations, which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

## *Amends*

The Ninth Step is not a step that can be neatly contained within a particular time frame. We don't write our Eighth Step list and then resolutely start making amends; crossing off "completed" ones like we would items on a shopping list. In fact, many of our amends will never be "finished"; our efforts will go on throughout our recovery. For instance, if we owe our families amends, we will spend the rest of our lives practicing the spiritual principles that will bring real change to the way we treat people. There may be one day when we sit our families down and make a commitment to treat them differently than we have in the past, but that won't be the end of our amends. Each day that we make an effort to refrain from hurting our families and try to practice loving behavior with them is a day when we've continued our amends to our families. Even such relatively concrete amends as paying a past-due debt aren't likely to be done once and for all when the debt is paid off. Living our Ninth Step requires that we try not to incur new debts that we can't pay. On a deeper level, we may need to look at the varieties of debt we incur—for instance, taking favor after favor from friends but never reciprocating, or overextending the patience of people with whom we share responsibilities by not assuming our fair share. Avoiding such liabilities in the future is just as much a part of our amends process as making regular payments on past-due debts.

### *Amends-Direct and Indirect*

We think it's best to make direct, face-to-face amends, and indeed, this step says we should do so wherever possible. But direct amends are not the only way to make amends, and in some cases they may be the worst way. Some situations are more complicated than they appear at first glance. We may think the solution is obvious, but we should always take the time for further reflection. Some situations are more complicated than they appear at first glance. We may think the solution is obvious, but we should always take the time for further reflection. For instance, there may be a situation where the person or people we've harmed are not aware of what we did, and learning what we did might possibly harm them more. We may have some friends, relatives, or an employer who were unaware of our addiction. To tell them might harm them. Our sponsor will help us look at our motives for wanting to tell people about our addiction. Do they need to know? What good purpose will be served by sharing such information? What damage could such information do? But what if this same situation was complicated by our theft of some money from our friends? And what if someone else was accused of taking the money? Wouldn't we then need to tell about our addiction, along with admitting the theft and paying the money back? Possibly, but perhaps not. Each of these kinds of situations needs to be taken on an individual basis. Again, our sponsor will help us decide how best to handle each one. In our discussion with our sponsor, if we are open-minded, we're sure to think about these kinds of situations in ways we haven't thought about them before. We may see how what we first thought was the obvious method of making amends may not be right after all. It's very helpful to prepare for this discussion by listing all the circumstances for these difficult amends so that it will be right in front of us when we talk to our sponsor. We've been emphasizing the need to check each and every amends with our sponsor before proceeding. While that's important, there's no need for us to become mindless robots, afraid to think for ourselves or act without asking our sponsor about it. Many of our members have had the experience of running into a person from our past whom we had not put on our Eighth Step list, but who might belong there. Sometimes the amends owed are so clear, we would be foolish not to avail ourselves of such a lucky coincidence. Other times, we may run into a person and experience very uncomfortable feelings but not know what's causing them. If this happens, it's better to take the relationship through the Fourth and Fifth Step process in order to gain more clarity about it. In any event, we should never consider our Eighth Step list "closed." Chances are we'll be adding new names to it throughout our lives. What about people we can't find? Should we go ahead and make indirect amends to them, too? Perhaps, although many of our members have had the experience of running across someone we thought we'd never be able to find, usually in a location in which we'd never expect to find them. We can certainly draw the conclusion that a Higher Power is at work when such coincidences happen, but

even if not, we certainly shouldn't ignore the opportunity to make direct amends. If we can't find someone on our amends list, we may want to wait. We should continue making every effort to find the person, we should make an effort not to cause the same type of harm to someone else, and we should remain willing. A spirit of willingness can often serve the purpose of the amends when we cannot make the actual amends. After considering the complications involved in making indirect amends, it may seem as though making direct amends is easy, or at least more straightforward. We did something that hurt someone. We need to apologize and repair the harm. That's it, right? Not very often, if ever. As mentioned earlier, the amends process isn't one that has a distinct beginning and end. We need to try to forgive the people who have harmed us before we make amends to them. We don't want to sit down with someone with whom we're furious and try to make amends. Our attitude will be apparent, no matter how much we try to hide it. Amends are a time when it's not usually very productive to "act as *if*." It is not necessarily a comforting and comfortable process to make amends. The steps aren't designed to make us happy and comfortable without also making us grow. The fear, the risk, and the feeling of vulnerability that come with making amends may be so uncomfortable for us that the memory keeps us from repeating the behavior that led to us having to make amends. We hear often around NA that "it gets better." "It" is us- we get better. We become better people. We become less willing to engage in destructive behavior because we are aware of the cost in human misery, both our own and that of those around us. Our self-centeredness is replaced by an awareness of other people and concern about their lives. Where we were indifferent, we begin to care. Where we were selfish, we begin to be selfless. Where we were angry; we begin to be forgiving.

***The Velveteen Rabbit or How Toys Become Real by Margery Williams***



THERE was once a velveteen rabbit, and in the beginning he was really splendid. He was fat and bunched, as a rabbit should be; his coat was spotted brown and white, he had real thread whiskers, and his ears were lined with pink satin. On Christmas morning, when he sat wedged in the top of the Boy's stocking, with a sprig of holly between his paws, the effect was charming.

There were other things in the stocking, nuts and oranges and a toy engine, and chocolate almonds and a clockwork mouse, but the Rabbit was quite the best of all. For at least two hours the Boy loved him, and then Aunts and Uncles came to dinner, and there was a great rustling of tissue paper and unwrapping of parcels, and in the excitement of looking at all the new presents the Velveteen Rabbit was forgotten.

For a long time he lived in the toy cupboard or on the nursery floor, and no one thought very much about him. He was naturally shy, and being only made of velveteen, some of the more expensive toys quite snubbed him. The mechanical toys were very superior, and looked

down upon every one else; they were full of modern ideas, and pretended they were real. The model boat, who had lived through two seasons and lost most of his paint, caught the tone from them and never missed an opportunity of referring to his rigging in technical terms. The Rabbit could not claim to be a model of anything, for he didn't know that real rabbits existed; he thought they were all stuffed with sawdust like himself, and he understood that sawdust was quite out-of-date and should never be mentioned in modern circles. Even Timothy, the jointed wooden lion, who was made by the disabled soldiers, and should have had broader views, put on airs and pretended he was connected with Government. Between them all the poor little Rabbit was made to feel himself very insignificant and commonplace, and the only person who was kind to him at all was the Skin Horse.

The Skin Horse had lived longer in the nursery than any of the others. He was so old that his brown coat was bald in patches and showed the seams underneath, and most of the hairs in his tail had been pulled

out to string bead necklaces. He was wise, for he had seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger, and by-and-by break their mainsprings and pass away, and he knew that they were only toys, and would never turn into anything else. For nursery magic is very strange and wonderful, and only those playthings that are old and wise and experienced like the Skin Horse understand all about it.

“What is REAL?” asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. “Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in your joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

“I suppose *you* are real?” said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive. But the Skin Horse only smiled.

“The Boy’s Uncle made me Real,” he said. “That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can’t become unreal again. It lasts for always.”

The Rabbit sighed. He thought it would be a long time before this magic called Real happened to him. He longed to become Real, to know what it felt like; and yet the idea of growing shabby and losing his eyes and whiskers was rather sad. He wished that he could become it without these uncomfortable things happening to him.

There was a person called Nana who ruled the nursery. Sometimes she took no notice of the playthings lying about, and sometimes, for no reason whatever, she went swooping about like a great wind and hustled them away in cupboards. She called this “tidying up,” and the playthings all hated it, especially the tin ones. The Rabbit didn’t mind it so much, for wherever he was thrown he came down soft.

One evening, when the Boy was going to bed, he couldn’t find the china dog that always slept with him. Nana was in a hurry, and it was too much trouble to hunt for china dogs at bedtime, so she simply looked about her, and seeing that the toy cupboard stood open, she made a swoop.

“Here,” she said, “Take your old Bunny! He’ll do to sleep with you!” And she dragged the Rabbit out by one ear, and put him into the Boy’s arms.

That night, and for many nights after, the Velveteen Rabbit slept in the Boy’s bed. At first he found it uncomfortable, for the Boy hugged him very tight, and sometimes he rolled over on him, and sometimes he pushed him so far under the pillow that the Rabbit could scarcely breathe. And he missed, too, those long moonlight hours in the nursery, when all the house was silent, and his talks with the Skin Horse. But very soon he grew to like it, for the Boy used to talk to him, and made nice tunnels for him under the bedclothes that he said were like the burrow the real rabbits lived in. And they had splendid games together, in whispers, when Nana had gone away to her supper and left the night-light burning on the mantelpiece. And when the Boy dropped off to sleep, the Rabbit would snuggle down close under his little warm chin and dream, with the Boy’s hands clasped close round him all night long.

And so time went on, and the little Rabbit was very happy—so happy that he never noticed how his beautiful velveteen fur was getting shabbier and shabbier, and his tail becoming un-sewn, and all the pink rubbed off his nose where the Boy had kissed him.

Spring came, and they had long days in the garden, for wherever the Boy went the Rabbit went too. He had rides in the wheelbarrow, and picnics on the grass, and lovely fairy huts built for him under the raspberry canes behind the flower border. And once, when the Boy was called away suddenly to go to tea, the Rabbit was left out on the lawn until long after dusk, and Nana had to come and look for him with the candle because the Boy couldn't go to sleep unless he was there. He was wet through with the dew and quite earthy from diving into the burrows the Boy had made for him in the flowerbed, and Nana grumbled as she rubbed him off with a corner of her apron.

"You must have your old Bunny!" she said. "Fancy all that fuss for a toy!"

"Give me my Bunny!" he said. "You mustn't say that. He isn't a toy. He's REAL!"

When the little Rabbit heard that he was happy, for he knew what the Skin Horse had said was true at last. The nursery magic had happened to him, and he was a toy no longer. He was Real. The Boy himself had said it.

That night he was almost too happy to sleep, and so much love stirred in his little sawdust heart that it almost burst. And into his boot-button eyes, that had long ago lost their polish, there came a look of wisdom and beauty, so that even Nana noticed it next morning when she picked him up, and said, "I declare if that old Bunny hasn't got quite a knowing expression!"

That was a wonderful summer!

Near the house where they lived there was a wood, and in the long June evening the Boy liked to go there after tea to play. He took the Velveteen Rabbit with him, and before he wandered off to pick flowers, or play at brigands among the trees, he always made the Rabbit a little nest somewhere among the bracken, where he would be quite cozy, for he was a kind-hearted little boy and he liked Bunny to be comfortable. One evening, while the Rabbit was lying there alone, watching the ants that ran to and fro between his velvet paws in the grass, he saw two strange beings creep out of the tall bracken near him.

They were rabbits like himself, but quite furry and brand-new. They must have been very well made, for their seams didn't show at all, and they changed shape in a queer way when they moved; one minute they were long and thin and the next minute fat and bunched, instead of always staying the same like he did. Their feet padded softly on the ground, and they crept quite close to him, twitching their noses, while the Rabbit stared hard to see which side the clockwork stuck out, for he knew that people who jump generally have something to wind them up. But he couldn't see it. They were evidently a new kind of rabbit altogether.

They stared at him, and the little Rabbit stared back. And all the time their noses twitched.

"Why don't you get up and play with us?" one of them asked.

"I don't feel like it," said the Rabbit, for he didn't want to explain that he had no clockwork.

"Ho!" said the furry rabbit. "It's as easy as anything," And he gave a big hop sideways and stood on his hind legs.

"I don't believe you can!" he said.

"I can!" said the little Rabbit. "I can jump higher than anything," He meant when the Boy threw him, but of course he didn't want to say so.

"Can you hop on your hind legs?" asked the furry rabbit?

That was a dreadful question, for the Velveteen rabbit had no hind legs at all! The back of him was made all in one piece, like a pincushion. He sat still in the bracken, and hoped that the other rabbit wouldn't notice.



“I don’t want to!” he said again.

But the wild rabbits have very sharp eyes. And this one stretched out his neck and looked.

“He hasn’t got any hind legs” he called out. “Fancy a rabbit without any hind legs” And he began to laugh.

“I have!” cried the little Rabbit. “I have got hind legs! I am sitting on them”

“Then stretch them out and show me, like this!” said the wild rabbit. And he began to whirl around and dance, till the little Rabbit got quite dizzy.

“I don’t like dancing,” he said. “I’d rather sit still!”

But all the while he was longing to dance, for a funny new tickly feeling ran through him, and he felt he would give anything in the world to be able to jump about like these rabbits did.

The strange rabbit stopped dancing, and came quite close. He came so close this time that his long whiskers brushed the Velveteen Rabbit’s ear, and then he wrinkled his nose suddenly and flattened his ears and jumped backwards.

“He doesn’t smell right!” he exclaimed. “He isn’t a rabbit at all! He isn’t real!”

“I *am* Real!” said the little Rabbit. “I am Real! The Boy said so!” And he nearly began to cry.

Just then there was a sound of footsteps, and the Boy ran past near them, and with a stamp of feet and a flash of white tails the two strange rabbits disappeared.

“Come back and play with me!” called the little Rabbit. “Oh, do come back! I *know* I am Real!”

But there was no answer, only the little ants ran to and fro, and the bracken swayed gently where the two strangers had passed. The Velveteen Rabbit was all-alone.

“Oh, dear!” he thought. “Why did they run away like that? Why couldn’t they stop and talk to me?”

For a long time he lay very still, watching the bracken, and hoping that they would come back. But they never returned, and presently the sun sank lower and the little white moths fluttered out, and the Boy came and carried him home.

Weeks passed, and the little Rabbit grew very old and shabby, but the Boy loved him just as much. He loved him so hard that he loved all his whiskers off, and the pink lining to his ears turned grey, and his brown spots faded. He even began to lose his shape, and he scarcely looked like a rabbit any more, except to the Boy. To him he was always beautiful, and that was all that the little Rabbit cared about. He didn’t mind how he looked to other people, because the nursery magic had made him Real, and when you are Real shabbiness doesn’t matter.

And then, one day, the Boy was ill.

His face grew very flushed, and he talked in his sleep, and his little body was so hot that it burned the Rabbit when he held him lose.

Strange people came and went in the nursery, and a light burned all night and through it all the little Velveteen Rabbit lay there, hidden from sight under the bedclothes, and he never stirred, for he was afraid that if they found him some one might take him away, and he knew that the Boy needed him.

It was a long weary time, for the Boy was too ill to play, and the little Rabbit found it rather dull with nothing to do all day long. But he snuggled down patiently, and looked forward to the time when the Boy should be well again, and they would go out in the garden amongst the flowers and the butterflies and play splendid games in the raspberry thicket like they used to. All sorts of delightful things he planned, and while the Boy lay half asleep he crept up close to the pillow and whispered them in his ear. And presently the fever turned, and the Boy got better. He was able to sit up in bed and look at picture books, while the little Rabbit cuddled close at his side. And one day, they let him get up and dress.

It was a bright, sunny morning, and the windows stood wide open. They had carried the Boy out on the balcony, wrapped in a shawl, and the little Rabbit lay tangled up among the bedclothes, thinking.

The Boy was going to the seaside to-morrow. Everything was arranged, and now it only remained to carry out the doctor's orders. They talked about it all, while the little Rabbit lay under the bedclothes, with just his head peeping out, and listened. The room was to be disinfected, and all the books and toys that the Boy had played with in bed must be burnt.

"Hurrah!" thought the little Rabbit. "To-morrow we shall go to the seaside!" For the boy had often talked of the seaside, and he wanted very much to see the big waves coming in, and the tiny crabs, and the sand castles.

Just then Nana caught sight of him.

"How about his old Bunny?" she asked.

"*That?*" said the doctor. "Why, it's a mass of scarlet fever germs! Burn it at once. What? Nonsense! Get him a new one. He mustn't have that any more!"

And so the little Rabbit was put into a sack with the old picture books and a lot of rubbish, and carried out to the end of the garden behind the fowl-house. That was a fine place to make a bonfire; only the gardener was too busy just then to attend to it. He had the potatoes to dig and the green peas to gather, but next morning he promised to come early and burn the whole lot.

That night the Boy slept in a different bedroom, and he had a new bunny to sleep with him. It was a splendid bunny, all white plush with real glass eyes, but the Boy was too excited to care very much about it. For to-morrow he was going to the seaside, and that in itself was such a wonderful thing that he could think of nothing else.

And while the Boy was asleep, dreaming of the seaside, the little Rabbit lay among the old picture books in the corner behind the fowl-house, and he felt very lonely. The sack had been left untied, and so by wriggling a bit he was able to get his head through the opening and look out. He was shivering a little, for he had always been used to sleeping in a proper bed, and by this time his coat had worn so thin and threadbare from hugging that it was no longer any protection to him. Near by he could see the thicket of raspberry canes, growing tall and close like a tropical jungle, in whose shadow he had played with the Boy on bygone mornings. He thought of those long sunlit hours in the garden! —How happy they were— and a great sadness came over him. He seemed to see them all pass before him, each more beautiful than the other, the fairy huts in the flower-bed, the quiet evenings in the wood when he lay in the bracken and the little ants ran over his paws; the wonderful day when he first knew that he was Real. He thought of the Skin Horse, so wise and gentle, and all that he had told him. Of what use was it to be loved and lose one's beauty and become Real if it all ended like this? And a tear, a real tear, trickled down his little shabby velvet nose and fell to the ground.

And then a strange thing happened. For where the tear had fallen a flower grew out of the ground, a mysterious flower, not at all like any that grew in the garden. It had slender green leaves the color of emeralds, and in the centre of the leaves a blossom like a golden cup. It was so beautiful that the little Rabbit forgot to cry, and just lay there watching it. And presently the blossom opened, and out of it there stepped a fairy.

She was quite the loveliest fairy in the whole world. Her dress was of pearl and dewdrops, and there were flowers round her neck and in her hair, and her face was like the most perfect flower of all. And she came close to the little Rabbit and gathered him up in her arms and kissed him on his velveteen nose that was all damp from crying.

"Little Rabbit," she said, "don't you know who I am?"

The Rabbit looked up at her, and it seemed to him that he had seen her face before, but he couldn't think where.

“I am the nursery magic Fairy,” she said. “I take care of all the playthings that the children have loved. When they are old and worn out, and the children don’t need them any more, then I come and take them away with me and turn them into Real.”

“Wasn’t I Real before?” asked the little Rabbit.

“You were Real to the Boy,” the Fairy said, “because he loved you. Now you shall be Real to every one.”

And she held the little Rabbit close in her arms and flew with him into the wood.

It was light now, for the moon had risen. All the forest was beautiful, and the fronds of the bracken shone like frosted silver. In the open glade between the tree-trunks the wild rabbits danced with their shadows on the velvet grass, but when they saw the Fairy they all stopped dancing and stood round in a ring to stare at her.

“I’ve brought you a new playfellow,” the Fairy said. “You must be very kind to him and teach him all he needs to know in Rabbit-land, for he is going to live with you for ever and ever!”

And she kissed the little Rabbit again and put him down on the grass.

“Run and play, little Rabbit!” she said.

But the little Rabbit sat quite still for a moment and never moved. For when he saw all the wild rabbits dancing around him he suddenly remembered about his hind legs, and he didn’t want them to see that he was made all in one piece. He did not know that when the Fairy kissed him that last time she had changed him altogether. And he might have sat there a long time, too shy to move, if just then something hadn’t tickled his nose, and before he thought what he was doing he lifted his hind toe to scratch it.

And he found that he actually had hind legs! Instead of dingy velveteen he had brown fur, soft and shiny, his ears twitched by themselves, and his whiskers were so long that they brushed the grass. He gave one leap and the joy of using those hind legs was so great that he went springing about the turf with them, jumping sideways and whirling round as the other did, and he grew so excited that when at last he did stop to look for the Fairy she had gone.

He was a Real Rabbit at last, at home with the other rabbits.

Autumn passed and Winter, and in the Spring, when the days grew warm and sunny, the Boy went out to play in the wood behind the house. And while he was playing, two rabbits crept out from the bracken and peeped at him. One of them was brown all over, but the other had strange markings under his fur, as though long ago he had been spotted, and the spots still showed through. And about his little soft nose and his round back eyes there was something familiar, so that the Boy thought to himself:

“Why, he looks just like my old Bunny that was lost when I had scarlet fever!”

But he never knew that it really was his own Bunny, come back to look at the child who had first helped him to be Real.

# Step Ten: “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

## Brief Outline

In Step Ten you will continue to take personal inventory. The purpose of doing this is so you can continue to grow spiritually. It is not possible to just stay the same, and this is especially true for the alcoholic or other addict. Unless you move forward, you will slip backward toward the insanity of the illness of the mind—the obsession with the idea that you can safely drink or use again. If this idea is left unchallenged, you will surely revert to your disease and progression toward death.

It should be fairly obvious from all of this that moving ahead spiritually is essential to recovery. By working Step Ten on a daily basis, you also work Steps Four through Nine on a daily basis for the rest of your life and keep yourself spiritually fit and growing.

Now stop and read page 84, line 16, to page 85, line 23, in your *Big Book*.

### Exercise 1: What the Big Book Says About Step Ten

There are several key ideas in the *Big Book’s* description of Step ten. Use your own words to tell what the following phrases from the *Big Book* might mean in your life:

“We have entered the world of the Spirit.”

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“We have ceased fighting anything or anyone.”

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“What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.”

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**Exercise 2: Nine Questions to Help You Work Step Ten**

The “personal inventory” of Step Ten need not be a written one, but perhaps the following questions might help you direct and organize your daily thoughts and reflections in a more meaningful way. Use the following questions to look at the past twenty-four hours. Briefly fill in your responses to each question either in your mind or on paper.

- 1. How may I have harmed myself or someone else today?

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- 2. Which of my character defects caused me to do those harmful things?

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- 3. How was I selfish, dishonest, resentful, or fearful?

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- 4. Did I ask my Higher Power to remove my selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear as soon as I was aware of them? What is left for my Higher Power to remove?

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- 5. Did I admit my mistakes promptly and make amends? What do I still need to take care of?

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6. How often during the day was I feeling gratitude, and how often was I feeling self-pity?

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7. What good did I do today?

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8. How was I loving and compassionate?

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9. Who did I help today, and how?

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**Exercise 3: “Thy Will (Not Mine) Be Done”**

The *Big Book* says on page 85, line 18–19, that each day alcoholics “must carry the vision of God’s will into all of (their) activities.” To express this thought, write the short suggested prayer on page 85, lines 19–20 of the *Big Book*, or write your own prayer.

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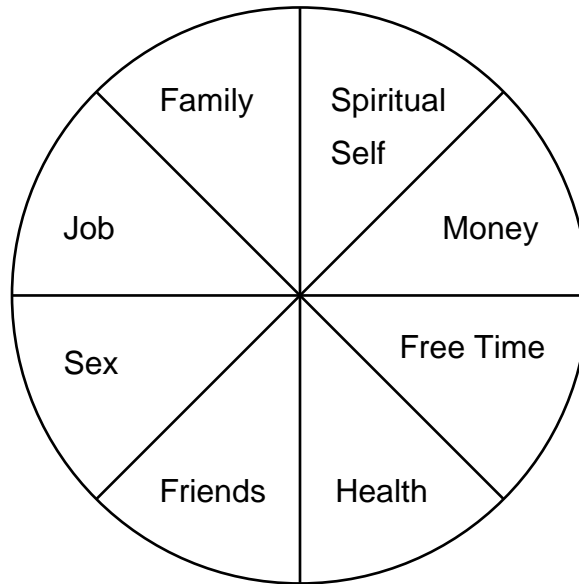
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Following the prayer on page 85, lines 19–20, the *Big Book* says, “we can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.” This means that your Higher Power—God as you understand God—will help with all areas of your life.

**Exercise 4: The Better-Live Pie**

The main areas of life appear on the pie shape that follows. These are the things that take time, energy, and attention in the lives of most people. We will call it the Better Life Pie—a life free from an obsession with alcohol and other drugs.

On each slice of the Better-Live Pie, draw a picture or describe in a few words how working Steps One through Ten have made your life saner, happier, freer, and more productive without alcohol or other drugs.



**Exercise 5: Celebrate!**

You are living a life without alcohol or other drugs, a life that is better in many ways. You are no longer ruled by the obsession to drink or use. You have regained sanity and begun to grow in the fourth dimension of living: the dimension of the spirit. It is time to celebrate! Do you feel like you deserve a celebration? If not, what is still blocking your good feelings about yourself and your Twelve Step program? What Steps do you need to rework to remove those blocks?

When you are ready to celebrate, what kind of celebration would you like to have? It does not have to be a party or involve a lot of people—it can be anything you want it to be, according to your mood or personality. Who else might be there? What would make it special for you? Describe your celebration below in words or with a drawing. Then go ahead and make it happen!

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**Notes on Step Ten from *The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous***

We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up our past. We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for a lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.

And we have ceased fighting anyone or anything—even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us, we are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. "How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done." These are, thoughts, which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.

Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action.

**Notes on Step Ten from *The Little Red Book***

Step Ten is one of the maintenance Steps. Its purpose is to remind us that moral defects—selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear—are still problems we will encounter daily. These defects remain serious threats to our sobriety. AA suggests a daily inventory to disclose our harmful thoughts and actions. Admitting mistakes is indispensable to our inventory and sobriety.

Step Ten is the AA slide rule for quick mental reckoning of daily AA progress—a perpetual mental inventory that safeguards our waking hours of sobriety and an appraisal to close each day. The plan of our philosophy is to live each Step. The object of Step Ten is to continue our personal inventory and daily check the progress we make with each Step in the AA program. By reviewing them we often find ourselves "off the beam." This is a bad spot for an alcoholic who invariably goes the whole hog if immediate steps toward correction are not taken.

Correction is possible if we realize our danger when our inventories reveal it to us. Prompt action upon such discovery is necessary. It is not unusual to find ourselves off the beam; the idea is to get back on again. The daily inventory is essential to this requirement.

Members may recognize a few of the off the beam positions in the following tendencies.

1. When we have forgotten we are alcoholics—we have nervous systems that are incapable of withstanding the narcotic effect of alcohol.
2. When complacency lowers our guard and allows resentment and intolerance to creep back into our lives.
3. When we ease up on the practice of honesty, humility, and making amends.
4. When we become cocky over our AA success and cease contact with God.



5. When we lack interest in new members and feel it inconvenient to help them.
6. When we demand authority or expect praise for our sobriety.
7. When boredom makes an appearance.
8. When we start missing AA meetings.
9. When we stop studying the AA book.

When our inventories disclose any of these symptoms, we stand in jeopardy of drinking. Our serious problem is self-centeredness. Further investigation will unearth a severe case of spiritual congestion. .

The antidote is a quick review of our alcoholism. We should pray for renewed interest. Read the *Big Book*. Talk AA with the members. Sincerely interest ourselves in our AA group. Attend more meetings. Do our bit. Consider our alcoholism as arrested but never cured. Lose ourselves in the program. Work with new members. Review the miracle that God has performed in our lives. Be honest and thankfully offer a prayer of gratitude. Always carry the *Big Book* on out of town trips.

The second part of Step Ten, "...when we were wrong, promptly admitted it," is not to be taken lightly. It is a good character conditioner. Recognition of a wrong is not enough; verbal acknowledgment should follow. The requirement of our program is to make amends if the wrong has harmed anyone. The inventory keeps us alert to our responsibility in this matter.

We must admit our wrongs to receive the feelings of decency and worthiness that keep us in the right mental and spiritual condition to maintain contented permanent sobriety.

Admitting our mistakes brings both psychological and spiritual benefits. They complement the personal inventory. They quicken our conscience, alerting us to knowledge of our need for God's help, for divine sublimation of our will, and for continued practice of Step Ten.

Step Ten makes us self-critical and less apt to criticize others. It keeps us on the beam. The inventory will let us know where we stand. It will keep us in good standing.

### **Notes on Step Ten from "A Good Tenth Step" from a Hazelden publication**

The price of freedom, it's often said, is eternal vigilance. In the business of living sober, we can't afford to hang on to useless, harmful attitudes and practices. If we're making mistakes or seem to be on a wrong course in any department of our lives, the sooner we admit it, the better chance we have of cutting our losses; i.e., reducing the pain and harm we may be causing. We do that by working the Tenth Step, which is actually a daily visit with Steps Four through Nine of the AA program.

The three areas that require constant scrutiny are: a) thoughts and motives, b) words, and c) actions. All of them can get me into trouble.

There are various ways we try to camouflage our wrongs. All we need to know about the subject, however, is that human pride and fear are always lurking to keep us from the painful task of dealing with our own faults. Bad thinking, like alcohol, is cunning, baffling, and powerful!

One of my most useful discoveries has been that wrongs do not necessarily have to be evil acts such as stealing or lying. As a recovering alcoholic, I can be in the wrong simply by the way I react to people or situations. If somebody injures me, for example, I am in the wrong by becoming indignant or vindictive about it.

There are times when we all need another person in order to take a good inventory. If something disturbs me, I need to find another person to talk it over with. And I've never done that without getting a changed feeling about the problem. There are times, too, when a problem can be discussed at an AA meeting, although it's often more satisfactory to take matters up with one person at a time.

Good Tenth Stepping brings its own rewards. The most important benefit of this Step is that it strengthens and protects one's sobriety. It also brings rewards in our personal relationships, freedom from fear of "being found out," freedom from guilt, and our ability to help others.

However well we're doing with the program, none of us ever has it made. Eternal vigilance in taking a Tenth Step inventory is the price of freedom. The rewards in sobriety and personal growth are well worth the price.

### **Five Ways to Turn a Frown Upside Down and Stop Being a Worrywart**

Stop worrying! There is a way to break the fretting habit. There are ways to shut out thoughts that can distract you from work, sleep, or pleasure.

The trick is to restrict worry to a certain time and place so you can spend the rest of the day productively. By saving your worrisome thoughts until a later time, you will be less likely to suffer from anxiety, insomnia, and depression.

Here is the five-step action plan:

1. Set aside a half-hour worry period at the same time each day and in the same place. But avoid doing this near bedtime, because it may produce insomnia if done too late. The best time is late afternoon or early evening. Begin by moving a table and chair into a corner and call this your "worry furniture" for the next 30 minutes. During this time, write down your concerns and fears and try to find solutions. Think through these worries in your mind. When you have finished, move the furniture back to where it belongs. The useful aspect of this step is that it helps you postpone obsessive worries that intrude upon daytime awareness and efficiency.
2. Learn to identify early signs of worry. Some people mull over things a long time before they even realize their pre-occupation. If you can catch yourself in the early stages, these worrisome phases are easier to recognize and control. Tell yourself: "I don't have time to think about this now, I can worry about it later." This may be difficult for some, because worry is a habit. Five seconds later they may find themselves worrying again. It takes time and effort to change an old habit, and you may find yourself practicing this step over and over again.
3. Use your half-hour worry period in any way you want. You do not even have to worry—as long as you postpone daily concerns to this future time. One positive thing to do during this time is to focus on lesser worries. The more you practice and succeed at that, the more adept you will become at handling difficult situations.
4. Concentrate on the task at hand. You may fear that if you stop worrying, the thing you are concerned about will happen for sure. This is superstition, wastes good mental energy, and intrudes on your awareness. Some people may find moderate amounts of worry helpful and comforting, but excessive worriers anticipate all kinds of negative events. These intruding thoughts can disrupt your attention and disturb performance. These people must stay busy in order to take their minds off obsessive thinking.
5. Define just what it is you are worried about. If necessary, use your worry time to decide which things you can do something about and which you cannot. Then plan a course of action. Make a list and use it as a guide toward a solution. Plan to reward yourself each time you concentrate on the positive aspects of life.

Remember; it takes more muscles to frown than to smile, so SMILE!

## Key Concepts for Step Ten

*Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*

- Key 1:** We now commence to put our AA way of living to practical use, day-to-day, in fair weather or foul. Then comes the acid test: can we stay sober, keep in emotional balance, and live to good purpose under, all conditions?
- Key 2:** A continuous look at our assets and liabilities, and a real desire to learn and grow by this means, are necessities for us.
- Key 3:** The wise have always known that no one can make much of his life until self-searching becomes a regular habit, until he is able to admit and accept what he finds, and until he patiently and persistently tries to correct what is wrong.
- Key 4:** ...the emotional hangover, the direct result of yesterday's and sometimes today's excesses of negative emotion—anger, fear, jealousy, and the like. If we would live serenely today and tomorrow, we certainly need to eliminate these hangovers. This requires an admission and correction of errors now. Our I inventory enables us to settle with the past
- Key 5:** Although all inventories are alike in principle but the time factor does distinguish them. The spot-check inventory is taken at any time of the day, whenever we find ourselves getting tangled up. There is the balance sheet we take at days end when we review the happenings of the hours just past. Then there are those occasions when alone or with our sponsor we make a careful review of our progress since the last time. Many AAs go in for annual or semi-annual house cleaning. Many of us take occasional retreats for an undisturbed day or so of self-overhaul and meditation.
- Key 6:** The emphasis on inventory is heavy only because a great many of us have never really acquired the habit of accurate self-appraisal.
- Key 7:** It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us!!!
- Key 8:** Few people have been more victimized by resentments than have we alcoholics. As we saw it, our wrath was always justified. Anger, that occasional luxury of more balanced people, could keep us on an emotional jag indefinitely. Other kinds of disturbances—jealousy, envy, self-pity, or hurt pride—did the same thing.
- Key 9:** In all situations we need self-restraint, honest analysis of what is involved, a willingness to admit when the fault is ours, and an equal willingness to forgive when the fault is elsewhere. We shall look for progress, not for perfection.
- Key 10:** Our first objective will be the development of self-restraint. Nothing pays off like restraint of tongue and pen. We can neither think nor act to good purpose until the habit of self-restraint has become automatic.
- Key 11:** We must be quite as careful when we begin to achieve some measure of importance and material success. We are sober only by the grace of God and any success we enjoy may be more due to his help than our efforts.
- Key 12:** Finally, we begin to see that all people, including ourselves, are to some extent emotionally ill as well as frequently wrong, and then we approach true tolerance and see what real love for our fellows actually means.
- Key 13:** We can try to stop making unreasonable demands upon those we love.
- Key 14:** Such a radical change in our outlook will take time, maybe a lot of time.

- Key 15:** When we fail any of these people, we can promptly admit it—to ourselves always, and to them also, when the admission would be helpful, Courtesy, kindness, justice, and love are the keynotes by which we may come into harmony with practically anybody.
- Key 16:** When in doubt we can always pause, saying, “not my will, but Thine, be done”—And we can often ask ourselves, “Am I doing to others as I would have them do to me—today?”
- Key 17:** Inventory-taking is not always done in red ink. As a matter of fact, the waking hours are usually well filled with things that are constructive. Good intentions, good thoughts, and good acts are there for us to see.
- Key 18:** We should carefully examine our motives in each thought or act that appears to be wrong. In most cases our motives won’t be hard to see and understand. When prideful, angry, jealous, anxious, or fearful, we acted accordingly. Here we need only recognize that we did act or think badly, try to visualize how we might have done better, and resolve with God’s help to carry these lessons over into tomorrow, making, of course, any amends still neglected.
- Key 19:** In other instances only the closest scrutiny will reveal what our true motives were. There are cases where our ancient enemy, rationalization, has stepped in and justified conduct which was really wrong. The temptation here is to imagine that we had good motives and reasons when we really didn’t. This odd trait of mind and emotion, this perverse wish to hide a bad motive underneath a good one permeates human affairs from top to bottom.
- Key 20:** Learning daily to spot, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek.

*Will you take a daily inventory, and when you make a mistake or are wrong, promptly admit it?*

### **Home Study**

*Big Book:* Chapter 6, Pages 84 to 85, and Stories 7 thru 13 in They Lost Nearly All

*12&12:* Read the Step 10.

***Tips for Taking a Daily Inventory–I***

Ask yourself the following questions as you look back on each day:

1. Have I refrained from drinking or using today?
2. Was I **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, and **T**ired today?
3. Have I tried to fulfill my obligations today?
4. Was I resentful, selfish, dishonest, or afraid today?
5. Do I owe an apology?
6. Is there something I need to discuss with someone today?
7. Was I kind and loving towards everyone today? (Who was I kind and loving towards?)
8. Am I taking myself too seriously today?
9. Did I judge my insides by somebody else's outsides today?
10. Have I, in short, done about the best I could today?
11. What could I have done better?
12. Did I remember progress not perfection?

***Tips for Taking a Daily Inventory–II***

Ask yourself the following questions as you look back on each day:

1. Did I have a plan for the day, and did I follow it?
2. With whom did I spend most of my time?
3. Where did I spend most of my time?
4. What was the quality of the judgments I made today?
5. Did anything threaten my sobriety today? What?
6. What specific work did I do on my AA program (attending meetings, doing meditations, reading AA material or listening to it on audio tapes, etc.)?
7. Did I feel my attitude toward recovery was constructive today?
8. Was I honest in all my dealings?
9. Have I been fair in all my interaction with others? Were there situations today where I was wrong or unreasonable? Did I make amends?
10. What good things happened? How did I react to them?
11. Did any bad things happen? What were they? How did I react?
12. What do I feel I have accomplished this day? What would I have liked to have done that I didn't do? What would I have done differently?

We look at our current behavior and ask ourselves if we are living by our values. Am I being honest today? Am I maintaining personal integrity in my relations with others? Am I growing, or am I slipping back into old patterns? We concentrate on the overall picture of our day.

In order to examine our day or our life, for that matter in its entirety, we have to draw on the humility we've acquired in the previous steps. We have learned quite a bit about ourselves: how we've responded to life in the past and how we want to respond to life now. It takes a great deal of awareness to humbly acknowledge our part in our own lives. We may have trouble knowing when we are wrong simply because we usually intend to be right. For instance, at some point in our recovery, we may attend a group

business meeting firmly convinced that we know what the group should do. We've studied all sides of the issues. We forcefully share our views at the meeting. We're so convinced of our rightness that we fail to recognize our self-righteousness. We are blind to the harm we're causing others by not respecting their views as much as our own.

Often we act in ways that are contrary to our values, yet we expect others to live up to our standards. For instance, we may find ourselves flinching when we hear others gossiping about someone. Following such an occurrence, we are likely to be self-righteous-until we catch ourselves doing the very same thing. Other situations can occur when we become supercritical of others. For example, we may have a tendency to have high expectations of others; however, we have a variety of excuses at hand for why these standards don't apply to us! If we find ourselves in the midst of such moral uncertainty, we can use the principles of the Tenth Step to provide more clarity.

There may be other times in our lives when we find ourselves in a situation that seems to require a compromise of our personal beliefs and values. For instance, if we had gained employment at a company only to discover that our employer expected us to indulge in questionable business practices, we could reasonably expect to feel confused about the choices available to us. Deciding what to do about such a difficult dilemma would be a tough decision for any one of us. We may be tempted to make a snap judgment or expect our sponsor to provide an easy answer; however, we have found that no one can solve such a dilemma for us. While our sponsor will provide us with guidance, we must apply the principles of the program for ourselves and arrive at our own decision. In the end, we are the ones who must live with our conscience. In order to do so comfortably we must decide what is, and what is not, morally acceptable in our lives.

It can be very confusing to determine when we were wrong, especially when we're right in the middle of a conflict. When our emotions are running high, we may not be able to take an honest look at ourselves. We can see only our immediate wants and needs. At such times, our sponsor may suggest that we take a personal inventory on a particular area of our lives so that we can see our part. If our friends notice that we're acting on a character defect, they may suggest that we talk to our sponsor about it. Being open-minded to the suggestions of our sponsor and our NA friends, paying attention to what our conscience is telling us, spending some quiet time with the God of our understanding-all these things will lead us to greater clarity.

Once we're aware that we've been wrong-whether it's five minutes, five hours, or five days after the fact we need to admit our error as soon as possible and correct any harm we've caused. As in the Ninth Step, we find that the process of admitting our mistakes and changing our behavior brings about tremendous freedom.

Of course, we must be just as careful when amending our current behavior, as we were when we made amends in the Ninth Step. For instance, if we find that we were wrong because we sat in a meeting silently judging someone who shared, we certainly don't need to go tell that person what we were thinking. Instead, we can make an effort to be more tolerant.

We must remember that the Tenth Step isn't a one-sided endeavor, an exercise in noting what we have done wrong. We must resist any urge to become obsessive with this step, ruthlessly searching out every flaw in our character. The point of the Tenth Step is for us to be willing to pay attention to our thoughts, behaviors, and values, and then work on what we need to change. We should acknowledge that, quite often our motives are good and we do things right. Character defects and character assets do not exclude each other, and we are sure to find both on any given day.

**From NA IP No. 9 Living The Program**

## What Worked For Us:

- ❖ The purpose of this daily inventory is to keep track of who we are and what we are doing today.
- ❖ Try to answer every question, every day. Keep your answers as simple and as honest as you can. If you miss a day, do not make it up later.
- ❖ Limit your answers and concerns to the past twenty-four hours and complete the questions at the end of the day.
- ❖ If you wish to share some of this journal, we suggest that you do so verbally.
- ❖ Remember that a daily inventory is not a test; there are no right or wrong answers. Do not get upset if you could have done better or if you fail to live up to your expectations of yourself. Remember, this is a program of growth and recovery and if you are clean today, you are doing something right.

***Just for today my thoughts will be on my recovery, living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.***

1. Am I clean today?
2. How have I acted differently?
3. Did my disease run my life today?
4. If so, how?
5. What did I do today that I wish I had not done?
6. What have I left undone that I wish I had done?
7. Was I good to myself today?
8. How?
9. Was today a good day?
10. Was I happy?
11. Was I serene?

***Just for today I will have faith in someone in NA who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery.***

1. Did I talk to my sponsor today?
2. Did I attend a meeting today?
3. Where?
4. Did I share my experiences, strengths, and hopes?
5. Who are the people in my life that I trust today?
6. Who has trust in me today?

***Just for today I will have a program; I will try to follow it to the best of my ability.***

1. Did I read from our literature today?
2. What steps did I consciously work?
3. Did I admit my powerlessness today?
4. Was I able to put my trust in my Higher Power today?
5. What did I learn about myself today?
6. Did I make any amends today?

7. Do I owe any?
8. Did I admit fault to anyone today?
9. Did I worry about yesterday or tomorrow?
10. Can I accept myself as I am today?

***Just for today, through NA, I will try to get a better perspective on my life.***

1. Did I feel like I was part of humanity today?
2. Did I allow myself to become obsessed by anything today?
3. What has God given me to be grateful for today?
4. Have I done anything to cause harm to myself or to another today?
5. If so, what?
6. Am I willing to change today?
7. Did I pray or meditate today?
8. How did this affect my life?
9. What spiritual principles have I been able to practice in my life today?
10. Was the most important thing in my life today staying clean?

***Just for today I will be unafraid; my thoughts will be on my new associations, people who are not using and have found a new way of life. So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear.***

1. Have I given of myself today without expecting anything in return?
2. Was there fear in my life today?
3. Did I feel intense joy or pain?
4. Did I call or visit someone in the program today?
5. Did I pray for the well being of another today?
6. Was I happy today?
7. Have I been peaceful today?
8. Did I consciously remember that I have a choice today?

***Dear God, show me what I have done right and wrong today. Show me how I can better live and serve your will tomorrow.***

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# Step Eleven: “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”

## Brief Outline

Step Eleven is about staying in regular contact with your Higher Power. It is about knowing your Higher Power’s will so you will know what to do in any situation. And Step Eleven tells you exactly how to do this—through prayer and meditation.

**Before continuing, open your Big Book to page 85, line 24, and read to the end of Chapter Six.**

At first, many people draw a blank or come up with a big question mark when they read about the importance of prayer and meditation. Or maybe they remember the prayer that they used over and over when they were drinking: “God, get me out of this mess and I swear I’ll never do it again!” That is a typical alcoholic’s prayer and is pretty much the extent of a lot of alcoholics’ or addicts’ prayer lives before coming to AA or NA. As for meditation, most knew nothing at all about it.

It was not until they began working the Twelve Steps that most alcoholics or addicts saw prayer as a way to receive the will of a Higher Power into their lives. It never occurred to them when drinking or using to even want to receive that will and carry it out. For many, prayer was used to approach God with a list of their petty wants and ask for this thing and that thing, trying to sway God’s will to suit their own.

Let’s take a minute and, in the exercise that follows, look at what you think about prayer and meditation.

(Although the *Big Book*, written in the late 1930’s, refers to “God” as “Him,” no deliberate gender preference was intended. The words “Her” or simply “God,” depending on your preference, can be substituted for “Him.”)

### **Exercise 1: What the Big Book Says About Step Eleven**

Answer the following questions about prayer and meditation.

- 1. What do you think of when you think of prayer?

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- 2. What do you think of when you think of meditation?

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3. How have you used prayer and meditation before?

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4. What kind of experience did you have the last time you prayed? Helpful? Unhelpful? Frustrating? Comforting? Describe.

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5. What kind of experience did you have the last time you meditated? Helpful? Unhelpful? Frustrating? Comforting? Describe.

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The *Big Book* recognizes that many people may be confused by prayer and meditation and, due to past experiences, are reluctant to try. On pages 86 to 88, the *Big Book* gives you specific ways to overcome your resistance to prayer and meditation. You can teach yourself to do them. Within those directions, prayer is described as a constructive review, a request for inspiration, and humbly asking your Higher Power to make its will known.

**Exercise 2: A Guide to Reviewing Your Day**

To help you make a constructive review of each day, the *Big Book* offers specific questions and suggestions on pages 86–88. In the three main areas that follow, you will be asked to write down these questions and suggestions. Each of these main areas covers one of the three times you will use prayer and meditation during a twenty-four hour period: when you go to bed, when you wake up, and during the day. When you have finished writing, pick a day and try using this list to structure your thoughts and to answer the questions either to yourself or by writing them down if you wish.

**Seven questions to ask when I go to bed.** (*Big Book*, page 86, lines 5-18.)

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2. 

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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***When I wake up, what will I be asking God to help me with for the day ahead?***

*(Big Book, page 86, line 19, through page 87, line 19)*

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***During the day... (Big Book, page 87, line 31, through page 88, line 7)***

1. When agitated or doubtful I will \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I will constantly remind myself \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. And will humbly say to myself as often as I need to \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 3: Prayer and Meditation Log**

Recovery is a process that is lived one day at a time. Each of these days should involve prayer and meditation. It may help to use a prayer and meditation schedule of log, especially if you are just starting out. At the top of the next page is an example of a prayer and meditation log. You can make as many copies as you need.

**Prayer and Meditation Log**

Page # \_\_\_\_\_

DATE:	TIME:	PLACE:
Thoughts and feelings that block prayer and meditation:		How can I put them aside: _____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____

Even though prayer and meditation might sound mystical at first, with practice you will see a Higher Power’s direction for your life. With prayer and meditation in your daily life, inspiration will become more and more a natural part of your thinking. Here are some suggestions that might help you get started:

- ❖ Plan for prayer and meditation at least fifteen to thirty minutes every day.
- ❖ Find a quiet place where you will not be distracted.
- ❖ Use a straight-backed chair or sit so your spine is comfortably straight.
- ❖ Concentrate on your breathing. It should be slow and regular.
- ❖ Be aware of thoughts, feelings, obligations, or other things that block prayer or meditation and find ways to put them aside or just let them go. (Remember, you are removing obstacles to a Higher Power, which is within all of us.)
- ❖ Use affirmations, prayers, or other meditative writings that have been helpful to you in the past.
- ❖ Use other resources recommended by your sponsor and other people in your Twelve Step group whom you trust.

When you have worked the Twelve Step program as it has been described so far, you have made it through the first eleven Steps, and you have had the *Big Book’s* biggest promise fulfilled in your life: You have had a spiritual awakening. Step Twelve begins with those words. It is stated as a fact.

**Notes on Step Eleven from The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous**

Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn’t be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it. It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest, or afraid? Do we owe an apology? After making our review we ask God’s forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken?

On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest

or self-seeking motives. In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or decision. We relax and take it easy. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely on it.

We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no requests for ourselves only.

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day “Thy will be done.” We are then in much less danger of *excitement*, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.

It works—it really does.

### **Notes on Step Eleven from The Little Red Book**

Step Eleven can be broken into three parts. The first recommends the use of prayer and meditation to improve our understanding of God and our contact with Him.

A prayer for improved contact with God, for knowledge of His will, and for mental, physical, and spiritual energy to carry it out, requires the coordinated effort of all our faculties.

When complacency develops we are apt to forget the part that God has played in effecting our rehabilitation. We overlook the fact that our nervous systems are still those of alcoholics. We seem to forget that as alcoholics we are susceptible to moods and emotions that we formerly appeased with alcohol. Complacency obscures the knowledge that our recovery from alcoholism was granted by a *Power greater than ourselves*. Without contact with God, returning to former physical and spiritual lows is probable.

Step Eleven is a maintenance Step that was planned to keep us out of the alcoholic rut and make us stay put. It keeps us spiritually active and in tune with God. It insures against the dulling of inspiration as our alcoholic problems diminish.

In reality we have a “daily reprieve” and our reprieves are “contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” The bitter experiences of members who insist on learning the hard way attest to the truth of this statement. Their trouble invariably begins with neglect of prayer. It slowly matures as they abandon conscious contact with God and service to others.

A sure way of increasing God’s help and improving our contact with God is through simple prayers of sincere gratitude. We can meditate on the help He has given, acknowledge its source, and be genuine in our thanks for His understanding of our alcohol problem and the strength He has given us to overcome it. Prayers of gratitude are especially good for alcoholics. They kill egoism and awaken us to life’s true values. We need endless experience in the practice of unselfish prayer to balance the spiritual debits alcoholism has charged against us.

Relaxation of mind and body and surrender of our will to God are necessary before prayer and meditation are truly satisfying. We owe God both humility and respect; we show it by freeing ourselves, for the moment, from material considerations, self-pity, fear, or anxiety, and by giving Him our undivided attention.

Alcoholics possess a restless spirit that tends toward over activity. Therefore we recommend relaxation as an aid to prayer and suggest that a quiet time, aside from prayer, will be beneficial to all alcoholics. We attempt to momentarily suspend all mental and physical activities. We try to relax our entire bodies, and then close our minds to the worries and anxieties about us. What do we think about? Just relaxation. Then we let go of our cares and turn to God with this simple prayer: *Thy Will Be Done*.

The second part of this Step deals with prayer for a *knowledge of His will*. This knowledge will bring the proper use of our will, which seems to be tied up in self-denial and willing service to others.

The questions that have repeatedly confronted members are: What is God's will? How am I to know it from my own will? In AA, God's will for the alcoholic is sobriety. Other aspects embrace conscious contact with him, faith, prayer, honesty, and humility. But, day-by-day, sobriety is the first essential of His will for us.

The will of God would be easier understood and executed if there were no one in the world to consider but ourselves. The resulting self-centered living would soon become boring beyond belief. Human happiness stems from faith in God, from human association, and from a desire to live and let live. Therefore, we deduce that our understanding of God's will ***starts with surrender of our wills to Him and with charitable, loving acts of service to others. We cannot live unto ourselves alone.***

Our spiritual awakening is contingent upon our personality change. It results from renouncing self-will, from admitting our wrongs, from charitable deeds that benefit others at the expense of our own time and money, and from making amends. It was only while engaged in thought and activity of this nature that we keenly felt the presence of God, or came close to the knowledge of His will. The answer to our prayer for such understanding comes with the least effort when we are on spiritual missions of help and service, when our conscience guides us, and when we forgive and feel gratitude. Our efforts in this direction, aided by faith and prayer for guidance, will bring us near to God.

The third part of this Step relates to prayer for ***the power to carry out God's will***. This prayer is for mental efficiency, for spiritual strength, and for physical endurance.

The power is developed as we surrender self-centeredness, and by prayer and meditation. We "improve our conscious contact with God" when we forgive and help others.

We cannot live others' lives, but we can help them help themselves. Our interest will urge them to renewed effort. As we aid their progress we enrich our own resourcefulness. As we help them develop strength we are unconsciously devising ways and means for gaining new power and understanding ourselves.

At times our thinking becomes self-centered. We try to force issues. We mistake our willfulness for Divine Will, and by sheer willpower we accomplish certain objectives. The true source of such power soon becomes evident. We find ourselves out of harmony with other members. We lose that warm feeling of accomplishment. We lack proper inspiration. We are unappreciated and misunderstood. We do things that give us no pleasure and are not useful to others. When this occurs we may be sure the power we are generating has no connection with the *Power greater than ourselves*.

As alcoholics, we have overlooked the value of harnessing the right emotional energy. We have used the energy of destructive, negative power at the expense of creative, positive power. We have overlooked a greater source of energy than we are capable of generating, that of love. It is reasonable to believe, therefore, that the *power to carry out God's will must come from the inspiration and energy that are found in the emotion, love—love that embraces God and humankind. We serve and appreciate both.*

## Suggested Prayers

1) *Eleventh Step Prayer*

**THE PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS**

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is doubt, faith  
Where there is despair, hope  
Where there is darkness, light  
Where there is sadness, joy  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled, as to console  
To be understood, as to understand  
To be loved, as to love  
For it is in giving that we receive  
It is in pardoning, that we are pardoned  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

2) *Seventh Step Prayer*

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character, which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.

3) *Third Step Prayer*

God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Takeaway my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life. May I do Thy will always!

4) *The Serenity Prayer*

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.  
Thy will, not mine, be done.

5) *Tenth Step Prayer*

How can I best serve Thee? Thy will (not mine) be done.

6) ***The Lord's Prayer***

Our Father, which art in Heaven,  
Hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who have trespassed against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom,  
And the power, and the glory  
Forever and ever. Amen.

See if you can find Steps Two, Three, Four, Seven, Eight, Nine, and Eleven, as well the AA principle of One Day at a Time, in this prayer.

Go through the promises to see which have come true in your life.

***The Twelve Promises of AA***

1. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
2. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
3. We will comprehend the word serenity.
4. We will know peace.
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone; we will see how our experience can benefit others.
6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
8. Self-seeking will slip away.
9. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
10. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations, which used to baffle us.
12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.



## Key Concepts for Step Eleven

***Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.***

- Key 1: Prayer and meditation are our principal means of conscious contact with God.
- Key 2: It has been well said “almost the only scoffers at prayer are those who never tried it enough.”
- Key 3: Those of us who have come to make regular use of prayer would no more do without it than we would refuse air, food, or sunshine; and for the same reason. When we turn away from meditation and prayer, we deprive our minds, our emotions, and our intuitions of vitally needed support. We all need the light of God’s reality, the nourishment of His strength, and the atmosphere of His grace.
- Key 4: There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer. When they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life.
- Key 5: Self-searching is the means by which we bring new vision, action, and grace to bear upon the dark and negative side of our natures. It is a step in the development of that kind of humility that makes it possible for us to receive God’s help. Yet it is only a step. We will want to go further.
- Key 6: We will want the good that is in us all, even in the worst of us, to flower and to grow. Most certainly we shall need bracing air and an abundance of food. But first of all we shall want sunlight; nothing much can grow in the dark. Meditation is our step out into the sun.
- Key 7: In meditation debate has no place. We rest quietly with the thoughts of someone who knows, so that we may experience and learn.
- Key 8: No man can build a house until he first envisions a plan for it. Well, meditation is like that too. It helps to envision our spiritual objective before we try to move toward it.
- Key 9: Meditation is perhaps our first attempt at a mood, a “flier” into the realm of spirit.
- Key 10: Meditation is something, which can always be further developed. It has no boundaries. It is essentially an individual adventure; something which, each one of us works out in his own way. But its object is always the same, to improve our conscious contact with God, with His grace, wisdom, and love.
- Key 11: Let’s always remember that meditation is in reality intensely practical. One of its first fruits is emotional balance. With it we can broaden and deepen the channel between ourselves and God as we understand Him.
- Key 12: Now, what of prayer? Prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God.
- Key 13: Prayer, as commonly understood, is a petition to God. Having opened our channel as best we can, we try to ask for those right things of which we and others are in the greatest need. And we think that the whole range of our needs is well defined by that part of Step Eleven, which says, “knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.” A request for this fits in any part of our day.
- Key 14: When making specific requests, it will be well to add to each one of them this qualification: “if it be Thy will.” We ask simply that throughout the day our Higher Power place in us the best understanding of His will that we can have for that day, and that we be given the grace by which we may carry it out.
- Key 15: As the day goes on, we can pause where situations must be met and decisions made, and renew the simple request: “Thy will, not mine, be done.”
- Key 16: We will more surely keep our emotional balance, provided we remember, and repeat to ourselves a particular prayer or phrase that has appealed to us in our reading or meditation.

- Key 17: In AA we have found that the actual good results of prayer are beyond question. They are matters of knowledge and experience. All those who have persisted have found strength not ordinarily their own. They have found wisdom beyond their usual capability. And they have increasingly found a peace of mind, which can stand firm in the face of difficult circumstances.
- Key 18: We discover that we do receive guidance for our lives to just about the extent that we stop making demands upon our higher Power to give it to us on order and on our terms.
- Key 19: Our affairs have taken remarkable and unexpected turns for the better as we have tried to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power.
- Key 20: Out of every season of grief or suffering, when the hand of God seemed heavy or even unjust, new lessons for living were learned, new resources of courage were uncovered, and that finally, inescapably, the conviction came that God does “move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.”
- Key 21: All of us, without exception, pass through times when we can pray only with the greatest exertion of will. Occasionally we go even further than this. We are seized with a rebellion so sickening that we simply won’t pray. When these things happen we should not think too ill of ourselves. We should simply resume prayer as soon as we can, doing what we know to be good for us.
- Key 22: Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of belonging that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless. We know that God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to Him, all will be well with us, here and hereafter.

***Will you seek through Prayer and Meditation to improve your conscious contact with God, as you understand Him?***

**Home Study**

*Big Book:* Chapter 6, Pages 60 to 63, Pages 85 to 88, and Pages 100 to 103.

*12&12:* Read the Step 11 and Step 3.

## Additional Step Eleven Readings

Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it. It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest, or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves, which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse, or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.

On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought- life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.

In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.

We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why.

### **Prayer**

*"I've tried praying, but nothing happens. What's the use?"*

When you dial a friend on the telephone and get a busy signal or no answer, you try, again. If you don't, you won't make contact. It's no different with praying. Many people seem to get a busy signal or no answer when they call God. Very few achieve the quick response-what they might term a spiritual experience. But if they keep at it, regularly and faithfully, experience shows they will eventually get through.

How do you know you've gotten through? No, not by that bolt of lightning. Not even by having your prayers answered-what you're asking for may not be what your Higher Power has in mind. Success may be so gradual, so slow that you don't even realize at first that something is happening. You may not recognize it until someone you haven't seen for a long time comments on how much more "together" or at peace you seem. Or maybe you just start feeling good,

Persevering is often difficult for alcoholics/addicts. They like quick solutions, immediate gratification-orgasm without love, satisfaction without effort. But if you give up, one thing is sure: You'll never get through.

### **Daily Meditation**

*"Meditation sounds like some fringe religion stuff. It makes me feel uncomfortable."*

Prayer has been described as talking to God, meditation as listening. For some people that means listening to God, to others just to their inner selves. But in the hectic outer-directed culture we live in, we so rarely take time to listen to our inner voices that some of us have come to think of meditation as flaky. Not only is taking the time to stop and listen not flaky, in recovery it's downright necessary.

The very word *meditation* repels some people. It sounds like something that only people with turbans or shaved heads should do. But meditation is far from far-out. It's just doing some controlled thinking, or mind exercises, to make yourself feel better—physically, mentally, and emotionally. It's like turning on a private educational TV in your head and tuning in to yourself. You can do it while you're sitting in your living room, lying in your bed, walking along the beach, or jogging in the park. As you become more adept at it, you'll be able to use meditation to calm yourself in stressful situations.

There are almost as many different approaches to meditation as there are air flights to Atlanta. Three that work successfully in recovery are:

### ***Relaxation Meditation***

The purpose of this type of meditation is to relax completely, both body and mind. This may be accomplished by emptying the mind of extraneous thoughts and focusing on breathing, on your movements if you're walking, on a peaceful scene, on a non-sense word, or on a simple, repetitive prayer or thought. For some people, yoga does the trick. For others, reading escapist literature (something that is pure fun and doesn't relate to your life in any way) works as relaxation meditation.

Relaxation meditation is good for getting the kinks out on a regular basis, but it is also valuable for reducing anxiety in a tense situation (before a job interview, when you're about to begin a difficult discussion, when you're mugged by a sudden craving). Just a minute or two of deep breathing can lower your blood pressure and reduce your level of stress.

Good relaxation exercises include: In a comfortable position and with eyes closed, breathe in deeply and say, "I am..." then breathe out and say, "relaxed." Then: "I am... calm and serene." You can stop there, or you can follow that by imagining that you're breathing in and out through your feet and then (several times, in turn) your legs, your abdomen, your chest, your back, your arms, your face, your scalp—which indeed your cells are doing. Or just concentrate on relaxing your body, part by part.

### ***Contemplation Meditation***

This form of meditation gives you a chance to think about the past day or days, about failures and successes, and about how you can make the next day better. When you have trouble getting started, use one of the standard meditation books (see below) to turn on your meditation machinery.

### ***Life-in-Order Meditation***

When responsibilities pile up faster than the available hours, it's useful to take time out to reorder priorities and think about the things that need to be accomplished. Having a small pad and pencil handy to jot down key words (but not for extensive note making) during this type of "meditation" is helpful.

Many in recovery use all three types of meditation as needed. Those who make meditation a part of their daily lives swear by its effectiveness. If you're a novice, the following tips will help you get started. Try it. You almost certainly will like it.

- ❖ Meditation takes practice. You may not "get it" at first, but if you keep trying, eventually you will.
- ❖ Set aside a regular time each day for meditation. Some people find the early bird catches the spirit best; they meditate in the morning, before everyone else wakes up. For others the end of the day, perhaps when they are in bed, is most conducive to communing with themselves. Still others find

that walking (or jogging) focuses them best. Experiment to discover what works best for you.

- ❖ Choose a quiet place until you become skilled at meditation.
- ❖ Empty your mind of extraneous thoughts before beginning. There are several ways to do this: Breathe in and out several times, focusing on your breathing and nothing else. Or close your eyes and count to one hundred.
- ❖ A soft musical background (classical, religious) or sounds-of-nature tapes (waves lapping against the sand, a breeze rustling through trees) help some people get into the mood for meditation.
- ❖ Visualization of a place you associate with serenity (a tranquil mountain stream, a deserted beach at sunset) or imagining yourself floating serenely on a cloud can also help set the mood. You can focus on a painting or photo in the room, or summon up a scene in your mind. Try to do more than just “see” the scene; try to feel it-through sound, touch, smell, and even taste. Try to relax your body as well as your mind.
- ❖ If it will help you tune in to yourself, tune in to someone else first by listening to AA tapes. Choose the talks of people who have similar backgrounds and problems. Or read recovery meditation material, such as *The 24 Hour Book*, *One Day at a Time*, *Alateen One Day at a Time*.
- ❖ Use contemplation meditation as a way of taking your daily inventory. Ask yourself, “Have I been honest in all my words and actions today? Have some of my thoughts, words, or actions benefited me (or my ego) at the expense of others?”

Prayer and meditation are our principal means of conscious contact with God. We AA’s are active folk, enjoying the satisfactions of dealing with the realities of life, usually for the first time in our lives, and strenuously trying to help the next alcoholic who comes along. So it isn’t surprising that we often tend to slight serious meditation and prayer as something not really necessary. To be sure, we feel it is something that might help us to meet an occasional emergency, but at first many of us are apt to regard it as a somewhat mysterious skill of clergymen, from which we may hope to get a secondhand benefit. Or perhaps we don’t believe in these things at all. To certain newcomers and to those one-time agnostics who still cling to the AA group as their higher power, claims for the power of prayer may, despite all the logic and experience in proof of it, still be unconvincing or quite objectionable. Those of us who once felt this way can certainly understand and sympathize. We well remember how something deep inside us kept rebelling against the idea of bowing before any God. Many of us had strong logic, too, which “proved” there was no God whatever. What about all the accidents, sickness, cruelty, and injustice in the world? What about all those unhappy lives which were the direct result of unfortunate birth and uncontrollable circumstances? Surely there could be no justice in this scheme of things, and therefore no God at all. Sometimes we took a slightly different tack. Sure, we said to ourselves, the hen probably did come before the egg. No doubt the universe had a “first cause” of some sort, the God of the Atom, maybe, hot and cold by turns. But certainly there wasn’t any evidence of a God who knew or cared about human beings. We liked AA all right, and were quick to say that it had done miracles. But we recoiled from meditation and prayer as obstinately as the scientist who refused to perform a certain experiment lest it prove his pet theory wrong. Of course we finally did experiment, and when unexpected results followed, we felt different; in fact we knew different; and so we were sold on meditation and prayer. And that, we have found, can happen to anybody who tries. It has been well said that “almost the only scoffers at prayer are those who never tried it enough.”

Step Eleven says that we already have a conscious contact with the God of our understanding, and that the task before us now is to improve that contact. We began to develop our conscious awareness of a Higher Power in Step Two, learned to trust that Power for guidance in Step Three, and relied on that Power many times for many other reasons in the process of working through the steps. Each time we called upon our Higher Power for help, we improved our relationship with our Higher Power. Step Eleven recognizes that reaching out to the God of our understanding, referred to most simply as prayer, is one of the most effective means for building a relationship with God. The other means put

forth in this step is meditation. In this step, we will need to explore our own concepts of prayer and meditation, and make sure they reflect our spiritual path.

The Eleventh Step allows us the opportunity to find our own spiritual path, or further refine our path if we've already embarked on one.

Our spirituality has been developing since we first came to NA. We are constantly changing, and so is our spirituality. New territory, new people, and new situations have their effect on us, and our spirituality needs to respond.

Exploring our spirituality in the Eleventh Step is a wonderful and illuminating experience. We will be exposed to many new ideas, and we'll find that many of these new ideas come directly from our own knowledge of spiritual matters. Because we've developed a frame of reference about spirituality in the previous ten steps, we find that our insight has grown along with our capacity to comprehend new information about ourselves and our world. Spiritual exploration is wide open, and we will learn and find personal truths both in our concentrated efforts to understand more and in the most mundane details of our lives.

Many of us find that when we get to NA, we really need to "change Gods." Some of us believed in something we vaguely referred to as "God," but we didn't really understand anything about it, except that it seemed to be out to get us. We probably did some work in Steps Two and Three aimed at uncovering unhealthy ideas about our Higher Power, and then we tried to form some new ideas that allowed for a loving, caring Higher Power. For many of us, simply believing that we had a Higher Power that cared about us as individuals was enough to get us through the following steps. We didn't feel any need to develop our ideas any further.

But our ideas were developing anyway, even without our conscious effort. Each specific experience with working the steps provided us with clues about the nature of our Higher Power. We sensed truths about our Higher Power rather than understanding them intellectually. The moment we sat down with our sponsor to share our Fifth Step, many of us were suddenly filled with a quiet certainty that we could trust our sponsor, trust this process, and go forward; this was a moment in which many of us felt the presence of our Higher Power. This, along with the work we did in Steps Eight and Nine, implanted in many of us a growing awareness of our Higher Power's will for us.

These clues about the nature of our Higher Power are perhaps the primary factor in determining our spiritual path. Many of us have found that the spiritual path of our childhood doesn't mesh with the truths we are finding within the steps. For instance, if we sense that God is vast and open, and the spirituality we have been exposed to in the past suggested that God was confined and confining, we're probably not going to return to our earlier path. If we sense that our Higher Power cares in a very personal and individual way about each one of us, a belief system that presents a distant, unknowable, alien force may not work for us.

While some need to take a new path, others have found that just the opposite is true: that what we are discovering in the steps can be explored in more depth through the spiritual path of our childhood. It's possible that, through our step work, we've healed resentments we may have held against religious institutions, and as a result are able to return to those institutions with an open mind. For others, the religion of our childhood was little more than a place to hang out, a community to which we had a sentimental connection. In recovery, we begin to see how we can use our religion as our personal spiritual path.

It bears emphasizing that we should never confuse religion with spirituality. In NA, they are not the same thing at all. Narcotics Anonymous, itself, is not a religion. It offers a set of spiritual principles, and uses a concept referred to as "God," a "Higher Power," or a "Power greater than ourselves" for members to use as a path out of active addiction. The spiritual principles and the concept of a Higher Power can go along with a member's personal spiritual path that he or she follows outside of NA, or those principles and the concept of a Higher Power can serve as a spiritual path all by themselves. It's up to each member.

Some of us get to this point, and we just don't know. The institutions we've been involved with in the past hold no answers, but we can't think of anything that sounds like a better idea. For those with this experience, this is the point at which we embark on one of the most important journeys in our lives: the search for a way to understand a Higher Power. In this process, we are likely to visit every place that has anything to do with spirituality that's available in our community. We're also likely to read a great number of books concerned with spirituality and personal growth, and talk to a great number of people. We may commit for a time to any number of practices before settling on one—or we may never really settle on any one practice permanently. It Works mentions that many of our members adopt an “eclectic approach” to spirituality. If this applies to us, it's important to know that doing this is okay and will serve the spiritual needs of recovery just fine.

Members of NA often describe prayer as talking to God, and meditation as listening to God. This description has been part of the collective wisdom of NA for a long time because it captures the distinct meanings of prayer and meditation so well. We are building a relationship with our Higher Power, and we need to have a dialogue with that Power, not merely a monologue aimed in its direction.

Prayer is talking to our Higher Power, though not always in the form of actual speech. We worked on developing a form of prayer that felt right to us in the Second Step. We may find by now that we've further refined our approach to prayer to fit with our spiritual path. One of the forms of prayer in which virtually every NA member engages is the closing or opening prayer said at most NA meetings. Ultimately, the manner in which we pray is up to us as individuals. How often should we pray? Many of us set aside a specific time in our day—the beginning is fairly common—to pray. These prayers usually involve asking our Higher Power for another day clean or, as we will explore more fully later in this chapter, knowledge of God's will for us. When we communicate with our Higher Power at the end of our day, it is usually to express gratitude. Many of us try to incorporate prayer throughout our day. It is very good practice to pray regularly. It helps us form a habit of communicating with our Higher Power that may save our recovery some day.

If this is our first experience with the Eleventh Step, we may be surprised to learn we've already been meditating, and doing so on a regular basis. Each time we stand as a community at a meeting and observe a moment of silence, we are meditating.

It is from such beginnings that we go on to build a pattern of regular meditation. There are many different ways we can go about meditating, but its usual goal is to quiet the mind so that we can gain understanding and knowledge from our Higher Power. We try to minimize distractions so that we can concentrate on knowledge arising from our own spiritual connection. We try to be open to receiving this knowledge. It's essential that we understand that such knowledge is not necessarily, or even usually, immediate. It builds in us gradually as we continue to practice regular prayer and meditation. It comes to us as a quiet sureness of our decisions and a lessening of the chaos that used to accompany all our thoughts.

To many of us, “conscious contact” sounds like something very mysterious, implying some kind of cosmic union with God. But it's really very simple. It just means that we have a conscious awareness of our link to a Higher Power. We notice the presence of that Power, and see some of the ways it works in our life. There are so many ways our members have experienced the presence of a loving God: when we experience something in nature, such as a forest or an ocean; through the unconditional love of our sponsor or other NA members; through the feeling of being anchored during difficult times; through feelings of peace and warmth; through a coincidence that later on we see having led to some great good; through the simple fact of our recovery in NA; through our ability to listen to others at a meeting; and countless other means. The point is that we are looking, and we are willing to acknowledge that our Higher Power is active in our lives.

The knowledge that has been building in us as we've prayed and meditated is the essence of God's will for us. The whole purpose of praying and meditating is to seek knowledge of a Higher Power's

will for us and, of course, the power to carry it out. But the first thing to do is to identify God's purpose for our lives.

It takes a large amount of open-mindedness to begin to understand God's will for us. Many of us find that it is easier to identify what is not God's will for us than what is. This is absolutely fine; in fact, this is a great starting point that can lead us to more specific knowledge of God's will for us. First of all, and obviously, it is not God's will for us to relapse. We can extend this simple fact to conclude that acting in ways that might lead us to relapse are also not God's will for us. We don't need to become overly analytical about this and start questioning whether our daily routines could possibly lead to us relapsing; it's really much easier than that. We use all of the knowledge about ourselves and our patterns that we gained from the work we did in Steps Four through Nine, and we try our very best to avoid destructive patterns. We'll discover that we no longer have the luxury of consciously acting out. We can't deal with a situation by thinking, "Oh, I'll just be manipulative this one time, and then I'll write about it later, work with my sponsor, and make amends." If we do such a thing, we're not only on very dangerous ground; we're making a conscious and deliberate decision to go against God's will. There will be many, many times when we act on defects unconsciously. It is our consciousness and willingness to be deliberately destructive in this situation that is the real cause for concern.

In the Third Step, we explored the fine line that divides humble and honest pursuit of our goals from subtle manipulation and forced results. Now, with the experience we have gained in the intervening steps, we are much better equipped to spot that line and stay on the right side of it. As we go after the things we want, we need to continuously gauge our distance from that line. For instance, we may decide we want to be in a romantic relationship. There's nothing wrong with that, provided we are spiritually motivated and keep track of the line between God's will and self-will. If we lie to make ourselves seem more attractive, or become chameleons, we're acting on self-will. If we honestly express who we are, we're more likely to be pursuing God's will. If we're trying to change our potential partner in a relationship into something he or she is not, we're acting on self-will. If, on the other hand, we've already determined what we want in a partner and the person we're seeing seems to be matching that vision without our intervention, we're probably living in God's will. That's how we tell whether a relationship is God's will for us or not. Or say we want a college education. Are we willing to cheat on a test to get it? Doing such a thing would turn an otherwise worthy goal into an act of self-will. The avoidance of acting on self-will is the primary reason we pray only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

As it says in *It Works: How and Why*, "God's will for us is the ability to live with dignity, to love ourselves and others, to laugh, and to find great joy and beauty in our surroundings. Our most heartfelt longings and dreams for our lives are coming true. These priceless gifts are no longer beyond our reach. They are, in fact, the very essence of God's will for us."

Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of belonging that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of God's will, the moment we begin to see truth, justice, and love as the real and eternal things in life, we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs. We know that God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to Him, all will be well with us, here and hereafter.

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few.

People say meditation practice is difficult, but there is a misunderstanding as to why. It is not difficult because it is hard to sit in the cross-legged position, or to attain enlightenment. It is difficult because it is hard to keep our mind pure and our practice pure in its fundamental sense. The goal of practice is to always keep beginner's mind. The first time you say the serenity prayer, it may be perfect and enlightening, but with each recitation it loses its impact. The same thing happens in meditation. You



meditation and concentration may improve but you will lose the excitement of beginners mind when you are open to every thing and empty.

Sitting properly is very important. Your posture and attitude mean everything. When you first wake in the morning and you think about meditating the bed seems much more attractive. Once you get up and get into your meditating posture it is of utmost importance that you sit up straight, spine straight, head up, no slouching. If you slouch you will drift.

I heard it explained once that we have monkey mind, and that meditation was to put those monkeys down for a nap. When you sit to meditate, your head is full of monkeys chattering, throwing bananas, and acting like wild monkeys do. As we meditate we quite the monkeys.

It is also said that meditation is like removing the weeds from you mind.

Thoughts are to your mind like waves are to water. They are inseparable. Meditating stills the water, so you can see yourself as in a mirror.

# Step Twelve: “Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

## Brief Outline

Read Chapter 7 in the *Big Book*, “Working with Others,” pages 89 to 103.

Step Twelve begins by promising you that if you apply the previous eleven Steps in your life and use the kit of simple spiritual tools the *Big Book* provides, you will have a spiritual awakening. Not “might have” or “should have” or “will probably have”—but *will have*.

In Appendix II of the *Big Book* (pages 569 to 570), we learn that a spiritual awakening is a “personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism.” In *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Bill W says that there are three things that almost all spiritual awakenings have in common:

1. You are able to see and feel things you could never see and feel before.
2. You will know things you have never known before.
3. You will be able to do things you could never do before.

### **Exercise 1: More about the Meaning of “Spiritual Awakening”**

If you have carefully worked through the first eleven Steps, you can do, feel, and believe things you have not been able to before. What are some of those things?

Draw a picture or describe in words below.

Do: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Feel: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Believe: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

So now that you have had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, what are you supposed to do? The second part of Step Twelve says the message should be carried to other alcoholics and practiced in all your affairs. But what is the message that you should bring to other alcoholics and addicts who still suffer?

The only real message that you are qualified to give is *that you have had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps*. You can help alcoholics and addicts when no one else can. You are an expert on the disease you are recovering from. And now you have a strong message of hope to carry.

***A Higher Power very seldom talks to people directly, but usually works through others. By carrying the message of recovery and spiritual awakening to others still suffering from alcoholism and other drug addictions, you have the chance to help others save their lives. The primary reason you carry the message is that this is how you will stay clean and sober yourself.***

### **Exercise 2: Carrying the Message**

Think about times you have unselfishly helped others in the past with no strings attached. How did you feel about yourself?

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How will seeking these kinds of experiences by carrying the message help keep you clean and sober?

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Chapter Seven of the *Big Book* offers many suggestions for carrying the message of recovery to others who still suffer. There are some other suggestions that might be helpful as well:

1. If at all possible, go with someone else. It can be dangerous to go alone if you are at all unsure about your own sobriety.
2. Do not talk to someone who does not want help. Remember, the message is given through attraction, not promotion.
3. Tell your story in a simple, straightforward way.
  - ❖ What we used to be like (our drinking or using history).
  - ❖ What happened (hitting bottom and later experiencing a spiritual awakening).
  - ❖ What we are like now (how we and our lives are different clean and sober).

Most of the time, you will work Step Twelve in your local AA or other Twelve Step meeting. Your commitment to being part of a fellowship, to taking part in meetings, will bring your message of experience, strength, and hope to others as they bring it to you. You are telling others this program works every time you show up at a meeting clean and sober.

At the end of Chapter Seven (page 103), the *Big Book* repeats its message of tolerance. To preach, show intolerance, or condemn will not help anyone. Each person eventually must decide for him or herself.

### **Conclusion**

The *Big Book* reminds us that we are all imperfect human beings that the Twelve Steps are for guidance and not for 100-percent perfect obedience. Your claim can be to spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection.

If you make a genuine, honest, and sincere effort to follow the program of recovery in the *Big Book* to the best of your ability, you will have all the tools you need.

- ❖ In Steps One, Two, and Three, you admit you are powerless over alcohol, and abandon yourself to a Higher Power—God, as you understand God.

- ❖ In Steps Four, Five, Six, and Seven, you admit your faults to a Higher Power, to yourself, and to your fellow men and women, and humbly ask God to remove them.
- ❖ In Steps Eight and Nine, you clear away the wreckage of the past.
- ❖ In Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve, you continue to monitor your behavior, improve your conscious contact with God, and give freely of what you have found.

*Chapters 8, 9, and 10 in the Big Book offer guidance for spouses, family, and employers.*

*Read and use this information as you need it. The personal stories in the three sections after page 164 will offer confirmation and inspiration for making the Big Book's suggestions your design for living.*

*Finally, read Chapter 11, "A Vision For You," and pay special attention to the final two paragraphs on page 164.*

You have always been a part of the fellowship of the Spirit. May this program help you to know it so that your life is a journey down the Road of Happy Destiny.

If we have worked and lived the previous steps in a thorough and honest manner, then the following is apparent:

Step 1: We admit that we are powerless over not only alcohol but also others, and that our lives have been, are now, and shall remain unmanageable by us alone.

Step 2: We are coming to believe that God can restore us to sanity as we rightly relate ourselves to Him.

Step 3: We make a daily decision to turn our lives and our will over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

Step 4: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves by uncovering the acquired character defects as well as our assets.

Step 5: We admitted to God, ourselves, and another person the exact nature of our wrongs. We started to clean house.

Step 6: We became entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character as we practice to correct them daily.

Step 7: We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings as we became more aware of the fact that "I, of myself, am nothing, the Father doeth the works!"

Step 8: We made a list of all those we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step 9: We made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others. Finally we put the past in the past!

Step 10: We continue to take personal inventory and when we are wrong promptly admit it. Thus, we are cleaning up the wreckage of the present, now.

Step 11: We are seeking through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact of God within and without by praying only for His guidance and the power to carry it out.

At this point in our recovery process, we must be practicing the first two maintenance steps, Steps Ten and Eleven, to the best of our ability. In addition, we constantly check to make sure that Steps One, Two and Three are evident in our lives on a daily basis. If this is true, then we are ready for Step Twelve, the last maintenance step. Step Twelve can easily be divided into three areas. The first area concerns a spiritual awakening. The second asks us to carry this message to alcoholics. The last suggests we practice these principles in all our affairs. What an order, but we can carry it out if we look at these three areas and what they mean. The first portion of Step Twelve is—"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps..." This implies, in no uncertain terms, that as a result of practicing all the steps, we have each

found something called a spiritual awakening. This spiritual awakening, which has come slowly and sometimes painfully as we were living each step in sequence, is nothing more than a transformation to a new state of consciousness and being. At this point we find ourselves in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love of which we had thought ourselves quite incapable of attaining. In addition, we are now aware of the havoc that the false self has caused us and are now determined to keep the “thinking mind” in its proper role as our servant instead of our master. Each time that we gained deeper and deeper awareness of God’s presence within, our consciousness was raised. This program asks for progress, not perfection. So we must now continue daily to realize a deeper awareness of God’s presence within us, or we will once again separate ourselves from Him. We are on a lifetime spiritual path. But at this point our spiritual growth is fragile and we should guard it closely. Seek truth and then live it. Truth shall set us free. Therefore, in order to allow this gift of a spiritual awakening to grow, we should look at the remainder of Step Twelve and find out what we should be doing.

The second part of Step Twelve is. “...we tried to carry this message to alcoholics,....” As we carry the message to the next suffering alcoholic, this finally translates the Twelve Steps into action. In order for us to properly “twelfth-step” other alcoholics, we should have a thorough foundation of this program and make sure that our own recovery process is in order. The message we carry is one that shows how the Steps transformed our lives—from what we used to be like, to what happened, and how this transformation occurred. In other words, we must practice this program daily before we can have a message to give away. Those of us who have done the steps and are living them, are in a unique position to carry this message of hope with love, never forgetting that this program is a spiritual program, period!

Many AA members declare that no satisfaction has been deeper and no joy greater than in a twelfth step well done. The unconditional giving and helping of others to move from darkness into light, to see their lives filled with new purpose and meaning, and above all to watch these people awaken to the presence of a loving God in their lives—these things are the benefits that we receive as we carry the message. For those who are interested in “twelfth step” work, it is suggested that we

1. Read the chapter on “Working with Others” in the *Big Book*;
2. Become an apprentice of someone who does “twelfth-stepping” regularly; and
3. Remember—“we carry the message, not the drunk.”

There are other kinds of “twelfth step” work. We sit in AA meetings and listen, not only to receive, but to give the reassurance and support which our presence can bring. If called upon to speak, we again try to carry the message. We can also be of service to AA by making coffee, by being a group secretary or treasurer, by cleaning up, and in general doing whatever the traditions suggest needs to be done to keep AA together. Then there is always the need for competent sponsors in AA Sponsorship—if approached rightly, can be a very rewarding experience. This is the ultimate reward.

“Freely ye have received; freely give...” is the core of this part of Step Twelve.

The third and final part of Step Twelve is—“... and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” The program of recovery, that each of us has developed in the doing of the steps, means absolutely nothing if we do not practice these principles in all our affairs. At this place in time, many things may be going well for us. Beware—we temporarily cease to grow because we feel there is no need for all of AA’s Twelve Steps for us. Maybe we are doing fine on the first half of the First Step and that part of Step Twelve where we “carry the message.” If this is the case, then we are “two-stepping.” But, if we are again willing to receive from God that grace which can sustain and strengthen us in any catastrophe, then we switch from “two-stepping” back to “twelve-stepping.”

Our troubles are the same as everyone else’s, but when an honest effort is made “to practice these principles in all our affairs,” well-grounded AA’s seem to have the ability, by God’s grace, to take these troubles in stride and turn them into demonstrations of faith. If we find ourselves still challenged by the

lesser and more continuous problems of life, our answer is in still more spiritual development. As we grow spiritually, we find that the old ideas and negative thinking associated with the false self slowly disappear. So in order to grow, we must continue to practice these principles in all our affairs.

It is only by accepting and solving our problems that we can begin to get right with ourselves and with the world about us, and with Him who presides over us all. Understanding is the key to right principles and attitudes, and right action is the key to good living; therefore, the joy of good living is the theme of AA's Twelfth Step.

In summary, we have had a spiritual awakening, in some sense, by doing and living the previous eleven steps. If we have done our job thoroughly and honestly, then we will have a message to carry. In addition, if we have been practicing the steps as we completed them, and continue to do so, then it is easy to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The purpose of writing the Twelfth Step is to help us identify which areas of our own personal program need to be strengthened. In each of the three areas—spiritual growth, carrying the message, and practicing the principles in all our affairs, we need to take a long hard look and see how they can be improved upon.

The following questions are to help you improve your program by recognizing the areas that still need honest and thorough practice. Remember, your program of recovery does not end with the Twelfth Step—*it is just the beginning!*

### **Right Action Towards Right Living**

1. What does “Having had a spiritual awakening as the RESULT of these steps mean to you?
2. In what ways have you had a spiritual awakening?
3. Has your awareness of God’s presence within increased since you have started to PRACTICE this program? How?
4. What does “we tried to carry this message to alcoholics “ mean to you?
5. What IS the message that you are trying to carry? In what ways are you carrying it?
6. What is meant by “two-stepping”?
7. What does “to practice these principles in all our affairs” mean to you?
8. What are these principles that you should practice?
9. Why is PRACTICE so important to your continued spiritual growth?
10. If you are still having problems with life, what is the answer? Why? (See Step 12 in the *12&12*)
11. What is meant by “twelfth stepping”? How can you successfully do this?
12. Explain why you HAVE to stop fighting anybody or anything!
13. What does “Understanding is the key to right principles and attitudes, and right action is the key to good living...” mean to you?
14. Describe the “essence” of each of the Twelve Steps!
15. How does this program of recovery work?
16. Why does it work?
17. Now that you have finished doing the twelve Steps once, how are you going to expand your program from this point on?
18. Has this program changed your life? In what ways?

19. Describe your view of yourself at this point.

But for the Grace of God...

**Notes from the Foreword of “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions”**

This book deals with the “Twelve Steps” and the “Twelve Traditions” of Alcoholics Anonymous. It presents an explicit *view* of the *principles* by which AA members recover and by which their society functions.

AA’s *Twelve Steps* are a group of *principles*, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of *life*, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.

AA’s *Twelve Traditions* apply to the *life* of the Fellowship itself. They outline the means by which AA maintains its unity and relates itself to the world about *it*, the way it lives and grows.

**Notes on Step Twelve from *The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous***

Practical experience shows that nothing *will* so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive Work with other alcoholics. It Works when other activities fail. Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can.

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people *recover*, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—*this is an experience YOU must not miss*. We know you *will* not want to miss *it*. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is *the bright spot of Our lives*.

If the alcoholic does not want to stop drinking, don’t waste time trying to persuade him. You may spoil a later opportunity. ... Don’t deal with him when he is very drunk, unless he is ugly and the family needs your help. Wait for the end of the spree, or at least for a lucid interval. If he does not want to see you, never force yourself upon him.

See your man alone, if possible. If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady. Keep his attention focused mainly on your personal experience. If he is curious to know how you got well, tell him exactly what happened to you! Stress the spiritual feature freely. The main thing is that he be willing to *believe* in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.

To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self-sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action. Call to his attention the fact that however deep his faith and knowledge, he could not have applied it or he would not drink. Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to him. Suggest how important it is that he place the welfare of other people ahead of his own. He may rebel at the thought of a drastic house cleaning, which requires discussion with other people. Do not contradict such views. Tell him you once felt as he does but you doubt whether you would have made much progress had you not taken action. You will be most successful with alcoholics if you do not exhibit any passion for crusade or reform. Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop, simply layout the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection. Show him how they worked with you. Offer him friendship and fellowship. Tell him that if he wants to get well you will do anything to help.

If he is to find God the desire must come from within. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us.

We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy. Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn’t enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day if need be.

Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth. Job or no job wife or no wife we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God. Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house. Remind the prospect that his recovery is not dependent upon people. It is dependent upon his relationship with God.

Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist remarkable things will happen. When we look back we realize that the things, which came to us when we put ourselves in Gods hands, were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world no matter what your present circumstances!

Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must avoid alcohol (lists various situations). Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so. We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them still has an alcoholic mind there is something the matter with his spiritual status. So our rule is not to avoid a place where there is drinking, **if we have a legitimate reason for being there.** But be sure you are on solid spiritual ground before you start, and that your motive in going is thoroughly good

Let your friends know they are not to change their habits on your account. Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking as an institution Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved had it not been for such stupidity.

*After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything—we have to!*

### **Notes on Step Twelve from The Little Red Book**

1. **“Spiritual Awakening”** Knowing the fallacies of alcoholic thinking, it is inconceivable that we could recover from alcoholism without spiritual inspiration dependent upon some Power greater than our own. We get this inspiration and come to know God by living the Twelve Steps. Our sobriety demands a personality change. We gain this in the form of a spiritual awakening from living the AA program.

Opinions about spiritual awakenings, taken from members internationally, had common denominators of faith, surrender, humility, tolerance, and love. There should be no difficulty in recognizing the essence of a spiritual experience in the contented sobriety we enjoy, in the responsibility we daily assume, in attitudes of forgiveness, in the amends we make, in willingness to admit our mistakes, in our unselfish interest in helping sick alcoholics and other persons who are less fortunate than ourselves.

The spiritual aspects of our lives become even more convincing when we discover that these things are done without thought of personal glory or hope of material gain. But, the outcome of spiritual living is never without reward. God declares His dividends—not in human coinage but in the divine currency of serenity.

Each worthy thought put into practice brings us a step nearer to God. The Twelve Steps all lead in that direction. They are like stepping-stones that we slowly progress over to greater awareness of His presence. They are the means by which we make a conscious contact with Him. They stand as spiritual bulwarks between us and lives of desperation and drunkenness. By practicing the Steps we gain the priceless gem of contented sobriety. It is ours to hold as long as we willingly share it with other alcoholics who sincerely seek our help.

2. **“Carry the Message”** Rendering this service, we immunize ourselves against taking that first drink.



We help restore faith in God and physical health to drinkers who have lost all hope of recovery from their alcoholic condition. This spiritual grant should not be ignored. The principle of working with others is sound, as it is founded upon the ageless axiom, “Give and you shall receive.” There are many ways of carrying the message besides twelfth step calls and sponsorship, some of which appear in the following list:

- a) The most convincing message we can carry to alcoholics is our own example of contented sobriety.
  - b) Accompanying an older member on a twelfth step call.
  - c) The example of regular attendance at AA meetings. Visiting outside AA meetings when we are away from home.
  - d) Making hospital calls upon members.
  - e) Telephone calls to new members.
  - f) Friendly talks with persons after meetings, particularly with newcomers or those who—are having trouble living the program.
  - g) By owning *The Big Book*. By encouraging other alcoholics to buy and study it for AA understanding.
  - h) Assuming the duties and obligations that will help our fellowship.
  - i) Talking with relatives or associates of drinking alcoholics (and explaining that alcoholism is a disease and how we arrest it in AA).
  - j) By speaking before other groups or conducting meetings in our own group.
  - k) By making a reasonable pledge of our energy, time, and money to the fellowship.
  - l) By our obvious belief that we have received help from a Higher Power.
  - m) By making AA our way of life.
3. **“Practice These Principles”** The principles of the Twelve Steps add up to a logical and livable way of life, which will restore health, happiness, and sobriety to sick hopeless alcoholics. We work for daily recovery, which is all that we expect. Experience has taught us we cannot drink normally again. Our heritage of sane living is denied until we fully recognize and start treating our alcoholism as a physical, mental, and spiritual illness. Our heritage is restored when we:
- a) Acknowledge our physical and mental illness and work for recovery.
  - b) Seek help from “God as we understand Him” to arrest our spiritual illness.
  - c) Study and isolate our defects of character with a view to correcting them.
  - d) Admit these defects to ourselves and to God and talk them over with another person.
  - e) Rely upon the Twelve Steps to inspire us with worthy motives. .
  - f) Concede the injury that our drinking addiction has inflicted upon others.
  - g) Ask God’s forgiveness for these acts and make amends to the persons harmed.
  - h) Develop the habit of admitting our mistakes and correcting, our character defects.
  - i) Cultivate better spiritual relations With God and try to execute His will.
  - j) Share the experience of our recovery with alcoholics who ask for help.
  - k) Continue living the AA life by “practicing these principles in all our affairs”

## Key Concepts for Step Twelve

***Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”***

- Key 1: The joy of living is the theme of AA’s Twelfth Step, and is its key word. When the Twelfth Step is seen in its full implication, it is really talking about the kind of love that has no price tag on it.
- Key 2: Our Twelfth Step also says that as a **result of** practicing ALL the steps, we have each found something called a spiritual awakening.
- Key 3: When a man or woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift, which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being.
- Key 4: In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength, which he had hitherto denied himself. He finds himself in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love of which he had thought himself quite incapable.
- Key 5: AA’s manner of making ready to receive this gift lies in the practice of the Twelve Steps in our program.
- Key 6: The wonderful energy Step twelve releases and the eager action by which it carries our message to the next suffering alcoholic and which finally translates the Twelve Steps into action upon all our affairs is the payoff, the magnificent reality, of Alcoholics Anonymous: Even the newest of newcomers finds undreamed of rewards as he tries to help his brother alcoholic, the one who is even blinder than he.
- Key 7: Practically every AA member declares that no satisfaction has been deeper and no joy greater than in a Twelfth Step job well done.
- Key 8: Other kinds of Twelfth Step work:
- a) We sit in AA meetings and listen
  - b) If our turn comes to speak at a meeting, we again try to carry AA’s message.
  - c) We can take on the unspectacular but important tasks of arranging for the coffee and cake after the meeting.
- Key 9: Freely ye have received; freely give is the core of this part of Step Twelve.
- Key 10: We may often pass through Twelfth Step experiences where we will seem to be temporarily off the beam. These will appear as big setbacks at the time, but will be seen later as stepping-stones to better things.
- Key 11: Now comes the biggest question yet. What about the practice of these principles in *all* our affairs? The AA answer to these questions about living is “Yes, all of these things are possible.” We know this because we see monotony, pain, and even calamity turned to good use by those who keep on trying to practice AA’s Twelve Steps.
- Key 12: Of course all AA’s, even the best, fall far short of such achievements as a consistent thing. Our troubles sometimes begin with indifference. We temporarily cease to grow because we feel satisfied that there is no need for ALL of AA’s Twelve Steps for us.

- Key 13: Our basic troubles are the same as everyone else's, but when an honest effort is made "to practice these principles in all our affairs," well-grounded AA's seem to have the ability, by God's grace, to take these troubles in stride and turn them into demonstrations of faith.
- Key 14: Like most people, we have found that we can take our big lumps as they come. But also like others, we often discover a greater challenge in the lesser and more continuous problems of life. Our answer is in still more spiritual development. Only by this means can we improve our chances for really happy and useful living.
- Key 15: And as we grow spiritually, we find that our old attitudes toward our instincts need to undergo drastic revisions. We have learned that the satisfaction of instincts cannot be the sole end, and aim *of* our lives. But when we are willing to place spiritual growth first, then and only then, do we have a real chance.
- Key 16: Our demand for emotional security, for our own way, had constantly thrown us into unworkable relations with other people. Either we had tried to play God and dominate those about us, or we had insisted on being over-dependent upon them,
- Key 17: It became clear that if we ever were to feel emotionally secure among grown-up people, we would have to put our lives on a give-and-take basis; we would have to develop the sense of being in partnership or brotherhood with all those around us. We saw that we would need to give constantly of ourselves without demands for repayment. When we persistently did this we gradually found that people were attracted to us as never before. And even if they failed us we could be understanding and not too seriously affected.
- Key 18: When we developed still more, we discovered the best possible source of emotional stability to be God Himself. If we really depended upon God, we couldn't very well play God to our fellows nor would we feel the urge wholly to rely on human protection and care. These were the attitudes that finally brought many of us an inner strength and peace that could not be deeply shaken by the shortcomings of others or by any calamity not of our own making.
- Key 19: Prospective partners (whether AA's or not) need to be long enough acquainted to know that their compatibility at spiritual, mental, and, emotional levels is a fact and not wishful thinking. They need to be as sure as possible that no deeply emotional handicap in either will be likely to rise up under later pressures to cripple them. With clear understanding and right, grown-up attitudes, very happy results do follow.
- Key 20: Money gradually became our servant and not our master. It became a means of exchanging love and service with those about us. When, with Gods help we calmly accepted our lot then we found we could live at peace with ourselves and show others who still suffered the same fears that they could get over them.
- Key 21: We found that freedom from fear was more important than freedom from want.
- Key 22: When AA was quite young, a number of eminent psychologists and doctors made an exhaustive study of a good-sized group of so called problem drinkers. They sought to find whatever personality traits, if any, this group of alcoholics had in common. They finally came up with a conclusion that shocked the AA members of that time. These distinguished men had the nerve to say that *most of the alcoholics under investigation were still childish, emotionally sensitive, and grandiose.*
- Key 23: How we alcoholics did resent that verdict! In the years since, however most of us have come to agree with those doctors. We have had a much keener look at ourselves and those about us. But today, in well-matured AAs, these distorted, drives have been restored to something like their true purpose and direction.
- Key 24: True ambition is the deep desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God.

Key 25: We have been talking about problems because we are problem people who have found a way up and out, and who wish to share our knowledge of that way with all who can use it. For it is only by accepting and solving our problems that we can begin to get right with ourselves and the world about us, and with Him who presides over us all. Understanding is the key to right principles and attitudes, and right action is the key to good living: therefore, the joy of good living is the theme of AA's Twelfth Step.

*Will you try to carry this message to alcoholics and practice these principles in all your affairs?*

**Home Study**

*Big Book:* Chapter 7.

*12&12:* Read the Step 12 and Tradition 12.

## **Additional Twelfth Step Readings**

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends — this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

When you discover a prospect for Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about him. If he does not want to stop drinking, don't waste time trying to persuade him. You may spoil a later opportunity. This advice is given for his family also. They should be patient, realizing they are dealing with a sick person.

If there is any indication that he wants to stop, have a good talk with the person most interested in him — usually his wife. Get an idea of his behavior, his problems, his background, the seriousness of his condition, and his religious leanings. You need this information to put yourself in his place, to see how you would like him to approach you if the tables were turned.

Sometimes it is wise to wait till he goes on a binge. The family may object to this, but unless he is in a dangerous physical condition, it is better to risk it. Don't deal with him when he is very drunk, unless he is ugly and the family needs your help.

If he does not want to see you, never force yourself upon him. Neither should the family hysterically plead with him to do anything, nor should they tell him much about you.

Usually the family should not try to tell your story. When possible, avoid meeting a man through his family. Approach through a doctor or an institution is a better bet.

When your man is better, the doctor might suggest a visit from you. Though you have talked with the family, leave them out of the first discussion. Under these conditions your prospect will see he is under not pressure. He will feel he can deal with you without being nagged by his family. Call on him while he is still jittery. He may be more receptive when depressed.

See your man alone, if possible. At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell him enough about your drinking habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage him to speak of himself. If he wishes to talk, let him do so. You will thus get a better idea of how you ought to proceed. If he is not communicative, give him a sketch of your drinking career up to the time you quit. But say nothing, for the moment, of how that was accomplished. If he is in a serious mood dwell on the troubles liquor has caused you, being careful not to moralize or lecture. If his mood is light, tell him humorous stories of your escapades. Get him to tell some of his.

When he sees you know all about the drinking game, commence to describe yourself as an alcoholic. Tell him how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give him an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show him the mental twist, which leads to the first drink of a spree.

If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady. Show him, from your own experience, how the queer mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will power. Don't, at this stage, refer to this book, unless he has seen it and wishes to discuss it. And be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion. If he sticks to the idea that he can still control his drinking, tell him that possibly he can — if he is not too alcoholic. But insist that if he is severely afflicted, there may be little chance he can recover by himself.

Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal malady. Talk about the conditions of body and mind, which accompany it. Keep his attention focused mainly on your personal experience. Explain that many are doomed who never realize their predicament.

Tell him exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely. If the man be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that he does not have to agree with your conception of God. He can choose any conception he likes, provided it makes sense to him. The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.

Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to him. It is important for him to realize that your attempt to pass this on to him plays a vital part in your recovery. Actually, he may be helping you more than you are helping him. Make it plain he is under no obligation to you, that you hope only that he will try to help other alcoholics when he escapes his own difficulties. Suggest how important it is that he place the welfare of other people ahead of his own. Make it clear that he is not under pressure that he needn't see you again if he doesn't want to. You should not be offended if he wants to call it off, for he has helped you more than you have helped him. If your talk has been sane, quiet, and full of human understanding, you have perhaps made a friend. Maybe you have disturbed him about the question of alcoholism. This is all to the good. The more hopeless he feels, the better. He will be more likely to follow your suggestions.

Your candidate may give reasons why he need not follow all of the program. He may rebel at the thought of a drastic housecleaning, which requires discussion with other people. Do not contradict such views. Tell him you once felt as he does, but you doubt whether you would have made much progress had you not taken action. On your first visit tell him about the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. If he shows interest, lend him your copy of this book.

Unless your friend wants to talk further about himself, do not wear out your welcome. Give him a chance to think it over. If you do stay, let him steer the conversation in any direction he like. Sometimes a new man is anxious to proceed at once, and you may be tempted to let him do so. This is sometimes a mistake. If he has trouble later, he is likely to say you rushed him. You will be most successful with alcoholics if you do not exhibit any passion for crusade or reform.

Tell him that if he wants to get well you will do anything to help.

If he is sincerely interested and wants to see you again, ask him to read this book in the interval. After doing that, he must decide for himself whether he wants to go on. He should not be pushed or prodded by you, his wife, or his friends. If he is to find God, the desire must come from within.

We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy.

We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking as an institution. Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every new alcoholic looks for this spirit among us and is immensely relieved when he finds we are not witch burners. A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics, whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it.

In a sense, Step Twelve encompasses *all* the steps. We must make use of what we've learned in the previous eleven as we carry the message and practice the principles of recovery in all our affairs. Individually and collectively, each step has contributed to the extraordinary transformation, which we know as a spiritual awakening.

Many of us have wondered how this spiritual awakening comes about. Does it happen all at once, or does it occur slowly over a long period of time? While there may be great variations within our experience about this awakening of the spirit, we all agree that it results from working the steps.

Developing a personal style for carrying the message rests on a simple requirement: We must be ourselves. We each have a special, one-of-a-kind personality that is sure to be an attraction to many. Some of us have a sparkling sense of humor, which may reach someone in despair. Some of us are especially warm and compassionate, able to reach an addict who has rarely been the recipient of kindness. Some of us have a remarkable talent for telling the truth, in no uncertain terms, to an addict literally dying to hear it. Some of us are a valuable asset on any service committee, while others do better working one-on-one with a suffering addict. Whatever our own personality makeup, we can be assured that when we sincerely try to carry the message, we can reach the addict seeking recovery.

Yet there are limits to what we can do to help another addict. We cannot force anyone to stop using. We cannot “give” someone the results of working the steps, nor can we grow for them. We cannot magically remove someone’s loneliness or pain. Not only are we powerless over our own’ addiction, we are powerless over everyone else’s. We can only carry the message; we cannot determine who will receive it.

It is absolutely none of our business to decide who is ready to hear the message of recovery and who is not. Many of us have formed such a judgment about an addict’s desire for recovery and have been mistaken. Multiple relapses do not necessarily signify a lack of interest in recovery, nor does the ‘model newcomer’ demonstrate, without a doubt, a certainty of “making it.” It is our purpose and our privilege to share the message of recovery unconditionally with anyone expressing a desire to receive it.

The principle of unconditional love is expressed in our attitude. Anyone who reaches out for help is entitled to our compassion, our attention, and our unconditional acceptance. Any addict, regardless of clean time, should be able to pour out his or her pain in an atmosphere free of judgment. Most of us have found that we are able to feel great empathy for those who suffer from our disease precisely because it is *our* disease. Our empathy isn’t abstract nor is our understanding. Instead, it is born in shared experience. We greet each other with the recognition reserved for survivors of the same nearly fatal catastrophe. This shared experience, more than anything else, contributes to the atmosphere of unconditional love in our meetings.

Our Twelfth Step also says that as a result of practicing all the Steps, we have each found something called a spiritual awakening.

Step One showed us an amazing paradox: We found that we were totally unable to be rid of the alcohol obsession until we first admitted that we were powerless over it. In Step Two we saw that since we could not restore ourselves to sanity, some Higher Power must necessarily do so if we were to survive. Consequently, in Step Three we turned our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him. For the time being, we who were atheist or agnostic discovered that our own group, or AA as a whole, would suffice as a higher power. Beginning with Step Four, we commenced to search out the things in ourselves, which had brought us to physical, moral, and spiritual bankruptcy. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory. Looking at Step Five, we decided that an inventory, taken alone, wouldn't be enough. We knew we would have to quit the deadly business of living alone with our conflicts, and in honesty confide these to God and another human being. At Step Six, many of us balked—for the practical reason that we did not wish to have all our defects of character removed, because we still loved some of them too much. Yet we knew we had to make a settlement with the fundamental principle of Step Six. So we decided that while we still had some flaws of character that we could not yet relinquish, we ought nevertheless to quit our stubborn, rebellious hanging on to them. We said to ourselves, "This I cannot do today, perhaps, but I can stop crying out 'No, never!'" Then, in Step Seven, we humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings such as He could or would under the conditions of the day we asked. In Step Eight, we continued our housecleaning, for we saw that we were not only in conflict with ourselves, but also with people and situations in the world in which we lived. We had to begin to make our peace, and so we listed the people we had harmed and became willing to set things right. We followed this up in Step Nine by making direct amends to those concerned, except when it would injure them or other people. By this time, at Step Ten, we had begun to get a basis for daily living, and we keenly realized that we would need to continue taking personal inventory, and that when we were in the wrong we ought to admit it promptly. In Step Eleven we saw that if a Higher Power had restored us to sanity and had enabled us to live with some peace of mind in a sorely troubled world, then such a Higher Power was worth knowing better, by as direct contact as possible. The persistent use of meditation and prayer, we found, did open the channel so that where there had been a trickle, there now was a river which led to sure power and safe guidance from God, as we were increasingly better able to understand Him. So, practicing these Steps, we had a spiritual awakening about which finally there was no question. Looking at those who were only beginning and still doubted themselves, the rest of us were able to see the change setting in. From great numbers of such experiences, we could predict that the doubter who still claimed that he hadn't got the "spiritual angle," and who still considered his well-loved AA group the higher power, would presently love God and call Him by name.



### **Why We Were Chosen**

GOD in His wisdom selected this group of men and women to be purveyors of His goodness. In selecting them through whom to bring about this phenomenon, He went not to the proud, the mighty, the famous, or the brilliant. He went instead to the humble, to the sick, to the unfortunate. He went right to the drunkard, the so-called weakling of the world. Well might He have said to us:

“Unto your weak and feeble hands I have entrusted a power beyond estimate. To you has been given that which has been denied the most learned of your fellows. Not to scientists or statesmen, not to wives or mothers, not even to my priests or ministers have I given this gift of healing other alcoholics, which I entrust to you.”

It must be used unselfishly; it carries with it grave responsibility. No day can be too long; no demands upon your time can be too urgent; no case be too pitiful; no task too hard; no effort too great. It must be used with tolerance for I have restricted its application to no race, no creed, and no denomination. Personal criticism you must expect; lack of appreciation will be common; ridicule will be your lot; your motives will be misjudged. You must be prepared for adversity, for what men call adversity is the ladder you must use to ascend the rungs toward spiritual perfection, and remember, in the exercise of this power I shall not exact from you beyond your capabilities.

You are not selected because of exceptional talents, and be careful always, if success attends your efforts not to ascribe to personal superiority that to which you can lay claim only by virtue of my gift. If I had wanted learned men to accomplish this mission, the power would have been entrusted to the physician and scientist. If I had wanted eloquent men, there would have been many anxious for the assignment, for talk is the easiest used of all talents with which I have endowed mankind. If I had wanted scholarly men, the world is filled with better-qualified men than you who would be available. You were selected because you have been the outcasts of the world and your long experience as drunkards has made or should make you humbly alert to the cries of distress that come from the lonely hearts of alcoholics everywhere.

Keep ever in mind the admission you made on the day of your profession in AA- namely that you are powerless and that it was only with your willingness to turn your life and will unto my keeping that relief came to you.

Now comes the biggest question yet. What about the practice of these principles in all our affairs? Can we love the whole pattern of living as eagerly as we do the small segment of it we discover when we try to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety? Can we bring the same spirit of love and tolerance into our sometimes-deranged family lives that we bring to our AA group? Can we have the same kind of confidence and faith in these people who have been infected and sometimes crippled by our own illness that we have in our sponsors? Can we actually carry the AA spirit into our daily work? Can we meet our newly recognized responsibilities to the world at large? And can we bring new purpose and devotion to the religion of our choice? Can we find a new joy of living in trying to do something about all these things? Furthermore, how shall we come to terms with seeming failure or success? Can we now accept and adjust to either without despair or pride? Can we accept poverty, sickness, loneliness, and bereavement with courage and serenity? Can we steadfastly content ourselves with the humbler, yet sometimes more durable, satisfactions when the brighter, more glittering achievements are denied us? The AA answer to these questions about living is “Yes, all of these things are possible.” We know this because we see monotony, pain, and even calamity turned to good use by those who keep on trying to practice AA’s Twelve Steps. And if these are facts of life for the many alcoholics who have recovered in AA, they can become the facts of life for many more.

Then perhaps life, as it has a way of doing, suddenly hands us a great big lump that we can’t begin to swallow, let alone digest. We fail to get a worked-for promotion. We lose that good job. Maybe there are serious domestic or romantic difficulties, or perhaps that boy we thought God was looking after becomes a military casualty. What then? Have we alcoholics in AA got, or can we get, the resources to meet these calamities, which come to so many? These were problems of life, which we could never face up to. Can we now, with the help of God, as we understand Him, handle them as well and as bravely as our nonalcoholic friends often do? Can we transform these calamities into assets, sources of growth and comfort to ourselves and those about us? Well, we surely have a chance if we switch from “two-stepping” to “twelve-stepping,” if we are willing to receive that grace of God, which can sustain and strengthen us in any catastrophe. Our basic troubles are the same as everyone else’s, but when an honest effort is made “to practice these principles in all our affairs,” well-grounded AA’s seem to have the ability, by God’s grace, to take these troubles in stride and turn them into demonstrations of faith. We have seen AA’s suffer lingering and fatal illness with little complaint, and often in good cheer. We have sometimes seen families broken apart by misunderstanding, tensions, or actual infidelity, who are reunited by the AA way of life.

Like most people, we have found that we can take our big lumps as they come. But also like others, we often discover a greater challenge in the lesser and more continuous problems of life. Our answer is in still more spiritual development. Only by this means can we improve our chances for really happy and useful living. And as we grow spiritually, we find that our old attitudes toward our instincts need to undergo drastic revisions. Our desires for emotional security and wealth, for personal prestige and power, for romance, and for family satisfactions—all these have to be tempered and redirected. We have learned that the satisfaction of instincts cannot be the sole end and aim of our lives. If we place instincts first, we have got the cart before the horse; we shall be pulled backward into disillusionment. But when we are willing to place spiritual growth first—then and only then do we have a real chance.

Still more wonderful is the feeling that we do not have to be specially distinguished among our fellows in order to be useful and profoundly happy. Not many of us can be leaders of prominence, nor do we wish to be. Service, gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with God’s help, the knowledge that at home or in the world outside we are partners in a common effort, the well-understood fact that in God’s sight all human beings are important, the proof that love freely given surely brings a full return, the certainty that we are no longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons, the surety that we need no longer be square pegs in round holes but can fit and belong in God’s scheme of things—these are the permanent and legitimate satisfactions of right living for which no amount of pomp and circumstance, no heap of material possessions, could possibly be substitutes. True ambition is not

what we thought it was. True ambition is the deep desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God. These little studies of AA Twelve Steps now come to a close. We have been considering so many problems that it may appear that AA consists mainly of racking dilemmas and troubleshooting. To a certain extent, that is true. We have been talking about problems because we are problem people who have found a way up and out, and who wish to share our knowledge of that way with all who can use it. For it is only by accepting and solving our problems that we can begin to get right with ourselves and with the world about us, and with Him who presides over us all. Understanding is the key to right principles and attitudes, and right action is the key to good living; therefore the joy of good living is the theme of AA Twelfth Step. With each passing day of our lives, may every one of us sense more deeply the inner meaning of AA simple prayer: God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, Courage to change the things we can, And wisdom to know the difference.

## Sponsorship: How and Why

Wouldn't it be great if there were an instruction book on "How to Be A Sponsor," a kind of recipe book? "If you follow these simple directions then all of your sponsees will become happy, joyous, and free, guaranteed!" Unfortunately it isn't that easy. Sponsees come in all shapes, sizes, and mental states.

I would like to be so bold as to share my experience, strength, and hope with sponsorship. I have been clean and sober since August 3, 1995. I do not claim to have any answers, this is just my experience. If nothing else my experience has taught me that what works for one does not always work for another. It would be nice if there were one simple foolproof way to sponsor. I am sure that there are people who believe that there is. I am not here to argue that. Some sponsors are task masters, some sponsors make you write a lot, some sponsors only make you write your fourth step, some sponsors have requirements that you have to meet to be their sponsee, some have none, some sponsors fire their sponsees when they are not compliant, some sponsors don't believe in firing sponsees or sponsors.

Here is the paradox! We ask newcomers, people who are newly clean and sober, to choose someone to be their sponsor. Now up to this point in their lives these newcomers have made just about every bad choice you could imagine. That is what gets them into recovery in the first place. Now that they have made all the choices that got them into recovery, we ask them to choose a sponsor, someone who is most likely going to be helping them change their lives. How does this work? I don't know, but it does. How many times have we heard people accepting a token and say that their sponsor has changed their life?

Well, I believe that sponsors can be influential people, but the credit really belongs to the sponsee and their higher power. Just like the saying goes, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear." I tell all my sponsees the same thing, "This relationship is based on trust. Not whether or not I can trust you but whether or not you can learn to trust me." The only thing I promise my sponsees is that I will show them how I worked The Steps. I also tell them, "My sponsor didn't tell me to go to 90 meetings in 90 days, get a service commitment, and work the Steps. He didn't have to because I was already doing that when I first got clean and sober. That doesn't mean, just because I don't tell you to do what is suggested to stay clean and sober, you don't have to do it. If you do the work then you get the benefits, if you don't do the work then you suffer the consequences." If one of my sponsees, or all of them for that matter, doesn't go to meetings, work the steps, or do any of the other things that are suggested to keep us clean and sober, then they suffer, not me. I will still go to meetings, work the steps, do service, etc. That part is actually pretty simple.

The hard part is the attachment I have to my sponsees. When any one of them is suffering I feel care and compassion for him/her. I also feel pride and happiness for their accomplishments. But it would be wrong for me to take credit for any success or failure. One of my most important jobs I have as a sponsor is to be available. That doesn't mean that I have to put my life on hold every time one of my sponsees calls or is in need. One of the ways I am able to work with a lot of sponsees is that I am not attached to their results. When they call or we meet, I do my best to be present and attentive at that very moment. Now, what they do with information I share with them after we part I have no control over. That does mean that I don't get happy, sad, angry, or proud of my sponsees' results. It's just that they did it, not me. If I tell you to cross the street at the corner because it is safer and I am concerned for you safety, and you cross in the middle of the street and get hit by a car, then I am going to be sad, concerned, and angry. But I will still love and care for you, and I am not suffering the consequences-a broken leg, etc.

Here are a couple of things that I believe about sponsorship. These are my opinions based on my experience. The first and foremost is that you should trust your sponsor. If you do not trust him/her, then you will not share everything. When I asked my sponsor to sponsor me, I decided to take a risk. I made a decision to tell him the truth, something different than I had ever done with any one individual. You should choose a sponsor who has a sponsor, and who has worked the Steps. Your sponsor should be of the same sex. This is not a hard and fast rule, but you should absolutely not choose someone you are

attracted to. I have found that my job as a sponsor is to listen, more than to give advice. I can also provide consistency. Most people in recovery have had very chaotic, abusive, aloof, and traumatic relationships. By setting clear boundaries and sticking to them, and by providing a relationship that is not judgmental or full of mixed messages, I can help sponsees develop better relationships. The most important thing that I can do is take a sponsee through the steps. I don't know if there is a better service commitment in recovery than taking someone through the Steps.

Sponsorship is a big commitment and I think it is the very first service commitment that ever happened in Alcoholics Anonymous. What do you think Bill was doing with Dr. Bob? If you read the *Big Book* you will find out that Bill learned there was no foolproof way to get someone sober. One of my favorite stories about Bill was when he had been going to the hospital trying to get people sober and he had had very little success. This went on for months and he came home to Lois frustrated. He said that it wasn't working; people weren't getting sober. Lois looked at him and said, "Yes, it is working, you are sober." So, is sponsorship an act of altruism or am I just trying to stay clean and sober myself? It doesn't really matter because it works.