

1 **WORLD LITERATURE COMMITTEE**
2 **RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS IN RECOVERY**
3 **WORK IN PROGRESS DRAFT**
4 **INTRODUCTION**
5

6 Most of us in the Narcotics Anonymous fellowship find that besides becoming and
7 remaining clean, one of the most difficult parts of our recovery process is the restoration of
8 our personal relationships. Our difficulties with handling our relationships are evident by
9 the many times relationships became the topic at discussion meetings. Many of us have
10 come to feel a sense of "powerlessness" in our dealings with others, but yet have trouble
11 "surrendering" this powerlessness. Thus, just as with our past using behavior, our lives
12 become unmanageable. Most of us do not want to admit that our addiction has affected
13 our ability to handle our relationships effectively. Pride and denial, two major
14 characteristics of our disease of addiction, tell us that our difficulties are the fault of the
15 other person(s). We find it very hard to admit our own fears, mistakes and weaknesses.
16 Subsequently, we focus on the shortcomings we perceive in others. The reality is that just
17 like with our past compulsive using behavior, we are not alone with this malady. We
18 listened at meetings, read that N.A. literature, talked with our sponsor, and soon began to
19 realize that there were many other recovering addicts struggling with the same feelings and
20 conflicts regarding relationships. We hear others share many similar problems regarding
21 their relationships which we are also encountering: loneliness, confusion, difficulties with
22 intimacy, the need to be in control or to exert power over others, sexual problems,
23 resentments towards those we love and others, isolation from others, fear of rejection,
24 confusion about the nature of God and over who we really are, and the list seems to go on
25 and on. Where do we begin in order to restore our relationships and constructively deal
26 with the overwhelming feelings we have? Most of have come to realize that in order for us
27 to develop more effective ways of dealing with relationships, we must first understand and

accept that part of our addiction which results in our disconnecting from ourselves, others, and God - "our spiritual condition".

ADDICTION AS A SPIRITUAL DISEASE

Most of us came to Narcotics Anonymous for help with a "drug problem". We listened for the "cure", and we learned that we are "powerless" over more than our compulsive use of drugs. We are powerless over our disease of "addiction". We learned that our addiction is much more than a "drug problem". It encompasses our destructive thinking and negative attitudes, our overwhelming emotions, our relationships with ourselves, others, and God, as well as the compulsive using behavior and perhaps other compulsive behavior patterns. After listening to others share their stories, and after attending more meetings, we come to learn that we are dealing with a disease which is primarily spiritual in nature. We hear others talk about that N.A. program being a "spiritual program". At first we were lost. What does this mean? We heard others say that by the time they found the N.A. program they were spiritually dead. This confused us even more. We listened and later learned that our spiritual condition refers to the "disconnectedness" which occurs as a result of our disease. We begin to disconnect from ourselves, others, and God as our disease grows. Looking back, many of us remember feeling "different" or uncomfortable around others even before we began using. We had difficulty "fitting" in, we didn't feel good enough, we were always comparing ourselves to others - either feeling less than others, or as a result of our defensiveness, making ourselves out to be better than others. We never seemed to be on an equal basis with anyone. We didn't understand why, but we felt something was missing in our lives. We were not complete. We learned that this void, our spiritual condition, helped to make us vulnerable to destructiveness. How? We tried many ways to fill this void in our lives, but nothing ever seemed to satisfy it. Our first experiences with drugs seemed to give us a real sense of satisfaction, relief, and pleasure, one which we have not known before using.

56 Many of us could look back at our first days of using and see that we became
57 "instantaneously" addicted to using after experiencing that first high and feeling we finally
58 fit in with a group of people who were like us and accepted us now that we got high. We
59 did not realize that this attempt to fulfill our spiritual needs with a physical substance was
60 the beginning of our spiritual death. Using became our number one priority at any and all
61 expense, for we really could not satisfy this intense hunger we had through the use of
62 substance or substances. Yet we tried. This led us to become progressively self centered as
63 our disease grew. We wanted to feel good, so we used. The more we used, the more we
64 became dependent on using and the less good we felt. Our preoccupation with using
65 forced us to become self centered, concentrating solely on how we could get the drug(s) we
66 wanted when we wanted it(them). Our thinking became more distorted and as we became
67 less able to see ourselves as we really are - addicts, losing more and more control to our
68 addiction. We therefore became more disconnected from our real selves. What we were
69 on the inside was different than what we portrayed on the outside. In reality, we felt lonely,
70 afraid, unsure, guilty, and confused. At other times, however, we might have felt happy,
71 confident and even joyful for apparently no reason. In any case, our emotions ran at
72 extremes - high and low, hardly ever at a manageable pace. We sought escape from the
73 lows and we sought desperately to intensify the highs. Feelings were just too much for us to
74 handle, so we used to avoid them. Once under the influence of drugs, we could be anything
75 or anyone we wanted to be. We lived in fantasy world where we convinced ourselves that
76 despite the pain, our responsibilities, the consequences of our using, taking the next drug
77 would somehow make things better. For a while this seemed to work, but as time went on,
78 our disease demanded more and more from us until we had nothing left to give. We gave
79 out total selves to our addiction. We became what our disease wanted us to be - slaves to
80 it's power. We no longer knew who we were and why we were doing what we were doing.
81 We completely disconnected from our real selves. And this disconnection from self was
82 only the beginning of our spiritual death. As our disease continued, we became more and

83 more dissatisfied with ourselves and our lives. At the same time we knew we could not stop
84 this destructive pattern of living . Many of us have tried so many times. Those who loved
85 us and cared for us began to confront us and to try to help us. Our own dissatisfaction with
86 self and our loss of control over our use scared us and confused us. This "powerlessness"
87 also helped to fuel anger and frustration inside of us as our dissatisfaction with self grew
88 and our attempts to change failed. We projected our anger and frustration onto those who
89 loved us. We blamed them for our condition, and for the problems that were resulting due
90 to our addiction. Resentment built. It became so painful for us to see what was happening
91 in our lives that we projected this frustration onto others. We became critical, judgmental,
92 and resentful of others so that we could not have to face up to our own sense of failure.
93 We placed fault everywhere but on ourselves. We could not see that our critical,
94 judgmental, and resentful attitudes were producing two very destructive consequences;
95 first of all, these feelings helped to fuel the addictive process by giving us the excuses to
96 use. By believing that everything and everyone was either against us or did not understand
97 us, it was easier for us to convince ourselves to continue to use. Secondly, the more we
98 placed blame for our shortcomings on others and on events in our lives, the less
99 responsibility we had to take in our own lives. By seeing others as the cause of our
100 problems, we had an excuse to isolate from them. This irrational thinking advanced us
101 further in our spiritual dying process. We not only disconnected from ourselves, but we
102 also began disconnecting from others. We began to isolate ourselves from those who loved
103 us. We no longer needed or wanted others in our life, only more of the substance(s) which
104 was (were) killing us. Others were important to us only insofar as what we could get from
105 them. We demanded and expected the power or control in our relationships with others.
106 And when they got tired of being used and abused and left us we became so manipulative
107 that many of them came back to us, and when they did not, we would soon find others to
108 use. Our families were usually the first ones to be exploited and the first ones we
109 disconnected from. After all, they were the closest to us, and our disease would not allow

110 us to be involved with anyone on an intimate basis. We were afraid of intimacy. Intimacy
111 meant sharing openly and honestly with others. Our total self-centered attitudes prevented
112 us from experiencing true intimacy. We could not be a responsible member or partner in
113 an intimate relationship. We used others as compulsively as we used drugs. Our families
114 couldn't understand our irrational thinking and bizarre behavior and many times they
115 became preoccupied with attempts to change us. We pushed them away. we told them to
116 stay out of our lives, we blamed them for our troubles and the consequences of our using.
117 Being emotionally immature as a result of our addiction preventing us the opportunity to
118 grow, as well as being powerless over our disease, we could not accept the responsibility for
119 our behavior. So we did not. Little by little we grew further and further from our families.
120 The more our disease grew, the more distant we became, and the more our families tried to
121 help. They tried in desperation to break through the barriers of our addiction, but many of
122 them soon discovered their own sense of powerlessness. In utter despair, they may have
123 detached from us. As a result, some of us experienced the painful reality of divorce,
124 separation, being locked out of their homes, and/or being turned in to the police by our
125 families. They could not take our abuse any longer. Our disease was so powerful, it not
126 only made us sick, but our families as well. There were those families who became so sick
127 by our disease that they could not detach from us at all. They became "addicted" to us and
128 their own irrational behavior served to enable our self-destructive thinking and behavior.
129 this made it easier and more comfortable for us to continue with our using lifestyle. We
130 became pros at using these people, exerting power over them by manipulating them, and
131 subsequently hurting them, all in efforts to get what they wanted - another high. And we
132 knew, despite our families threats to take action, they would or could not. They were sick
133 too. Many of us became so disconnected from our families that we felt little or no guilt or
134 remorse over the ways we would hurt them. They were like strangers to us as we were like
135 strangers to ourselves. As addiction gained more and more control over our lives, we
136 began to disconnect from our spouse, lovers and friends also. Friends were those who

137 would support our using lifestyle, those we used with and/or those we obtained drugs from.
138 Non-using friends were dropped very quickly as they had nothing to offer us. Our spouse
139 or lover became a victim of our addiction as well. Like our families, we ignored,
140 mistreated, used and hurt anyone who stood in the way of our using. After so much abuse,
141 even our closest friends, if we had any left, stayed away from us. Those who did remain in
142 contact, we isolated from. We became alone and lonely. However, our need for intimacy
143 was still present. It seemed like the only relationships we would allow where any intimacy
144 existed was a sexual relationship. But even here intimacy was purely physical, and as a
145 result many of us could not even handle a sexual relationship without problems. Our
146 values had deteriorated. Love became equivalent to sex; as we could not handle the
147 responsibility of giving which true love demands of us. Just like we used our families and
148 friends to get what we wanted, we used our spouse or lover as well. We were starved for
149 intimacy, yet the very nature of the self-centeredness of addiction did not allow for this
150 intimacy, yet the very nature of the self centeredness of addiction did not allow for this
151 intimacy beyond a physical or sexual manual. Once again, we were relying on our spiritual
152 needs to be met through physical ways. Sex becomes a "high" for us also. It too helped to
153 fill the void in us without demanding the risk, commitment, or the responsibility that an
154 inmate relationship demands. It was the "safe" way to feel wanted, accepted, and loved.
155 But even here we could not seem to get enough. So we cheated on our lover, we lied to
156 them, we demanded sex from them whenever we wanted it or we used sex as a weapon
157 against our lover. We were not able to care about their needs or wants, only our own. We
158 exerted physical and emotional power over them as we needed so badly to be in control, yet
159 we were not in control at all. We could not control our lives, we could not care for anyone,
160 not even ourselves. We were living like animals, completely out of instinct. We wanted
161 what we wanted when we wanted it. We sought out our victims and we used them. And if
162 we denied our wants, we learned to con so well that it became a game to us. Once this
163 process began, it took over our lives completely, so that even when we wanted out of this

164 way of living, until we sought help through Narcotics Anonymous, we could not stop this
165 process of destruction. Finally, our spiritual death became complete with our
166 disconnectedness to our God. Some of us never believed in God to begin with. We felt we
167 didn't need a God. Our disease made us so self-centered that we believed we were the
168 center of the universe, and that the world should evolve around our wants and needs. We
169 made ourselves God. Those of us who were raised with some kind of religious background
170 soon denounced this faith as we became convinced there could be no such being as a loving
171 god who cares for us when our own sense of powerlessness made life seem unbearable. We
172 lost any faith we had. We felt despair, loneliness, fear, and confusion. If God really cared
173 for us why would he allow us to suffer in this way? Those of us who attempted to hold on
174 to our beliefs and faith in a God of our understanding found that our faith lessened as our
175 disease grew. God became a bargaining tool to use when we were in a crisis situation. We
176 promised Him we would change if only He would get us out of the painful situations we
177 were in. And even if we did get out of these situations, we did not change. We used God
178 like we used others. We attempted to make deals with God but yet we knew we could
179 never really live up to the commitments we offered Him. How many times we promised
180 God and others that we would change and yet did not? Even if we were sincere with our
181 promises at the time we made them, we failed to realize the power addictions had over our
182 lives. It always took from us, leaving us with less and less in return. We come to see that
183 this truly is a disease as it is much too powerful for us to fight, although we tried. Our
184 behavior was excessive, we were physically, emotionally, and spiritually sick. And we felt
185 alone and afraid. This is how we came to N.A. We were completely disconnected from
186 ourselves, those who loved us, and our god. We see now that from the moment we entered
187 N.A. our relationships were severely damaged as a result of our "spiritual condition". We
188 need help. And this is why just staying clean is not enough if we are to recover. Our
189 capacity to have meaningful relationships has been damaged by our self-centered attitude
190 and thinking we developed over time as our disease progressed. We come to learn that

191 staying clean is the first step towards building more healthy relationships. But there is
192 more to be done. We can't stop here.

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195

RESTORING OUR RELATIONSHIPS

196 These self-centered attitudes and thinking we have as addicts are the major
197 obstacles blocking us from having more meaningful relationships. These attitudes lead to
198 our progressive isolation to who we really are, others, and to our God. Consequently, in
199 our efforts to work through the specific problems we may be having in many of our
200 relationships, we must focus beyond these problems or "symptoms" we are experiencing and
201 look at where these conflicts most likely originate - in our self centered thinking and
202 behavior. Getting and staying clean does not automatically mean our lives have changed.
203 Many of us still function in our past destructive ways long after getting clean. We may find
204 ourselves still making excuses for our irresponsible behavior, manipulating or conning
205 others and God to get what we want, and even hurting others as well as ourselves in so
206 many different ways. We can be clean without recovering. Therefore, even while in the
207 Narcotics Anonymous fellowship, we may find that the isolation we've experienced while
208 using, as a result of our disconnectedness and self centeredness, is still present and even
209 growing. In addition, when we came to N.A. and gave up using drugs, the void we
210 attempted to fill by using drugs in the past is once again exposed and in desperate need for
211 filling. Those of us who came to the fellowship after being separated from our spouse,
212 lover, and/or families, felt this void even more so as two important elements in our lives,
213 using and our loved one(s) are now gone. Like in the past, many of us seek quick, safe
214 ways to fill this void. Some of us result back to using drugs, as this emptiness we feel after
215 getting clean seems to be too much for us to bear. We look for relief once again, and tend
216 to go to where we feel relief will come quickly and easily. Thus, we relapse. Some of us
217 turn to other destructive ways of filling this void. The results are the same, we end up
218 hurting and also vulnerable to relapse. Many of us soon look towards getting involved in

219 an intimate relationship or even multiple relationships, as a way to deal with these lonely
220 and empty feelings we have. However, what we fail to realize is that until we have changed
221 our self-centered attitude, thinking, behavior, any attempts at forming intimate
222 relationships are likely to result in failure, and subsequently, both ourselves and the other
223 person are likely to get hurt. This is then likely to lead us to relapse also. This is why we
224 hear it suggested at meetings to avoid seeking intimate relationships in our initial recovery.
225 We can't handle these relationships yet. We are still spiritually sick, and therefore, stuck in
226 our self-centeredness. We cannot yet handle the responsibility, the sharing, the caring, the
227 honesty, the open-mindedness, the risk taking, the commitments, or in other words, the
228 unconditional giving and sharing of love which real intimacy demands, until we change
229 from being self centered to being otherly centered. this is why so many of us experience
230 many difficulties in our relationships during early recovery. We are still imprisoned to self,
231 and this is evident by how we perceive the difficulties we're having in relationships. Our
232 focus tends to be entirely on how badly we are being treated by others, what was done to
233 us, and how much we hurt as a result. we cannot even begin to see the role we take in
234 producing these conflicts. Our interpretation is completely one sided, we see ourselves
235 solely as victims, we can do no wrong. It's no wonder we have these conflicts! Once we
236 come to the realization that we have to change, and that this self-centered thinking or
237 acting has to go, we realize the difficult task ahead of us. It is not easy to change. We
238 begin by getting clean first. We then come to see that there are many times we are not
239 even aware that our thinking or actions are destructive, and that we are being self-centered.
240 How do we change these patterns? Fortunately for us, Narcotics Anonymous has given us
241 the tools for change. They come in the form of the 12 steps. When we take a close look at
242 each of the 12 steps we see that they are entirely based upon spiritual principles. The
243 working and living of these steps are the ways we come to reconnect with our real selves,
244 others and the God of our understanding. This also results in our change from being self-
245 centered to being otherly-centered. This is recovery. We learn how to love, It's only

246 through this process that we become whole again, as the void in our lives finally becomes
247 filled in a way we've never experienced before, in a way that works, and more importantly,
248 that lasts. This process is our spiritual awakening. We hear members who have worked the
249 steps and are now doing their best to live them in their daily lives share how different their
250 lives are today. We see how serene they appear, how content with life they seem to be, and
251 we feel the love that has developed in them. They know real intimacy. They have become
252 truly connected in a spiritual way to themselves, others, and God. We want what they have.
253 Our experience shows that those recovering addicts who are having on-going and/or severe
254 problems in their relationships probably have not worked the steps at all, or have not yet
255 incorporated the steps into their daily lives. Many of us still find excuses for not working
256 the steps. We put them off. We tell ourselves that we don't need to work them, we work
257 them with little or no effort, or we work them too quickly, then denying ourselves their true
258 value. As addicts, we are fighters. We fight anything we don't understand, don't agree with,
259 that appears too difficult, that demands risk, or takes time. We want the quick, easy way.
260 We want it our way. Should this way of thinking persist, we will eventually use. Our
261 experience shows that self-destructive thinking will always almost lead to self-destructive
262 behavior in one form or another. Those of us who finally begin working the steps soon
263 begin to see and feel the positive changes in our lives. This helps us to continue on with
264 our program, and we want all we can get. The steps help us to change slowly over time,
265 giving us the tools to re-connect with ourselves, others, and God. They work in a simple
266 format, giving us the simple tasks to do. We work them one by one, in order. We begin to
267 get out of our self-centeredness. The first step begins this process by teaching us the
268 importance of honestly looking at ourselves, and seeing ourselves as we really are. This
269 leads us to reconnect with our true selves, as we stop believing those false notions we've
270 had about ourselves in the past. We stop making excuses for our past. We accept our
271 reality. "We admitted we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become
272 unmanageable". We do this by allowing ourselves to see the consequences of our

addiction, and the eventual destructiveness which always resulted. This is our addictive nature. We are addicts. For some of us, this takes a long time to admit. We may fight this and thereby return to using. Others of us may have come to our first N.A. meeting accepting ourselves as addicts. Regarding our relationships, in the past we attempted to control, manipulate, and con others. We wanted others to be the way we wanted them. We learn by working the first step that our powerlessness extends beyond our past using behavior. Our thinking and attitudes are also part of our disease of addiction. When we think we can control or change others, or when the addict in us attempts to manipulate or con others, the results are chaos - our lives become unmanageable. We find that we can stop using drugs and still think and act destructively. By seeing ourselves as we really are, we realize that we cannot manage our own lives without the help from others. Thus we move on to the second step to begin to connect with a source of strength. "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity". In our using days, we made ourselves the center of the universe. We denied we needed help, and we could not see our irrational or insane thinking and behavior for what it was. In our relationships, we also denied the need for help with problems we were having. We accused others of acting crazy, yet denying our own insanity. We continue to look at ourselves as we really are. This step gives us the faith and hope. We realize our need for help by a power greater than ourselves. By working towards building faith in a source of strength, and by practicing this faith, we begin to have hope in ourselves and in our recovery, thus we become more fully connected to ourselves and connected to the God of our understanding. The sanity we are restored to is the change in our thinking and behavior. We begin to get out of the self-centeredness and destructiveness we were trapped in, thereby freeing us to think and to act more rationally. We learn to rely on our God for continued strength. As our recovery grows, we begin to trust more and more in our God and we see the value to this trust. This helps us to continue to take risks, and to trust more. We become ready to work the third step. "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we

300 understand Him". In our past, we demanded things and others to go our way. We were
301 impatient, impulsive, greedy people who demanded what we wanted when we wanted it.
302 We were like this in our relationships also. We demanded from others, putting our needs
303 and wants first, hardly ever allowing their needs and wants to come first unless we were
304 attempting to set them up to get something we wanted from them later. We played these
305 games with people. Working the third step requires a dramatic change in us. The God of
306 our understanding becomes our lifeline for the strength we need to make this change. We
307 no longer doubt, ignore, or manipulate God, rather we practice doing His will to the best of
308 our ability. We begin loving others unconditionally. We accept life on it's own terms. It's
309 no longer as important to have things our way. Our self centeredness is continuing to
310 diminish. For most of us this is a very difficult change to make in our lives. Yet we know
311 that if we are going to achieve any measure of serenity in our recovery, we must be willing
312 to do our best in working this step. Our attachment to our God then strengthens, as our
313 faith increases and we become ready to take more demanding risks. We begin to accept
314 others for who they are also, instead of trying to make them conform to our will. This helps
315 to remove many difficulties we've had in our relationships. We find we need to concentrate
316 on our own personal growth, and let others grow their own way, in their own time. Not my
317 will, but Thine be done. After continuing to practice the principles in the first three steps,
318 we find we have the strength and the courage to look at ourselves more closely in order to
319 continue this process of change. We move on to the fourth step. "We made a searching
320 and fearless moral inventory of ourselves". This too is a radical change for us. Prior to
321 working our program, we were constantly taking other people's inventories, pointing out
322 their defects, putting them down for their shortcomings, and laughing at their mistakes.
323 Consequently, this led to many arguments, hurt feelings, and separations in these
324 relationships. Now the focus has shifted. We look at a deeper level at who we really are,
325 and what we're really all about. We see our character defects as well as our assets. This
326 reinforces the true connection we have begun to build with ourselves. We remove the

327 masks we wore. which serve to isolate us from ourselves, from reality, from others, and
328 from God, and we see our inner selves. although this is painful at first, we need to go
329 through with it if we are going to continue our program of change. We realize we need to
330 know where we must change in order to work on changing in these areas. The strength and
331 courage to unmask ourselves comes from continued practice of the first three steps. we
332 learn how to be honest with ourselves. We then become ready to become honest with
333 others. We move on to the fifth step. "We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another
334 human being the exact nature of our wrongs". In our past using days, we lived secretive
335 lives. Much of our using may have been to hide our feelings or emotions which were too
336 difficult for us to deal with. When others noticed that something was wrong and tried to
337 help us, we often denied that there was a problem. We hid ourselves from others, isolating
338 more and more as our addiction grew. In our efforts to hide from our own inadequacies,
339 we focused on what we perceived was wrong in others. This kept us from getting too close
340 to them. Thus we felt safe. We now begin to put the focus on coming out of the shell we've
341 made. This takes a lot of courage, strength, and trust. We begin by honestly admitting the
342 nature of our wrongs, the self-centeredness behind each action, to ourselves and to our
343 God. This continues to strengthen our connection to ourselves and to our God. We then
344 seek to also strengthen our connection to others. We open ourselves completely to one
345 other person, honestly sharing our past with that person. We no longer hold on to the
346 secrets we've kept for so long. We feel a sense of relief and acceptance afterwards. This is
347 what we've been looking for all along! We begin to see what real intimacy is all about.
348 Prior to this, we've known intimacy only in a physical way. Most of us, upon completion of
349 our fifth step, feel a real sense of connection to ourselves, God, and the person we've
350 shared with, in a way we've never known before. We are growing along spiritual lines. This
351 gives us the willingness to begin the difficult task of working on our character defects. We
352 move on to the sixth step. "We were entirely ready to have god remove all these defects of
353 character". In our past, we demanded commitment from others in our lives. We not only

354 wanted others to do what we wanted them to do, we also demanded that they be there
355 when we wanted them to be. Our addiction would not allow us to live up to any
356 commitments to them. We demanded from them, but rarely could follow through on
357 commitments ourselves. Naturally, our relationships suffered as a result. This was our
358 self-centeredness in control. Now we focus on committing ourselves to continual change.
359 We ready ourselves for this change by making a commitment to ourselves and to our God,
360 willing to do our part in the process of change. Once again, this strengthens our
361 reconnection process. We become ready to commit ourselves to this change when we
362 honestly admit that the past destructive ways of thinking and acting must be surrendered,
363 and the principles of the 12 Steps of N.A. need to take their place. We realize that holding
364 on to any of these old ideas, attitudes, or behaviors, will only serve to keep us in a self
365 centered way of thinking. We make this commitment to change. We're now ready for our
366 seventh step. "We humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings". We know that we can't
367 change by ourselves. In the past using days, we had difficulty asking for help, as we felt we
368 had all the answers. This only helped to close us off from reality as well as from others.
369 We became isolated in our closed-mindedness. We now realize that if we are to truly
370 change these character defects, we must acknowledge these weaknesses, and ask for His
371 help.. We begin to listen to suggestions instead of turning ourselves off to the help of
372 others. We deepen our relationship with our God by accepting his power as the source of
373 the strength we need to make the necessary changes in our lives. We deepen our
374 connection with ourselves by keeping us focused on these character defects which need to
375 be changed, thus continuing to see ourselves as we really are. At the same time, we deepen
376 our commitment to ourselves by striving towards spiritual growth. We then become ready
377 to deepen our commitment to restore our relationships. We work on our eighth step. "We
378 made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all".
379 Since many of us have experienced conflicts in our relationships which stemmed from our
380 own inability to admit our wrongs and blaming others for everything that went wrong in

381 these relationships, in a completely non-self-centered way, we must now look at all those
382 that we had harmed by this self-centeredness. Our attitude is changing. We are no longer
383 as self-centered as in our using days. We take an honest look at how we hurt others. In the
384 past, we could only see how we have been hurt. We became ready to make these amends,
385 and go on to our next step. "We made direct amends to such people wherever possible,
386 except when to do so would injure them or others". At this point our attitude must be
387 completely unselfish. Our goal is to restore our relationships to the best of our ability.
388 Therefore, we must be careful at how we approach others. We do not want to hurt or
389 injure them. We are beginning to think about the welfare of others. We are beginning to
390 care about them also. We learn the spiritual principle of forgiveness by actually making
391 amends. Once again this action allows us to experience a real sense of intimacy if we do it
392 in an unselfish manner, expecting nothing in return. This strengthens our connection to our
393 true selves, others, and God. We become close and begin to feel the connection we're
394 making as real. By attempting to right our wrongs, we feel a sense of peacefulness with
395 ourselves. By allowing ourselves to see our own weaknesses, we are better able to accept
396 the weaknesses in others also. Suddenly, resentments we may have held towards others
397 diminish as we focus on righting our own wrongs. We recognize that if this sense of
398 serenity we feel is going to last at all, we must continue practicing the principles we've
399 learned in our daily lives. We are becoming more spiritually connected. But we know that
400 it's easy to fall back into our old ways. Some of us have gotten stuck and fallen back. We
401 must continue working towards spiritual growth or we begin isolating ourselves and our
402 thoughts may once again become self-centered. We guard against this by working our tenth
403 step daily. "We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly
404 admitted it". The way we've found to keep ourselves in touch with who we really are, and
405 our relationships to our God and to others is by daily inventory. We must continue to
406 check up on our attitudes. We must ask ourselves regularly if we've been at all self-
407 centered in our daily affairs. In our dealings with others, we must look at any ways we've

408 acted selfishly and make immediate amends to those affected by this behavior. It's the only
409 way to keep us from falling back into that dreadful trap of isolation and fear. By keeping
410 daily tabs on our self-centeredness, we notice that our relationships are improving
411 dramatically. We are no longer focused on what we can get out of others but what we can
412 offer to them. This is what unconditional love is all about. We recognize the importance
413 of continued strength from the God of our understanding. We want to improve this
414 relationship with Him. We move onto the eleventh step. "We sought through prayer and
415 meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him, praying only
416 for the knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out". Another way we keep
417 ourselves from falling back to self-centeredness is by asking God daily for the strength we
418 need to do his will. We continue to do our part by surrendering our will over to Him. We
419 ask him to show us the way. We are now truly connected to him, as well as to ourselves,
420 and to others. Our self-centeredness diminishes. We feel spiritually alive, a part of instead
421 of apart from. We no longer feel that void in our lives. We feel complete. We work our
422 twelfth step. "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry
423 this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs". We learn that
424 the only way to keep what we have is by giving it away. Whereas in the past, we did not and
425 could not care for anyone, including ourselves, due to the nature of addiction, today we
426 begin to reach out to those who still suffer in attempts to help. We begin to care about
427 them. We now see and feel what real love is all about. We learn to love unconditionally,
428 without expecting anything in return. We apply this principle to all of our relationships.
429 We're coming out of ourselves. We experience real intimacy through the living of spiritual
430 principles in our lives. Principles such as honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, faith,
431 hope, trust, sharing, risk-taking, commitment, humility, spiritual growth, forgiveness, caring
432 and unconditional love have given us that true connection we have been searching for all
433 along. We do our best to incorporate these principles in all areas of our lives. Our
434 relationships strengthen. We have begun to build the characteristics needed for intimate

435 relationships to grow and strengthen by the working and the living of the twelve steps. Our
436 love grows. We are truly spiritual beings, who've suffered from a spiritual illness. We are
437 now ready to share the love we have with others in many different ways and in a variety of
438 roles. We see that by living these principles, we can handle and enjoy an intimate
439 relationship with that someone special. We are not perfect, but we have become so much
440 better, and we have the tools for continued growth. We become free not only from our
441 past using, but also from the self-centered destructiveness in our thinking and our attitudes.
442 We're free to love and it shows! Others become attracted to us as they see our new way of
443 life, problems are dealt with more simply and more effectively, and our serenity lasts
444 longer. We find we have the capacity to have meaningful relationships today because our
445 focus is on loving others instead of what we can get from them. We have something to
446 offer and it feels good to give of ourselves. And the more we give of the love we have, the
447 more this love grows! We see our relationships being restored and we feel a true
448 connection to life. We are truly recovering and our relationships reflect this spiritual
449 progress.

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