

Narcotics Anonymous.

# **It Works:** How and Why

Part One

## **The Steps**

Review-Form Material

Steps One — Six

UNAPPROVED LITERATURE  
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FOR REVIEW AND INPUT  
INPUT DUE JUNE 30, 1992



## **The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous®**

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We 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.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.


## Volume One

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# It Works: How and Why The Steps

*Review Form, 1991*

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# WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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TO: The Fellowship

FROM: Mary Jensen, Chairperson  
WSC Literature Committee

DATE: December 16, 1991

RE: Review form of the Steps portion of *It Works: How and Why*

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The WSC Literature Committee is pleased to submit these first six steps for your review and input. We hope that literature committees and individuals who review this work will find that we have been able to communicate the spiritual essence of our steps and provide encouragement to addicts as they practice our recovery program.

There are surely many ways to workshop these steps. We suggest that you read the drafts out loud to see how they flow orally, since these chapters may be read in that way in step meetings. As you can tell from the questions on the review form, we are seeking primarily conceptual review of the material. If we have missed the mark somewhere, we need to know that. Also, if any of the ideas presented lack clarity or seem "wrong," please let us know about it.\*

During the 1989-1990 conference year, we set the foundation for working on this book. We elected to use a new process--the staff team approach. This is the same process used by the WSB Traditions Ad Hoc Committee, and we believe that it will provide for some consistency between the two parts of the book. The staff team is guided by an ad hoc group which provides the content of the book and revision of drafts generated. The WSCLC then recommends further revisions based on their review of the drafts and on fellowship input in the case of Steps One through Three. The master list of input for these first three steps seemed clear, and we were able to alter the material to reflect concepts seen as missing by reviewers.

As you review our work, we thought that it would be helpful to present again here the decisions that guided it.

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\* Please don't focus on structural or grammatical issues within these drafts. The approval form will reflect a thorough copy edit.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this book is to invite members to engage in a journey of recovery and to serve as a resource in gaining a personal understanding of the spiritual principles in the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. This book will explore the spiritual principles in each step and how we experience them in our lives. The steps will be presented in a manner that will encompass the diversity of our fellowship. We believe that this purpose is reflective of the spiritual awakening described in our Twelfth Step.

**Readability:**

Eighth to ninth grade level (the current drafts are written at an eighth grade reading level). Other readability factors taken into consideration included comprehensibility (use of familiar wording, concrete images, and experiences to which most readers can relate), clarity (showing preference for the active voice, sharing of experiences rather than intellectualizing), and conciseness (favoring shorter sentences, avoiding cliches and redundancies).

**Audience:**

Our audience is the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. This encompasses the diversity of our membership from the newcomer to those with lengthy clean time. We believe that when we write a quality piece of literature, our message will be clear to other readers as well. We will strive to use language that will communicate to English speaking members yet remain translatable.

**Style:**

To summarize our decisions related to style, a list of a few of our most prevailing features follows: experiential exploration of the steps rather than descriptive or "how to" language; preference for the use of present tense; non-repetitive; fluent, yet using many short, concise sentences; preference for active voice; non-judgemental, friendly, respectful, informal tone; use of an easily followed organizational structure; and capable of standing the test of time.

The organization of each chapter is similar in structure. An introduction is followed by an identification section. In this section, we have attempted to link the addict reading this step for the first time with our collective experience--what brought us to this step, the fears we felt toward taking it, the realizations that brought us over the edge and allowed us to experience the step. The identification section also provides the motivation for working that particular step. Next, spiritual principles from previous steps are woven into the material. In Step Two, for example, the principle of humility is mentioned, but it is not developed until Step Five, then continues to be built upon as the steps progress. New spiritual principles are then brought in and experience shared about working the step. We have included material in each step that will speak to members regardless of the

length of their clean time. Each step closes with a transition to the following chapter.

We have been clear among ourselves from the beginning that this is not a "how to" book. We don't believe that it's possible to represent all the ways in which a particular step may be worked. Rather, we have sought to represent our collective experiences with the steps and concepts we hold in common. At times, we offer suggestions to the reader, but our intention has been to do so with the clear message that these are only some of the ways in which we may approach this avenue of our program.

Now you can tell us if we followed the guidelines we set for ourselves. We hope that we have been able to transmit an invitational tone and that the content of the chapters focuses on the spiritual nature of the recovery process in Narcotics Anonymous.

We invite you to share with us the joys of working on this book. We trust that the review of this material will provide your committees with strong shared experiences, as it has for us. This review form is available through the WSO to any individual member, group, or committee that wishes to review it.

We look forward to receiving your input. The input for this phase of the project is due June 30, 1992. Please make every attempt to meet this deadline as we will begin factoring in fellowship input in July.

**WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE  
LITERATURE COMMITTEE**

**STEPS ONE - SIX  
REVIEW FORM**

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1

## STEP ONE

2

*"We admitted we were powerless over our addiction,  
that our lives had become unmanageable."*

3

4 As addicts, we have each experienced the pain, loneliness, and despair of  
5 addiction. Before coming to NA, most of us tried everything we could think of to  
6 control our use of drugs. We tried switching drugs, thinking that we only had a  
7 problem with one particular drug. We tried managing our drug use, getting high  
8 only at certain times or in certain places. We vowed to stop using altogether at a  
9 certain point. We swore we would never do things we watched other addicts do,  
10 then found ourselves doing those very things. Nothing we tried had any effect.  
11 Our active addiction progressed at every turn, overpowering our best intentions.

12 Our experience, as members of Narcotics Anonymous, is that addiction is a  
13 disease, one that has disastrous effects on every area of our lives. It may progress  
14 rapidly, destroying our lives in a matter of months, or more slowly, years passing  
15 before we notice its effects. It would be impossible to precisely describe  
16 addiction in a way that everyone would agree with. However, the disease seems  
17 to affect us in the following general ways: Mentally, we become obsessed with  
18 thoughts of using. Physically, once we start using drugs, we develop a compulsion  
19 to continue using, regardless of the consequences. Spiritually, we become totally  
20 self-centered in the course of our addiction. Looking at addiction as a disease  
21 makes a lot of sense to addicts because, in our experience, addiction is  
22 progressive, incurable, and fatal.

23 We found that, when we used, we set off a craving for drugs which could  
24 never be satisfied. Our self-centered thinking fed this obsession; no power on  
25 earth could keep us from using more drugs. We could neither take enough drugs  
26 to make us feel right nor could we stop using on our own. We found that, no  
27 matter how much we used, we could not escape the overwhelming loneliness of  
28 our addiction. We were trapped in a self-destructive cycle created by our  
29 obsessive thoughts and our compulsive actions.

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30 Denial is another aspect of our disease, manifesting itself in many ways. In  
31 our addiction, we used denial to protect ourselves against the reality of what our  
32 lives had become. We often told ourselves that, given the right set of  
33 circumstances, we might still be able to bring our lives under control. Always  
34 skillful at defending our actions, we refused to accept responsibility for the  
35 damage done by our addiction. We believed that if we tried long and hard  
36 enough, substituted one drug for another, switched friends, or changed our living  
37 arrangements or occupations, our lives would improve. These rationalizations  
38 repeatedly failed us, yet we continued to cling to them. Our denial let us tell  
39 ourselves that we didn't have a problem with drugs, regardless of all evidence to  
40 the contrary. It let us tell ourselves that we could use again successfully. It  
41 allowed us to justify our actions, despite the wreckage around us resulting from  
42 our addiction.

43 Eventually, however, we arrived at a place where we could no longer fool  
44 ourselves. No matter how hard we tried to deny our disease, we finally realized  
45 we had backed ourselves into a corner of utter despair. The overwhelming pain  
46 of our addiction brought us to our knees. We finally saw the unmanageability of  
47 our lives that resulted from our drug use. We saw the wasteful, destructive  
48 reality, our neglect of normal responsibilities, and our inability to handle our  
49 feelings.

50 Unmanageability takes many forms, and they vary from addict to addict.  
51 Some of us neglected personal hygiene and even basic health care. Some of us  
52 noticed that we kept "forgetting" to eat. Some of us seemed to function very well  
53 at work or school, but couldn't cope with our feelings. Even those of us whose  
54 lives looked very manageable on the outside eventually came to the realization  
55 that our inner lives were decidedly unmanageable.

56 Many of us recall the moment of clarity when we came face to face with our  
57 disease. All the lies, all the pretenses, all the rationalizations we had used to  
58 justify where we stood as a result of our drug use stopped working. Who and

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59 what we were became more clear. We could no longer run from the truth.  
60 Alone, terrified of what the future held for us, we sought out the rooms of  
61 Narcotics Anonymous.

62 Perhaps we arrived in NA without seeing the problems we had left in our  
63 wake. Because of our self-centeredness, we were often the last ones to realize  
64 that we were addicts. Many of us were persuaded by friends or family to begin  
65 attending NA meetings. Other members received even stronger encouragement  
66 from the courts. No matter how it occurred, our longstanding illusions had to be  
67 shattered. Honesty had to replace denial before we could face the truth of our  
68 addiction.

69 We have found that we cannot recover without an ability to be honest.  
70 Learning to be honest is an ongoing process; we are able to become progressively  
71 more honest as we work the steps and continue to stay clean. In the First Step,  
72 we begin to practice the spiritual principle of honesty by telling ourselves the  
73 truth about our drug use. Then, we go on to tell ourselves the truth about our  
74 lives. We face what *is*, not the way things could be or should be. It doesn't  
75 matter where we come from or how good or bad we think we've had it; when we  
76 finally turn to Narcotics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps, we begin to find  
77 relief. The honest sharing of members of Narcotics Anonymous makes us realize  
78 that we have been living a lie.

79 As we begin working the First Step, it is important to ask ourselves some basic  
80 personal questions: Can I control my use of drugs? Am I willing to stop using?  
81 Am I willing to go to any lengths to find recovery? Given a choice between  
82 finding a new way of life in NA and the jails, institutions, or death we may face if  
83 we continue in our addiction, recovery begins to make sense. We cannot begin to  
84 recover unless we stop using drugs. Total abstinence from all drugs is the only  
85 way we can begin to treat our addiction. However, abstinence is only the  
86 beginning. Recovery really begins when we start to apply the spiritual principles  
87 contained in the Twelve Steps of NA to all areas of our lives.

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88 Our only hope for a life free from active addiction is a profound emotional  
89 and spiritual change. Our experience shows that it is necessary for us to be  
90 willing to go to any lengths to receive this precious gift of recovery. In recovery,  
91 we will be introduced to spiritual principles such as the honesty and surrender  
92 required for the First Step. If we faithfully practice these principles, they will  
93 transform our perceptions and the way we live our lives.

94 As we work the First Step, we find that surrender is not what we thought it  
95 was. In the past, we probably thought of surrender as something that only weak  
96 and cowardly people did. We saw only two choices: either keep fighting to  
97 control our using, or just cave in completely and let our lives fall to pieces. We  
98 felt we were in a battle to control our using and that, if we surrendered, the drugs  
99 would win. In recovery, we find surrender to be something else entirely. The  
100 process of surrender is extremely personal for each one of us. Only we, as  
101 individuals, know when we've done it. We cannot stress the importance of  
102 surrender enough, for it is the very process that enables us to recover. When we  
103 surrender, we know in our hearts that we've had enough. We're tired of fighting.  
104 A relief comes over us as we finally realize that the struggle is over.

105 No matter how hard we fought, we finally reached the point where we  
106 realized that we couldn't stop using on our own--the point of surrender for all  
107 addicts who have gone on to find recovery. We were able to admit our  
108 powerlessness over our addiction. We gave up completely. Even though we  
109 didn't know exactly what would happen, we gathered up our courage and  
110 admitted our powerlessness. We gave up the illusion that we could control our  
111 using, thereby opening the door to recovery.

112 Many of us begin the process of surrender when we identify ourselves at an  
113 NA meeting with our name and the words, "I am an addict." Once we admit that  
114 we are addicts and that we cannot stop using drugs on our own, we are able to  
115 stay clean on a daily basis with the help of other recovering addicts in Narcotics  
116 Anonymous. The paradox of this admission is evident once we work the First

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117 Step. As long as we think we can control our using, we are almost forced to  
118 continue. The minute we admit we're powerless, we never have to use again.  
119 This reprieve from having to use is the most profound gift we can receive, for it  
120 saves our lives.

121 Once we have admitted our powerlessness, it becomes necessary for us to  
122 seek help from other recovering addicts. Through our collective experience, we  
123 have found that we can accomplish together what we cannot do alone. As we  
124 attend meetings regularly, we can find great comfort in the experiences of those  
125 traveling this path with us. Perhaps for the first time, we find others just like us in  
126 the rooms of NA. Coming to NA has been described by many members as  
127 "coming home." We find ourselves welcomed and accepted by other recovering  
128 addicts. We finally find a place where we belong.

129 Though we are sure to be helped by the sharing we hear at meetings, we need  
130 to find one special person to help us in our recovery, a sponsor. Our sponsor will  
131 help us through the Twelve Steps and share with us his or her own experience.  
132 Listening to our sponsor's experience and applying it to our own lives is how we  
133 take advantage of one of the most beautiful and practical aspects of recovery: the  
134 therapeutic value of one addict helping another. Through our developing  
135 relationship with our sponsor, we learn about the principle of trust. By following  
136 the suggestions of our sponsor instead of only our own ideas, we learn the  
137 principles of open-mindedness and willingness. Our sponsor will help us take the  
138 necessary steps along the path of recovery.

139 Talking honestly with our sponsor about our drug use and how it affected our  
140 lives will help us work the First Step thoroughly. We must always remember  
141 where we came from and where our addiction took us. We have only a daily  
142 reprieve from our active addiction. Each day, we must accept the fact that we  
143 cannot use drugs successfully. Even long periods of abstinence do not guarantee  
144 us continued freedom from the pain and trouble that addiction can bring. The  
145 symptoms of our disease can always return. We may find that we are powerless

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146 in ways we never imagined. No matter how our disease displays itself, we must  
147 take its deadly nature into account. As we do, we develop a fuller awareness of  
148 the nature of our disease. This is a natural part of the recovery process.

149 Few recovering addicts will say that the recovery process is easy, because it's  
150 not. Many have attempted it and given up. It takes great courage and  
151 perseverance to continue in recovery day after day and year after year. Part of  
152 the recovery process is to move forward in spite of whatever may stand in our  
153 way. Because long-lasting change in recovery happens slowly, we will turn to the  
154 First Step again and again.

155 The disease of addiction can manifest itself in a variety of mental obsessions  
156 and compulsive actions that have nothing to do with drugs. We may find  
157 ourselves obsessed and behaving compulsively over things we never had problems  
158 with until we stopped using drugs. We may once again try to fill the awful  
159 emptiness we sometimes feel with something outside ourselves. Any time we find  
160 ourselves using something to "fix" how we feel, it's time to work the First Step  
161 again.

162 We are never completely immune from having our lives become  
163 unmanageable, even after years of recovery. If problems pile up and our  
164 resources for coping with them dwindle, we may feel out of control and in too  
165 much pain to do anything constructive for ourselves. We feel overwhelmed by  
166 life, and that feeling seems to make everything worse. When our lives seem to be  
167 falling apart, we reapply ourselves to the basics of the NA program. We stay in  
168 close contact with our sponsor, work the steps, and go to meetings. We surrender  
169 again, knowing that victory lies in the admission of defeat.

170 The feeling of love and acceptance we find in the Fellowship of Narcotics  
171 Anonymous allows us to begin to recover from our addiction. We start to learn a  
172 new way to live. The emptiness from which we suffered begins to be filled  
173 through working and living the Twelve Steps. We start to find a solution to our

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174 hopelessness. We begin to learn that our addiction is being addressed in all its  
175 complexity by this simple program.

176       There is a deeply spiritual nature to our program of recovery. The Twelve  
177 Steps of Narcotics Anonymous will take us on a journey that will far exceed our  
178 expectations. Working and living the steps will lead us to a spiritual awakening.  
179 Step One is the beginning of this spiritual journey. To embark on this personal  
180 quest, we must become willing to humble ourselves to this program and its  
181 principles, for our future hinges on our willingness to grow spiritually.

182       We are starting a new way of life, one that offers great joy and happiness. It  
183 goes without saying that once we stop using drugs, many of our problems  
184 disappear along with the drugs. However, recovery doesn't exempt us from pain.  
185 Living life on life's terms combines moments of happiness with moments of  
186 sadness. Wonderful events are interspersed with painful ones. We will  
187 experience a full range of feelings about the events in our lives.

188       When events beyond our control are causing pain or unmanageability in our  
189 lives, working the First Step is the beginning of our solution. After the struggle,  
190 we surrender. We become teachable. We admit the problem so we can go on to  
191 find the solution. The solution to our addiction lies in working the rest of the  
192 steps, beginning with Step Two.

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**Step One Review Form**

- |   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step?                 | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear?                       | [ ]        | [ ]       |

If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_

4. General comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**This form was completed by :**

region \_\_\_\_\_ area \_\_\_\_\_ group \_\_\_\_\_ individual \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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## STEP TWO

*"We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."*

Our surrender in the First Step leaves us with a deep need to believe that we can recover. We've accepted our addiction and seen just how hopeless our lives had become. We've been forced to give up our illusions, and now we need to develop hope and believe in something that will help us in our efforts to change and continue our recovery.

The solution we seek is spiritual in nature; we find it through working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Our hope lies in developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves. We must change, and we have found that we can't do it without a Power greater than our own.

Our Basic Text states, "There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery; this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles." The fatal nature of addiction doesn't afford us the luxury of this attitude. If we want to stay clean, we cannot let an unwillingness to believe in a Higher Power be a barrier to our recovery.

Belief in a Higher Power does not come easily to all of us. We may first have to let go of our old attitudes and beliefs about a Power greater than ourselves before we can begin to try a new approach. Many of us have ideas of a Higher Power that punishes or condemns us. Ideas of this sort aren't going to help us now. Any Power that can restore us to sanity needs to be not only powerful, but loving, too. Because the concept of a loving Power greater than ourselves may be an entirely new idea for some of us, we have found an open mind indispensable when we approach this step. An open mind allows us to rethink our old ideas of a Power greater than ourselves that can restore us to sanity.

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

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30 reality. We viewed the world around us as a hostile environment and cut  
31 ourselves off from normal human contact. Some of us withdrew physically and  
32 had little, if any, contact with anyone. Some of us went through the motions of  
33 life but allowed nothing to touch us emotionally. Either way, we ended up feeling  
34 isolated. Our responses to most situations were generally inappropriate. We  
35 acted irrationally and made poor choices. Despite evidence to contrary, we felt  
36 that we were in control. We ignored or didn't believe the truths that were staring  
37 us in the face. Worst of all was the fact that we continued to use drugs, regardless  
38 of the negative consequences we experienced. Despite the warning signs that our  
39 drug use was out of control, we continued trying to justify it. All too often, the  
40 result was that we could no longer face ourselves. When we take a realistic look  
41 at our lives, there can be no doubt that we desperately need a restoration to  
42 sanity.

43 Though being restored to sanity is a life-long process, we can see results right  
44 from the beginning of our recovery. Initially, being restored to sanity means that  
45 we no longer have to use drugs. We see further progress as we begin to make  
46 choices that help us rather than harm us. We go to meetings rather than  
47 isolating. We call our sponsor rather than sitting alone with painful feelings. We  
48 follow our sponsor's suggestions, realizing that those suggestions are in our best  
49 interest. We work the steps, a powerful demonstration of sanity. We begin to  
50 believe that a powerful force *can* and *is* restoring us to sanity. At long last, we  
51 feel hope for ourselves.

52 Strangely enough, our surrender in the First Step made it possible for us to  
53 feel hope. By admitting our own powerlessness, we opened our minds to an  
54 entirely new idea: the possibility that something greater than ourselves might be  
55 powerful enough to relieve our obsession to use drugs. It is quite likely that,  
56 before coming to NA, we never believed in any power but our own willpower,  
57 and that had failed us. NA introduces us to a new understanding: a Power  
58 greater than our own that can restore us to sanity. We draw hope from this

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59 understanding and begin to comprehend what it means to believe in something.  
60 As we begin to believe in a Higher Power, we make a leap of faith.

61 This leap of faith needn't be overly difficult; a small amount of open-  
62 mindedness works wonders. If we look around us, we find many reasons to  
63 believe. Our belief may be simply that we *can* recover from our lives of active  
64 addiction. The freedom from the obsession to use may be our first experience of  
65 a Power greater than ourselves at work in our lives. Perhaps for the first time in  
66 many years, our obsession with drugs no longer controls our every waking  
67 moment. Knowing that we are no longer destined to die from our disease is a  
68 powerful belief in and of itself.

69 We find additional hope by listening to other recovering addicts. We can  
70 relate to where they've been and draw hope from who they've become. We listen  
71 closely at meetings and become willing to apply what we hear to our own lives.

72 "We *came* to believe" implies a process. For some, this process is simple, and  
73 it may bring immediate results. Many of us arrived in NA so completely defeated  
74 that we were willing to try anything. Seeking help from a Power greater than  
75 ourselves was the best idea we had ever heard. However, the process of coming  
76 to believe can be difficult, even painful. If our former beliefs about a Power  
77 greater than ourselves hold us back, we will need to develop a different concept.

78 It is not necessary that we define for ourselves the entire concept of a Power  
79 greater than ourselves right now. Those of us with many years of recovery find  
80 that our understanding of a Higher Power grows over time. Our belief in that  
81 Power grows, as does our faith. We come to believe in a Power without limit.  
82 We find that what this Power can do for us, and the ways it works in our lives, go  
83 far beyond what we originally thought. This is a big part of the ongoing process  
84 of recovery, for just as a flower blossoms from a tightly closed bud, so our coming  
85 to believe often unfolds over time.

86 We come from various walks of life and experience, so it is natural that we  
87 bring with us differing concepts of spirituality. In NA, no one is forced to believe

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88 any dogma or doctrine. This is a program of spirituality, not a religion.  
89 Individually, we cultivate our own beliefs about a Power greater than we are.  
90 However we define our own concept of this Power, its help is available to us all.

91 In the beginning, many of us turn to the group or the love we encounter in  
92 Narcotics Anonymous as our Higher Power. An NA group is a powerful example  
93 of a Power greater than ourselves at work. Often in desperation, we enter a  
94 room full of addicts who share their experience, strength, and hope with us. As  
95 we listen, we know with certainty that they have felt the hopelessness and  
96 remorse from which we, too, have suffered. But there is a difference: *They* are  
97 staying clean. Through their experience, we find hope and much more.

98 As we observe other addicts practicing a new way of life without the use of  
99 drugs, we may come to believe that we, too, can recover. Watching the miracle of  
100 other addicts staying clean is compelling proof of the existence of a Power greater  
101 than ourselves. We notice the acceptance that recovering addicts who practice  
102 this new way of life show each other. We watch as addicts celebrate lengths of  
103 clean time that we think will be impossible for us to attain. Perhaps someone  
104 hugs us and tells us to "keep coming back." Members offer their phone numbers.  
105 We feel the collective spiritual energy of the group, and this helps us start to heal.

106 As we undertake our search for this Power greater than ourselves, talking  
107 with our sponsor and with other recovering addicts can help us. We ask them  
108 what their idea of a Higher Power is and how they have arrived at it. We open  
109 our minds and become willing to consider the ideas of others.

110 While it is useful to question others about their spirituality, we must  
111 remember that it is a personal search we are embarking upon. Others can help  
112 us, pointing out the direction their own paths have taken. We cannot, however,  
113 depend entirely upon another's experience in this area. We must come to believe  
114 for ourselves. The need for our own sense of spirituality is too vital to our  
115 recovery for us to neglect this highly personal process.

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116 For us, part of the process of coming to believe is accepting the evidence we  
117 see. As mentioned before, our addiction caused us to deny the truths we saw.  
118 But now in recovery, we can believe what we see. At first, we make a small leap  
119 of faith and try something new, somehow believing that what we try might work.  
120 After we've taken a few such small steps toward belief and trust and have gotten  
121 results, we become willing to take bigger steps. We find that we are no longer  
122 relying solely on blind faith. Our belief is now reinforced with our own personal  
123 experience, some of which is inexplicable. After all, who can logically explain the  
124 sudden lifting of an obsession to use drugs, yet this has happened for many of us.  
125 We sometimes experience remarkable "coincidences" in our lives that have no  
126 rational explanation. We don't need to explain or analyze these occurrences.  
127 We can simply accept them for the miracles they are, and be grateful for them.

128 The longer we stay clean, the more evident it becomes that our addiction goes  
129 much deeper than the drugs we used. Much of our problem seems to center in  
130 our search for something to make us feel whole. It is a tremendous struggle to  
131 stop relying on our own reasoning and ask for help, especially given the self-  
132 centered nature of our disease. However, our surrender has made us open-  
133 minded. In realizing that we don't have all the answers, we begin to find some  
134 humility. We may not grasp the full impact of what being humble means, but our  
135 open-mindedness assures us that we have found and begun to demonstrate this  
136 valuable quality.

137 Our humility and open-mindedness make us teachable. We allow others who  
138 have traveled this path before us to share what has worked for them. This also  
139 takes humility, for we must let go of our fears about how we may appear to  
140 others. Some of the strongest directions we may receive from other addicts are  
141 to attend meetings, to ask others for help, and to pray, even if we don't believe.  
142 Our experience has shown us that belief in a Higher Power leads us in the  
143 direction of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. People tend to live what they  
144 believe, and our newfound belief calls on us to live the program. No matter what

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145 we choose for our personal Higher Power, we've come to believe that NA works.  
146 We live what we believe by continuing on our path of recovery and working the  
147 Twelve Steps to the best of our ability.

148 Even after years clean, when we have been working a program of recovery  
149 and seeking change, we sometimes experience periods when life seems  
150 meaningless. We may experience a sense of alienation too painful to ignore. At  
151 such times, we may find ourselves moving away from sanity, not toward it. We  
152 may begin to question our commitment to recovery. We can become obsessed  
153 with self-destructive thoughts. We may feel an urge to fall back on what seems  
154 easier: the familiar ways of our addiction. But we must resist this urge and make  
155 a renewed commitment to our recovery. We sense that we are undergoing a  
156 fundamental transformation, even though we may not yet understand its full  
157 implication for our lives. As painful as it seems, we must change. If we trust that  
158 there is growth despite the pain, we can walk through these difficult periods more  
159 readily.

160 During these times, relying on the Second Step provides us with hope and  
161 reminds us that we are not alone. If things don't feel right, we take time to think  
162 and seek direction. We trust that, with help from our Higher Power and others,  
163 we can be restored to sanity *in all areas of our lives*. We draw upon what we have  
164 learned from going to meetings and following directions. We accept that life on  
165 life's terms may not always be to our liking or, more importantly, to our  
166 understanding. Sometimes we accept that sanity means simply that we don't act  
167 until we have a clearer direction in our lives. What worked for us in the  
168 beginning remains applicable, no matter how many years we have been clean.  
169 We have found it helpful to return to the basics of this program. Although we  
170 may feel despair, there is hope: our Higher Power is always with us.

171 Along with the hope we derive from working Step Two, we find that our way  
172 of thinking is undergoing a radical change. The whole world looks different.  
173 Where before we had no reason to hope, we now have every reason to expect a

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174 remarkable difference in our lives. Simply by being open-minded, we've opened  
175 ourselves to new ideas. We've stepped away from the problem and toward the  
176 solution.

177 Step Two is the beginning of a spiritual remedy for our disease, yet it is only  
178 the beginning. We must go on to develop our relationship with the God of our  
179 understanding. Being open-minded enough to accept that there is a Power  
180 capable of restoring us to sanity, we are led to Step Three.

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<b>Step Two Review Form</b>
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- |   | Yes | No  |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step?                 | [ ] | [ ] |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [ ] | [ ] |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear?                       | [ ] | [ ] |

If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_

4. General comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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1

**STEP THREE**

2

*"We made a decision to turn our will and our lives  
over to the care of God as we understood Him."*

3

4

The surrender we experience in Step One, coupled with the hope and acceptance we find in Step Two, make us ready and willing to continue on the path toward freedom in Narcotics Anonymous. In Step Three, we put our belief in a Higher Power into action, making a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.

9

The heart of the Third Step is our willingness to allow the God of our understanding to work in our lives. Without a willingness to make this decision, there is no chance for recovery. We have discovered that we must be willing to change or we will use again.

13

The decision we make in Step Three requires that we move away from our self-will. Self-will is composed of such characteristics as closed-mindedness, unwillingness, and outright defiance. Our self-centered obsession, and its accompanying insanity, have made our lives unmanageable. Acting on our own self-will has kept us trapped in a continuous cycle of fear and pain. We wore ourselves out in fruitless attempts to control everyone and everything. We couldn't bear to just allow events to happen. We were always on the lookout for ways we could force things to go as we wanted.

21

When we first look at making the decision called for in this step, we are likely to have questions, uncertainty, and even fear about what we are being asked to do. We might wonder why we need to turn our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding. Or we may wonder what will happen to us if we place ourselves in God's care. We may fear that we won't be happy with what our lives will be like after working this step.

27

The Third Step is our commitment to our own emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. When we trust that there is growth in taking action despite our fear or uncertainty, we are able to work Step Three. Even though we do not

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30 know how our lives will change after we work this step, we can learn to trust that  
31 our Higher Power will care for us better than we could.

32 Over time, what began in the Second Step as an exploration of our concept of  
33 a Higher Power can serve as a springboard to a fuller relationship with God in  
34 Step Three. The decision that we make in this step, and the relationship that  
35 results, will revolutionize our existence.

36 This decision is easy to make but hard to live by. It is a decision we can *make*  
37 perfectly, but not *live by* perfectly. No one among us has ever made this decision  
38 and then gone on to live in perfect harmony with God's will. Because we are  
39 human and imperfect, we simply continue to reaffirm our decision on a regular  
40 basis throughout our lifetime and then do the very best we can to live by it.  
41 Complete and unconditional surrender of our will and our lives is an ideal we  
42 strive to fulfill. Although we don't become perfect, we do make a profound  
43 change in this step. We are beginning to make a serious effort to live differently  
44 than we have in the past. From now on, we are going to be practicing this  
45 decision, and the way we relate to the world around us will change radically as a  
46 result.

47 In working Step Three, we begin to learn how to stop struggling. We learn to  
48 let go and trust God. If we take time to think and seek direction before acting,  
49 we no longer have to run on our own self-centered will. Turning our will and our  
50 lives over to the care of our Higher Power provides a solution to the problems  
51 created by a life based in self-will, resentment, and control.

52 The spiritual principles we are practicing will guide us, not just in the Third  
53 Step but throughout our recovery. The first three steps provide us with the solid  
54 spiritual foundation we will need to work the rest of the steps. We keep our  
55 initial surrender alive by actively practicing the faith and willingness required to  
56 work the Third Step. In other words, we've admitted our powerlessness and  
57 inability to manage our own lives; now we need to surrender to the care of the  
58 God of our understanding.

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59 We may find the willingness to work the Third Step simply by remembering  
60 where we came from and believing that where we are going is guaranteed to be  
61 quite different. Though we don't know what this "difference" will entail, we know  
62 that it is sure to be better than what we've had in the past. We simply rely on  
63 blind faith and believe that this decision is one of the best decisions we've ever  
64 made.

65 Turning our will and our lives over to the care of God is a revolutionary  
66 decision. We may very well wonder exactly how we are supposed to put this  
67 decision into practice. Because our individual beliefs about a Power greater than  
68 ourselves vary so greatly, there are no rules about conducting our lives that  
69 everyone in our fellowship lives by. However, we have found some general  
70 means that we all can use in finding a personal understanding of how to practice  
71 the Third Step in our lives. One is to continue our efforts to develop a personal  
72 relationship with our Higher Power. Another is to give up our efforts at  
73 controlling everything around us. We relax our grip on the burdens we've been  
74 carrying and turn them over to the care of our God. Yet another way we can  
75 practice our Third Step decision is to continue with our recovery by working the  
76 remainder of the steps. Our sponsor will guide us in applying the spiritual  
77 principles of recovery, showing us how to shift our focus away from our own self-  
78 interest and toward a more God-centered life.

79 As we get ready to make this decision, we talk with our sponsor, go to step  
80 meetings, and take the opportunity to share about it with other NA members.  
81 We gather as much knowledge, insight, and experience as we can from these  
82 sources, and then we make our own decision. No one can do it for us--we must  
83 consciously decide to do this for ourselves. Of course, this is not a decision we  
84 make solely with our intellect. In truth, this is a choice we make with our hearts,  
85 a decision based much more in feeling and desire than in deliberate reasoning.  
86 Though the path from mind to heart seems a difficult one, formally working this

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87 step with our sponsor seems to help us make this decision an intrinsic part of who  
88 we are.

89 The search for a God of our own understanding is one of the most important  
90 endeavors we will undertake in our recovery. We have complete personal choice  
91 and freedom in how we understand our Higher Power. We can each find a  
92 Higher Power that does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We need this  
93 Power, not just because we are powerless ourselves but because *no* human power  
94 can relieve the spiritual malady that lies at the root of our addiction.

95 To work the Third Step, we need to pray; prayer and the Third Step are  
96 inseparable. Just as our freedom to have a God of our own understanding is  
97 unlimited, so is our freedom to communicate with our Higher Power in whatever  
98 ways work for us. Anytime we communicate with God, whether it's simply with  
99 our thoughts or aloud at the close of a meeting, we are praying. Most of us ask  
100 our Higher Power for direction through prayer on a daily basis.

101 Our relationship with our Higher Power grows stronger as we practice faith  
102 and daily prayer. In our experience, prayer works. When we are having trouble  
103 in a particular area of our lives or when we feel unable to stay clean, our Higher  
104 Power can help; we only need to ask. With our prayers, we ask God to care for  
105 us. Each time we take this action, we strengthen our faith and our decision to  
106 rely on our Higher Power.

107 Step Three doesn't free us from having to take action, but it does liberate us  
108 from excessive worry about the results. If we want something--a job, an  
109 education, recovery--we have to make the effort to get it. Our Higher Power will  
110 take care of our spiritual needs, but we need to participate in our own lives; we  
111 can't simply sit back and expect God to provide.

112 Our lives are meant to be lived. No matter how sincere our efforts at "turning  
113 it over," we will make mistakes, wander off course, and experience moments of  
114 doubt. However, with each setback we are given a new opportunity to renew our  
115 commitment to live in God's will rather than our own. We try to align our actions

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116 with what we believe our Higher Power would want for us, and then we deal with  
117 life as it happens.

118 Although we strive to trust our Higher Power absolutely, we often place  
119 reservations on our faith. We may hesitate working Step Three in all areas of our  
120 lives, especially in matters we want to control. Our experience has been that we  
121 tend to compartmentalize our lives. Perhaps we think, "I can control my finances  
122 just fine," or "My relationship is working, why do I need to turn that over to the  
123 care of my Higher Power?" Working Step Three only in certain areas of our lives  
124 short-circuits our spiritual development. We have found that our recovery  
125 benefits when we practice the principle of surrender, to the best of our ability, in  
126 *all* areas of our lives. We strive to work this step thoroughly.

127 We begin to see positive results from the decision we have made. We begin  
128 to notice changes in our lives, perhaps not in circumstances, but in the way we  
129 *deal* with the circumstances of our lives. Because we have made the decision to  
130 allow God to work in our lives, we may notice a sense of relief. We are being  
131 relieved of a burden we've carried far too long: the need to control everything  
132 and everyone. We begin to react differently to the situations and others around  
133 us. As we gain acceptance, we cease to rail against life on life's terms.  
134 Maintaining a continual process of surrender, we are better able to live and enjoy  
135 life in the moment.

136 Deciding to turn our will and lives over to the care of our Higher Power is a  
137 process, not an event. However, in making that decision, we do make a  
138 commitment to practice this step in our lives. When we are tempted to  
139 manipulate a situation, we recall this decision and let go. When we catch  
140 ourselves attempting to exert control over someone or something, we stop and  
141 instead ask a loving God to guide us.

142 Relinquishing control is not easy, but we can do it with help. Whenever we  
143 are confused about how to act or what to do next, we ask our sponsor to show us  
144 how to work this step. With guidance from our sponsor and daily practice, we are

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145 sure to find ourselves learning how to get our egos out of the way so our Higher  
146 Power can work in our lives. Each time we are fearful over a situation, we can  
147 turn to this step and find the means to walk through our fear without resorting to  
148 our old ways.

149 Recovery doesn't exempt us from having to live through painful situations.  
150 Life goes on and may not always be pleasant. At some point in our lives, we may  
151 have to mourn the death of a loved one or deal with the end of a relationship.  
152 When such things happen to us, we hurt, and no amount of spiritual awareness  
153 will take our pain away. We do find, however, that the caring presence of a  
154 loving Power greater than ourselves will help us get through our pain. We rely on  
155 the God of our understanding and trust that Power to always be with us. We can  
156 cease questioning why painful things happen and trust that walking through the  
157 difficult times in our recovery can lead us in the direction of God's will for us.  
158 We can grow in spite of our pain, or perhaps in response to it.

159 Recovery is a process of discovery. We learn about ourselves, and we learn  
160 how to cope with the world around us. When we are sincere in our desire to  
161 allow God to care for us, we begin to gain a sense of serenity. We notice a  
162 gradual change in our thinking. Our attitudes and ideas become more positive.  
163 Our world is no longer so distorted by self-pity, denial, resentment, and the like.  
164 We are beginning to replace those old attitudes with honesty, faith, and  
165 responsibility: as a result, we begin to see our world in a better light. Our lives  
166 are guided by our emerging integrity. Even though we make mistakes, we  
167 become more willing to take responsibility for our actions. We learn that we  
168 don't have to be perfect to live a spiritual life. When we work Step Three with an  
169 open mind and heart and do the "footwork," God's grace will provide for us  
170 beyond our expectations.

171 As we experience this new way of life, we begin to realize that recovery is a  
172 priceless gift. We learn to trust; as we do, we open the doors to intimacy and  
173 develop new relationships. Where once we focused only on not using, we now

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174 can appreciate the many things that make our lives so valuable. We savor the  
175 laughter and the joy we hear expressed so abundantly in our meetings. As God  
176 becomes more central in our lives and we internalize the principles embodied in  
177 the steps, our view of the world changes profoundly. As our awareness grows, so  
178 does our appreciation and faith in our Higher Power.

179 If we pause to reflect on our lives at this stage of our recovery, we will see that  
180 we have experienced dramatic personal growth. The relief we experience as a  
181 result of working the first three steps is only a glimpse of the growth we can  
182 experience through working the Twelve Steps.

183 The role of the Third Step expands in our lives as we continue working the  
184 other steps. Step Eleven asks us to pray for the knowledge of God's will for us,  
185 and the power to carry it out. Step Three begins this process; it is here that we  
186 start to seek God's will for us. Moving from a life based on self-will to one based  
187 on God's will requires us to change profoundly.

188 With the help of a loving God, we are ready to move forward on our journey.  
189 This is a twelve-step program, not a three-step program. The decision we've  
190 made in the Third Step is perhaps the most momentous decision we'll ever make  
191 in our lives, but we need to work the rest of the steps for it to remain meaningful.  
192 There is more work to do. We have found that the spiritual path set forth in the  
193 Twelve Steps is the only way to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Putting our  
194 recovery commitment into action, we work Step Four.

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<b>Step Three Review Form</b>
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- |   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step?                 | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear?                       | [ ]        | [ ]       |

If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_

4. General comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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## STEP FOUR

*"We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."*

By working the first three steps, we have formed a solid foundation for our recovery. Our active addiction cannot remain arrested, however, unless we build upon this foundation. As we worked the Third Step, many of us were puzzled: How can we make sure we were really turning our will and lives over to the care of God? The answer is simple: we work the remainder of the steps, starting with Step Four.

Why take the 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 quite right, a sense of impending doom, or feelings of fear and anger that have no readily apparent reason. Still others may think they're doing just fine without a Fourth Step--until it catches up with them. 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 take the Fourth Step is quite simple: We're working a recovery program 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. We need to change how we perceive the world and alter what our role in it has been. We need to change our attitude. Whether our motivation stems from a desire to move away from our addiction or to move toward recovery doesn't really matter.

The Fourth Step is a turning point in our journey of recovery. It is a time for deep personal reflection. The confusion that we attempted to mask with self-deception and drugs is about to end. We are about to embark on a search for

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insight into ourselves, our feelings, our fears, our resentments, and the patterns of behavior that make up our lives.

We may be very frightened at the prospect of examining ourselves so thoroughly. We don't know ourselves very well, and we may not be sure we want to. Our fear of the unknown may seem overwhelming at this point, but if we recall our faith and trust in our Higher Power, our fear can be overcome. We believe that part of God's will for us is to work the steps, and God's will simply cannot be bad for us! We trust that the final outcome of working the Fourth Step will be the continued healing of our spirits, and we go on.

The principles of recovery that we have already begun to practice are the prerequisites for taking the Fourth Step. The honest acceptance of our addiction that we've brought with us from Step One will help us to be honest about other aspects of our addiction. We've developed a level of trust and faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and that glimmer of hope we've been feeling is growing with each day clean. We've paved the way to recovery with our willingness, and we find the courage necessary to take the Fourth Step through living these principles.

Honesty is an essential part of this step. Our years of living a lie must end. If we sit down and become very quiet with ourselves, we will find it easier to get in touch with the truth. What we currently know to be true, we put on paper, holding nothing back. Telling the truth is a brave act, but with our faith and trust in the God of our understanding, we find the courage we need to be searching and fearless. With our courage, we are able to put on paper those things we thought we'd never tell.

What is meant by a "searching and fearless moral inventory?" We take stock of our assets and liabilities. We try to get at the bottom of who we are, to expose the lies we have told ourselves about ourselves. For years, we became whoever we needed to be to survive our addiction. After living a lifetime of lies, we began to believe those lies. Although we did discover some valuable truths in the First

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58 Step, the Fourth Step further separates fantasy from reality. We can begin to  
59 stop being the person we have invented and find the freedom to be who we are.

60 If the word "moral" bothers us, we have found that talking with our sponsor  
61 about our reservations can ease our discomfort. A moral inventory doesn't mean  
62 that we will condemn ourselves. In reality, the inventory process is one of the  
63 most loving things we can do for ourselves. We simply look at our instincts, our  
64 desires, our motives, our tendencies, our likes and dislikes as they relate to  
65 others, and the compulsive routines that kept us trapped in our addiction. No  
66 matter how many days or how many years we have been clean, we are still human  
67 and subject to defects and failings. An inventory allows us to look at our basic  
68 nature with its flaws and its strengths. We look not only at our imperfections, but  
69 also at our hopes, our dreams, our aspirations, and where they may have gone  
70 astray. Step Four is a big step forward on the path toward becoming a whole,  
71 functional human being.

72 Some of us may want to write our inventory all at once; others spend some  
73 time writing each day. Any time we sit down to write, we ask our Higher Power  
74 for the courage and honesty we need to be thorough and to reveal what we are  
75 searching for. In most cases, we are relieved to find that once we begin, the  
76 words seem to flow naturally. We need not worry about what we are writing.  
77 Our Higher Power will reveal no more to us than we can handle.

78 Most of us don't have much experience with the type of self-appraisal we are  
79 about to do, and we must have the guidance and support of our sponsor in order  
80 to understand what we're doing. They may give us a format to follow, certain  
81 subjects or points to concentrate on, or just general guidance. Not only can our  
82 sponsor provide direction for the actual inventory, he or she can encourage us to  
83 be courageous, remind us to pray, and be emotionally supportive throughout this  
84 process. We often strengthen our relationship with our sponsor by relying on her  
85 or his experience at this time.

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86 Consistent action on our Fourth Step is important. We can't afford to delay  
87 work on our inventory. If we have a tendency to procrastinate, it is a good idea to  
88 set aside a certain amount of time each day to work on our inventory. Such a  
89 routine establishes our inventory as a high priority in our lives. If we put our  
90 Fourth Step away once we have begun, we run the risk of never returning to it.  
91 Once we begin writing, we need to continue our inventory until we are done.

92 We are painstaking and detail-oriented in our inventory. We systematically  
93 examine all aspects of our lives. We begin to see and understand the truth about  
94 ourselves, our motives, and our patterns. It is important that we look at more  
95 than one dimension of our experience. What motivated us to act the way we did?  
96 What repercussions did our behavior have in our lives? How did our behavior  
97 affect those around us? How did we harm others? How did we feel about our  
98 actions, and others reactions? While these are only a few of the points we  
99 address in our inventories, we have found them and other issues like them to be  
100 inherent parts of our addiction.

101 In the Fourth Step, it is important to take a good hard look at how fear has  
102 worked in our lives. Our experience tells us that self-centered fear is at the root  
103 of our disease. Many of us have put on a facade of fearlessness, when, in fact, we  
104 were terrified. Fear has driven us to act rashly in trying to protect ourselves. We  
105 have often been paralyzed into inaction because of our fears. We may have  
106 resorted to scheming and manipulating because we feared the future. We went  
107 to extremes to protect ourselves from what we saw as potential loss, disaster, and  
108 a constant lack of what we needed. Having no faith in a Power that we believed  
109 would provide for us, we took control of our lives and everything around us. We  
110 used people, we manipulated, we lied, we plotted, we planned, we stole, we  
111 cheated, then we lied more to cover up our schemes. From these actions, we  
112 experienced envy, jealousy, and deep, gut-wrenching insecurities. We were alone.  
113 As we drove away the people who cared about us, we used more drugs, trying to  
114 cover up our feelings. The lonelier we felt, the more we tried to control

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115 everything and everybody. We suffered when things didn't go our way, but so  
116 strong was our desire for power and control that we couldn't see the futility of our  
117 efforts to manage events. In our new lives, we have faith in a loving God whose  
118 will for us is better than anything we could manipulate or control for ourselves.  
119 We need not fear what might happen.

120 We assess the emotional effects of our addiction. Some of us became so  
121 skilled at shutting down our feelings with drugs or other distractions, that by the  
122 time we came to our first meeting, we had lost touch with our own emotions. In  
123 recovery, we learn to identify what we are feeling. Naming our feelings is  
124 important, for once we can label them we don't need to be afraid of them.  
125 Rather than panicking over how we feel, we can say "I'm angry," or "I'm sad."  
126 This gets us away from the "good" or "bad" way in which we are so accustomed to  
127 viewing things.

128 We make a list of our resentments, for they often play a large part in making  
129 our recovery uncomfortable. We cannot allow ourselves to be obsessed with  
130 hostility toward others. We look at the institutions that may have affected us: our  
131 families, schools, employers, organized religion, the law, or jails. We list the  
132 people, places, social values, institutions, and situations against which we bear  
133 anger. We examine not only the circumstances surrounding these resentments,  
134 but we look at the part we played in them. What in us was so threatened that we  
135 experienced such deep emotional torment? Often, we will see that the same  
136 areas of our lives were affected again and again.

137 We look at our relationships as well, especially the manner in which we  
138 related to our families. We don't do this to place blame for our addiction on our  
139 families. We keep in mind that we are writing an inventory of *ourselves*. We  
140 write about how we felt about our families and the way we acted on our feelings.  
141 In most cases, we'll find that patterns of behavior we established early in life are  
142 what we've carried with us up to the present. Some of our patterns and choices

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143 have served us well, while others have not. Through the inventory, we search for  
144 the patterns we want to continue and those we want to change.

145 Writing about all of our relationships is very important, and we'll want to pay  
146 particular attention to our friendships. If we gloss over our platonic friendships  
147 in favor of focusing on romantic relationships, our inventories will be incomplete.  
148 Many of us come to NA never having had a long-term friendship because of basic  
149 conflicts within our own personalities. Those conflicts were the real grounds for  
150 the arguments we started with our friends, and our ensuing refusal to work  
151 through the disagreement and continue the friendship. Some of us felt that we  
152 would end up getting hurt in any close friendship, so before that happened, we set  
153 up the end of the friendship ourselves. We may have feared intimacy to such a  
154 degree that we never revealed anything about ourselves to our friends. We may  
155 have induced guilt in our friends to ensure their loyalty, or indulged in other  
156 forms of emotional blackmail. If our friends had others in their lives, we may  
157 have felt so jealous and insecure that we tried to remove the threat of their other  
158 friends. Our behavior ran the gamut from taking our friends hostage to taking  
159 them for granted. We may find several instances where we sacrificed our  
160 friendships for romantic relationships.

161 We will probably find identical conflicts and behaviors in our romantic  
162 relationships. We'll see the same difficulties with trust, refusals to be vulnerable,  
163 and perhaps a lifelong pattern of inability to make commitments. As we write,  
164 we'll most likely see fear of intimacy in each relationship, or discover that we've  
165 never understood the difference between intimacy and sex. Whether we ran from  
166 close relationships because of fear or because we had been hurt over and over  
167 again, we search out the common threads that appear in all of our relationships.

168 We may find that our sexual beliefs and behavior have caused problems in  
169 our relationships. We may have used sex to get something we wanted or believed  
170 that by having sex, we could extract a commitment from an unwilling partner.  
171 We ask ourselves if our sexual behavior has been based in selfishness or in love.

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172 We may have used sex to fill the spiritual void we felt inside. Some of us felt that  
173 our sexual practices were out of the norm and were ashamed as a result. After  
174 years of compulsively acting on our fears and misguided beliefs about sex, we  
175 want to be comfortable with our own sexuality. This is a very uncomfortable  
176 topic for most of us. However, if we want something different than what we've  
177 had, it's necessary that we begin the process of change by writing about it.

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

188 To experience serenity, we must begin to alter the self-defeating patterns that  
189 have prevailed in our lives. The Fourth Step helps us identify those patterns. We  
190 begin to see how we have maneuvered through life, perhaps not consciously  
191 planning our own misery but setting ourselves up for it nevertheless. Most of us  
192 have blamed various people for the prices we paid for our addiction. We didn't  
193 want to accept that our addiction had a negative impact that we alone were  
194 responsible for. Some of us committed crimes and then complained about the  
195 consequences the law imposed. Some of us were irresponsible at work and then  
196 objected loudly when we were held accountable. We beat a hasty retreat  
197 whenever life caught up with us. Our inventories will help us identify our  
198 responsibility for our actions and find those circumstances where we tend to place  
199 blame elsewhere. Our booklet, *Working Step Four in Narcotics Anonymous*, can  
200 provide more avenues to explore.

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201 The quality of our lives depends, to a large degree, on the results of our  
202 decisions. As we write our inventory, we look for the times when we made  
203 decisions that hurt us, and also for those times when we made decisions that  
204 worked out well. If we lived our lives by default, refusing to make any choices,  
205 we write about that, too. Those times when we procrastinated until opportunities  
206 were missed and gone, the times when we abdicated all responsibility, the times  
207 when we withdrew and refused to participate in life--all are inventory material.  
208 Most of us had hopes and dreams for ourselves at some point in our lives, but we  
209 abandoned those in the pursuit of our addiction. In our inventory, we try to recall  
210 those lost dreams and find out how our choices ruined our chances of having our  
211 dreams come true. We ask ourselves when we stopped believing in ourselves.  
212 Through this process, our lost dreams may reawaken.

213 We dig deep to learn how we lived in conflict with our own morals and values.  
214 If we believed it was wrong to steal and we were stealing everything we could get  
215 our hands on anyway, what did we do to quiet our anguish? If we believed in  
216 monogamy but were unfaithful to our partners, what did we do so that we could  
217 live with our compromised principles? Certainly we used more drugs, but what  
218 else? We explore how we felt about ignoring our deepest beliefs. In the process,  
219 we discover our lost values so we can begin to rebuild them.

220 Often, our sponsor will direct us to look at our assets. With most of us being  
221 unaccustomed to looking for our character strengths, we might have some trouble  
222 with this task. But if we examine our behavior with an open mind, we're sure to  
223 find situations where we persevered in the face of adversity, or showed a concern  
224 for others, or even where our spirit triumphed over our addiction. We begin to  
225 uncover the pure and loving spirit that lies at the core of our being as we look for  
226 our character assets. We begin to define our values. We learn what we can do  
227 and, more importantly, what we can't do if we want to lead productive and  
228 fulfilling lives. What we did in our active addiction will not work for us in  
229 recovery. Step Four allows us to chart a new course for our lives.

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230       The Fourth Step provides us with the initial insight we need to grow.  
231       Whether we are writing our first inventory or our tenth, we are starting a process  
232       that takes us from confusion to clarity, from resentment to forgiveness, from  
233       spiritual confinement to spiritual freedom. We can turn to this process again and  
234       again. When we are confused, when we are angry, when we have problems that  
235       don't seem to disappear, an inventory is a good way to take stock of just where we  
236       stand on the path to recovery. After we have written a number of inventories, we  
237       may discover that our first Fourth Step merely scratched the surface. As different  
238       attitudes and behaviors become apparent to us in later recovery, we'll want to  
239       renew the process of change by taking the Fourth Step again.

240       The steps are tools we use over and over on our spiritual path. In the process  
241       of our recovery, God will reveal more to us as we have the maturity and the  
242       spiritual strength to understand it. Over time, the nature of the work we have to  
243       do is disclosed to us. As we continue in recovery, we begin to resolve some of the  
244       basic conflicts contributing to our addiction. As the pain of old wounds begins to  
245       fade, we begin to live more fully in the present.

246       The Fourth Steps allows us to identify the patterns, behaviors, and beliefs that  
247       show us the exact nature of our wrongs. We have written an inventory of  
248       ourselves, which revealed what we can change with God's help. To continue the  
249       process of change, we move on, making our admissions in Step Five.

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**Step Four Review Form**

- |   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step?                 | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear?                       | [ ]        | [ ]       |

If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. General comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**This form was completed by :**

region \_\_\_\_\_ area \_\_\_\_\_ group \_\_\_\_\_ individual \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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1

## STEP FIVE

2

*"We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another  
human being the exact nature of our wrongs."*

3

4 Now that we have completed our written inventory, it is essential that we  
5 share it promptly. The sooner we work our Fifth Step, the stronger the  
6 foundation of our recovery will be. We've built this foundation on spiritual  
7 principles such as surrender, honesty, trust, willingness, and courage, and with  
8 each step forward in our recovery, we strengthen our commitment to these  
9 principles. We reaffirm our commitment to recovery by immediately working  
10 Step Five.

11 Despite our desire to recover, we may find that we're feeling pretty frightened  
12 at this point. This fear is only natural. After all, we're about to confront the  
13 exact nature of our wrongs, candidly admitting our secrets to God and to another  
14 human being. If we allow our feelings of shame or our fears of change and  
15 rejection to stop our progress, our problems will only be compounded. If we stop  
16 moving forward in our recovery, if we cease making every possible effort to  
17 recover from our addiction, we will start slipping backward. If we abandon our  
18 search for recovery, we will have given in to the disease of addiction.

19 We must overcome our fear and work the Fifth Step if we are to make any  
20 significant changes in the way we live. We gather our courage and go on. We  
21 may call our sponsor for reassurance. Usually, a reminder that we don't have to  
22 face our feelings alone makes all the difference in easing our fears. Taking this  
23 step with the support of our sponsor and a loving God is a way of putting into  
24 practice our decision to allow God to care for our will and our lives. That  
25 decision, like most other decisions we make, must be followed with action.  
26 Following our Third Step decision with the action of the Fourth and Fifth Steps  
27 will lead to a closer relationship with our Higher Power.

28 Our understanding of the spiritual principles we have practiced in the first  
29 four steps will be enhanced by taking the Fifth Step. We experience honesty by

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30 making an admission just as we did in Step One, but we experience it on a deeper  
31 level. The admission we are about to make in Step Five is especially important.  
32 Not only do we open up and tell the truth about ourselves, we also hear this  
33 admission from our own lips, breaking the pattern of denial that has plagued us  
34 for so long. We find new levels of honesty, especially self-honesty, when we  
35 squarely face the results of our addiction and see the reality of our lives. The risk  
36 we take in this step increases our trust in God, nourishing the faith and hope we  
37 first experienced in Step Two. We take our willingness a step further, thereby  
38 renewing the decision we made in Step Three. We draw on the courage we  
39 acquired in Step Four and find that we are capable of demonstrating more  
40 bravery than we ever dreamed possible. This bravery is demonstrated not by our  
41 lack of fear but by the action we take in spite of our fear. We set a time to share  
42 our inventory; then, we show up and share at the scheduled time. The principles  
43 in the previous steps provide us with the foundation we need to work the Fifth  
44 Step.

45 We gain a new understanding of the principle of humility as we work this step.  
46 We've most likely been under the impression that we are somehow bigger or  
47 more visible than other people. Through working the Fifth Step, we find that few  
48 of our actions deserve exaggerated attention. Through our self-disclosure, we  
49 feel connected with humanity, perhaps for the first time in our lives.

50 As we share our most personal feelings and our most carefully guarded  
51 secrets, we may experience anguish. However, many of us have looked up and  
52 seen unconditional love in the eyes of the person hearing our Fifth Step. The  
53 feelings of acceptance and belonging we experienced at that moment warmed us  
54 to the bottoms of our hearts.

55 The knowledge that we are about to face feelings we have avoided for a long  
56 time may cause a rise in our anxiety level, but we go on, encouraged by our  
57 sponsor to trust in God. The first thing we must realize is that the Fifth Step is  
58 not a quick fix for a painful situation. If we work this step expecting our feelings

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59 to go away, we are expecting the steps to numb us the way drugs did. We review  
60 our first four steps and see that their purpose is to awaken our spirits, not deaden  
61 our feelings. We will need support and understanding to cope with our feelings.  
62 If we choose an understanding individual to make our admissions to, we will have  
63 all the support we need.

64 Although there is no requirement that the listener must be our sponsor, most  
65 of us choose to share our inventory with him or her. We are most likely to  
66 benefit from the full range of experience that another recovering addict has to  
67 share. After all, who can better understand what we are attempting than those  
68 who have done it for themselves? Addicts more experienced in recovery than we  
69 are will already have dealt with the matters we are just beginning to face. Such  
70 people can share with us their experience and the solutions they have found  
71 through working this step. The bond we share with another member of Narcotics  
72 Anonymous will strengthen our connection with the program and increase our  
73 sense of belonging.

74 The person who is to listen to our Fifth Step should be someone who  
75 understands the process of recovery we are involved in and is willing to help us  
76 through it. An ideal listener will have enough compassion to honor our feelings,  
77 enough integrity to respect our confidences, and enough insight to help us keep  
78 the exact nature of our wrongs within our field of vision. Knowing that we are  
79 reading *our* inventory, he or she will help us not to get sidetracked by blaming  
80 others for the things we've written about in our Fourth Step.

81 Although we know we are going to derive meaningful benefits from taking  
82 this step, we may still need a sort of "spiritual boost" before we actually begin this  
83 process. Immediately before we sit down to share, we take a moment to reaffirm  
84 our surrender and the decision we made in the Third Step. We ask a Power  
85 greater than ourselves for the honesty, courage and willingness to work this step.  
86 To invite God into this process, we may want to say a prayer. The prayer can be

87 anything that reaffirms our commitment to recovery. Praying with the person  
88 hearing our Fifth Step can be a profoundly intimate experience.

89 Not only do we pray to ask for strength and courage, many of us also ask our  
90 Higher Power to listen as we make our admission. Why is it so important that we  
91 also make our admission to God? Because this is a spiritual program and our  
92 whole purpose is to awaken spiritually. Our willingness to approach our Higher  
93 Power openly with our past and who we are is central to our recovery. In the  
94 past, some of us have felt that we weren't worthy of a relationship with God. Our  
95 secrets kept us apart from God, and blocked our ability to feel any acceptance or  
96 love from that Power. When we reveal something about ourselves, we draw  
97 closer to our Higher Power and experience the unconditional love and  
98 acceptance which springs from that Power. The feeling that the God of our  
99 understanding accepts us no matter what we've done enhances our acceptance of  
100 ourselves. The positive relationship we are building with our Higher Power  
101 carries over into our relationships with others as well.

102 We may be surprised by the intensity of the partnership we are developing  
103 with our sponsor as we share our inventory. If we've never really been listened to  
104 before, we may be startled to discover that we are being asked questions about  
105 some fine point of our personal history, or that our sponsor is jotting down notes  
106 while we read. Our self-esteem increases as we realize that what we have to  
107 share is worth another's attention. We may see deep compassion in our listener's  
108 eyes, showing us that our pain is shared. That compassion is one more assurance  
109 of the presence of a Power greater than ourselves.

110 Looking at and sharing the *exact nature* of our wrongs is not likely to be a  
111 comfortable activity. We have looked back and seen how repeating the same  
112 patterns over and over again has kept us stuck in the same place. And we haven't  
113 just seen the surface behavior; we've seen the defects of character that have been  
114 behind our behavior all along. We realize that there is a difference between our  
115 actions and the exact nature of our wrongs. For instance, we may see example

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116 after example of situations where we lied in a vain attempt to make everyone like  
117 us. But those examples aren't the nature of our wrongs. The nature of our  
118 wrongs is the dishonesty and manipulation we were demonstrating each time we  
119 lied. If we look beyond the dishonesty and manipulation, we'll most likely find  
120 that we were afraid no one would like us if we told the truth.

121 As we share our inventory, our sponsor will sometimes share some of her or  
122 his own experience with us. Our sponsor may cry with us or smile in recognition  
123 at some of the struggles we are now sharing. We may laugh together as we share  
124 some of the more comical aspects of our addiction and the ridiculous lies we told  
125 ourselves so that we could continue to live as we were living. As we see how  
126 similar our feelings are to our sponsor's feelings, we realize that there are other  
127 people like us. We're human beings, nothing more, nothing less. Our self-  
128 obsession blinded us to this, making us feel unique. Suddenly we understand that  
129 other people have painful problems too, and that ours are no more significant  
130 than anyone else's. Healing takes place when we see a glimpse of ourselves in  
131 the eyes of another. We find humility in that moment and a reason to hope that  
132 the serenity and peace we have been striving for are within our reach at last.

133 Our feelings of alienation fade as we experience an emotional connection  
134 with another human being. We are allowing someone entry to those places we've  
135 never before opened to another person. This may be the first time we've ever  
136 trusted another person enough to tell him or her about ourselves and allow that  
137 person to get to know us. We may be surprised at the closeness that develops  
138 between us and our sponsor. We're developing a give-and-take relationship  
139 based on equality and mutual respect, the kind that can last for a lifetime.

140 After taking our Fifth Step, we may feel a little raw or emotionally vulnerable.  
141 We've taken a major step in the healing process of recovery. What we've done  
142 could easily be thought of as "surgery of the spirit." We've opened up old wounds.  
143 We've exposed our most carefully constructed lies for the deceptions they were,

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144 and we've told ourselves some painful truths. We've dropped our masks in the  
145 presence of another person.

146 At this point, we may experience a dangerous urge to run from our new  
147 awareness and return to the safe misery of the past. We may feel tempted to  
148 avoid our sponsor because he or she knows all about us now. It is very important  
149 that we resist such impulses. We must talk with other recovering addicts about  
150 our fears and feelings so we can hear the experience they have to share. We'll  
151 find that what we're going through is not unique, and feel relieved when others  
152 tell us they went through the very same struggles after they took their Fifth Step.

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

164 Our relationships begin to change after this step, including the one we have  
165 with the God of our understanding. Throughout the process of the Fifth Step, we  
166 turned to that Power when we were fearful, and we received the courage we  
167 needed to complete the step. Our belief and our faith grew as a result. Because  
168 of this, we're willing to put more of ourselves into building a relationship with  
169 God. Just like any other relationship, the one we develop with our Higher Power  
170 calls for openness and trust on our part. When we share our most personal  
171 thoughts and feelings with our Higher Power, letting down our walls and

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172 admitting we are less than perfect, intimacy develops. We develop a certainty  
173 that our Higher Power is always with us and that we are being cared for.

174 The process we have undertaken so far has made us aware of the exact nature  
175 of our wrongs. The *exact nature* of those wrongs is our character defects. We  
176 now know that the patterns of our lives were rooted in dishonesty, fear,  
177 selfishness, and many other defects of character. We've seen the whole spectrum  
178 of our defects, and are ready for something new. With this readiness, we move  
179 on to Step Six.

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<b>Step Five Review Form</b>
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- |   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step?                 | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear?                       | [ ]        | [ ]       |

If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. General comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**This form was completed by :**

region \_\_\_\_\_ area \_\_\_\_\_ group \_\_\_\_\_ individual \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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**STEP SIX**

*"We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."*

The insight we gained in Step Five as to the exact nature of our wrongs, while valuable, is only the beginning of the striking changes that take place in our lives as we move into Step Six. The admission we made of the nature of our wrongs, our character defects, is a necessary prerequisite for our readiness to have them removed. Profoundly shaken by our part in the past, we can expect our attitudes to be profoundly changed by working the Sixth Step.

Although some of us have not understood the critical importance of the Sixth and Seventh Steps, they are essential actions that must be taken if we expect to make any significant and lasting changes in our lives. We cannot simply say, "Yes, I'm ready. God, please remove my defects" and go on to Step Eight. If we gloss over the Sixth and Seventh Steps and go on to make our amends, we will only wind up owing more amends by repeating the same destructive patterns as before.

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 touch of a loving God.

We've already had experience, in the Third Step, with what we must do now in the Sixth Step. Just as we surrendered our will and lives to the care of a Power greater than ourselves because we could no longer go on managing our own lives, we now prepare to surrender our defects of character to a loving God because we have exhausted our attempts to change on our own willpower. This process is difficult and often painful.

Our growing awareness of our defects often causes us pain. We've all heard the expression "ignorance is bliss," but we're no longer ignorant of our character

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30 defects, and this awareness hurts. All of a sudden, we'll notice a wounded look in  
31 the eyes of a friend after we've acted on one of our less endearing traits. We'll  
32 hang our heads in shame, mumble an apology, and probably beat ourselves  
33 inwardly for being so callous one more time. We feel sick inside, knowing how  
34 our actions adversely affect the people in our lives. We are sick and tired of  
35 being the people we have been, but this feeling compels us to change and grow.  
36 We want to be different, and the good news is that we already are. Being able to  
37 see beyond our own interests and being concerned about the feelings of others  
38 are striking changes, considering that our raging self-obsession is at the core of  
39 our disease.

40 We are likely to feel very frustrated as we notice that our defects are getting  
41 in the way of our recovery. We may attempt to suppress them ourselves by either  
42 denying their existence or hiding them from others. We may think that if no one  
43 knows about our more unattractive characteristics they'll go away. What we must  
44 do, rather than try to exert power and control over our defects, is step out of the  
45 way and allow a loving God to work in our lives. One part of this process  
46 involves becoming responsible for our behavior.

47 When we are confronted with our character defects, either by our own insight  
48 or by someone we hurt, we begin by taking complete responsibility for our  
49 actions. We don't avoid responsibility by saying something like, "Well, God  
50 hasn't removed that defect yet" or "I'm powerless over my defects and that's just  
51 the way I'm going to be." We accept responsibility for our behavior--good, bad,  
52 or indifferent. We no longer have our drug use or our ignorance as an excuse to  
53 be irresponsible.

54 When we honestly admit our wrongs, we find humility. The humility we  
55 experienced in Step Five grows as we again sense our humanness and realize that  
56 we are never going to be perfect. We accept ourselves a little bit more, we  
57 surrender, and our willingness to change increases dramatically. We have already  
58 experienced remarkable changes in our emotional and spiritual nature through

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59 our continuous efforts to live by the principles contained in the previous steps.  
60 Despite our lack of familiarity with the realm of the spirit, we must remember  
61 that, in Steps One through Three, we were given the basic tools we need to  
62 negotiate the path of recovery. We carry within us the honesty it took to make  
63 our initial surrender, the faith and hope we developed in coming to believe in a  
64 Power greater than ourselves, and the trust and willingness required from us  
65 when we made our decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of that  
66 Power. Our spirits were touched by the humility of believing in that Power.

67 On this spiritual foundation we lay the principles of commitment and  
68 perseverance as we work the Sixth Step. We need the willingness to make a  
69 commitment to pursue our recovery despite the continued presence of character  
70 defects in our lives. We mustn't give up, even when we think no change has taken  
71 place. We are often blind to our own internal changes, but we can rest assured  
72 that what's happening inside us is evident on the outside to others. We trust that  
73 even though our vision may be blocked by the disease of addiction, God is hard at  
74 work on our spirits. Our job is to keep on walking, even though it may feel as  
75 though each step requires more strength than we can muster. No matter how  
76 difficult our progress, we must persevere. We can make use of the sheer grit and  
77 tenacity it took to maintain our active addiction by applying them to our recovery.

78 Having written our inventory and shared it with ourselves, the God of our  
79 understanding, and another human being, we've become aware of our defects of  
80 character. With the help of our sponsor, we write a list of those defects and focus  
81 on how they manifest themselves in our lives. Our character defects are basic  
82 human traits that have been distorted all out of proportion by our self-  
83 centeredness, causing enormous pain to us and those around us.

84 Take a defect such as self-righteousness, for example, and imagine it in its  
85 normal, uninflated state--confident belief in one's own values. Strong, confident,  
86 and well-rounded people have formed values and principles to live by and believe  
87 deeply in their rightness. Such people live what they believe, and share those

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88 beliefs with others in a non-critical way when asked. Confidence in our beliefs is  
89 essential. Without it, we would be wishy-washy, unsure of our decisions, and  
90 probably somewhat immature in our dealings with the world. Confident belief  
91 becomes ugly self-righteousness when we insist that others live by our values.  
92 Attempting to enforce our insistence by manipulating or exploiting others makes  
93 this defect even uglier.

94 Or consider fear. The absence of fear in the face of a personal attack,  
95 catastrophic illness, or potential injury would signal insanity rather than serenity!  
96 We all have fears--of being alone, of not having enough money, of dying, and  
97 many others. But when our fears become obsessively self-centered, when we  
98 spend all of our time protecting ourselves from what *might* happen, we can no  
99 longer deal effectively with life.

100 As we work Step Six, traversing the vast gulf that lies between fear and  
101 courage requires a great deal of willingness and trust on our part. Our fears of  
102 what we will be like without relying on the destructive behavior of our past must  
103 be overcome. We'll have to trust our Higher Power to do a good job on our  
104 character. We'll have to believe that God knows best what we need. We must be  
105 willing to take a chance that what lies beyond the Sixth Step is going to be better  
106 than our current stock of fears, resentments, and spiritual anguish. When the  
107 pain of remaining the same becomes greater than our fear of change, we will  
108 surely let go.

109 We may wonder what will happen to us without the use of what we may see as  
110 survival skills. After all, in our active addiction, our self-centeredness protected  
111 us from feeling guilt and enabled us to continue our drug use without regard for  
112 those around us. Our denial protected us from seeing the wreckage of our lives.  
113 Our selfishness made it possible for us to do whatever it took to continue on our  
114 path of madness. But we no longer need these "skills." We have a set of  
115 principles to practice that are much more appropriate to our new way of life.

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116 As we write our list of defects and see how they have been at the root of our  
117 troubles, we need to be open-minded about how our lives would be without these  
118 defects. If one of our character defects is dishonesty, we can think about  
119 situations in our lives where we normally lie and imagine how it would feel to tell  
120 the truth for a change. If we put some effort into this exercise, we may feel a  
121 sense of relief at the possibility of a life free from having to cover small deceptions  
122 with major fabrications and all the complications inherent in dishonesty. Or, if  
123 we find defects based in laziness and procrastination, we can visualize leaving  
124 behind our marginal existence and trading up to a life of realized ambitions, new  
125 horizons, and unlimited possibilities.

126 In addition to our hopes and dreams for the future, we might find a more  
127 concrete example of what we are striving for in our sponsor or others whose  
128 recovery we admire. If we know members who are exhibiting the spiritual assets  
129 we want to attain, we can use them as an example for ourselves. What we hope  
130 to become is evidenced all around us in recovering addicts living by spiritual  
131 principles. Our sponsors share the freedom they have found from their defects of  
132 character, and we have faith that what happened for them will also happen for us.

133 Even so, we may still go through a period of mourning over the loss of our  
134 illusions and old ways. Sometimes giving up those outdated survival skills feels  
135 like giving up our best friend. We do, however, need to surrender our  
136 reservations, excuses, rationalizations, and self-deceptions, and go forward into  
137 recovery with our eyes wide open. We are completely aware that there's no  
138 turning back because we can never forget the miracle that's begun to happen to  
139 us. Our bruised and battered spirits have started to heal in the course of working  
140 the steps.

141 Part of the process of becoming entirely ready involves practicing constructive  
142 behavior. Because we now understand and recognize our destructive behaviors,  
143 we'll find the willingness to practice constructive behaviors instead. For instance,  
144 if we're hurt somehow, we don't have to curl up in a ball of self-pity, complaining

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145 about what a rotten deal we got. Instead, we can accept what is and work toward  
146 finding solutions. The more we do this, the more we form a habit of thinking  
147 constructively. It becomes natural to begin examining alternatives, setting goals,  
148 and following through in the face of adversity. Hardly a minute do we have to  
149 spend sulking or pointlessly complaining about circumstances beyond our control.  
150 We may even surprise ourselves with our cheer and optimism at times and it's no  
151 wonder, considering how foreign such attitudes have been to most of us!

152 There may still be times when we feel that entirely too much is being asked of  
153 us. Many of us have exclaimed, "You mean I even have to tell the truth about  
154 *that?*" or "If only I could still lie, steal, or cheat, it would be so much easier to get  
155 what I want." We're torn between the unprincipled ways of our addiction and the  
156 character-building principles of recovery. While, at first glance, it may seem  
157 easier to manipulate outcomes or avoid consequences, we know that we cannot  
158 afford the price we would have to pay. The resulting shame, regret, and loss of  
159 spiritual contentment would far outweigh anything we might possibly gain by  
160 compromising our principles.

161 Through upholding the principles of recovery, we seek a life of harmony and  
162 peace. The energy we once put into the care and feeding of our character defects  
163 can now be put into nurturing our spiritual goals. The more attention we focus  
164 on our spiritual nature, the more it will unfold in our lives.

165 We will not, however, achieve a state of spiritual perfection, regardless of how  
166 diligently we apply the Sixth Step to our lives. We will most likely see the defects  
167 we deal with today crop up in a myriad of manifestations throughout our  
168 lifetimes. Even after years of recovery, we may feel devastated at the  
169 reappearance of some old defect we thought had been removed. We are  
170 humbled by our imperfection--but let there be no mistake, humility is the ideal  
171 state for an addict to be in. Humility brings us back down to earth and plants our  
172 feet firmly on the spiritual path we are walking. We smile ruefully at our

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173 delusions of perfection, and keep on walking. We're on the right path, headed in  
174 the right direction, and each step we take brings progress.

175       We gain more tolerance for the defects of those around us as we work this  
176 step. When we see someone acting in one of the ways that has caused us to feel  
177 pain ourselves, we feel compassionate rather than judgmental, for we know just  
178 exactly how much pain such behavior causes. Rather than condemning the  
179 behavior of another, we look at ourselves. Having experience in accepting  
180 ourselves, we can extend compassion and tolerance to others.

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

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**Step Six Review Form**

- |   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step?                 | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [ ]        | [ ]       |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear?                       | [ ]        | [ ]       |

If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. General comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**This form was completed by :**

region \_\_\_\_\_ area \_\_\_\_\_ group \_\_\_\_\_ individual \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE DEADLINE FOR INPUT IS JUNE 30, 1992**

## **The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous®**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

