

STEP SEVEN

"We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

In Step Four, we uncovered the basic defects of our character. In Step Five, we admitted their existence. In Step Six, we became entirely ready to have God remove them all so that we could experience continued spiritual growth and recovery. Now, in Step Seven, we humbly ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings. When we ask our Higher Power to remove these shortcomings, we ask for freedom from anything which limits our recovery or prevents us from experiencing God's love and understanding. We ask for help because we cannot do it alone.

Through working the previous steps, we see that attaining humility is necessary if we are going to live a clean life and walk a spiritual path. An attitude of humility, however, doesn't mean we need to be humiliated, nor is it a denial of our good qualities. On the contrary, an attitude of humility means that we have a realistic view of ourselves and our place in the world. In the Seventh Step, humility means understanding our role in our own recovery, appreciating our— limitations and having faith in the God we've come to understand. To work the Seventh Step, we must get out of the way so that God can do God's work. Humbly asking for the removal of our shortcomings means we are giving complete license to God to work in our lives. We are giving permission to that loving Power, believing God's wisdom far exceeds our own.

Even though we now possess some measure of humility, many of us were somewhat confounded by the word "humbly." Guessing that God might perhaps

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24 respond more readily to someone demonstrating subservience, we tried to seem
 25 as lowly and servile as possible and hoped that God wouldn't laugh at our
 26 request. On the other hand, some of us took it for granted that God would
 27 remove our shortcomings immediately upon request. Those of us with this
 28 attitude may have been surprised when our Higher Power didn't comply with our
 29 demands.

30 We tried so hard to get it right. We were tired of our shortcomings. We were
 31 worn out from trying to manage and control them, and we wanted some relief.
 32 Oddly enough, this is precisely the attitude we hope to demonstrate in Step
 33 Seven, the attitude of humility. We admit defeat, recognize our limitations, and
 34 ask for help from a loving God.

35 Asking God to remove our shortcomings requires a surrender of a more
 36 pronounced nature than our initial surrender. That surrender, born of sheer
 37 despair over our powerlessness and inability to manage our lives, moves into an
 38 entirely new realm in the Seventh Step. In this new surrender, we accept not only
 39 our addiction, we also accept the shortcomings related to our addiction.
 40 Accepting our addiction was the first move in the direction of accepting ourselves.
 41 We know something about ourselves because of our work in the previous steps,
 42 and our illusions of uniqueness have been overcome in the process. We know
 43 we're neither more important nor less important than anyone else.
 44 Understanding that we are not unique is a good indication that we have sufficient
 45 humility to work the Seventh Step.

46 Patience is an essential ingredient of working this step. God will decide when
 47 our shortcomings are to be removed, not us. We may have difficulty with the

concept comes in later

because

48 notion of patience, thinking that our addiction accustomed us to instant
49 gratification. But we've already been practicing the principles that make it
50 possible for us to be patient. We simply need to expand on our Third Step
51 decision. ~~Then~~ ^{when} we made a decision to trust God with our will and our lives,
52 perhaps without clarifying how far we would go with our trust. If we only trusted
53 that Power to a certain extent in Step Three, it's time to increase our trust.
54 Because our view of what we can hope for may be limited, many of us can't even
55 begin to fathom what ~~God~~ ^{H.P.} has in store for us. If this is the case for us, we must
56 rely on blind faith. As in the previous steps, we simply have to believe that God's
57 will for us is good and will give us freedom from those things which block our path
58 to serenity. If we believe this, it seems logical to assume that our Higher Power
59 will help us attain freedom from our shortcomings. Our faith gives us reason to
60 hope for the best.

61 In working this step, we move away from intellectualizing the recovery
62 process. Our concern is not to determine exactly how or when God will remove
63 our shortcomings. It's not our job to think about this step, ponder its meaning, ^{→?}
64 and analyze its effect. This step is a choice of the spirit. To choose otherwise
65 would leave us stuck with only a heightened awareness of our character defects,
66 but no hope for relief from those shortcomings. The resulting pain might well be
67 unbearable.

68 We've seen our character defects, our faulty belief systems, and our unhealthy
69 patterns of behavior. We've seen that we need to change, but may not be aware
70 that we've been changing since we first came to Narcotics Anonymous for help.
71 We walked into our first meeting with nothing but a spiritual void. People looked

72 into our eyes and had trouble seeing the human being behind the blank gaze.
73 Some essential ray of spiritual light had been cut off. We had lost the ability to
74 love, to laugh, and to feel. We are beginning to come back to life. What we are in
75 the midst of experiencing is an awakening of the spirit--no less dramatic than it
76 sounds. This awakening has been evident to those around us for quite some
77 time, but the change is now so obvious that even we can't miss it.

78 One of the changes we see is in our relationship with the God of our
79 understanding. Previously, we may have felt that God was powerful but far
80 removed and not having much to do with us on a personal level. We may have
81 had trouble grasping the fact that each one of us could have a personal Higher
82 Power--a Power always available to us. Prayer may have felt artificial for quite a
83 while, but we ^{may} now sense that we are being listened to and loved when we pray.
84 We feel as though Someone or Something is there for us, supporting us, and
85 always on our side. Once we've experienced this feeling, we no longer need to
86 operate on blind faith or borrow our understanding of God from someone else.
87 We now have our own understanding, intensely personal and all ours.

88 Not that we should ignore the ideas of others just because we've developed
89 our own understanding of God. We should remain open to the experience of
90 others and our sponsor's suggestions. Our sponsor will guide us through taking
91 the Seventh Step just as he or she has guided us through the previous steps. Our
92 sponsor may help us with our understanding of humility, or help us find a way of
93 communicating with God that feels right.

94 Developing a personal relationship with the God of our understanding goes a
95 long way towards increasing our level of comfort when we ask to have our

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analogy**discuss
outside
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96 shortcomings removed. We've made a Friend. When we have a friend with
97 whom we've developed a close relationship, we seldom hesitate about asking that
98 friend for a favor. For instance, we want a close friend to help us with a big task
99 such as hauling away old furniture we don't need anymore. We don't feel as
100 though we are imposing on our friend. Even if our friend tells us that he or she
101 can't help the particular day we have in mind, we trust our friend enough to know
102 that eventually we'll get the help we need. Eventually that old, useless furniture
103 will be removed so that we no longer have to trip over it each day.

104 This analogy holds true for God's removal of our shortcomings. We may see
105 little bits of them removed, they may simply be shoved out of the way for a time so
106 we can move forward on the path of recovery, or we may attain complete freedom
107 from having to act on those shortcomings. The point is that we have come to
108 believe that only the God of our understanding has the power to remove our
109 shortcomings. We can actually ask our Higher Power to remove our
110 shortcomings in good faith, knowing that it will happen when God sees fit. The
111 infinite wisdom and love of God goes far beyond our own ideas of what we need
112 and think we should have. After all, many of us have had trouble identifying our
113 shortcomings. We may have thought one of our personal characteristics was a
114 shortcoming, when in reality, that characteristic was a valuable asset.

115 We need to remember that we don't know what's best for us when we ask
116 God to remove our shortcomings. We are praying to a Power greater than
117 ourselves, not an equal. We ask humbly, knowing that, of ourselves, we are
118 powerless. Some of us will recite a formal prayer in a posture that demonstrates
119 humility when we ask God to help us. Some of us will pray in a more casual

manner, just as humbly but using words that feel more natural and comfortable to us. Any communication with a Higher Power is prayer. However we choose to communicate with God, we feel a certain comfort come over us as we pray. We know that we are being taken of.

With this knowledge comes freedom. Though not a cure by any means, taking the Seventh Step gives us the freedom to choose. We know that if we live by the spiritual principles of recovery, we have nothing to worry about. We no longer need to wear ourselves out trying to arrange situations and outcomes, because we trust God completely with our lives. ~~We know that if we are truthful, what happens as a result is what is supposed to happen.~~ We may still be fearful from time to time, but we no longer have to react to fear in destructive ways. We have the freedom to choose to act constructively or, when appropriate, do nothing at all. Knowing that God has a plan for us is a result of developing a relationship with God. We are in the process of developing a conscious contact with a Higher Power which we will strive to improve throughout our lives. We are conscious of our God and feel that Power's presence.

This certainty, beyond all doubt, brings about a peace of mind that we never dreamed possible. We are now free to dream beyond our previous wildest imaginings. We sense that what lies at the end of our search for spiritual growth is our ability to feel God's love for us ~~perfectly~~. We glimpse a vision of complete freedom from our shortcomings. It doesn't matter that we will not attain a state of perfection or complete humility in our lifetimes. The ability to contemplate this grand vision and meditate upon it are rare and priceless gifts in their own right and don't require fruition to be complete.

120 Developing a personal style for carrying the message rests on a single
121 requirement: we must be ourselves. We each have a special, one-of-a-kind
122 personality that is sure to be an attraction to many. Some of us have a sparkling
123 sense of humor which may reach someone in despair. Some of us are especially
124 warm and compassionate, able to reach an addict who has rarely been the
125 recipient of kindness. Some of us have a remarkable talent for telling the truth, in
126 no uncertain terms, to an addict literally dying to hear it. Some of us are a
127 valuable asset on any service committee, while others do better working one-on-
128 one with a suffering addict. Whatever our own personality makeup, we can be
129 assured that when we honestly try to carry our own message, we will reach the
130 addict we are trying to help.

131 Yet there are limits to what we can do to help another addict. We cannot force
132 anyone to stop using. We cannot "give" someone the results of working the
133 steps, nor can we grow for them. We cannot magically remove someone's
134 loneliness or pain. Not only are we powerless over our own addiction, we are
135 powerless over everyone else's. We can only carry the message; we cannot
136 determine who will receive it.

137 It is absolutely none of our business to decide who is ready to hear the
138 message of recovery and who is not. Many of us have formed such a judgment,
139 and have been sorely mistaken, about an addict's desire for recovery. Multiple
140 relapses do not necessarily signify a lack of interest in recovery, nor does the
141 "model newcomer" demonstrate, without a doubt, a certainty of "making it." On
142 the other hand, it is our business, and our privilege, to share the message of
143 recovery unconditionally.

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Even though we now possess some measure of humility, many of us were somewhat confused by the word "humbly." We may have taken it for granted that

24 God would remove our shortcomings immediately upon request. Those of us
25 with this attitude may have been surprised when our Higher Power didn't comply
26 with our request. On the other hand, some of us tried begging God to remove
27 our shortcomings, guessing that would be a demonstration of humility.

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29 worn out from trying to manage and control them, and we wanted some relief.
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31 Seven, the attitude of humility. We admit defeat, recognize our limitations, and
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34 pronounced nature than our initial surrender. That surrender, born of sheer
35 despair over our powerlessness and inability to manage our lives, moves into an
36 entirely new realm in the Seventh Step. In this new surrender, we accept not only
37 our addiction, we also accept the shortcomings related to our addiction.
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39 We know something about ourselves because of our work in the previous steps,
40 and our illusions of uniqueness have been overcome in the process. We know
41 we're neither more important nor less important than anyone else.
42 Understanding that we are not unique is a good indication of humility.

43 Patience is an essential ingredient of working this step. We may have difficulty
44 with the notion of patience, because our addiction accustomed us to instant
45 gratification. But we've already been practicing the principles that make it
46 possible for us to be patient. We simply need to expand on our Third Step
47 decision to trust God with our will and our lives. If we only trusted that Power to a

48 certain extent in Step Three, it's time to increase our trust. Because our view of
49 what we can hope for may be limited, many of us can't even begin to fathom what
50 our Higher Power has in store for us. If this is the case for us, we must rely on
51 blind faith. As in the previous steps, we simply have to believe that God's will for
52 us is good and will give us freedom from those things which block our path to
53 serenity. If we believe this, it seems logical to assume that our Higher Power will
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61 shortcomings. The resulting pain might well be unbearable.

62 We've seen our character defects, our faulty belief systems, and our unhealthy
63 patterns of behavior. We've seen that we need to change, but may not be aware
64 that we've been changing since we first came to Narcotics Anonymous for help.
65 We walked into our first meeting with a spiritual void. People looked into our eyes
66 and had trouble seeing the human being behind the blank gaze. Some essential
67 ray of spiritual light had been cut off. We had lost the ability to love, to laugh, and
68 to feel. Now, we are beginning to come back to life. What we are in the midst of
69 experiencing is an awakening of the spirit--no less dramatic than it sounds. This
70 awakening has been evident to those around us for quite some time, but the
71 change is now so obvious that even we can't miss it.

72 One of the changes we see is in our relationship with the God of our
73 understanding. Previously, we may have felt that God was powerful but far
74 removed and not having much to do with us on a personal level. We may have
75 had trouble grasping the fact that each one of us could have a personal Higher
76 Power--a Power always available to us. Prayer may have felt artificial for quite a
77 while, but we may now sense that we are being listened to and loved when we
78 pray.

79 Still, we must rely on the experience of others in recovery. We need a Higher
80 Power, but we also need other recovering addicts. The truths that they share with
81 us will guide us toward finding our own truths. Regardless of how secure we feel
82 in our relationship with our God, we should remain open to our sponsor's
83 suggestions. Our sponsor will guide us through taking the Seventh Step just as
84 he or she has guided us through the previous steps. Our sponsor may help us
85 with our understanding of humility, or help us find a way of communicating with
86 God that feels right.

87 Developing a personal relationship with the God of our understanding goes a
88 long way towards increasing our level of comfort when we ask to have our
89 shortcomings removed. The work we've done in the previous steps has furthered
90 that relationship. We've asked our Higher Power for honesty, open-mindedness,
91 and willingness and been provided with those attributes that are so vital to our
92 recovery.

93 Each time we come up short in any of the qualities we are trying to attain or
94 when we have difficulty practicing spiritual principles, we turn to our God. In this
95 step, we ask God to remove our impatience, our intolerance, our dishonesty, or

96 whatever shortcoming is currently in the way. We find that our Higher Power
97 always provides us with what we need and our faith grows as a result. When we
98 ask God to remove our shortcomings, we may see little bits of them removed,
99 they may simply be shoved out of the way for a time so we can move forward on
100 the path of recovery, or we may attain complete freedom from having to act on
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102 of our understanding has the power to remove our shortcomings. We can
103 actually ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings in good faith, knowing
104 that it will happen in God's time. The infinite wisdom and love of God goes far
105 beyond our own ideas of what we need and think we should have.

106 After all, many of us have had trouble identifying our shortcomings. Or, we
107 may have had trouble seeing how one of our characteristics was valuable in one
108 area of our lives, but troublesome in another. For instance, some of us are highly
109 successful at work because we have the ability to manage and direct employees.
110 But if we go home expecting to manage and direct our families, we're more likely
111 to be met with seething resentment than anything else.

112 We need to remember that we don't know what's best for us when we ask
113 God to remove our shortcomings. We are praying to a Power greater than
114 ourselves, not an equal. We ask humbly, knowing that, of ourselves, we are
115 powerless. Some of us will recite a formal prayer that demonstrates humility when
116 we ask God to help us. Some of us will pray in a more casual manner, just as
117 humbly but using words that feel more natural and comfortable to us. Any
118 communication with our Higher Power is prayer. However we choose to

119 communicate with God, we feel a certain comfort come over us as we pray. We
120 know that we are being taken of.

121 With this knowledge comes freedom. Though not a cure by any means,
122 taking the Seventh Step gives us the freedom to choose. We know that if we live
123 by the spiritual principles of recovery, we have nothing to worry about. We no
124 longer need to wear ourselves out trying to arrange situations and outcomes,
125 because we trust God completely with our lives. We may still be fearful from time
126 to time, but we no longer have to react to fear in destructive ways. We have the
127 freedom to choose to act constructively or, when appropriate, do nothing at all.
128 Knowing that we are being cared for is a result of developing a relationship with
129 God. We are in the process of developing a conscious contact with a Higher
130 Power which we will strive to improve throughout our lives. We are conscious of
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133 dreamed possible. We are now free to dream beyond our wildest imaginings. We
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136 shortcomings. It doesn't matter that we will not attain a state of perfection or
137 complete humility in our lifetimes. The ability to contemplate this grand vision and
138 meditate upon it are rare and priceless gifts in their own right and don't require
139 fruition to be complete.

140 We are being changed. We've not only heard about the miracle of recovery,
141 we are becoming living, breathing examples of what the power of God can do.
142 The spiritual life has ceased to be a theory we hear about in meetings--it is now

143 becoming a tangible reality. We can witness a miracle simply by looking in the
144 mirror. God has taken us from spiritually unconscious, hopeless addicts to
145 spiritually aware, recovering addicts eager to get on with our new lives. Although
146 we've reached this point, the damage we've done by living out our shortcomings
147 needs to be repaired. Before we can hope to have the lasting peace that is God's
148 will for us and be spiritually fit to carry the message of recovery, we must begin
149 the process of repairing the path of destruction we have left behind us. Desiring
150 continued recovery and freedom, we go on to Step Eight.

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Through working the previous steps, we see that attaining humility is necessary if we are going to live a clean life and walk a spiritual path. An attitude of humility, however, doesn't mean we need to be humiliated, nor is it a denial of our good qualities. On the contrary, an attitude of humility means that we have a realistic view of ourselves and our place in the world. In the Seventh Step, humility means understanding our role in our own recovery, appreciating our limitations and having faith in the God we've come to understand. To work the Seventh Step, we must get out of the way so that God can do God's work. Humbly asking for the removal of our shortcomings means we are giving complete license to God to work in our lives. We are giving permission to that loving Power, believing God's wisdom far exceeds our own.

Even though we now possess some measure of humility, many of us were somewhat confused by the word "humbly." We may have taken it for granted that

169 have a place in our lives even when we aren't writing an inventory. Humility is
170 always a desirable state, whether we are asking God to remove our
171 shortcomings, conducting business with a co-worker, or talking to a friend.

172 To practice the principles of recovery "in all our affairs" is what we strive for.
173 Both in and out of meetings, no matter who is involved, no matter how difficult it
174 may seem, we make the principles of recovery the guides by which we live. Only
175 through the practice of these principles in our daily life can we hope to achieve the
176 state of grace necessary to maintain our reprieve from the disease of addiction.
177 Though this may seem a lofty goal, we have found it attainable. Our gratitude for
178 the gift of recovery becomes the underlying force in all we do, motivating our most
179 altruistic intentions and weaving its way through our lives and the lives of those
180 around us.

181 Even in silence, the voice of our gratitude does not go unheard. It speaks
182 most clearly as we walk the path of recovery, selflessly giving to those we meet
183 along the way. We venture forth on our spiritual journey, our lives enriched, our
184 spirits filled with love, and our horizons ever-expanding. The quintessential spirit
185 that lies inside each one of us, the spark of life that was almost extinguished by
186 our disease, has been renewed through working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics
187 Anonymous. And it is on the path paved with these steps that our future journey
188 begins.

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48 certain extent in Step Three, it's time to increase our trust. Because our view of
49 what we can hope for may be limited, many of us can't even begin to fathom what
50 our Higher Power has in store for us. If this is the case for us, we must rely on
51 blind faith. As in the previous steps, we simply have to believe that God's will for
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61 patterns of behavior. We've seen that we need to change, but may not be aware
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91 Each time we come up short in any of the qualities we are trying to attain or
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STEP EIGHT

*"We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and
became willing to make amends to them all."*

In the previous steps, we began to make peace with God and with ourselves. In the Eighth Step, we begin the process of making peace with others.

By acting on our character defects, we inflicted harm on ourselves and those around us. In the Seventh Step, we asked our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings. To gain true freedom from our defects, we need to accept responsibility for those defects by setting right the wrongs we did in acting on them. Steps Eight and Nine--the "amends steps"--give us a chance to rectify our wrongs. We accept responsibility for our actions, listing all the people we have harmed, and becoming willing to make amends to them all.

Our efforts to make amends will certainly make a difference in the lives of those we have harmed. However, this process has its greatest impact in our own lives. Our true objective is to begin clearing away our regrets for the wrongs we've done so that we can continue with our spiritual awakening. In our active addiction, we had no interest in our spiritual well-being, but now we do. We want freedom and all the other gifts this program has to offer. By the time we work our way through the process of making amends, we will surely be astounded by the level of freedom we feel.

We are involved in a process designed to free us from our pasts so that we are able to live fully in the present. Many of us are haunted by memories of our mistreatment of others. Those memories can creep up on us without warning. Our shame and remorse over our past actions is so deep that these recollections

25 can ruin our whole day. We want to be free of such guilt. We begin our search
26 for freedom by making a list of the people we've harmed.

27 Just thinking about our list may frighten us. We find ourselves wondering how
28 our amends will be received. We imagine being absolved of any wrongdoing by
29 one person and beaten by another. Most of us have fairly vivid imaginations, but
30 this is not the time to get ahead of ourselves. We must avoid making projections,
31 either negative or positive, about how it will be to actually make our amends. We
32 are on the Eighth Step, not the Ninth Step. At this point, making a list and
33 becoming willing to make amends are our only concerns.

34 Working the previous steps has prepared us for the willingness we need to
35 begin the Eighth Step. We've practiced honesty and courage in the Fourth and
36 Fifth Steps. We've honestly assessed the exact nature of our wrongs and
37 examined how our actions affected others. It was not easy to admit our wrongs.
38 We had to believe in a Power that would supply us with courage and love us
39 through the pain of involved in reviewing the results of our addiction. The same
40 honesty and courage we called upon as we wrote our inventory and shared it are
41 just as vital in making our amends list. We've been practicing these principles all
42 along and are quite familiar with them. The Eighth Step is simply a continuation of
43 our efforts to find freedom by applying spiritual principles.

44 Making the list and becoming willing may be difficult unless we overcome our
45 resentments. Most of us owe amends to at least one person who had also
46 harmed us. Perhaps we haven't truly forgiven that person yet and find we are
47 very reluctant to put his or her name on our list. However, we must. Why?
48 Because we are responsible for our actions. We make amends because we owe

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49 them. We must let go of long-standing grudges and focus on our part in the
50 conflicts in our lives. We won't get better and be able to live the spiritual life we
51 are seeking if we are still in the grip of self-will. We let go of our expectations, and
52 we let go of blaming anyone for our actions. Our idea that we have been a victim
53 must go. In the Eighth Step, we are not concerned with what was done to us. We
54 are concerned only with accepting responsibility for what we've done to others.

55 Some of us completely surrendered our resentments when we worked the
56 Fourth and Fifth Steps; others may find that we still bear anger toward some of
57 the people in our pasts. If we discover the latter to be true, we will need to
58 practice the spiritual principle of forgiveness. Our ability to forgive comes from
59 our ability to accept and be compassionate with ourselves. We've begun to
60 accept ourselves as we are. Now, we begin to accept others as they are.
61 Forgiveness is essential for, without it, we will not be able to become willing to
62 make amends. If we seek the spiritual gifts of the Eighth Step, we cannot afford to
63 be only barely willing to make our amends. Our willingness to make amends
64 must be wholehearted and without reservation.

65 We go through our Fourth Step and list all the people, places, and institutions
66 to whom we owe amends. If we've done a thorough Fourth Step, it should clearly
67 outline our part in the conflicts in our lives and show how we harmed others by
68 acting on our faults. We find the people we wounded with our dishonesty, the
69 people we stole from or cheated, the people who were on the receiving end of our
70 wrongs. We also take note of how we harmed society as a whole and add that to
71 our list. We drained community resources, exhibited offensive behavior in public,
72 refused to contribute to the general welfare. Although we may find the majority of

73 our amends list from reviewing our Fourth Step, Step Eight isn't simply a
 74 reiteration of our inventory. We are now looking for the people, places, and
 75 institutions we harmed, not just the types of harm we inflicted. We didn't just lie;
 76 we lied to ~~someone, most likely to several people.~~ ~~We didn't just steal; we stole~~
 77 ~~from various people.~~ *included*

78 The writing we did on our Fourth Step is not the only source of help we will be
 79 given in compiling our amends list. Our sponsors will also help us. When we
 80 shared our inventory, they helped us see the exact nature of our wrongs. Our
 81 sponsors' insight showed us how we had wounded people by acting on our
 82 character defects. Now, their insight will help us determine who actually belongs
 83 on our amends list. Many of us have gone to extremes in matters of accepting
 84 responsibility for ourselves. Some of us have had a tendency to deny any
 85 responsibility, while others have shouldered total blame for every disagreement.
 86 Our flawed perceptions begin to fall away as we talk with our sponsors, and we
 87 find the clarity we need to take the Eighth Step. ~~With the experience our sponsors~~
 88 ~~have shared, we are developing a realistic view of where our responsibility truly~~
 89 ~~begins and ends.~~ *we have started to develop* *includes* *repair*

90 Before we proceed in making a list, it is important that we understand what the
 91 word "harm" means in the context of the Eighth Step. Our Basic Text defines
 92 harm as follows: "One definition of harm is inflicting physical or mental damage.
 93 Another definition of harm is inflicting pain, suffering or loss. The damage may be
 94 caused by something that is said, done or left undone. Harm can result from
 95 words or actions, either intentional or unintentional. The degree of harm can
 96 range from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to inflicting bodily injury

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or even death." To gain a better understanding of how we may have harmed people, we may want to "put ourselves in their shoes." If we can imagine what it felt like to be the victim of our reckless disregard for those around us, we shouldn't have any trouble adding those names to our list.

In addition to understanding what harm means, we also need to understand what "make amends" means. This step does not say that we become willing to say we're sorry. Most of the people we've hurt have probably heard enough "sorries" from us to last a lifetime. We're not becoming willing to merely apologize, although that may be a part of our amends. In truth, we are becoming willing to do anything possible to set right the wrongs we've done, including changing our behavior.

There may be instances in which we inflicted harm so severe that the situation simply can't be set right. This may be readily apparent as we look at our relationships with those who have been in our lives for quite some time. Over the years, we have given our ^{family} ~~spouses, children~~ and long-term friends one painful situation after another. Even though we can't undo the past, our experience has shown that we still need to look at what we've done, acknowledge the damage we've caused, and become willing to make reparations, despite the impossibility of changing what happened.

Accepting the harm we caused, being truly sorry, and becoming willing to go to any lengths to change is a painful process. But we need not fear our growing pains, for our acknowledgment of these truths helps us continue our spiritual awakening. Simply accepting the harm we caused increases our humility. Being truly sorry is a clear indication that our self-centeredness has diminished and that

121 we are availing ourselves of our Higher Power's love. Willing to go to any lengths
122 to change, we are newly inspired.

123 Some of our willingness will come about simply by writing our list. We will have
124 the opportunity to face the harm we've done. Some of us, after writing the name
125 of a person to whom we owe amends and what we did to harm that person, have
126 added plans for how we intend to make the amends. Planning how we are going
127 to make our amends may help increase our willingness as we see that we do
128 have the potential to correct our past mistakes.

129 [Some of us find it necessary to add our own names to the list as we realize
130 that we've also harmed ourselves.] We become willing to make amends to
131 ourselves simply by being willing to continue our recovery and start treating
132 ourselves better.

133 We want to become willing with our whole heart to make the amends we owe,
134 and we do whatever it takes to bring that willingness about. Our recovery is at
135 stake. The only way we can stay clean is to make our amends. Reminding
136 ourselves of this, we usually find ourselves willing in short order.

137 We can ask a loving God to help us find the willingness to make our amends.
138 Praying for willingness takes our relationship with God a step further. In the
139 Seventh Step, we furthered our personal relationship with our Higher Power by
140 asking for freedom from our shortcomings. Now, we trust that Power to provide
141 us with whatever we need to work the Eighth Step. Right now, we need
142 willingness.

143 Our commitment to recovery includes becoming willing to go as far as we
144 must. Our level of willingness will determine the level of healing we will experience

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145 in working this step. When we become willing to finally accept responsibility for
146 our actions, we will experience a peace of mind we never imagined. Though we
147 have yet to make peace with others, we've come a long way toward making
148 peace with ourselves.

149 A Higher Power is working in our lives, preparing us to be of service to others.
150 The changes wrought by that Power are evidenced by our changing attitudes and
151 actions. We are developing the ability to choose spiritual principles over
152 character defects, and recovery over addiction. We have a fresh outlook on life,
153 and we know that we are responsible for what we do. We no longer feel constant
154 regret over the harm we've caused in the past. Simply understanding how badly
155 we've hurt people, being truly sorry for the pain we've caused, and becoming
156 willing to let them know of our desire to make things right are the keys to freedom
157 from our past. With our new perspective, our trust in God, and our willingness,
158 we go on to Step Nine.

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1

STEP EIGHT

2

*"We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and
became willing to make amends to them all."*

3

4

In the previous steps, we began to make peace with God and with ourselves.

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In the Eighth Step, we begin the process of making peace with others.

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By acting on our character defects, we inflicted harm on ourselves and those around us. In the Seventh Step, we asked our Higher Power to remove our

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shortcomings. However, in order to gain true freedom from our defects, we need

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to accept responsibility for those defects by setting right the wrongs we did in

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acting on them. Steps Eight and Nine--the "amends steps"--give us a chance to

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rectify our wrongs. We begin to accept responsibility for our actions by listing all

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the people we have harmed, and becoming willing to make amends to them all.

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Our efforts to make amends will certainly make a difference in the lives of

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those we have harmed. However, this process has its greatest impact in our own

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lives. Our objective is to begin clearing away the damage we've done so that we

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can continue with our spiritual awakening. We want freedom and all the other

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gifts this program has to offer. By the time we work our way through the process

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of making amends, we will surely be astounded by the level of freedom we feel.

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We are involved in a process designed to free us from our pasts so that we are

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able to live fully in the present. Many of us are haunted by memories of our

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mistreatment of others. Those memories can creep up on us without warning.

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Our shame and remorse over our past actions is so deep that these recollections

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can cause us to feel unbearable guilt. We want to be free of such guilt. We begin

24

our search for freedom by making a list of the people we've harmed.

25 Just thinking about our list may frighten us. We find ourselves wondering how
26 our amends will be received. Our most hopeful projections probably entail being
27 absolved of any wrongdoing. Or, our most nightmarish expectations may involve
28 someone refusing to accept our amends, preferring instead to take revenge.
29 Most of us have fairly vivid imaginations, but this is not the time to get ahead of
30 ourselves. We must avoid making projections, either negative or positive, about
31 how it will be to actually make our amends. We are on the Eighth Step, not the
32 Ninth Step. At this point, making a list and becoming willing to make amends are
33 our only concerns.

34 Working the previous steps has prepared us for the willingness we need to
35 begin the Eighth Step. We've honestly assessed the exact nature of our wrongs
36 and examined how our actions affected others. It was not easy to admit our
37 wrongs. We had to believe in a Power that would supply us with courage, and
38 love us through the pain involved in reviewing the results of our addiction. The
39 same honesty and courage we called upon as we wrote our inventory and shared
40 it are just as vital in making our amends list. We've been practicing these
41 principles all along and are quite familiar with them. The Eighth Step is simply a
42 continuation of our efforts to find freedom by applying spiritual principles.

43 Making the list and becoming willing may be difficult unless we overcome our
44 resentments. Most of us owe amends to at least one person who had also
45 harmed us. Perhaps we haven't truly forgiven that person yet and find we are
46 very reluctant to put his or her name on our list. However, we must. Why?
47 Because we are responsible for our actions. We make amends because we owe
48 them. We must let go of long-standing grudges and focus on our part in the

49 conflicts in our lives. We won't get better and be able to live the spiritual life we
50 are seeking if we are still in the grip of self-will. We let go of our expectations, and
51 we let go of blaming anyone for our actions. Our idea that we have been a victim
52 must go. In the Eighth Step, we are not concerned with what others have done to
53 us. We are concerned only with accepting responsibility for what we've done to
54 others.

55 If we still bear anger toward some of the people in our pasts, we will need to
56 practice the spiritual principle of forgiveness. Our ability to forgive comes from
57 our ability to accept and be compassionate with ourselves. We've begun to
58 accept ourselves as we are. Now, we begin to accept others as they are.

59 We go through our Fourth Step and list all the people, places, and institutions
60 to whom we owe amends. If we've done a thorough Fourth Step, it should clearly
61 outline our part in the conflicts in our lives and show how we harmed others by
62 acting on our faults. We find the people we wounded with our dishonesty, the
63 people we stole from or cheated, the people who were on the receiving end of our
64 wrongs. We also take note of how we harmed society as a whole and add that to
65 our list. We drained community resources, exhibited offensive behavior in public,
66 refused to contribute to the general welfare. Although we may find the majority of
67 our amends list from reviewing our Fourth Step, Step Eight isn't simply a
68 reiteration of our inventory. We are now looking for the people, places, and
69 institutions we harmed, not just the types of harm we inflicted. We didn't just lie;
70 we lied to *someone*. We didn't just steal; we stole from various *people*.

71 The writing we did on our Fourth Step is not the only source of help we will be
72 given in compiling our amends list. Our sponsor will also help us. When we

73 shared our inventory, they helped us see the exact nature of our wrongs. Our
74 sponsor's insight showed us how we had wounded people by acting on our
75 character defects. Now, their insight will help us determine who actually belongs
76 on our amends list. Many of us have gone to extremes in matters of accepting
77 responsibility for ourselves. Some of us have had a tendency to deny any
78 responsibility, while others have shouldered total blame for every disagreement.
79 Many of us also had trouble seeing how we had harmed ourselves, and may have
80 been surprised when our sponsor suggested that we add our own name to the
81 list. Our flawed perceptions begin to fall away as we talk with our sponsor, and
82 we find the clarity we need to take the Eighth Step. With the help of our sponsor,
83 we have started to develop a realistic view of where our responsibility truly began
84 and ended.

85 Before we proceed in making a list, it is important that we understand what the
86 word "harm" means in the context of the Eighth Step. Our Basic Text defines
87 harm as: "...inflicting physical or mental damage...inflicting pain, suffering or loss.
88 The damage may be caused by something that is said, done or left undone. [It]
89 can result from words or actions, either intentional or unintentional. [It] can range
90 from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to inflicting bodily injury or
91 even death." To gain a better understanding of how we may have harmed
92 people, we may want to "put ourselves in their shoes." If we can imagine what it
93 felt like to be the victim of our reckless disregard for those around us, we
94 shouldn't have any trouble adding those names to our list.

95 In addition to understanding what harm means, we also need to understand
96 what "make amends" means. This step does not say that we become willing to

97 say we're sorry, although that may be a part of our amends. Most of the people
98 we've hurt have probably heard enough "sorries" from us to last a lifetime. In
99 truth, we are becoming willing to do anything possible to set right the wrongs
100 we've done, including changing our behavior.

101 There may be instances in which we inflicted harm so severe that the situation
102 simply can't be set right. This may be readily apparent as we look at our
103 relationships with those who have been in our lives for quite some time. Over the
104 years, we have given our families, partners, and long-term friends one painful
105 situation after another. Even though we can't undo the past, our experience has
106 shown that we still need to look at what we've done, acknowledge the damage
107 we've caused, and become willing to make reparations, despite the impossibility
108 of changing what happened.

109 Accepting the harm we caused, being truly sorry, and becoming willing to go
110 to any lengths to change is a painful process. But we need not fear our growing
111 pains, for our acknowledgment of these truths helps us continue our spiritual
112 awakening. Simply accepting the harm we caused increases our humility. Being
113 truly sorry is a clear indication that our self-centeredness has diminished and that
114 we are availing ourselves of our Higher Power's love. Willing to go to any lengths
115 to change, we are newly inspired.

116 Some of our willingness will come about simply by writing our list. We will have
117 the opportunity to face the harm we've done. Some of us, after writing the name
118 of a person to whom we owe amends and what we did to harm that person, have
119 added plans for how we intend to make the amends. Planning how we are going

to make our amends may help increase our willingness as we see that we do have the potential to correct our past mistakes.

We want to become willing to make the amends we owe, and we do whatever it takes to bring that willingness about. If we find ourselves engaging in debates with ourselves, or getting caught up in assessing the exact level of willingness we need, we can lay these non-productive thoughts aside by making a conscious decision to be willing. We may still be slightly hesitant, but we do the best we can. Our recovery is at stake. The only way we can stay clean is to make our amends. Reminding ourselves of this, we usually find ourselves willing right away!

We can ask a loving God to help us find the willingness to make our amends. Praying for willingness takes our relationship with God a step further. In the Seventh Step, we furthered our personal relationship with our Higher Power by asking for freedom from our shortcomings. Now, we trust that Power to provide us with whatever we need to work the Eighth Step. Right now, we need willingness. Our commitment to recovery includes becoming willing to go as far as we must.

A Higher Power is working in our lives, preparing us to be of service to others. The changes wrought by that Power are evidenced by our changing attitudes and actions. We are developing the ability to choose spiritual principles over character defects, and recovery over addiction. We have a fresh outlook on life, and we know that we are responsible for what we do. We no longer feel constant regret over the harm we've caused in the past. Simply understanding how badly we've hurt people, being truly sorry for the pain we've caused, and becoming willing to let them know of our desire to make things right are the keys to freedom

144 from our past. Though we have yet to make peace with others, we've come a
145 long way toward making peace with ourselves. With our new perspective, our
146 trust in God, and our willingness, we go on to Step Nine.

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1 **STEP EIGHT**

2 *"We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and*
3 *became willing to make amends to them all."*

4 In the previous steps, we began to make peace with God and with ourselves.

5 In the Eighth Step, we begin the process of making peace with others.

6 By acting on our character defects, we inflicted harm on ourselves and those
7 around us. In the Seventh Step, we asked our Higher Power to remove our
8 shortcomings. However, in order to gain true freedom from our defects, we need
9 to accept responsibility for them. We need to do whatever we can to make up for
10 our mistakes. Steps Eight and Nine--the "amends steps"--give us a chance to
11 rectify our wrongs. We begin to accept responsibility for our actions by listing all
12 the people we have harmed, and becoming willing to make amends to them all.

13 Our efforts to make amends will certainly make a difference in the lives of
14 those we have harmed. However, this process has its greatest impact in our own
15 lives. Our objective is to begin clearing away the damage we've done so that we
16 can continue with our spiritual awakening. By the time we work our way through } *quest*
17 the process of making amends, we will surely be astounded by the level of
18 freedom we feel.

19 We are involved in a process designed to free us from our pasts so that we are
20 able to live fully in the present. Many of us are haunted by memories of our
21 mistreatment of others. Those memories can creep up on us without warning.
22 Our shame and remorse over our past actions are so deep that these
23 recollections can cause us to feel unbearable guilt. We want to be free of such
24 guilt. We begin by making a list of the people we've harmed.

25 Just thinking about our list may frighten us. We may be afraid that we've done
26 so much damage that we can never repair it, or we may be afraid of facing the
27 people we've harmed. We find ourselves wondering how our amends will be
28 received. Our most hopeful projections probably entail being absolved of any
29 wrongdoing. Or, our most nightmarish expectations may involve someone
30 refusing to accept our amends, preferring instead to take revenge. Most of us
31 have fairly vivid imaginations, but this is not the time to get ahead of ourselves.
32 We must avoid making projections, either negative or positive, about how it will
33 actually be to make our amends. We are on the Eighth Step, not the Ninth Step.
34 At this point, making a list and becoming willing to make amends are our only
35 concerns.

36 Working the previous steps has prepared us for the willingness we need to
37 begin the Eighth Step. We've honestly assessed the exact nature of our wrongs
38 and examined how our actions affected others. It was not easy to admit our
39 wrongs. We had to believe in a Power that would supply us with courage, and
40 love us through the pain involved in reviewing the results of our addiction. The
41 same honesty and courage we called upon as we wrote our inventory and shared
42 it are just as vital in making our amends list. We've been practicing these
43 principles all along and are quite familiar with them. The Eighth Step is simply a
44 continuation of our efforts to find freedom by applying spiritual principles.

45 Making the list and becoming willing may be difficult unless we overcome our
46 resentments. Most of us owe amends to at least one person who had also
47 harmed us. Perhaps we haven't truly forgiven that person yet and find we are
48 very reluctant to put his or her name on our list. However, we must. Why?

49 Because we are responsible for our actions. We make amends because we owe
50 them. We must let go of long-standing grudges and focus on our part in the
51 conflicts in our lives. We won't get better and be able to live the spiritual life we
52 are seeking if we are still in the grip of self-will. We let go of our expectations, and
53 we let go of blaming anyone for our actions. Our idea that we have been a victim
54 must go. In the Eighth Step, we are not concerned with what others have done to
55 us. We are concerned only with accepting responsibility for what we've done to
56 others.

57 If we still bear anger toward some of the people in our pasts, we will need to
58 practice the spiritual principle of forgiveness. Our ability to forgive comes from
59 our ability to accept and be compassionate with ourselves. However, if we have
60 difficulty, we can ask our Higher Power for help. We pray for whatever it takes to
61 become willing to forgive. We've begun to accept ourselves as we are. Now, we
62 begin to accept others as they are.

63 We go through our Fourth Step and list all the people, places, and institutions
64 to whom we owe amends. If we've done a thorough Fourth Step, it should clearly
65 outline our part in the conflicts in our lives and show how we harmed others by
66 acting on our faults. We find the people we wounded with our dishonesty, the
67 people we stole from or cheated, the people who were on the receiving end of our
68 wrongs. We also take note of how we harmed society as a whole and add that to
69 our list. We drained community resources, exhibited offensive behavior in public,
70 refused to contribute to the general welfare. Although we may find the majority of
71 our amends list from reviewing our Fourth Step, Step Eight isn't simply a
72 reiteration of our inventory. We are now looking for the people, places, and

73 institutions we harmed, not just the types of harm we inflicted. We didn't just lie;
74 we lied to *someone*. We didn't just steal; we stole from various *people*.

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76 given in compiling our amends list. Our sponsors will also help us. When we
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81 responsibility for ourselves. Some of us have had a tendency to deny any
82 responsibility, while others have shouldered total blame for every disagreement.
83 Many of us also had trouble seeing how we had harmed ourselves, and may have
84 been surprised when our sponsors suggested that we add our own name to the
85 list. Our flawed perceptions begin to fall away as we talk with our sponsors, and
86 we find the clarity we need to take the Eighth Step. With the help of our sponsors,
87 we have started to develop a realistic view of where our responsibility truly began
88 and ended.

89 Before we proceed in making a list, it is important that we understand what the
90 word "harm" means in the context of the Eighth Step. We may be inclined to think
91 of harm only in terms of physical suffering. However, there are many different
92 forms of harm: causing mental anguish, property damage or loss, inflicting long-
93 lasting emotional scars, betraying trust, and so forth. Though we may exclaim,
94 "but I never meant to hurt anyone!," this is beside the point. We are responsible
95 for the harm we caused no matter what our intentions were. Any time that people
96 were hurt, in any way, because of something we did, they were harmed. To gain

97 a better understanding of how we may have harmed people, we may want to "put
98 ourselves in their shoes." If we can imagine what it felt like to be the victim of our
99 reckless disregard for those around us, we shouldn't have any trouble adding
100 those names to our list.

101 In addition to understanding what harm means, we also need to understand
102 what "make amends" means. This step does not say that we become willing to
103 say we're sorry, although that may be a part of our amends. Most of the people
104 we've hurt have probably heard enough ^{"I'm sorry"} ~~"sorry"~~ from us to last a lifetime. In *- rework*
105 truth, we are becoming willing to do anything possible to set right the wrongs
106 we've done, including changing our behavior.

107 There may be instances in which we inflicted harm so severe that the situation
108 simply can't be set right. This may be readily apparent as we look at our
109 relationships with those who have been in our lives for quite some time. Over the
110 years, we have given our families, partners, and long-term friends one painful
111 situation after another. Even though we can't undo the past, our experience has
112 shown that we still need to look at what we've done, acknowledge the damage
113 we've caused, and become willing to make reparations, despite the impossibility
114 of changing what happened.

115 Accepting the harm we caused, being truly sorry, and becoming willing to go
116 to any lengths to change is a painful process. But we need not fear our growing
117 pains, for our acknowledgment of these truths helps us continue our spiritual
118 awakening. Simply accepting the harm we caused increases our humility. Being
119 truly sorry is a clear indication that our self-centeredness has diminished and that

120 we are availing ourselves of our Higher Power's love. Willing to go to any lengths
121 to change, we are newly inspired.

122 Some of our willingness will come about simply by writing our list. We will have
123 the opportunity to face the harm we've done. Some of us, after writing the name
124 of a person to whom we owe amends and what we did to harm that person, have
125 added plans for how we intend to make the amends. Planning how we are going
126 to make our amends may help increase our willingness as we see that we do
127 have the potential to correct our past mistakes.

128 We want to become willing to make the amends we owe, and we do whatever
129 it takes to bring that willingness about. If we find ourselves engaging in debates
130 with ourselves, or getting caught up in assessing the exact level of willingness we
131 need, we can lay these non-productive thoughts aside by making at conscious
132 decision to pray for willingness. We may still be slightly hesitant, but we do the
133 best we can. Our recovery is at stake. If we want to continue with our recovery,
134 we must make amends.

135 We ask a loving God to help us find the willingness to make our amends.
136 Praying for willingness takes our relationship with God a step further. In the
137 Seventh Step, we furthered our personal relationship with our Higher Power by
138 asking for freedom from our shortcomings. Now, we trust that Power to provide
139 us with whatever we need to work the Eighth Step. Our commitment to recovery
140 includes becoming ready to go as far as we must.

141 A Higher Power is working in our lives, preparing us to be of service to others.
142 The changes brought about by that Power are evidenced by our changing
143 attitudes and actions. We are developing the ability to choose spiritual principles

144 over character defects, and recovery over addiction. We have a fresh outlook on
145 life, and we know that we are responsible for what we do. We no longer feel
146 constant regret over the harm we've caused in the past. Simply understanding
147 how badly we've hurt people, being truly sorry for the pain we've caused, and
148 becoming willing to let them know of our desire to make things right are the keys
149 to freedom from our past. Though we have yet to make peace with others, we've
150 come a long way toward making peace with ourselves. With our new perspective,
151 our trust in God, and our willingness, we go on to Step Nine.

152

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1 **STEP NINE**

2 *"We made direct amends to such people wherever*
3 *possible, except when to do so would injure them or*
4 *others."*

5 Now that we are willing to make amends to all the people we've harmed, we
6 put our willingness into action by working the Ninth Step. We're ^{involved in} ~~hearing~~
7 ~~/completion of/~~ a process that takes us from awareness of our wrongs and the
8 conflicts they've caused to the resolution of those conflicts. This process has
9 called on us to examine our lives, identify our character defects, and become
10 aware of how we harmed others when we acted on those defects. Now, we must
11 do everything we can to repair the harm we've caused.

12 We have our Eighth Step list, and we know what we have to do; however,
13 knowing and doing are two different things. We may have a perfectly good plan
14 for making our amends but, when the moment arrives, find ourselves
15 overwhelmed by fear and feel unable to go on. We may be afraid of how our
16 amends will be received. We may be worried that someone will retaliate. On the
17 other hand, we may be harboring a secret hope that we will be excused from our
18 responsibilities. We cannot base our willingness on the expectation that we won't
19 actually have to make restitution. For each of our amends, every possibility
20 exists, from being held fully accountable to being completely excused. We must
21 be willing to follow through, regardless of the potential outcome. One more time,
22 with the help of our Higher Power, we simply have to walk through our fear and
23 go on.

24 We must be courageous when we work this step. Though the prospect of
25 making amends may frighten us, we turn to God for strength, just as we always
26 have. Our Higher Power is with us as we make each of our amends. We rely on
27 the presence of that Power, no matter how scared we are about approaching the
28 people we have harmed.

29 We may hesitate, fearing other people won't accept us as readily as our fellow
30 NA members have. However, we have found that recovering addicts don't hold a
31 monopoly on kindness or forgiveness. Other people are capable of accepting us
32 as we are and understanding our problems. But whether they are willing to
33 accept us or not, we must go on with making our amends to them. The risk we
34 take is sure to be rewarded with increased personal freedom.

35 The spiritual principles of honesty and humility that we've learned in earlier
36 steps are invaluable to us in the Ninth Step. We would never be able to approach
37 the people to whom we owe amends in the spirit of humility if we hadn't been
38 practicing these principles before now. The honest examination we used to write
39 our inventory and make our admissions, the ego-deflation brought about by our
40 work in the Sixth and Seventh Steps, and the realistic look at how we harmed
41 others have all worked together to increase our humility and provide us with the
42 impetus needed to work the Ninth Step. Our path has led us to humbly accept
43 who we have been and who we are becoming resulting in a sincere desire to
44 make amends to all those we have harmed.

45 This desire to make amends should be the primary motive for working the
46 Ninth Step. Making amends isn't something we do simply because our program
47 of recovery suggests it, nor can we make amends for self-serving reasons. To be

48 certain our motives are based in spiritual principles, we ~~may~~ find it helpful to
49 reaffirm our decision to turn our will over to the care of God before making each of
50 our amends. A Power greater than ourselves will provide us with the guidance we
51 need.

52 When we make amends to those we have held a resentment against in the
53 past, an attitude of forgiveness is imperative. We don't want to go to someone,
54 intent on making amends, and end up in a shouting match over who was injured
55 more severely. Even though we are sure to have amends to make to people who
56 have also harmed us, we must set our hurt feelings aside. Our responsibility is to
57 make amends for what we have done wrong, not to force others to admit how
58 they have wronged us. ~~Although we may receive an apology in return, this is not~~
59 ~~our goal.~~ We need to forgive, not be forgiven.

goes
to
83

60 We should not expect a "pat on the back" or praise for living in accordance
61 with the principles of recovery. People may respond to our amends in many
62 different ways. They may or may not appreciate our amends. The relationships
63 we have with those people may get better, or they may not. We may be thanked,
64 or we may be told "It's about time you did this." We must let go of any
65 expectations we have on how our amends will turn out and leave the results to the
66 God of our understanding. It is very important that we do our absolute best to
67 make amends. Once we have done that, however, our part is finished. We can't
68 expect our amends to magically heal the hurt feelings of someone we have
69 harmed. We may humbly ask for forgiveness, but if we don't receive it we let that
70 expectation go, knowing we have done our best. As we are making amends, we
71 ask ourselves if we are doing this because we are truly sorry and have a genuine

72 desire to make reparations for what we've done. If we answer "yes" to this
73 question, we can be assured we are approaching our amends in the true spirit of
74 humility and love.

75 Handling difficult amends requires the assistance of our sponsor. Wherever
76 possible, we should ask for guidance on *all* of our amends, discussing each one
77 of them with our sponsor *before* we set out to make them. We tell our sponsor
78 what we are making amends for, what we are planning to say, and what we intend
79 to offer to set the situation right. What we intend to offer as amends should be
80 appropriate to the harm we caused. For instance, if we borrowed money from
81 someone and never paid it back, we don't merely apologize; we pay the money
82 back. We talk directly to the person we harmed and amend exactly what we did
83 wrong.

84 In our experience, making amends is a two-stage process. Not only do we
85 make amends to the person we've harmed, we follow up on those amends with a
86 serious change in our behavior. First, we mend our fences; then, we mend our
87 ways. For example, some of us may have destroyed someone's property while
88 we were angry. When we make our amends, we not only apologize to the person
89 and replace or repair the property, we follow that up by repairing our attitudes.
90 We amend our behavior, making a daily effort not to express our anger by
91 damaging property anymore.

92 Changing the way we live is a lifetime process, and is perhaps the most
93 significant amend we can make. Some of the people we've harmed, like our
94 families or others we've been close to for a long time, have suffered for years.
95 Amends of this nature can't be made in a five-minute apology, no matter how

96 heartfelt. Although an admission of wrong and an apology may be the starting
97 point, we need to go on by making a concerted daily effort to stop hurting our
98 loved ones. If we have neglected our families, we ~~probably need to~~ start
99 spending time with them. If we have been thoughtless, always forgetting
100 birthdays and anniversaries, we begin to be thoughtful instead, remembering
101 those important events. If we have been inconsiderate, always wrapped up in
102 what we wanted and needed, we now begin to be sensitive to the needs of
103 others.

104 Of course, we may not have an ongoing relationship with some of the people
105 we have harmed. For instance, if we are divorced from a spouse with whom we
106 had children, we may owe child-support payments. Making such amends does
107 not require that we rekindle an emotional relationship with our ex-partner. We can
108 simply work out a mutually ^{acceptable} plan to fulfill our obligations to our children.

109 Because the action we take in this step can have a profound impact on other
110 people, we don't want to just blithely step out and start making our amends
111 without first discussing them in detail with our sponsor. Some of us have felt
112 compelled to make our amends on an impulse, just to ease our own conscience;
113 however, we usually ended up doing more harm than good. Suppose that, in our
114 Fourth Step, we wrote about people we had secretly resented for years.
115 Unbeknownst to those people, we had ridiculed them, judged and condemned
116 them, or otherwise defamed their character to others. Because all that character
117 assassination was taking place behind those people's backs, do we now go to
118 them and confess? Certainly not! The Ninth Step is not designed to clear our

119 conscience at the expense of someone else. Our sponsor will help us find a way
120 to make our amends without causing additional harm.

121 Though it seems obvious that we wouldn't make direct amends in a situation
122 where we would injure someone, we may find that we have questions about how
123 to make "direct" amends when the person to whom we owe them is deceased,
124 impossible to find, or lives thousands of miles away. There are many ways to
125 make effective "direct" amends without doing it in person. If someone to whom
126 we owe amends is deceased, we may find it very effective to write a letter saying
127 everything we would say if the person were still alive and perhaps reading that
128 letter to our sponsor. It may be a noble desire to want to make amends in person
129 to someone who lives thousands of miles away, but most of us lack the means to
130 travel great distances solely for that purpose, ~~especially if the people we harmed~~
131 ~~are scattered across the globe~~. In situations such as these, a telephone call or a
132 letter could serve the same purpose as an amends made in person. The people
133 on our list who we can't find should remain on our list. An opportunity to make
134 amends may present itself later on, even years later. In the meantime, we must
135 remain willing to make amends should we ever have the opportunity. Of course,
136 we should never avoid making amends in person only because we are afraid ~~for~~
137 ~~don't want to face~~ ^{of facing} the person we have harmed. We make every effort to find the
138 people we have harmed and make the best amends we can make.

139 Choosing the best way to make amends requires careful consideration and
140 time spent searching our conscience for what is right. Some of us have to face
141 situations that can't be corrected. Our actions may have left permanent physical
142 or emotional scars, even caused someone's death. We must somehow learn to

143 live with such things. We live with indescribable remorse over acts such as these
144 and wonder what we could possibly do to make amends. This is where we have
145 no choice but to rely on our Higher Power. We may have difficulty in forgiving
146 ourselves, but we can ask for the forgiveness of a loving God. We sit down,
147 become quiet in the presence of our Higher Power, and ask for guidance in what
148 we should do. Many of us have found answers in dedicating our lives to helping
149 other addicts ^{or} other forms of service to humanity. There are no easy answers
150 for problems like these; we simply do the very best we can, relying on our
151 sponsor and the God of our understanding for guidance.

152 We may also have to rely on legal advice before making some of our amends.
153 For many of us, the wreckage of our past includes such relatively minor things as
154 outstanding arrest warrants for traffic violations, while others have committed
155 crimes entailing very serious consequences. We may find ourselves in a
156 quandary over such issues. If we turn ourselves in to the authorities we may go
157 to jail, but if we don't we may live in fear of being caught and sent to jail anyway.
158 Consulting an attorney about these problems can be of great benefit. With the
159 help of our sponsor and the God of our understanding, we are willing to do
160 whatever it takes to maintain our recovery.

161 Especially troublesome financial amends may also require professional advice.
162 In our active addiction, many of us amassed debts at an alarming rate. We may
163 owe financial amends that are beyond our means to pay in the foreseeable future.
164 Some of us may owe medical bills that amount to more than we can conceivably
165 earn in ~~the next five~~ years. Some of us rarely paid our rent, utility bills, or phone

Several

166 bills. We may have found it easier to uproot our lives and move rather than meet
167 our financial obligations.

168 Just as we do for all of our amends, we discuss our financial amends with our
169 sponsor first. Some of us have begun providing for our families since we've been
170 in recovery; they are dependent on us for their food and shelter. We usually find
171 that we have to budget our money very carefully in order to meet our current living
172 expenses while paying as much as possible on our old debts. We may resolve
173 such situations by contacting our creditors, explaining our situation, and
174 expressing our desire to settle our debts. We agree on a reasonable plan for
175 paying off our debts, and we stick to it. This is an example of how living our
176 amends is a process rather than a "once and for all" occurrence. It takes great
177 discipline, personal sacrifice, and commitment to continue to pay a bill for years
178 and years, but we can regain our self-respect only by following through.

179 ~~Some of us~~ ^{we} find making amends for the damage we did in intimate
180 relationships to be extremely uncomfortable. As we wrote our Fourth Step, we
181 realized that we not only robbed ourselves of the chance for meaningful
182 relationships, we also caused deep emotional wounds in our partners. Our fears
183 of intimacy or commitment may have led us to use, be unfaithful to, or abandon
184 the people who loved us. ^{While there are times when we need to approach such}
185 people with our amends, ^{there are other times when it is best to leave them alone}
186 so as not to reopen old wounds. Knowing the difference requires complete
187 honesty on our part and open communication with our sponsor. Whether or not
188 we make direct amends to the people we've harmed in relationships, we definitely
189 need to change the way we behave in our relationships today. If we ran from

190 intimacy before, we need to sit down and learn to communicate with our partners.
191 We must become more considerate, more sensitive, and more attentive to the
192 needs of others.

193 Sometimes, the only way we can make amends is to change the way we live.
194 As discussed in the Eighth Step, we may owe amends to ^{our community} society as whole.
195 Though this may seem to be an abstract concept, we must make concrete
196 amends by changing our behavior. If we harmed society as whole by being
197 unproductive, we start to make amends by becoming a productive member of
198 society. We contribute. We look for ways to give, not take. Added sentence

199 Our recovery is also a way of making amends to ourselves. We treated
200 ourselves horribly in our active addiction. The guilt and shame we felt each time
201 we harmed another human being took quite a toll on our self-respect. Our
202 addiction humiliated us in a thousand different ways. Now, in recovery, we learn
203 to treat ourselves in ways that demonstrate our self-respect.

204 The most important results of the Ninth Step will be found within. This step
205 teaches us a great deal about humility, love, selflessness, and forgiveness. We
206 begin to heal from our addiction and no longer live with as many regrets. We
207 grow spiritually and find that we are truly gaining a new level of freedom in our
208 lives. Our past is just that: the past. We have put it behind us so that it no longer
209 hovers on the edge of our thoughts, waiting for a chance to haunt our present.

210 One of the most wonderful gifts we derive from working the Ninth Step is the
211 knowledge that we are becoming better human beings. We realize how much we
212 have changed because we are no longer doing the things we are making amends
213 for. We may not have realized how much we had changed in our recovery until

214 now. The amends process drives home the knowledge that we are becoming
215 truly different people. The extended nightmare of our addiction is finally beginning
216 to fade in the dawning light of our recovery.

217 Our humility increases as we face the people we have harmed. The impact of
218 realizing how deeply our actions have affected other people shocks us out of our
219 self-obsession. We begin to understand that other people have real feelings and
220 that we are capable of hurting them if we are careless. We learn about being
221 considerate of other people as we work this step, and what we learn is what we
222 practice in our lives today. It becomes natural for us to think before we speak or
223 act, keeping in mind that what we say or do is going to affect our friends, our
224 families, and our fellow NA members. We approach people with love and
225 kindness, carrying within ourselves a deep and abiding respect for the feelings of
226 others.

227 Because of the humility and selflessness so necessary to making our amends,
228 we may be surprised at the way Step Nine enhances our self-esteem. One of the
229 most paradoxical aspects of our recovery is that by thinking of ourselves less, we
230 learn to love ourselves more. We may not have expected our spiritual journey to
231 lead to a fresh appreciation of ourselves, but it does. Because of the love we
232 extend to others, we realize our own value. We learn that what we contribute
233 makes a difference, not just in NA but in the world at large.

234 As a result of working the Ninth Step, we are free to live in the present, able to
235 enjoy each moment and experience gratitude for the gift of recovery. Memories
236 of the past no longer hold us back, and new possibilities appear. We are free to
237 go in directions we never considered before. We are free to dream and to pursue

238 the fulfillment of our dreams. Our lives stretch out before us like a limitless
239 horizon. We may stumble from time to time, but the Tenth Step gives us the
240 opportunity to pick ourselves up and keep walking forward. Our Higher Power
241 has given us an invitation to live, and we accept it with gratitude.

242

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STEP NINE

"We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

Now that we are willing to make amends to all the people we've harmed, we put our willingness into action by working the Ninth Step. We're nearing completion of a process that takes us from awareness of our wrongs and the conflicts they've caused to the resolution of those conflicts. This process has called on us to examine our lives, identify our character defects, become aware of how we harmed others when we acted on those defects, and finally, set right the wrongs we did.

We have our Eighth Step list, and we know what we have to do; however, knowing and doing are two different things. We may have a perfectly good plan for making our amends but, when the moment arrives, find ourselves overwhelmed by fear and feel unable to go on. We may be afraid of how our amends will be received. We may be worried that someone will retaliate. On the other hand, we may be harboring a secret hope that we will be excused from our responsibilities by our creditors or others to whom we owe amends. We cannot base our willingness on the expectation that we won't actually have to follow through with our restitution, whether financial or otherwise. For each of our amends, every possibility exists, from being held fully accountable to being completely excused. We must be willing to follow through, regardless of the potential outcome. One more time, we simply have to walk through our fear with the help of our Higher Power and go on.

*in active addiction, yes.
but after 8 steps?
I don't know.*

25 Besides overcoming our fear, working the Ninth Step presents us with another
26 challenge: We must somehow conquer our seemingly innate urge to withdraw
27 from other people. In our addiction, we may have gone so far as to physically
28 isolate ourselves, or we may have just been emotionally isolated. Either way,
29 isolation is familiar to most addicts. In the past, we had a hard time feeling
30 connected with other people. But now, in recovery, we've begun to reach out to
31 other addicts, form friendships in the program, and become involved in a group.
32 We've been developing interactive skills. In the Ninth Step, we take those skills
33 beyond the rooms of recovery and into the relationships we've damaged in the
34 past.

35 Though we may hesitate, assuming that other people won't accept us as
36 readily as our fellow NA members, most of us have found that recovering addicts
37 don't hold a monopoly on kindness or forgiveness. Other people are capable of
38 accepting us as we are and understanding our problems. Even if they weren't,
39 we must go on with making our amends to them. The risk we take in getting out
40 of ourselves and rejoining society is sure to be rewarded with increased personal
41 freedom.

very good
42 The spiritual principles of honesty and humility that we've learned in earlier
43 steps are invaluable to us now. We would never be able to approach the people
44 to whom we owe amends in the spirit of humility if we hadn't been practicing this
45 principle before now. The honest examination we used to write our inventory and
46 make our admissions, the ego-deflation brought about by our work in the Sixth
47 and Seventh Steps, and the realistic look at how we harmed others have all
48 worked together to increase our humility and provide us with the impetus to take

49 the Ninth Step. This is where our path has led us: a humble acceptance of who
50 we have been and who we are becoming, followed by a sincere desire to make
51 amends.

V.G.

52 We must be courageous when we work this step. Though we may experience
53 anxiety about making our amends, we turn to our God for strength, just as we
54 have previously. We take our Higher Power with us as we make each of our
55 amends, and rely on the presence of that Power.

56 Though thoughts of our spiritual journey are in the forefront of our mind, we
57 don't need to approach the people we've harmed with a self-righteous attitude,
58 expecting to be congratulated just because we are clean and following a spiritual
59 path. Depending on the situation, we may want to tell the person about our drug
60 problem, and the principles we are practicing to recover, but only when it will
61 serve a good purpose to do so. We don't want to make amends for self-serving
62 reasons. We check our motives and reaffirm our decision to turn our will over to
63 the care of God before making each of our amends. We need not worry about
64 what we'll say or how we'll manage to show that we are sincere about our
65 amends. A Power greater than ourselves will provide us with the guidance we
66 need.

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67 When we make amends to those we have held a resentment against in the
68 past, an attitude of forgiveness is imperative. We don't want to go to someone,
69 intent on making amends, and end up in a shouting match over who was injured
70 more severely. Under no circumstances do we need to bring up the other
71 person's faults. Even though we are sure to have amends to make to people who
72 have also harmed us, we must set our hurt feelings aside and make amends only

73 for what we have done wrong. Although we may receive an apology in return,
74 this is not our goal. We need to forgive, not be forgiven. We keep in mind that
75 someone who harmed us may not realize it or may be incapable of doing any
76 better. We can certainly pray for people or hope that they also find a better way of
77 life, but we can never force anyone to be sorry.

78 Handling difficult amends requires the assistance of our sponsor. In fact, we
79 should ask for guidance on all of our amends, discussing each one of them with
80 our sponsor *before* we set out to make them. We tell our sponsor what we are
81 making amends for, what we are planning to say, and what we intend to offer to
82 set the situation right.

83 What we intend to offer as amends should be appropriate to the harm we
84 caused. For instance, if we borrowed money from someone and never paid it
85 back, we don't merely apologize; we pay the money back! This is what is meant
86 by making direct amends--correcting exactly what we did wrong. We do this
87 wherever possible.

88 In our experience, making amends is a two-stage process. Not only do we
89 make amends to the person we've harmed; we follow up on those amends with a
90 serious change in our behavior. First, we mend our fences; then, we mend our
91 ways. For example, some of us may have destroyed someone's property while
92 we were angry. When we make our amends, we not only apologize to the person
93 and replace or repair the property, we follow that up by repairing our attitudes.
94 We amend our behavior, making a daily effort not to express our anger by
95 damaging any more property.

96 Changing the way we live is a lifetime process, and is perhaps the most
97 significant amends we can make. Some of the people we've harmed, like our
98 families or others who have been close to us for a long time, have suffered for
99 years. Amends of this nature can't be made in a five-minute apology, no matter
100 how heartfelt. Although an apology may be the starting point, we need to go on
101 by making a concerted daily effort not to hurt our loved ones again. If we have
102 neglected our families, we probably need to start spending time with them. If we
103 have been thoughtless, always forgetting birthdays and anniversaries, we begin
104 to be thoughtful instead, remembering those important events.

105 Of course, we may not have an ongoing relationship with some of the people
106 we have harmed. For instance, if we are divorced from a spouse with whom we
107 had children, we may owe child-support payments. Making those amends does
108 not require that we rekindle an emotional relationship with our ex-partner. In fact,
109 it could be extremely destructive for us to do so. We would simply work out a
110 mutually acceptable arrangement that fulfills our obligations to our children.

111 We may have a family member or close friend who is still using drugs. In this
112 case, we simply can't renew the relationship. We should approach our amends to
113 such people with extreme caution and solid guidance from our sponsor.
114 Sometimes our sponsor will tell us to ask our Higher Power for forgiveness and to
115 leave our old using partners alone. However, there are times when we need to
116 make those amends. We may owe money to a relative who is also a practicing
117 addict. A situation like this can be handled by mailing a check. However, if we
118 make the amends in person, we need to remember that our amends are not the

means to an end, but an end in themselves. We don't need to get emotionally involved again to make effective amends.

Because the action we take in this step can have a profound impact on other people, we don't want to just blithely step out and start making our amends without first discussing them in detail with our sponsor. Some of us have felt compelled to make our amends on an impulse, just to ease our own conscience; however, we usually ended up doing more harm than good. Suppose that, in our Fourth Step, we wrote about people we had secretly resented for years. Unbeknownst to those people, we had ridiculed them, judged and condemned them, or otherwise defamed their character to others. Because all of this character assassination was taking place behind these people's backs, do we now go to them and confess? Certainly not! The Ninth Step is not designed to clear our conscience at the expense of someone else. Our sponsor may tell us that amends of this nature should be made in front of the mirror, to ourselves and to God. Our sponsor will help us find a way to make our amends without causing additional harm.

Though it seems obvious that we wouldn't make direct amends in a situation where we would injure someone, we may find that we have questions about how to make "direct" amends when the person to whom we owe them is deceased, impossible to find, or lives thousands of miles away. There are many ways to make effective amends, amends that are just as "direct," without doing it in person. If someone to whom we owe amends is deceased, we may find it very effective to write a letter saying everything we would say if the person were still alive and perhaps reading that letter to our sponsor. It may be a noble desire to

143 want to make amends in person to someone who lives thousands of miles away,
144 but most of us lack the means to travel great distances solely for that purpose,
145 especially if the people we harmed are scattered across the globe. In situations
146 such as these, a telephone call or a letter would serve the same purpose as an
147 amends made in person. The people on our list who we can't find should remain
148 on our list. An opportunity to make amends may present itself later on, even
149 years later. In the meantime, we must remain willing to make amends should we
150 ever have the opportunity. Of course, we should never avoid making amends in
151 person because we are afraid or don't want to face the person we have harmed.
152 We make every effort to find the people we have harmed and make the best
153 amends we can make.

154 Choosing the best way to make amends requires careful consideration and
155 time spent searching our conscience for what is right. Some of us have to face
156 situations that can't be corrected. Harm that left permanent physical or emotional
157 scars or caused someone's death may be parts of our past that we must
158 somehow learn to live with. We live with indescribable remorse over acts such as
159 these and wonder what we could possibly do to make amends. This is where we
160 have no choice but to rely on the God of our understanding. We may have
161 difficulty in forgiving ourselves, but we can ask for the forgiveness of a loving God.
162 We sit down, become quiet in the presence of our God, and ask for guidance in
163 what we should do. Many of us have found answers in dedicating our lives to -
164 helping other addicts or other forms of service to humanity. There are no easy
165 answers for problems like these; we simply do the very best we can, relying on
166 our sponsor and our God for guidance.

*The opportunities to make amends of this nature
may present themselves in situations*

*good
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of
this*

We may also have to rely on legal advice before making some of our amends. Many of us have wreckage such as outstanding arrest warrants for traffic violations, while others have committed crimes that carry more serious consequences. We may find ourselves in a quandary over such issues. If we turn ourselves in to the authorities, we may go to jail, but if we don't, we may live in fear of being caught and sent to jail anyway. Turning these problems over to a professional, trained in the practice of law, can be of great benefit; however, we must be willing to do whatever it takes to maintain our recovery.

Financial amends can be especially troublesome and may also require professional advice. We may owe financial amends that are beyond our means to pay in the foreseeable future. In our active addiction, many of us amassed debts at an alarming rate. Some of us rarely paid our rent, utility bills, or phone bills. We may have found it easier to uproot our lives and move rather than meet our financial obligations. Some of us may owe medical bills that amount to more than we can conceivably earn in the next five years.

Just as we do for all of our amends, we discuss our financial amends with our sponsor first. Some of us have begun providing for our families since we've been in recovery, and they are dependent on us for their food and shelter. We should not overextend ourselves in an effort to clear away our financial wreckage. We usually find that we have to budget our money very carefully in order to meet our current living expenses, while paying as much as possible on our old debts. We resolve such situations by contacting our creditors, explaining our situation, and expressing our desire to settle our debts. We agree on a reasonable plan for paying off our debts and we stick to it. This is an example of how living our

191 amends is a process, rather than a "once and for all" occurrence. It takes great
192 discipline and commitment to continue to pay a bill for years and years, but we
193 can regain our self-respect only by following through.

194 Sometimes, the only way we can make amends is to change the way we live.
195 As discussed in the Eighth Step, we may owe amends to society as whole.
196 Though this may seem to be an abstract concept, we must make concrete
197 amends by changing our behavior. If we harmed society as a whole by draining
198 social service resources, we may make amends by, first of all, not draining those
199 resources again; then, perhaps, we'll want to donate time or money to those
200 programs. If we harmed society as whole by being unproductive, we make
201 amends by becoming a productive member of society. We contribute. We look
202 for ways to give, not take.

*good
it.*

203 Our recovery is an amends in itself, one we've been living since our first day
204 clean. Chances are that our most obvious ways of inflicting harm came to a halt
205 as soon as we stopped using drugs. We stopped stealing. We stopped our most
206 obvious forms of lying. We stopped abusing our families and began to show
207 concern for them. We became better employees as soon as we stopped showing
208 up for work in a drug-induced stupor.

209 Our recovery is also the way we make amends to ourselves. We treated
210 ourselves horribly in our active addiction. The guilt and shame we felt each time
211 we harmed another human being took an additional toll on our self-respect. Our
212 addiction humiliated us in a thousand different ways. Now, in recovery, we learn
213 to treat ourselves in ways that demonstrate our self-respect.

214 We should not expect a "pat on the back" or praise for living in accordance
 215 with the principles of recovery. People may respond to our amends in many
 216 different ways. They may or may not appreciate our amends. The relationships
 217 we have with those people may get better, or they may not. We may be thanked,
 218 or we may be told "it's about time you did this." We must let go of any
 219 expectations we have on how our amends will turn out and leave the results to the
 220 God of our understanding. It is very important that we do our absolute best to
 221 make amends, but once we have done that, our part is finished. We can't force
 222 anyone to forgive us. We can't even expect to remove the hurt feelings of
 223 someone we harmed. We may humbly ask for forgiveness, but if we don't receive
 224 it we let that expectation go, knowing we have done our best. We ask ourselves,
 225 as we are making amends, if we are doing this because we are truly sorry and
 226 have a genuine desire to make reparations for what we've done. If so, we are
 227 approaching our amends in the spirit of humility and love.

228 We do see results from working the Ninth Step; however, the majority of those
 229 results are only to be found within ourselves. This step teaches us a great deal
 230 about humility, love, selflessness, and forgiveness. We grow spiritually and find
 231 that we are truly gaining a new level of freedom from our past. Our past is just
 232 that: the past. We have put it behind us so that it no longer hovers on the edge of
 233 our thoughts, waiting for a chance to haunt our present.

234 One of the most wonderful gifts we derive from working the Ninth Step is the
 235 knowledge that we are becoming better human beings. We realize how much we
 236 have changed because we are no longer doing the things we are making amends
 237 for. We may not realize how much we've changed in our recovery until now. The

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238 amends process drives home the knowledge that we are truly different people
239 now. Our addiction seems like an extended nightmare that is finally beginning to
240 fade in the light of our recovery.

241 Our humility increases as we face the people we have harmed. The impact of
242 realizing how deeply our actions affected other people shocks us out of our self-
243 obsession. We begin to understand that other people have real feelings and that
244 we are capable of hurting them if we are careless. We learn about being
245 considerate of other people as we work this step, and what we learn is what we
246 practice in our lives today. It becomes natural for us to think before we speak or
247 act, keeping in mind that what we say or do is going to affect our friends, our
248 families, and our fellow NA members. We approach people with love and
249 kindness and carry within us a deep and abiding respect for the feelings of others.

250 Because of the humility and selflessness so necessary to making our amends,
251 we may be surprised at the resulting increase in our self-esteem. One of the most
252 paradoxical aspects of our recovery is that by thinking of ourselves less, we learn
253 to love ourselves more. We may not have expected our spiritual journey to lead
254 to a fresh appreciation of ourselves, but it does. Because of the love we extend to
255 others, we realize our own value. We learn that what we contribute makes a
256 difference, not just in NA but in the world.

257 We are freed from our pasts as a result of working the Ninth Step. We are free
258 to live in the present, able to enjoy each moment and experience gratitude for the
259 gift of recovery. Memories of the past no longer hold us back, and new
260 possibilities appear. We are free to go in directions we never considered before.
261 We are free to dream and to pursue the fulfillment of our dreams. Our lives

262 stretch out before us like an endless horizon, waiting only for us walk forward.
263 We may stumble from time to time, but the Tenth Step gives us the opportunity to
264 pick ourselves up and keep walking forward. Our Higher Power has given us an
265 invitation to live, and we accept it with gratitude.

266

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STEP NINE

"We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

Now that we are willing to make amends to all the people we've harmed, we put our willingness into action by working the Ninth Step. We're nearing completion of a process that takes us from awareness of our wrongs and the conflicts they've caused to the resolution of those conflicts. This process has called on us to examine our lives, identify our character defects, become aware of how we harmed others when we acted on those defects, and finally, set right the wrongs we did.

readability

We have our Eighth Step list, and we know what we have to do; however, knowing and doing are two different things. We may have a perfectly good plan for making our amends but, when the moment arrives, find ourselves overwhelmed by fear and feel unable to go on. We may be afraid of how our amends will be received. We may be worried that someone will retaliate. On the other hand, we may be harboring a secret hope that we will be excused from our responsibilities. We cannot base our willingness on the expectation that we won't actually have to follow through with our restitution. For each of our amends, every possibility exists, from being held fully accountable to being completely excused. We must be willing to follow through, regardless of the potential outcome. One more time, we simply have to walk through our fear with the help of our Higher Power and go on.

2.

24 We must be courageous when we work this step. Though we may experience
 25 anxiety about making our amends, we turn to the God of our understanding for
 26 strength, just as we have previously. Our Higher Power^{is} with us as we make each
 27 of our amends, and we rely on the presence of that Power.

28 Besides overcoming our fear, working the Ninth Step presents us with another
 29 challenge: We must somehow conquer our urge to withdraw from other people.
 30 In our addiction, we may have physically or emotionally isolated ourselves.
 31 Isolation is familiar to most addicts. In the past, we had a hard time feeling
 32 connected with other people. But now, in recovery, we've begun to reach out to
 33 other addicts, form friendships in the program, and become involved in a group.
 34 In the Ninth Step, we take what we've learned beyond the rooms of recovery and
 35 into the relationships we've damaged in the past.

36 Though we may hesitate, assuming that other people won't accept us as
 37 readily as our fellow NA members, ^{we} most of us have found that recovering addicts
 38 don't hold a monopoly on kindness or forgiveness. Other people are capable of
 39 accepting us as we are and understanding our problems. ^{can} Even if they weren't,
 40 we must go on with making our amends to them. The risk we take in getting out
 41 of ourselves is sure to be rewarded with increased personal freedom.

42 The spiritual principles of honesty and humility that we've learned in earlier
 43 steps are invaluable to us now. We would never be able to approach the people
 44 to whom we owe amends in the spirit of humility if we hadn't been practicing this
 45 principle before now. The honest examination we used to write our inventory and
 46 make our admissions, the ego-deflation brought about by our work in the Sixth
 47 and Seventh Steps, and the realistic look at how we harmed others have all

48 worked together to increase our humility and provide us with the impetus to work
 49 the Ninth Step. This is where our path has led us: a humble acceptance of who
 50 we have been and who we are becoming, followed by a sincere desire to make
 51 amends.

52 Though thoughts of our spiritual journey are in the forefront of our mind, we
 53 don't need to approach the people we've harmed with a self-righteous attitude,
 54 expecting to be congratulated just because we are clean and following a spiritual
 55 path. Depending on the situation, we may want to tell the person about our drug
 56 problem, and the principles we are practicing to recover, but only when it will
 57 serve a good purpose to do so. We don't want to make amends for self-serving
 58 reasons. We check our motives and reaffirm our decision to turn our will over to
 59 the care of God before making each of our amends. We need not worry about
 60 what we'll say or how we'll manage to show that we are sincere ~~about our~~
 61 ~~amends.~~ A Power greater than ourselves will provide us with the guidance we
 62 need.

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63 When we make amends to those we have held a resentment against in the
 64 past, an attitude of forgiveness is imperative. We don't want to go to someone,
 65 intent on making amends, and end up in a shouting match over who was injured
 66 more severely. Under no circumstances do we need to bring up the other
 67 person's faults. Even though we are sure to have amends to make to people who
 68 have also harmed us, we must set our hurt feelings aside and make amends only
 69 for what we have done wrong. Although we may receive an apology in return,
 70 this is not our goal. We need to forgive, not be forgiven. ~~We keep in mind that~~
 71 ~~someone who harmed us may not realize it or may be incapable of doing any~~

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forgiveness

thing about it.

72 ~~better. We can certainly pray for people or hope that they also find a better way of~~
 73 ~~life, but we can never force anyone to be sorry.~~

74 Handling difficult amends requires the assistance of our sponsors. Wherever
 75 possible, we should ask for guidance on *all* of our amends, discussing each one
 76 of them with our sponsors *before* we set out to make them. We tell our sponsors
 77 what we are making amends for, what we are planning to say, and what we intend
 78 to offer to set the situation right.

79 What we intend to offer as amends should be appropriate to the harm we
 80 caused. For instance, if we borrowed money from someone and never paid it
 81 back, we don't merely apologize; we pay the money back. We talk directly to the
 82 person we harmed and amend exactly what we did wrong.

83 In our experience, making amends is a two-stage process. Not only do we
 84 make amends to the person we've harmed, we follow up on those amends with a
 85 serious change in our behavior. First, we mend our fences; then, we mend our
 86 ways. For example, some of us may have destroyed someone's property while
 87 we were angry. When we make our amends, we not only apologize to the person
 88 and replace or repair the property, we follow that up by repairing our attitudes.
 89 We amend our behavior, making a daily effort not to express our anger by
 90 damaging any more property.

91 Changing the way we live is a lifetime process, and is perhaps the most
 92 significant amends we can make. Some of the people we've harmed, like our
 93 families or others who have been close to us for a long time, have suffered for
 94 years. Amends of this nature can't be made in a five-minute apology, no matter
 95 how heartfelt. Although an apology may be the starting point, we need to go on

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96 by making a concerted daily effort not to hurt our loved ones again. If we have
97 neglected our families, we probably need to start spending time with them. If we
98 have been thoughtless, always forgetting birthdays and anniversaries, we begin
99 to be thoughtful instead, remembering those important events. If we have been
100 inconsiderate, always wrapped up in what we wanted and needed, we now begin
101 to be sensitive to the needs of others.

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102 Of course, we may not have an ongoing relationship with some of the people
103 we have harmed. For instance, if we are divorced from a spouse with whom we
104 had children, we may owe child-support payments. Making those amends does
105 not require that we rekindle an emotional relationship with our ex-partner. We can
106 simply work out a mutually acceptable arrangement that fulfills our obligations to
107 our children.

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108 We may have a family member or close friend who is still using drugs. We
109 should approach our amends to such people with extreme caution and solid
110 guidance from our sponsors. Sometimes our sponsors will tell us to ask our
111 Higher Power for forgiveness and to leave our old using partners alone.
112 However, there are times when we need to make those amends. We may owe
113 amends to a relative who is also a practicing addict. A situation like this can be
114 handled by mailing a letter. However, if we make the amends in person, we need
115 to remember that our amends are not the means to an end, but an end in
116 themselves. We don't need to get emotionally involved again to make effective
117 amends.

118 Because the action we take in this step can have a profound impact on other
119 people, we don't want to just blithely step out and start making our amends

120 without first discussing them in detail with our sponsors. Some of us have felt
 121 compelled to make our amends on an impulse, just to ease our own conscience;
 122 however, we usually ended up doing more harm than good. Suppose that, in our
 123 Fourth Step, we wrote about people we had secretly resented for years.
 124 Unbeknownst to those people, we had ridiculed them, judged and condemned
 125 them, or otherwise defamed their character to others. Because all of this
 126 character assassination was taking place behind these people's backs, do we
 127 now go to them and confess? Certainly not! The Ninth Step is not designed to
 128 clear our conscience at the expense of someone else. ~~Our sponsors may tell us~~
 129 ~~that amends of this nature should be made in front of the mirror, to ourselves and~~
 130 ~~to the God of our understanding.~~ Our sponsors will help us find a way to make
 131 our amends without causing additional harm.

132 Though it seems obvious that we wouldn't make direct amends in a situation
 133 where we would injure someone, we may find that we have questions about how
 134 to make "direct" amends when the person to whom we owe them is deceased,
 135 impossible to find, or lives thousands of miles away. There are many ways to
 136 make effective amends, amends that are just as "direct," without doing it in
 137 person. If someone to whom we owe amends is deceased, we may find it very
 138 effective to write a letter saying everything we would say if the person were still
 139 alive and perhaps reading that letter to our sponsors. It may be a noble desire to
 140 want to make amends in person to someone who lives thousands of miles away,
 141 but most of us lack the means to travel great distances solely for that purpose,
 142 especially if the people we harmed are scattered across the globe. In situations
 143 such as these, a telephone call or a letter could serve the same purpose as an

144 amends made in person. The people on our list who we can't find should remain
145 on our list. An opportunity to make amends may present itself later on, even
146 years later. In the meantime, we must remain willing to make amends should we
147 ever have the opportunity. Of course, we should never avoid making amends in
148 person because we are afraid or don't want to face the person we have harmed.
149 We make every effort to find the people we have harmed and make the best
150 amends we can make.

151 Choosing the best way to make amends requires careful consideration and
152 time spent searching our conscience for what is right. Some of us have to face
153 situations that can't be corrected. Harm that left permanent physical or emotional
154 scars or caused someone's death may be parts of our past that we must
155 somehow learn to live with. We live with indescribable remorse over acts such as
156 these and wonder what we could possibly do to make amends. This is where we
157 have no choice but to rely on our Higher Power. We may have difficulty in
158 forgiving ourselves, but we can ask for the forgiveness of a loving God. We sit
159 down, become quiet in the presence of our Higher Power, and ask for guidance in
160 what we should do. Many of us have found answers in dedicating our lives to
161 helping other addicts or other forms of service to humanity. There are no easy
162 answers for problems like these; we simply do the very best we can, relying on
163 our sponsors and the God of our understanding for guidance.

164 We may also have to rely on legal advice before making some of our amends.
165 Many of us have wreckage such as outstanding arrest warrants for traffic
166 violations, while others have committed crimes that carry more serious
167 consequences. We may find ourselves in a quandary over such issues. If we

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168 turn ourselves in to the authorities, we may go to jail, but if we don't, we may live
169 in fear of being caught and sent to jail anyway. Consulting an attorney about
170 these problems can be of great benefit; ~~however, we must keep in mind that our~~
171 ~~first responsibility is to our recovery~~ With the help of our sponsors and the God
172 of our understanding, we are willing to do whatever it takes to maintain our
173 recovery.

174 Financial amends can be especially troublesome and may also require
175 professional advice. We may owe financial amends that are beyond our means to
176 pay in the foreseeable future. In our active addiction, many of us amassed debts
177 at an alarming rate. Some of us rarely paid our rent, utility bills, or phone bills.
178 We may have found it easier to uproot our lives and move rather than meet our
179 financial obligations. [Some of us may owe medical bills that amount to more than
180 we can conceivably earn in the next five years] -TO 176

181 Just as we do for all of our amends, we discuss our financial amends with our
182 sponsors first. Some of us have begun providing for our families since we've
183 been in recovery, and they are dependent on us for their food and shelter. ~~We~~
184 ~~should not overextend ourselves in an effort to clear away our financial wreckage.~~
185 We usually find that we have to budget our money very carefully in order to meet
186 our current living expenses, while paying as much as possible on our old debts.
187 We may resolve such situations by contacting our creditors, explaining our
188 situation, and expressing our desire to settle our debts. We agree on a
189 reasonable plan for paying off our debts and we stick to it. This is an example of
190 how living our amends is a process, rather than a "once and for all" occurrence. It

*self
respect**10
Amends*

191 takes great discipline, personal sacrifice, and commitment to continue to pay a bill
192 for years and years, but we can regain our self-respect only by following through.

193 Some of us find that making amends for our sexual behavior or the damage
194 we did in romantic relationships to be extremely uncomfortable. As we wrote our
195 Fourth Step, we realized that we not only robbed ourselves of the chance for
196 intimate relationships, we also caused deep emotional wounds in our partners.
197 Our fears of intimacy or commitment may have been the basis for us to use, be
198 unfaithful to, or abandon the people who ^{we} loved. While there are times when we
199 need to approach such people and make our amends, there are other times
200 when it is best to leave them alone and not re-open old wounds. Knowing the
201 difference requires complete honesty on our part and open communication with
202 our sponsors. Whether we make direct amends to the people we've harmed in
203 relationships or not, we will definitely need to change the way we behave in our
204 relationships today. If we always ran from intimacy before, we need to learn how
205 to sit down and communicate with our partners. We learn to be more
206 considerate, more sensitive, and more attentive to the needs of others.

207 Sometimes, the only way we can make amends is to change the way we live. *applied*
208 As discussed in the Eighth Step, we may owe amends to society as whole.
209 Though this may seem to be an abstract concept, we must make concrete
210 amends by changing our behavior. If we harmed society as whole by being
211 unproductive, we make amends by becoming a productive member of society.
212 We contribute. We look for ways to give, not take.

213 Our recovery is also the way we make amends to ourselves. We treated
214 ourselves horribly in our active addiction. The guilt and shame we felt each time

215 we harmed another human being took an additional toll on our self-respect. Our
216 addiction humiliated us in a thousand different ways. Now, in recovery, we learn
217 to treat ourselves in ways that demonstrate our self-respect.

218 We should not expect a "pat on the back" or praise for living in accordance
219 with the principles of recovery. People may respond to our amends in many
220 different ways. They may or may not appreciate our amends. The relationships
221 we have with those people may get better, or they may not. We may be thanked,
222 or we may be told "it's about time you did this." We must let go of any
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224 God of our understanding. It is very important that we do our absolute best to
225 make amends, but once we have done that, our part is finished. We can't expect
226 to remove the hurt feelings of someone we harmed. We may humbly ask for
227 forgiveness, but if we don't receive it we let that expectation go, knowing we have
228 done our best. We ask ourselves, as we are making amends, if we are doing this
229 because we are truly sorry and have a genuine desire to make reparations for
230 what we've done. If so, we are approaching our amends in the spirit of humility
231 and love.

232 We do see results from working the Ninth Step; however, the majority of those
233 results are only to be found within ourselves. This step teaches us a great deal
234 about humility, love, selflessness, and forgiveness. We begin to heal from our
235 addiction and no longer live with as many regrets. We grow spiritually and find
236 that we are truly gaining a new level of freedom from our past. Our past is just
237 that: the past. We have put it behind us so that it no longer hovers on the edge of
238 our thoughts, waiting for a chance to haunt our present.

239 One of the most wonderful gifts we derive from working the Ninth Step is the
240 knowledge that we are becoming better human beings. We realize how much we
241 have changed because we are no longer doing the things we are making amends
242 for. We may not have realized how much we had changed in our recovery until
243 now. The amends process drives home the knowledge that we are becoming
244 truly different people, now. Our addiction seems like an extended nightmare that
245 is finally beginning to fade in the light of our recovery.

246 Our humility increases as we face the people we have harmed. The impact of
247 realizing how deeply our actions affected other people shocks us out of our self-
248 obsession. We begin to understand that other people have real feelings and that
249 we are capable of hurting them if we are careless. We learn about being
250 considerate of other people as we work this step, and what we learn is what we
251 practice in our lives today. It becomes natural for us to think before we speak or
252 act, keeping in mind that what we say or do is going to affect our friends, our
253 families, and our fellow NA members. We approach people with love and
254 kindness and carry within us a deep and abiding respect for the feelings of others.

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256 we may be surprised at the resulting increase in our self-esteem. One of the most
257 paradoxical aspects of our recovery is that by thinking of ourselves less, we learn
258 to love ourselves more. We may not have expected our spiritual journey to lead
259 to a fresh appreciation of ourselves, but it does. Because of the love we extend to
260 others, we realize our own value. We learn that what we contribute makes a
261 difference, not just in NA but in the world.

262 ~~We are freed from our pasts as a result of working the Ninth Step.~~ We are free
263 to live in the present, able to enjoy each moment and experience gratitude for the
264 gift of recovery. Memories of the past no longer hold us back, and new
265 possibilities appear. We are free to go in directions we never considered before.
266 We are free to dream and to pursue the fulfillment of our dreams. Our lives
267 stretch out before us like an endless horizon. We may stumble from time to time,
268 but the Tenth Step gives us the opportunity to pick ourselves up and keep walking
269 forward. Our Higher Power has given us an invitation to live, and we accept it with
270 gratitude.

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*Something
Missing*

*The Power of the
step didn't come through
as strong as the other
drafts -*

STEP TEN

"We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

Prior to working the Tenth Step, we have dealt mostly with the past. In the previous steps, our attention was focused on our addiction and our energy was used to resolve the problems it had caused in our lives. By the time we reach Step Ten, however, we've caught up with our lives. Now we are prepared to turn our attention to the present. By working the Tenth Step, we will continue the process of raising our awareness of ourselves.

Some of us look back at our Fourth Step and wonder why we have to do a Tenth Step. We may think that we've corrected all our past mistakes in the previous steps, and since we have no intention of making those mistakes again, why should we continue with this relentless self-examination? The Tenth Step seems like a tiresome chore to some of us, a painful exercise that we could just as well avoid. But we must continue to grow and that's exactly what the Tenth Step helps us do. Though we will return to the previous steps again and again, the Tenth Step furthers our spiritual healing in a different way: by helping us keep up with what's going on in our lives.

This step can actually be one of the most satisfying endeavors of our recovery. Getting to know ourselves can be just as rewarding as getting to know another person. Continuing to discover the various aspects of our personalities can be just as fascinating as any other form of learning. By working the Tenth Step, we become more aware of our emotions, our mental state, and our spiritual condition. As we do, we find ourselves constantly rewarded with fresh insight.

25 The importance of keeping in touch with our thoughts, feelings, and behavior
26 cannot be overemphasized. Every day, life presents us with new challenges. Our
27 recovery depends on our willingness to meet those challenges. Our experience
28 tells us that members relapse after long periods of clean time because they have
29 become complacent in recovery, allowing their resentments to build, and refusing
30 to acknowledge their wrongs. Little by little, those small hurts, half-truths, and
31 "justified" grudges turn into deep disappointments, serious self-deceptions, and
32 full-blown resentments. We can't afford to allow emotional garbage to pile up,
33 thinking we'll "take out the trash" at some later date. We have to do it now.

34 A big part of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous is learning how to live--
35 something we've learned quite a bit about in the first nine steps. Incorporating the
36 spiritual principles we learned in those steps--principles such as honesty, humility,
37 willingness, compassion, and forgiveness--into our lives has made it possible to
38 live in harmony with ourselves and others. Self-examination, confronting what we
39 find in ourselves, and owning up to our wrongs are critical elements of conducting
40 our lives on a spiritual basis.

41 In the Tenth Step, we use all the principles and actions we learned in the
42 previous steps and apply them to our lives on a regular basis. Beginning our
43 days by reaffirming our decision to allow God to care for our lives has helped
44 many of us keep spiritual ideals foremost in our minds throughout the day. Even
45 so, we are bound to make mistakes, the exact nature of which will seem very
46 familiar. We can attribute virtually every wrongdoing to a character defect we
47 identified in the Sixth Step. Humbly asking the God of our understanding to

48 remove our shortcomings is just as necessary in the Tenth Step as it was in the
49 Seventh.

50 As addicts, we have a tendency to behave compulsively. We do whatever feels
51 good and avoid whatever feels bad, not stopping to think beforehand about the
52 consequences. In order to grow beyond our compulsive urges, we must begin to
53 practice the principle of self-discipline that is implicit in Step Ten. Although this
54 can be difficult, we must persist. We can ask our Higher Power to help us
55 remember to pay attention to ourselves. We can set aside some time during the
56 day for focused self-appraisal. Gradually, we'll be able to look at ourselves — *mmm*
57 throughout the day. The more effort we put into practicing self-discipline, the
58 more we'll find that working the Tenth Step has become as natural as breathing.

59 Some of us wondered how often we were supposed to work the Tenth Step.
60 We may find a very good clue to how often we practice this step in the phrase,
61 "we continued." To *continue* to do something implies that we go on with *STRONGER*
62 something we've already been doing. We just keep going forward, striving each
63 moment to become ever more aware of ourselves.

64 Not that we should be hard on ourselves, picking at our every motive and
65 looking for problems where none exist. We just need to stay in tune with the voice
66 of our conscience and listen to what it's telling us. When we get a nagging feeling
67 that something isn't quite right, we should pay attention to it. If we see that our
68 feelings of guilt or anger are lasting longer than they should, we can do something
69 about it. We know when something is bothering us--perhaps not immediately, but
70 usually not too long after the fact. As soon as we become aware that we're feeling
71 out of sorts, we search out the cause and deal with it as soon as possible.

72 While we strive to maintain ongoing awareness throughout the day, it is also
 73 helpful to sit down at the end of each day and quietly reflect on what has
 74 happened and how we responded to it. Sometimes, our sponsor will suggest that
 75 we write out our Tenth Step. By laying our whole day out on paper, we have the
 76 opportunity to sort through anything that's bothering us.

77 In Step Ten, we ask ourselves the same types of questions we asked in the
 78 Fourth Step; the only difference is that the emphasis is on *today*. We look at our
 79 current behavior and ask ourselves if we are living by our newfound values. Am I
 80 being honest today? Am I maintaining personal integrity in my relations with
 81 others? Am I growing, or am I slipping back into old patterns? We avoid labelling
 82 ourselves and our actions as "good" or "bad," concentrating instead on the overall
 83 picture.

84 In order to examine our day--or our life for that matter--in its entirety, we really
 85 have to draw on the humility we've acquired in the previous steps. It takes a great
 86 deal of awareness to humbly acknowledge our part in our own lives. *and the love*
 87 know quite a bit about ourselves: how we've responded to life in the past, and *from*
 88 how we want to respond to life now.

89 We may have trouble knowing when we're wrong, simply because we usually
 90 intend to be right. For instance, at some point in our recovery, we may attend a
 91 service committee meeting firmly convinced that we know what the committee
 92 should do. We've studied all sides of the issues. We forcefully share our views at
 93 the meeting. We're so convinced of our rightness that we fail to recognize our
 94 self-righteousness. We are blind to the harm we're causing others by not giving
 95 their views as much credence as our own.

96 When we admit we're wrong, we don't just acknowledge that we've harmed
97 someone else; we also acknowledge that we're not living by our beliefs. We have
98 to recognize that we ^{if may} compromise ourselves when we attempt to please
99 everyone else. We have to be able to recognize old, destructive patterns of
100 dishonesty in our relationships. Many of us, for instance, have always had a
101 tendency to lie about what we want from other people. We deny that we need
102 care and reassurance from our friends. If this is the case, we need to notice when
103 we're falling into that trap. We can then correct our behavior by letting people
104 know if we're feeling insecure. good

105 The more we do this, the more we'll begin to see that we never have to set
106 ourselves up to be a victim again. Many of us have believed that others were at
107 fault because we never got what we needed in our relationships. We thought they
108 were cold or unfeeling, emotionally unavailable, or didn't know how to love. But
109 when we humbly acknowledge our own part in such situations, we can see that
110 we never trusted anyone enough to really share ourselves with them. They may
111 have known very well how to love; we just never gave them any indication that we
112 *needed* their love. We presented a picture of what we thought people wanted
113 from us, and then wondered why we felt so alone. MARK

114 It can be very confusing to determine when we ^{are} were wrong, especially when
115 we're right in the middle of a conflict. When our emotions are running high, we
116 may not be able to take an honest look at ourselves. We can see only our
117 immediate wants and needs.

118 When we are having trouble separating what we did from what was done to
119 us, our sponsor may suggest that we take a personal inventory on a particular

120 area of our lives so that we can see our part with more clarity. If our friends notice
 121 that we're acting on a character defect, they may suggest that we talk to our
 122 sponsor about it. Being open-minded to the suggestions of our sponsor and our
 123 NA friends, paying attention to what our conscience is telling us, spending some
 124 quiet time with the God of our understanding --all these things will lead us to
 125 greater clarity.

126 Once we're aware that we've been wrong--whether it's five minutes, five hours,
 127 or five days after the fact--we need to admit our error as soon as possible and
 128 correct any harm we've caused. Of course, we must be just as careful when
 129 amending our current behavior as we were when we made amends in the Ninth
 130 Step. For instance, if we find that we were wrong because we sat in a meeting
 131 silently judging someone who shared, we certainly don't need to go tell that
 132 person what we were thinking. Instead, we can make an effort to understand ^{that} ~~that~~
 133 person and ~~go out of our way to be kind in the future.~~

134 We must remember that the Tenth Step isn't meant to be done blindly, paying
 135 attention only to what we do wrong. We must resist any urge to become
 136 obsessive with this step, ruthlessly searching out every flaw in our character. We
 137 should acknowledge that, quite often, our motives are good and we do things
 138 right. Character defects and character assets are not mutually exclusive, and we
 139 are sure to find both on any given day. The point of the Tenth Step is for us to be
 140 willing to pay attention to ourselves and work on what we need to change.

141 We develop recovery-oriented goals for ourselves as we work this step. When
 142 we see that we've been afraid to go forward in a particular area of our lives, we
 143 can resolve to take a few risks, drawing our courage from a Higher Power. When

144 we see that we've been selfish, we can strive to become more generous in the
 145 future. When we realize today that we've fallen short in any area of our lives, we
 146 are no longer overwhelmed by feelings of dread and fear of failure. Instead, we
 147 are grateful for our self-awareness and feel a sense of hope. We know that, by
 148 applying our program of recovery to our shortcomings, we will change and grow.

149 We begin to see ourselves more realistically as a result of working the Tenth
 150 Step. Where before we went from one extreme to another, either feeling better
 151 than everyone else or feeling worthless, we now find the middle ground where
 152 true self-worth can flourish. We see ourselves as we really are, cherishing our
 153 good qualities and accepting our defects, knowing we can change with God's
 154 help.

155 We no longer avoid being alone, because the aching loneliness that used to
 156 accompany any time we spent by ourselves has diminished. We are becoming
 157 what we were meant to be all along: whole human beings. Although none of us is
 158 without the need of love and attention from others, we have ceased depending on
 159 people to provide what we can only find within ourselves. We stop making
 160 unreasonable demands on others and begin to give of ourselves in relationships.

161 Our romantic relationships, our friendships, even our interactions with co-
 162 workers and casual acquaintances are undergoing an astounding change. We
 163 are free to enjoy another's companionship because we're no longer so obsessed
 164 with ourselves. We finally see that all the devices we've used to keep other people
 165 away were unnecessary at best, and more often than not were the underlying
 166 cause of the pain we suffered in past relationships.

run into
are not supposed to
not necessary removed

167 Healthy relationships are just one indication that the quality of our lives has
168 improved dramatically. Such indications merely reflect the intangible, but very
169 real, changes that have taken place inside us. Our entire outlook has changed.
170 Concerns such as "looking good" or amassing material wealth pale in significance
171 compared to the spiritual values we hold dear today. By accepting the challenge
172 of self-appraisal called for in the Tenth Step, we've discovered that we value our
173 loved ones, ourselves, and our relationship with God above all else.

174 The inner chaos that we lived with for so long has stilled, enabling us to
175 experience long periods of serenity. During these times, we experience the
176 powerful presence of a loving God in our lives. We are increasingly conscious of
177 that Power and are ready to search for ways to improve and maintain our contact
178 with it. Seeking direction and meaning for our lives, we go on to the Eleventh
179 Step.

180

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*resolve problems as they arise
fear-*

STEP TEN

"We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

✓ 4 ~~A big part of~~ recovery in Narcotics Anonymous is learning how to live--
5 something we've learned quite a bit about in the first nine steps. Incorporating the
6 spiritual principles we learned in those steps--principles such as honesty, humility,
7 willingness, compassion, and forgiveness--into our lives has made it possible to
8 live in harmony with ourselves and others. Self-examination, confronting what we
9 find in ourselves, and owning up to our wrongs are critical elements of conducting
10 our lives on a spiritual basis. By working the Tenth Step, we become more aware
11 of our emotions, our mental state, and our spiritual condition. As we do, we find
12 ourselves constantly rewarded with fresh insight.

13 Some of us look back at our Fourth Step and wonder why we have to do a
14 Tenth Step. We may think that we've corrected all our past mistakes in the
15 previous steps, and since we have no intention of making those mistakes again,
16 why should we continue with this relentless self-examination? The Tenth Step
17 seems like a tiresome chore to some of us, a painful exercise that we could just as
18 well avoid. But we must continue to grow and that's exactly what the Tenth Step
19 helps us do. Though we will return to the previous steps again and again, the
20 Tenth Step furthers our spiritual healing in a different way: by ^{creating an awareness} helping us keep up ^{aware} ~~it~~
21 ^{today} with what's going on in our lives, ^{our behavior our reaction something like that}

22 The importance of keeping in touch with our thoughts, feelings, and behavior
23 cannot be overemphasized. Every day, life presents us with new challenges. Our
24 recovery depends on our willingness to meet those challenges. Our experience

^{some} tells us that ^{even} members relapse after long periods of clean time because they have become complacent in recovery, allowing their resentments to build, and refusing to acknowledge their wrongs. Little by little, those small hurts, half-truths, and "justified" grudges turn into deep disappointments, serious self-deceptions, and full-blown resentments. We can't afford to allow these threats to our recovery to go untended. We have to deal with situations such as these as soon as they arise.

In the Tenth Step, we use all the principles and actions we learned in the previous steps and apply them to our lives on a regular basis. Beginning our days by reaffirming our decision to allow God ^{enter} to care for our lives, has helped many of us keep spiritual ideals foremost in our minds throughout the day. Even so, we are bound to make mistakes, ^{short} ~~the exact nature of which will seem~~ very familiar. We can attribute virtually every wrongdoing to a character defect we identified in the Sixth Step. Humbly asking the God of our understanding to remove our shortcomings is just as necessary now as it was in the Seventh Step.

Begin In the Tenth Step, we take such actions on a regular basis. Each day, we take our own inventory, look for those times when we fall short of our spiritual ideals, and renew our efforts to live a principle-centered life. We discard our tendency to behave compulsively, doing whatever feels good and avoiding whatever feels bad. To discipline ourselves, we need to think in terms of what's good for us and then follow through with doing it. *God wants for us*

Although forming a habit of working this step may be difficult at first, we must persist. ~~We can ask our Higher Power to help us remember to pay attention to ourselves if we have trouble~~ We can set aside some time during the day for

49 focused self-appraisal while gradually moving toward a goal of being able to look
 50 at ourselves throughout the day. We need to develop self-discipline and the more
 51 effort we put into doing so, the more we'll find that working the Tenth Step ^{has}
 52 become as natural as breathing. ^{rule}

53 Some of us wondered how often we were supposed to work the Tenth Step.
 54 We may find a very good clue to how often we practice this step in the phrase,
 55 "we continued." To *continue* to do something implies that we go on with
 56 something we've already been doing. We just keep going forward, striving each
 57 moment to become ever more aware of ourselves. ?

58 Not that we should be hard on ourselves, picking at our every motive and
 59 looking for problems where none exist. We just need to stay in tune with the voice
 60 of our conscience and listen to what it's telling us. When we get a nagging feeling
 61 that something isn't quite right, we should pay attention to it. If our feelings of guilt
 62 or anger seem to go on for a long time, we can do something about it. We know
 63 when something is bothering us--perhaps not immediately, but usually not too
 64 long after the fact. As soon as we become aware that we're feeling out of sorts,
 65 we search out the cause and deal with it as soon as possible.

66 While we strive to maintain ongoing awareness throughout the day, it is also
 67 helpful to sit down at the end of each day and quietly reflect on what has
 68 happened and how we responded to it. Sometimes, our sponsor will suggest that
 69 we write out our Tenth Step. ~~By following this direction, we have the opportunity~~
 70 ~~to sort through anything that's bothering us.~~ ^{disciplined here?}

71 In Step Ten, we ask ourselves the same types of questions we asked in the
 72 Fourth Step; the only difference is that the emphasis is on *today*. We look at our

73 current behavior and ask ourselves if we are living by our newfound values. Am I
 74 being honest today? Am I maintaining personal integrity in my relations with
 75 others? Am I growing, or am I slipping back into old patterns? We avoid labelling
 76 ourselves and our actions as "good" or "bad," concentrating instead on the overall
 77 picture.

78 In order to examine our day--or our life for that matter--in its entirety, we really
 79 have to draw on the humility we've acquired in the previous steps. It takes a great
 80 deal of awareness to humbly acknowledge our part in our own lives. We have to
 81 know quite a bit about ourselves: how we've responded to life in the past, and
 82 how we want to respond to life now.

83 We may have trouble knowing when we're wrong, simply because we usually
 84 intend to be right. For instance, at some point in our recovery, we may attend a
 85 group business meeting firmly convinced that we know what the group should do.
 86 We've studied all sides of the issues. We forcefully share our views at the
 87 meeting. We're so convinced of our rightness that we fail to recognize our self-
 88 righteousness. We are blind to the harm we're causing others by not giving their
 89 views as much credence as our own.

90 We may also find instances where our wrong isn't quite so obvious. For
 91 instance, we may find ourselves flinching when we hear others gossiping about
 92 someone. Following such an occurrence, we are likely to be self-righteous--until
 93 we catch ourselves doing the very same thing. Another common situation that
 94 occurs when we become super-critical is a tendency to expect everyone around
 95 us to be unfailingly honest; however, we have a variety of excuses at hand for why

*do we
have to
or do we
learn to*

96 this standard doesn't apply to us! If we find ourselves in the midst of such moral
 97 ambiguity, we can use the principles of the Tenth Step to ~~dig ourselves out.~~ *provide more clarity.*

98 There may be other times in our lives when we find ourselves in a situation that
 99 seems to require a compromise of our personal beliefs and values. For instance,
 100 if we had gained employment at a company only to discover that our employer
 101 expected us to indulge in questionable business practices, we could reasonably
 102 expect to feel torn between doing what we believe is right and keeping our job.
 103 Deciding what to do about such an ~~exceedingly~~ difficult dilemma would be a
 104 tough decision for any one of us. It may be tempting to make a snap judgment or
 105 ask our sponsor to provide our answer; however, we have found that no one can
 106 solve such a dilemma for us. We must apply the principles of the program for
 107 ourselves and arrive at our own decision. In the end, we are the ones who must
 108 live with our conscience. In order to do so comfortably, we must decide what is,
 109 and what is not, morally acceptable in our lives.

110 It can be very confusing to determine when we were wrong, especially when
 111 we're right in the middle of a conflict. When our emotions are running high, we
 112 may not be able to take an honest look at ourselves. We can see only our
 113 immediate wants and needs.

114 When we are having trouble separating what we did from what was done to
 115 us, our sponsor may suggest that we take a personal inventory on ~~a~~ ^{or that} particular
 116 area of our lives so that we can see our part with more clarity. If our friends notice
 117 that we're acting on a character defect, they may suggest that we talk to our
 118 sponsor about it. Being open-minded to the suggestions of our sponsor and our
 119 NA friends, paying attention to what our conscience is telling us, spending some

120 quiet time with the God of our understanding--all these things will lead us to
121 greater clarity.

122 Once we're aware that we've been wrong--whether it's five minutes, five hours,
123 or five days after the fact--we need to admit our error as soon as possible and
124 correct any harm we've caused. *photo* *P* Of course, we must be just as careful when
125 amending our current behavior as we were when we made amends in the Ninth
126 Step. For instance, if we find that we were wrong because we sat in a meeting
127 silently judging someone who shared, we certainly don't need to go tell that
128 person what we were thinking. Instead, we can make an effort to be more
129 ~~understanding.~~ *Tolerance*

130 We must remember that the Tenth Step isn't a one-sided endeavor, only for us
131 to note what we do wrong. We must resist any urge to become obsessive with
132 this step, ruthlessly searching out every flaw in our character. We should
133 acknowledge that, quite often, our motives are good and we do things right.
134 Character defects and character assets are not mutually exclusive, and we are
135 sure to find both on any given day. The point of the Tenth Step is for us to be
136 willing to pay attention to ourselves and work on what we need to change. *unity*

137 We develop recovery-oriented goals for ourselves as we work this step. When
138 we see that we've been afraid to go forward in a particular area of our lives, we
139 can resolve to take a few risks, drawing our courage from our Higher Power.
140 When we see that we've been selfish, we can strive to become more generous in
141 the future. When we realize today that we've fallen short in any area of our lives,
142 we don't have to be overwhelmed by feelings of dread and fear of failure. Instead,
143 we can be grateful for our self-awareness and begin to feel a sense of hope. We *v.g.*

144 know that, by applying our program of recovery to our shortcomings, we will
145 change and grow.

146 We begin to see ourselves more realistically as a result of working the Tenth
147 Step. Where before we went from one extreme to another, either feeling better
148 than everyone else or feeling worthless, we now find the middle ground where
149 true self-worth can flourish. We see ourselves as we really are, ^{accepting} cherishing our
150 good qualities and ^{along w/} accepting our defects, knowing we can change with God's
151 help.

152 We are becoming what we were meant to be all along: whole human beings.

153 ~~We no longer avoid being alone because the aching loneliness, that used to~~
154 ~~accompany any time we spent by ourselves, has diminished.~~ Although none of
155 us is without the need of love and attention from others, we can stop depending
156 on people to provide what we can only find within ourselves. We can stop making
157 unreasonable demands on others and begin to give of ourselves in relationships.

158 Our romantic relationships, our friendships, ^{family, friends} even our interactions with co-
159 workers and casual acquaintances are undergoing an astounding change. We
160 are free to enjoy another's companionship because we're no longer so obsessed
161 with ourselves. We finally see that all the devices we've used to keep other
162 people away were unnecessary at best, and more often than not were the
163 underlying cause of the pain we suffered in past relationships.

164 Healthy ⁿ relationships are just one indication that the quality of our lives has
165 improved dramatically. Such indications merely reflect the intangible, but very
166 real, changes that have taken place inside us. Our entire outlook has changed.
167 Compared to the spiritual values we hold dear today, concerns such as "looking

good" or amassing material wealth pale in significance. By accepting the challenge of self-appraisal called for in the Tenth Step, we've discovered that we value ~~our loved ones~~ our recovery, and our relationship with God above all else.

As the inner chaos that we lived with for so long subsides, we begin to experience long periods of serenity. During these times, we experience the powerful presence of a loving God in our lives. We are increasingly conscious of that Power and are ready to search for ways to improve and maintain our contact with it. Seeking direction and meaning for our lives, we go on to the Eleventh Step.

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25 tells us that some members relapse, even after long periods of clean time,
26 because they have become complacent in recovery, allowing their resentments to
27 build and refusing to acknowledge their wrongs. Little by little, those small hurts,
28 half-truths, and "justified" grudges turn into deep disappointments, serious self-
29 deceptions, and full-blown resentments. We can't afford to allow these threats to
30 our recovery to go untended. We have to deal with situations such as these as
31 soon as they arise.

32 In the Tenth Step, we use all the principles and actions we learned in the
33 previous steps and apply them to our lives on a regular basis. Beginning our
34 days by reaffirming our decision to live life according to God's will has helped
35 many of us keep spiritual ideals foremost in our minds throughout the day. Even
36 so, we are bound to make mistakes that are very familiar to us. We can attribute
37 virtually every wrongdoing to a character defect we identified in the Sixth Step.
38 Humbly asking the God of our understanding to remove our shortcomings is just
39 as necessary now as it was in the Seventh Step.

40 In the Tenth Step, we take such actions on a regular basis. Each day, we take
41 our own inventory, look for those times when we fall short of our spiritual ideals,
42 and renew our efforts to live a principle-centered life. For example, we disregard
43 the tendency to behave compulsively, ignoring the consequences of our actions.
44 To practice the discipline this step calls for, we need to focus on spiritual
45 principles, take prompt action, and continue forward in our recovery.

*rewrite
if possible*

46 Although forming a habit of working this step may be difficult at first, we must
47 persist. We can set aside some time during the day for focused self-appraisal
48 while gradually moving toward a goal of being able to look at ourselves

49 throughout the day. We need to develop self-discipline and the more effort we
50 put into doing so, the more we'll find that working the Tenth Step will become as
51 natural as breathing.

52 Some of us wondered how often we were supposed to work the Tenth Step.
53 We may find a very good clue to how often we practice this step in the phrase,
54 "we continued." To *continue* to do something implies that we go on with
55 something we've already been doing. We keep going forward, striving each
56 moment to become ever more aware of ourselves.

57 Not that we should be hard on ourselves, picking at our every motive and
58 looking for problems where none exist. We need to stay in tune with the voice of
59 our conscience and listen to what it's telling us. When we get a nagging feeling
60 that something isn't quite right, we should pay attention to it. If our feelings of guilt
61 or anger seem to go on for a long time, we can do something about it. We know
62 when something is bothering us--perhaps not immediately, but usually not too
63 long after the fact. As soon as we become aware that we're feeling out of sorts,
64 we search out the cause and deal with it as soon as possible.

65 While we strive to maintain ongoing awareness throughout the day, it is also
66 helpful to sit down at the end of each day and quietly reflect on what has
67 happened and how we responded to it. Sometimes, our sponsor will suggest that
68 we write out our Tenth Step. In this step, we ask ourselves the same types of
69 questions we asked in the Fourth Step; the only difference is that the emphasis is
70 on *today*. We look at our current behavior and ask ourselves if we are living by
71 our newfound values. Am I being honest today? Am I maintaining personal
72 integrity in my relations with others? Am I growing, or am I slipping back into old

73 patterns? We avoid labelling ourselves and our actions as "good" or "bad,"
74 concentrating instead on the overall picture.

75 In order to examine our day--or our life for that matter--in its entirety, we have
76 to draw on the humility we've acquired in the previous steps. We have learned
77 quite a bit about ourselves: how we've responded to life in the past, and how we
78 want to respond to life now. It takes a great deal of awareness to humbly
79 acknowledge our part in our own lives.

80 We may have trouble knowing when we're wrong, simply because we usually
81 intend to be right. For instance, at some point in our recovery, we may attend a
82 group business meeting firmly convinced that we know what the group should do.
83 We've studied all sides of the issues. We forcefully share our views at the
84 meeting. We're so convinced of our rightness that we fail to recognize our self-
85 righteousness. We are blind to the harm we're causing others by not respecting
86 their views as much as our own.

87 Often, we act in ways that are contrary to our values, yet we expect others to
88 live up to our standards. For instance, we may find ourselves flinching when we
89 hear others gossiping about someone. Following such an occurrence, we are
90 likely to be self-righteous--until we catch ourselves doing the very same thing.
91 Another common situation that occurs when we become super-critical is a
92 tendency to expect everyone around us to be unfailingly honest; however, we
93 have a variety of excuses at hand for why this standard doesn't apply to us! If we
94 find ourselves in the midst of such moral ambiguity, we can use the principles of
95 the Tenth Step to provide more clarity.

96 There may be other times in our lives when we find ourselves in a situation that
97 seems to require a compromise of our personal beliefs and values. For instance,
98 if we had gained employment at a company only to discover that our employer
99 expected us to indulge in questionable business practices, we could reasonably
100 expect to feel confused about the choices available to us. Deciding what to do
101 about such a difficult dilemma would be a tough decision for any one of us. It
102 may be tempting to make a snap judgment or ask our sponsor to provide our
103 answer; however, we have found that no one can solve such a dilemma for us.
104 We must apply the principles of the program for ourselves and arrive at our own
105 decision. In the end, we are the ones who must live with our conscience. In order
106 to do so comfortably, we must decide what is, and what is not, morally acceptable
107 in our lives.

108 It can be very confusing to determine when we were wrong, especially when
109 we're right in the middle of a conflict. When our emotions are running high, we
110 may not be able to take an honest look at ourselves. We can see only our
111 immediate wants and needs. At such times, our sponsor may suggest that we
112 take a personal inventory on a particular area of our lives so that we can see our
113 part with more clarity. If our friends notice that we're acting on a character defect,
114 they may suggest that we talk to our sponsor about it. Being open-minded to the
115 suggestions of our sponsor and our NA friends, paying attention to what our
116 conscience is telling us, spending some quiet time with the God of our
117 understanding--all these things will lead us to greater clarity.

118 Once we're aware that we've been wrong--whether it's five minutes, five hours,
119 or five days after the fact--we need to admit our error as soon as possible and

add here
120 correct any harm we've caused. As in the Ninth Step, we find that the process of
121 admitting our mistakes and changing our behavior brings about tremendous
122 freedom.

123 Of course, we must be just as careful when amending our current behavior as
124 we were when we made amends in the Ninth Step. For instance, if we find that we
125 were wrong because we sat in a meeting silently judging someone who shared,
126 we certainly don't need to go tell that person what we were thinking. Instead, we
127 can make an effort to be more tolerant.

128 We must remember that the Tenth Step isn't a one-sided endeavor, only for us
129 to note what we do wrong. We must resist any urge to become obsessive with
130 this step, ruthlessly searching out every flaw in our character. The point of the
131 Tenth Step is for us to be willing to pay attention to our thoughts, behaviors, and
132 values, and work on what we need to change. We should acknowledge that,
133 quite often, our motives are good and we do things right. Character defects and
134 character assets are not mutually exclusive, and we are sure to find both on any
135 given day.

136 We develop recovery-oriented goals for ourselves as we work this step. When
137 we see that we've been afraid to go forward in a particular area of our lives, we
138 can resolve to take a few risks, drawing our courage from our Higher Power.
139 When we see that we've been selfish, we can strive to become more generous in
140 the future. When we realize today that we've fallen short in any area of our lives,
141 we don't have to be overwhelmed by feelings of dread and fear of failure. Instead,
142 we can be grateful for our self-awareness and begin to feel a sense of hope. We

143 know that, by applying our program of recovery to our shortcomings, we will
144 change and grow.

145 We begin to see ourselves more realistically as a result of working the Tenth
146 Step. Many of us have remarked on the freedom we experienced through freely
147 admitting our mistakes and releasing ourselves from unrealistic expectations.
148 Where before we went from one extreme to another, either feeling better than
149 everyone else or feeling worthless, we now find the middle ground where true
150 self-worth can flourish. We see ourselves as we really are, accepting our good
151 qualities along with our defects, knowing we can change with God's help. We are
152 becoming what we were meant to be all along: whole human beings.

153 Although none of us is without the need of love and attention from others, we
154 can stop depending on people to provide what we can only find within ourselves.
155 We can stop making unreasonable demands on others and begin to give of
156 ourselves in relationships. Our romantic relationships, our friendships, and our
157 interactions with family members, co-workers, and casual acquaintances are
158 undergoing an astounding change. We are free to enjoy another's
159 companionship because we're no longer so obsessed with ourselves. We finally
160 see that all the devices we've used to keep other people away were unnecessary
161 at best, and more often than not were the underlying cause of the pain we
162 suffered in past relationships.

163 Healthier relationships are just one indication that the quality of our lives has
164 improved dramatically. Such indications merely reflect the intangible, but very
165 real, changes that have taken place inside us. Our entire outlook has changed.
166 Compared to the spiritual values we hold dear today, concerns such as "looking

good" or amassing material wealth pale in significance. By accepting the challenge of self-appraisal called for in the Tenth Step, we've discovered that we value our recovery and our relationship with God above all else.

As the inner chaos that we lived with for so long subsides, we begin to experience long periods of serenity. During these times, we experience the powerful presence of a loving God in our lives. We are increasingly conscious of that Power and are ready to search for ways to improve and maintain our contact with it. Seeking direction and meaning for our lives, we go on to the Eleventh Step.

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Love it!

STEP ELEVEN

*"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."*

The Eleventh Step marks the culmination of our efforts to build a relationship with the God of our understanding. We began our efforts in the Third Step with a simple decision, then followed up by working more steps, each one of which was designed to clear away whatever barriers might stand between our Higher Power and ourselves. As a result, we are now ~~entirely~~ open to receive God's power, love, and guidance directly into our lives.

reorganize

Many of us had trouble understanding the meaning of "praying for power" in the Eleventh Step. At first glance, this seemed to contradict the most basic aspect of our recovery program: our admission of powerlessness. But if we take another look at the First Step, we'll see that it says we are powerless over our addiction, not that God won't give us the power to carry out God's will. We did begin at a point of powerlessness in the First Step; we were powerless over our addiction and, ~~as a result, completely~~ incapable of carrying out God's will. The internal strength we had, we'd given away in our all-consuming battle with our addiction. This doesn't mean we gain power over our addiction in the Eleventh Step. In the Eleventh Step, we pray for a particular kind of power: the power to carry out God's will. We still are, and always will be, powerless over our addiction.

The characteristics of our disease and the things we did in our active addiction separated us from God. Our self-obsession made it difficult for most of us to even believe in a Power greater than ourselves, much less achieve a conscious contact

26 with that Power. We could see no purpose or meaning in our lives. Other people
 27 couldn't begin to fill the emptiness we felt. It seemed as though we shared no
 28 common bond with others at all. ~~We believed our existence was accidental at~~
 29 ~~best, often despairing at the insignificance of it all.~~ We felt alone in a vast, dark
 30 universe, believing nothing existed beyond what our limited view allowed us to
 31 see. We felt that any other view was "irrational," reserved for children and others
 32 lacking the strength to stand on their own two feet.

33 However, once we begin to recover, we find our obsession with ourselves
 34 diminishing and our awareness of the presence of a Higher Power growing.
 35 We've begun to see that we aren't alone and never have been. We have always
 36 been an essential part of a greater whole; we just couldn't conceive of such a
 37 thing when our lives were guided by our ^{DW's} "rational" beliefs. Through working the
 38 previous steps, we have already achieved a conscious contact with the God of
 39 our understanding. Our separation and isolation has ended. In the Eleventh
 40 Step, we now seek to *improve* our conscious contact with God through prayer
 41 and meditation.

42 We no longer shy away from spiritual growth, because it has become so
 43 essential to maintaining the peace of mind we've found. Perhaps at the beginning
 44 of our recovery we worked the steps because we were in pain and afraid we
 45 would relapse if we didn't. But today we are motivated less by pain and fear,
 46 driven more by our longing for continued recovery.

47 This leaning toward recovery reveals that we've surrendered more completely.
 48 We've reached a state where we actually believe that God's will for us is better
 49 than our own. It has become second nature for us to ask ourselves what our

50 Higher Power would have us do in our lives rather than attempting to manipulate
51 situations so they happen according to our ideas of what's best. We no longer
52 see God's will for us as something we have to *survive*. On the contrary, we strive
53 to align our will with God's, believing that we'll gain more happiness and peace of
54 mind by doing so. This is what surrender is: a heartfelt belief in our own fallibility
55 as human beings and an equally heartfelt decision to rely on a Power greater than
56 our own. Surrender, the stumbling block of our addiction, has become the
57 cornerstone of our recovery.

58 However, we cannot recover on surrender alone. We must build on our
59 surrender by taking action, just as we have in the previous steps. In the Tenth
60 Step, we began to practice the discipline required to live spiritually on a daily
61 basis. We continue practicing this principle in the Eleventh Step by persisting in
62 our efforts to take action each day. We place prayer and meditation high on our
63 priority list. We resolve to make prayer and meditation as much a part of our daily
64 routine as eating and sleeping, and then we employ the necessary self-discipline
65 to achieve our resolve.

66 To work this step, we must also increase the courage we've developed in the
67 previous steps. Though the courage we demonstrated when we honestly and
68 thoroughly examined ourselves was certainly valid, we now need to develop a
69 markedly different form of courage: the courage to live according to spiritual
70 principles, even when we are afraid of the results. *great* Though we may find ourselves
71 quaking with fear when we are called on to share our recovery with a group of
72 people, we know our lives are driven today by spiritual principles, one of which is
73 ~~selfless~~ service. Despite our fear, we do what's necessary and draw on the

74 endless well of courage we can find by tapping into a Power greater than
75 ourselves.

76 With all this discussion of God, we may again find ourselves growing
77 uncomfortable, perhaps wondering if this is where the "religious catch" we've
78 anticipated is going to be revealed. We may wonder if our sponsor is now going
79 to inform us that we must pray and meditate in a particular way, ~~or force us to~~
80 ~~engage in distasteful spiritual rituals to show our allegiance to NA.~~ Before we get
81 carried away with such fears, we would do well to remember one of the basic
82 tenets of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous: our absolute and unconditional
83 freedom to believe in any Higher Power we choose and, of course, our right to
84 communicate with our Higher Power in whatever way conforms to our individual
85 beliefs. Although many of us practice a traditional religion--^{many} ~~and an equal number~~
86 ~~do not--only rarely do we hear specific religious beliefs discussed in our meetings.~~
87 Our members respect the rights of other members to form their own spiritual
88 beliefs and tend to frown on anything with the potential to dilute the spiritual, not
89 religious, message of recovery.

90 In this encouraging atmosphere, most of us find it relatively easy to discard
91 our preconceived ideas of the "right" way to pray or meditate. Finding our own
92 way is another matter. We may have only the ^a ~~most~~ basic understanding of what
93 prayer and meditation are, prayer being the times we talk to God and meditation
94 the times we listen. We may not be aware of the many options that are open to
95 us. Searching those options out and exploring their usefulness to us can be
96 difficult and time-consuming; however, it is only by being open-minded that we
97 are likely to find what is right for us as individuals. We may experiment with a

198 whole assortment of practices until we find something that doesn't feel foreign or
199 contrived. However, some of us have found that *everything* feels strange, and
200 that we must stick with a particular form of prayer and meditation until it no longer
201 seems unnatural. Many of us have adopted an eclectic approach, borrowing our
202 practices from a variety of sources and combining those which provide us the
203 greatest comfort and enlightenment.

204 We choose a spiritual path which will lead us to a God of our own
205 understanding. Along the way, we are sure to find help from our fellow members,
206 or perhaps even from others who are also walking a spiritual path. Seeking out
207 these individuals and asking for their guidance can help us find our own answers;
208 however sharing in another's experience does not excuse us from the need to
209 seek our own. Others may be able to show us the path they walked, sharing with
210 us the insight they found along the way; however, we may find our spiritual paths
211 taking a different turn and have to adjust our method of travel accordingly. In the
212 end, we find what's true for us in moments of personal contact with our Higher
213 Power. The experience shared by others is merely that: *experience*, not ultimate
214 answers to the mysteries of life.

215 Our understanding of God grows and changes through prayer and meditation,
216 We begin to hesitate in assigning human ^{feelings} failings like jealousy or anger to our
217 Higher Power, knowing such beliefs will only serve to limit what we sense as
218 infinite. We find that it is confining to pigeonhole God or come up with a definition
219 for that Power which nails down our understanding once and for all. An
220 interesting parallel can be drawn if we remember the times we've thoughtlessly
221 tossed other human beings into categories and forgotten about them. We

122 deprived ourselves of an opportunity to know someone else on a deeper level.
 123 Treating our Higher Power as something to be defined absolutely will rob us on a
 124 grand scale, halting further spiritual growth the minute we arrive at a pat definition.

125 In addition to the open-mindedness so necessary to working the Eleventh
 126 Step, it is vital that we actively pursue knowledge of God's will for us and the
 127 power to carry it out. This knowledge is what we are searching for when we pray,
 128 whether our prayers are desperate pleas or calm requests for guidance. Though
 129 we may seem to be more open to acknowledging God's will when we are fresh
 130 out of ideas of our own, our ordinary requests for knowledge also have their
 131 subtle effect in our lives.

132 We pray *only* for the knowledge of God's will and the power to carry that out.
 133 Just as we opened our minds and avoided restricting our understanding of our
 134 Higher Power, we avoid placing limitations on what God's will for us can be.
 135 Though the temptation to pray for a relationship or monetary success may be
 136 great, we must resist the urge to do so if we want to experience the rewards of the
 137 Eleventh Step. This is not to say that we must sacrifice relationships and success
 138 if we want to live according to God's will, only that we must not expect God to
 139 provide those things for us. Praying for specific solutions to specific problems
 140 can be dangerous. It may seem as though we've been provided with an answer
 141 to what's bothering us; we may even go to great lengths to convince ourselves
 142 that our idea was divinely inspired.

143 For instance, at some time in our lives, we may feel unhappy but not know
 144 exactly what is causing such ~~depression~~ ^{unhappiness}. After spending a few minutes in prayer,
 145 asking God to reveal what is making us unhappy and show us how to become

146 happy again, we may suddenly get the idea that all our problems are caused by
 147 our boring job and our ~~futility~~ and demanding boss. We, as addicts, are subject
 148 to take such random thoughts and run with them, impulsively quitting our sorely
 149 needed jobs rather than trying to renew the challenge and fulfillment we used to
 150 derive from our occupation.

V. 4.
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run
→

151 This scenario may seem extreme, but its point is that by praying only for
 152 knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out, we can avoid our
 153 former tendency to allow fleeting whims and superstition to dictate the course of
 154 our lives. Knowledge of God's will usually comes not in a momentary blinding
 155 flash, but in a firm belief in our own right to happiness and peace of mind.

V. 4.

156 We see that, regardless of the presence or absence of tangible success in our
 157 lives, we can be content. We can be happy and fulfilled with or without money,
 158 with or without a partner, with or without the approval of others. We've begun to
 159 see that God's will for us is ~~what we've always desired but couldn't articulate~~
 160 before. The ability to live with dignity, to love ourselves and others, to laugh, and
 161 to find great joy and beauty in our surroundings is what we were looking for all
 162 along. These priceless gifts are no longer beyond our reach. They are, in fact,
 163 the very essence of God's will for us.

see
rewrite

164 Our most heartfelt longings and dreams for our lives are coming true. In our
 165 gratitude, we go beyond merely asking for the power to live up to God's plan for
 166 our own lives and begin to seek out ways to be of service, to make a difference in
 167 the life of another addict, to carry the message of recovery. Our spiritual
 168 awakening has reached a pinnacle of spiritual contentment, unconditional love,

169 and personal freedom. Knowing that we can only keep this precious gift by
170 sharing it with others, we go on to Step Twelve.

171

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STEP ELEVEN

*"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."*

Throughout our recovery, one of the things which stands out as a result of our working the steps is our success at building a relationship with the God of our understanding. Our initial efforts resulted in the decision we made in the Third Step. We continued by working the following steps, each one of which were designed to clear away whatever barriers might stand between our Higher Power and ourselves. As a result, we are now open to receive God's power, love, and guidance directly into our lives.

Many of us had trouble understanding the meaning of "praying for power" in the Eleventh Step. At first glance, this seemed to contradict the most basic aspect of our recovery program: our admission of powerlessness. But if we take another look at the First Step, we'll see that it says we are powerless over our addiction, not that ^{we} God won't give us the power to carry out God's will. We did begin at a point of powerlessness in the First Step; we were powerless over our addiction and incapable of carrying out God's will. ~~The internal strength we had, we'd given away in our all-consuming battle with our addiction.~~ This doesn't mean we gain power over our addiction in the Eleventh Step. In the Eleventh Step, we pray for a particular kind of power: the power to carry out God's will. ~~We still are, and always will be, powerless over our addiction.~~

The characteristics of our disease and the things we did in our active addiction separated us from ~~God~~. Our self-obsession made it difficult for most of us to even

H.P.

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26 believe in a Power greater than ourselves, much less achieve a conscious contact
 27 with that Power. We could see no purpose or meaning in our lives. Nothing
 28 could begin to fill the emptiness we felt. It seemed as though we shared no
 29 common bond with others at all. We felt alone in a vast universe, believing
 30 nothing existed beyond what our limited view allowed us to see.

31 However, once we begin to recover, we find our obsession with ourselves
 32 diminishing and our awareness of the presence of a Higher Power growing.
 33 We've begun to see that we aren't alone and never have been. Through working
 34 the previous steps, we have already achieved a conscious contact with the God
 35 of our understanding. Our separation and isolation has ended. In the Eleventh
 36 Step, we now seek to *improve* our conscious contact with God through prayer
 37 and meditation.

38 We no longer shy away from spiritual growth, because it has become so
 39 essential to maintaining the peace of mind we've found. Perhaps at the beginning
 40 of our recovery we worked the steps because we were in pain and afraid we
 41 would relapse if we didn't. But today we are motivated less by pain and fear,
 42 driven more by our longing for continued recovery.

43 This leaning toward recovery reveals that we've surrendered more completely.
 44 We've reached a state where we actually believe that God's will for us is better
 45 than our own. It has become second nature for us to ask ourselves what our
 46 Higher Power would have us do in our lives rather than attempting to manipulate
 47 situations so they happen according to our ideas of what's best. We no longer
 48 see God's will for us as something we have to *survive*. On the contrary, we strive
 49 to align our will with God's, believing that we'll gain more happiness and peace of

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50 mind by doing so. This is what surrender is: a heartfelt belief in our own fallibility
51 as human beings and an equally heartfelt decision to rely on a Power greater than
52 our own. Surrender, the stumbling block of our addiction, has become the
53 cornerstone of our recovery. V.G.

54 However, we cannot recover on surrender alone. We must build on our
55 surrender by taking action, just as we have in the previous steps. In the Tenth
56 Step, we began to practice the discipline required to live spiritually on a daily
57 basis. We continue practicing this principle in the Eleventh Step by persisting in
58 our efforts to take action each day. We place prayer and meditation high on our
59 priority list. We resolve to make prayer and meditation as much a part of our daily
60 routine as eating and sleeping, and then we employ the necessary self-discipline
61 to achieve our resolve.

62 To work this step, we must also increase the courage we've developed in the
63 previous steps. Though the courage we demonstrated when we honestly and
64 thoroughly examined ourselves was beyond anything we had previously
65 experienced, we now need to develop a markedly different form of courage: the
66 courage to live according to spiritual principles, even when we are afraid of the
67 results. Despite our fear, we do what's necessary and draw on the endless well of
68 courage we can find by tapping into a Power greater than ourselves.

69 With all this discussion of God, we may again find ourselves growing
70 uncomfortable, perhaps wondering if this is where the "religious catch" we've
71 anticipated is going to be revealed. We may wonder if our sponsor is now going
72 to inform us that we must pray or meditate in a particular way. Before we get
73 carried away with such fears, we would do well to remember one of the basic

tenets of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous: our absolute and unconditional freedom to believe in any Higher Power we choose and, of course, our right to communicate with our Higher Power in whatever way conforms to our individual beliefs. Although ^{some of us prefer a trad.} many of us practice a traditional religion--and many do not--only rarely do we hear specific religious beliefs discussed in our meetings. Our members respect the rights of other members to form their own spiritual beliefs and tend to frown on anything with the potential to dilute the spiritual, not religious, message of recovery.

In this encouraging atmosphere, most of us find it relatively easy to discard our preconceived ideas of the "right" way to pray or meditate. Finding our own way is another matter. We may have only a basic understanding of what prayer and meditation are, prayer being the times we talk to God and meditation the times we listen. We may not be aware of the many options that are open to us.

Searching those options out and exploring their usefulness to us can be ^{taking action} difficult and time-consuming; however, it is only by being open-minded that we are likely to find what is right for us as individuals. We may experiment with a whole assortment of practices until we find something that doesn't feel foreign or contrived. ^{If we find} However, some of us have found that ^{often} everything feels strange, and that we must stick with a particular form of prayer and meditation until it no longer seems unnatural. Many of us have adopted an eclectic approach, borrowing our practices from a variety of sources and combining those which provide us the greatest comfort and enlightenment. ^{what}

^{one on} We choose a spiritual path which will lead us to a God of our own understanding. Many of us have remarked on the great joy we find along the

98 way. We are sure to get help from our fellow members, or perhaps even from
 99 others who are also walking a spiritual path. Seeking out these individuals and
 100 asking for their guidance can help us find our own answers; ~~however,~~ sharing in
 101 another's experience does not excuse us from the need to seek our own. Others
 102 may be able to show us the path they walked, sharing with us the joy and insight
 103 they found along the way; ~~however,~~ ^{never the less} we may find our spiritual paths taking a
 104 different turn and have to adjust our method of travel accordingly. In the end, we
 105 find what's true for us in moments of personal contact with our Higher Power.
 106 The experience shared by others is just that: *experience*, not ultimate answers to
 107 the mysteries of life.

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108 Our understanding of God grows and changes through prayer and meditation.
 109 We find that it is confining to pigeonhole God or come up with a definition for that
 110 Power which nails down our understanding once and for all. An interesting
 111 parallel can be drawn if we remember the times we've thoughtlessly tossed other
 112 human beings into categories and forgotten about them. We deprived ourselves
 113 of an opportunity to know someone else on a deeper level. Treating our Higher
 114 Power as something to be defined absolutely will rob us on a grand scale, halting
 115 further spiritual growth the minute we arrive at a pat definition.

116 In addition to the open-mindedness so necessary to working the Eleventh
 117 Step, it is vital that we actively pursue knowledge of God's will for us and the
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 120 it seems we would be more open to acknowledging God's will when we're

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121 desperate, our routine requests for knowledge also have their subtle effect in our
122 lives.

123 We should remember that Step Eleven asks us to pray *only* for the
124 knowledge of God's will and the power to carry that out. Just as we opened our
125 minds and avoided restricting our understanding of our Higher Power, we avoid
126 placing limitations on what God's will for us can be. Though the temptation to
127 pray for a particular result in a relationship or monetary success may be great, we
128 must resist the urge to do so if we want to experience the rewards of the Eleventh
129 Step. This is not to say that we must sacrifice relationships and success if we
130 want to live according to God's will. Praying for specific solutions to specific
131 problems may not be the answer. As ideas come to us, it may seem as though
132 we've been provided with an answer to what's bothering us; we may even go to
133 great lengths to convince ourselves that our idea was divinely inspired.

* 134 For instance, at some time in our lives, we may feel unhappy but not know
135 exactly what is causing such unhappiness. We may suddenly get an idea that all
136 our problems are caused by our boring job and demanding boss. We, as
137 addicts, are subject to take such random thoughts and run with them, impulsively
138 quitting our sorely needed jobs rather than trying to renew the challenge and
139 fulfillment we used to derive from our occupation.

140 This scenario may seem extreme, but its point is that by praying only for
141 knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out, we can avoid our
142 former tendency to allow fleeting whims and superstition to dictate the course of
143 our lives. Knowledge of God's will usually comes not in a momentary blinding
144 flash, but in a firm belief in our own right to happiness and peace of mind.

145 We see that, regardless of the presence or absence of material success in our
146 lives, we can be content. We can be happy and fulfilled with or without money,
147 with or without a partner, with or without the approval of others. We've begun to
148 see that God's will for us is the ability to live with dignity, to love ourselves and
149 others, to laugh, and to find great joy and beauty in our surroundings. Our most
150 heartfelt longings and dreams for our lives are coming true. These priceless gifts
151 are no longer beyond our reach. They are, in fact, the very essence of God's will
152 for us.

153 In our gratitude, we go beyond merely asking for the power to live up to God's
154 plan for our own lives and begin to seek out ways to be of service, to make a
155 difference in the life of another addict, to carry the message of recovery. Our
156 spiritual awakening has opened us up to spiritual contentment, unconditional
157 love, and personal freedom. Knowing that we can only keep this precious gift by
158 sharing it with others, we go on to Step Twelve.

159

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STEP ELEVEN

*"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."*

Throughout our recovery, one of the things which stands out as a result of our working the steps is our success at building a relationship with the God of our understanding. Our initial efforts resulted in the decision we made in the Third Step. We continued by working the following steps, each one of which were designed to clear away whatever barriers might stand between our Higher Power and ourselves. As a result, we are now open to receive God's power, love, and guidance directly into our lives.

The characteristics of our disease and the things we did in our active addiction separated us from our Higher Power. Our self-obsession made it difficult for most of us even to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, much less achieve a conscious contact with that Power. We could see no purpose or meaning in our lives. Nothing could begin to fill the emptiness we felt. It seemed as though we shared no common bond with others at all. We felt alone in a vast universe, believing nothing existed beyond what our limited view allowed us to see.

However, once we begin to recover, we find our obsession with ourselves diminishing and our awareness of the presence of a Higher Power growing. We've begun to see that we aren't alone and never have been. Through working the previous steps, we have already achieved a conscious contact with the God of our understanding. Our separation and isolation has ended. In the Eleventh

Step, we now seek to *improve* our conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation.

Many of us had trouble understanding the meaning of "praying for power" in the Eleventh Step. At first glance, this seemed to contradict the most basic aspect of our recovery program: our admission of powerlessness. But if we take another look at the First Step, we'll see that it says we are powerless over our addiction, not that we won't be given the power to carry out God's will. We did begin at a point of powerlessness in the First Step; we were powerless over our addiction and incapable of carrying out God's will. This doesn't mean we gain power over our addiction in the Eleventh Step. In the Eleventh Step, we pray for a particular kind of power: the power to carry out God's will.

We no longer shy away from spiritual growth, because it has become so essential to maintaining the peace of mind we've found. Perhaps at the beginning of our recovery we worked the steps because we were in pain and afraid we would relapse if we didn't. But today we are motivated less by pain and fear, driven more by our longing for continued recovery.

This leaning toward recovery reveals that we've surrendered more completely. We've reached a state where we actually believe that God's will for us is better than our own. It has become second nature for us to ask ourselves what our Higher Power would have us do in our lives rather than attempting to manipulate situations so they happen according to our ideas of what's best. We no longer see God's will for us as something we have to *survive*. On the contrary, we strive to align our will with God's, believing that we'll gain more happiness and peace of mind by doing so. This is what surrender is: a heartfelt belief in our own fallibility

49 as human beings and an equally heartfelt decision to rely on a Power greater than
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91 seems unnatural. Many of us have adopted an eclectic approach, borrowing our
92 practices from a variety of sources and combining those which provide us the
93 greatest comfort and enlightenment.

94 We are on a spiritual path which will lead us to a God of our own
95 understanding. Many of us have remarked on the great joy we find along the
96 way. We are sure to get help from our fellow members, or perhaps even from

others who are also walking a spiritual path. Seeking out these individuals and asking for their guidance can help us find our own answers; however, sharing in another's experience does not excuse us from the need to seek our own. Others may be able to show us the path they walked, sharing with us the joy and insight they found along the way; nevertheless, we may find our spiritual paths taking a different turn and have to adjust our method of travel accordingly. In the end, we find what's true for us in moments of personal contact with our Higher Power. The experience shared by others is just that: *experience*, not ultimate answers to the mysteries of life.

Our understanding of God grows and changes through prayer and meditation. We find that it is too limiting to define God in such a way that our understanding is set in stone once and for all. An interesting parallel can be drawn if we remember the times we've thoughtlessly tossed other human beings into categories and forgotten about them. We deprived ourselves of an opportunity to know someone else on a deeper level. Treating our Higher Power as something to be defined absolutely will rob us on a grand scale, halting further spiritual growth the minute we arrive at a pat definition.

In addition to the open-mindedness so necessary to working the Eleventh Step, it is vital that we actively pursue knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry it out. This knowledge is what we are searching for when we pray, whether our prayers are desperate pleas or calm requests for guidance. Though it seems we would be more open to acknowledging God's will when we're desperate, our routine requests for knowledge also have a significant effect in our lives.

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 133 exactly what is causing such unhappiness. After spending a few minutes in
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 138 only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out, we can
 139 avoid our former tendency to allow fleeting whims and superstition to dictate the
 140 course of our lives. Knowledge of God's will does not usually come in a
 141 momentary blinding flash.

142 Practicing the Eleventh Step involves a daily discipline of prayer and
 143 meditation. This discipline reinforces our commitment to recovery, to living a new
 144 way of life, and to develop *my* further our relationship with our Higher Power. This

relationship reaches fruition through this daily practice, and we begin to glimpse the limitless freedom we can be afforded through God's love. We have found that following such a discipline also results in a firm belief in our own right to happiness and peace of mind.

We see that, regardless of the presence or absence of material success in our lives, we can be content. We can be happy and fulfilled with or without money, with or without a partner, with or without the approval of others. We've begun to see that God's will for us is the ability to live with dignity, to love ourselves and others, to laugh, and to find great joy and beauty in our surroundings. Our most heartfelt longings and dreams for our lives are coming true. These priceless gifts are no longer beyond our reach. They are, in fact, the very essence of God's will for us.

In our gratitude, we go beyond merely asking for the power to live up to God's plan for our own lives and begin to seek out ways to be of service, to make a difference in the life of another addict, to carry the message of recovery. Our spiritual awakening has opened us up to spiritual contentment, unconditional love, and personal freedom. Knowing that we can only keep this precious gift by sharing it with others, we go on to Step Twelve.

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like ending 12 Step section -
mixed feelings on review
of steps

STEP TWELVE

"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."

In a sense, Step Twelve encompasses *all* the steps. We must make use of what we've learned in the previous eleven as we carry the message, practice the principles of recovery in all our affairs. Individually and collectively, each step has contributed to the extraordinary transformation which we know as a spiritual awakening.

Our awakening has been progressive, beginning with a spark of awareness in the First Step. Before we admitted the truth about our addiction, our spirits were stifled by the darkness of denial. But when we surrendered, acknowledging that we couldn't arrest our addiction or hope for a better life on our own, a ray of light broke through the darkness, ~~stirring our spirits into consciousness~~.

Though each individual's experience of a spiritual awakening varies, some experiences are so common as to be almost universal. Humility is one of these common factors. We first began to experience humility when we opened our minds to the possibility that a Power greater than ourselves existed. For some of us, this experience was so astounding that we received an almost physical jolt from the knowledge that we weren't alone in our struggle for recovery. ~~(Having realized in the First Step that we could not arrest our addiction or live a life without its accompanying insanity,)~~ Step Two allowed us our first glimpse of hope. That hope had an immediate and powerful effect on our despairing spirit, providing us with a reason to go on.

25 Consequently, we had a decision to make: Would we allow ourselves the
 26 relief of being cared for by the God of our understanding? Faced with the
 27 alternative, still so fresh in our minds, a tremendous desire for change welled up
 28 inside us. This desire, though born in the pain of our addiction, prompted us to a
 29 deeper level of surrender. ^{In this} ~~In this~~ surrender, we gave up more. Not only did we
 30 admit that we couldn't control our addiction, we went on to recognize that our will
 31 and lives would be better left to the care of our Higher Power. We admitted that
 32 we had failed at managing our own lives. Paradoxically, in this admission we
 33 found our greatest strength. As we worked the Third Step, we began to
 34 understand that we could tap the limitless resource of our Higher Power for
 35 everything needed to heal our troubled spirits.

36 This included the courage we knew we would need to work the Fourth Step.
 37 Many of us dreaded the process of self-appraisal called for in Step Four. We
 38 thought that it entailed a dreary rehashing of our most painful memories. [She saw
 39 her own sudden birth of sensuousness, the ardent fullness, the promise of
 40 warmth, and she felt her lips parting in response to the reined-in desire she saw in
 41 his eyes. She brought her mouth down on him like a gift, with a steadily
 42 increasing pressure until she couldn't wait for the answering thrust she expected.]
 43 We found ourselves confused by the opposing voices of our disease and fellow
 44 NA members. Our disease, screaming at us not to do an inventory, contrasted
 45 sharply with the gentle assurances of our fellow NA members that we would find
 46 spiritual rewards in the process. Despite our confusion, we went forward,
 47 somehow believing in the experience of other recovering addicts. Once our
 48 inventory was completed, we no longer needed convincing. We had experienced

rewrite -
condense

49 for ourselves spiritual growth in the process. Our spirits were strengthened by
50 our emerging integrity. The shaping of values, so essential to our character, was
51 just one of the positive results we found in the Fourth Step.

52 At this point, we may have begun to see how each step prepared us spiritually
53 for the next one. Because of the spiritual principles we had begun to practice in
54 the previous steps, we found that we had the courage necessary to make our
55 admissions in Step Five. Unlike the admission we made in the First Step, which
56 was made in desperation, the admission we made in Step Five was voluntary.
57 Many of us saw this as evidence of a growing ability to make choices in our lives.
58 We chose, of our own accord, to stand before God and another human being and
59 admit our wrongs. This complete disclosure of our innermost selves, made
60 without reservation, resulted in a breakthrough in our ability to accept ourselves.
61 The acceptance of our sponsor and the unconditional love of our Higher Power
62 made it possible for us to judge ourselves less harshly. ~~Instead~~ we developed a
63 little more humility with the awareness of the exact nature of our wrongs. We
64 began to understand that humility and self-loathing are generally incompatible,
65 unlikely to exist in our spirits at the same time.

66 With our awareness of the exact nature of our wrongs--our character defects--
67 and the humility inherent in that awareness, our desire to change increased
68 dramatically. Though we may have experienced some trepidation about
69 surrendering our character defects, we overcame our fears by drawing on the
70 trust and faith we had developed in a loving God. Trust and faith, two important
71 elements of a spiritual awakening, made it possible for us to become entirely
72 ready to allow God to work in our lives.

73 Consciously asking God to help us was an important development in the
74 awakening of our spirits. That request was tangible evidence of how much we
75 had changed spiritually. We wouldn't have even asked such a thing unless we
76 truly believed that our Higher Power would help us. This was the point where
77 many of us began to sense just how powerful God is and just how powerful God's
78 love could be in our lives. Because we had asked for and been granted some
79 freedom from having to act on our shortcomings, we finally began to grasp what
80 the miracle of recovery offered us: unlimited freedom.

81 Carried along by the promise of continued freedom in our lives, we proceeded
82 to make ourselves aware of what we had done to others in our active addiction.
83 Again, we saw how the spiritual preparation of the previous steps made it possible
84 for us to withstand the pain and remorse of listing the people we harmed. Our
85 willingness to make amends to them all brought us further away from the grip of
86 self-obsession and into a wholly different perceptual realm. We saw beyond the
87 confines of our own lives and developed the ability to feel empathy for others.
88 Our search for recovery was no longer focused on what we could get out of it for
89 ourselves. We had enlarged our view of things; as a result, our efforts in recovery
90 began to be more generous.

91 ~~Actually~~ clearing away the wreckage of our past was ~~just as~~ necessary to our
92 awakening spirits as food and water are to our physical sustenance. If we can
93 imagine a channel between ourselves and God, envisioning the wreckage of our
94 past as barriers to the free flow of that channel, we can see why it was necessary
95 for us to clear away as much wreckage as possible. Once we had engaged in
96 this process, we could see how it contributed to our spiritual growth. Our humility

97 was enhanced by our newfound appreciation of others' feelings. Our self-esteem
98 grew along with our increased capacity to forgive both ourselves and others. We
99 were able to give of ourselves. Most of all, we gained freedom--freedom to live in
100 the present and to feel that we belonged in the world.

101 The discipline we practiced in the Tenth Step insured that we continued to
102 breathe new life into our awakening spirits. We practiced ongoing adherence to
103 our newfound values, thereby strengthening their importance in our lives. *good*
104 ~~principles became more important to us than material gain and we began letting~~
105 ~~go of things we had outgrown.~~ We saw that by making our spiritual development
106 the focus ~~of our lives,~~ other aspects of our lives would progress naturally, as they
107 were meant to all along.

108 Focusing our attention on our spiritual development brought us to the
109 Eleventh Step. We had become increasingly conscious, in the previous steps, of
110 a powerful presence operating in our lives: a Power that could restore our sanity
111 and remove our shortcomings. Through recognizing the love inherent in a Power
112 capable of doing such things for us, we were able to better understand the loving
113 nature of God. With such an awareness, is it any wonder that we began to seek
114 God's will for us and the power to carry it out? Our spiritual awakening reached a
115 high point in this step as we discovered the limitless spiritual freedom to be had.
116 ~~We found that no matter what was going on our lives, we were able to live with~~
117 ~~dignity and experience peace of mind.~~ The spiritual void we felt at the beginning
118 of our recovery had been filled with gratitude, unconditional love, and a desire to
119 be of service to God and others. Undeniably, we have experienced an awakening
120 of the spirit.

Continued

121 In order to sustain this awakening ~~and open ourselves to greater awakening,~~
 122 we have found it essential to express our gratitude and practice the principles of
 123 recovery in every area of our lives. However, this isn't something we do only to
 124 insure that our own recovery continues. Narcotics Anonymous is not a selfish
 125 program. In fact, the spirit of the Twelfth Step is grounded in the principle of
 126 selfless service. Upholding this principle in our efforts to carry the message is of
 127 the utmost importance, both to our own spiritual state and to those to whom we
 128 are trying to carry the message.

129 Now we must ask ourselves, just what *is* "the message" we are trying to carry?
 130 Is it that we never have to use drugs again? Is it that, by practicing the principles
 131 contained within the Twelve Steps, we have had a spiritual awakening? Is it that
 132 we are lifted from the dregs of society into a state of responsibility and
 133 productivity? Well, it's all of this and more. The message we carry is a message
 134 of hope that an addict, any addict, can recover from the disease of addiction.
 135 Whatever that means for each one of us is the message we carry to those
 136 seeking recovery.

137 The ways in which we carry the message are as varied as our members.
 138 There are, however, some basic guidelines that we, as a fellowship, have found to
 139 be helpful. First and foremost, we share our experience, strength, and hope.
 140 This means that we share our experience, not the theories we have heard from
 141 other sources. This also means that we share our *own* experience, not someone
 142 else's. It may be tempting to pass along something we have heard, but haven't
 143 experienced for ourselves. However, doing so usually results more in the passing
 144 along of half-baked ideas than the transmission of solid experience with recovery.

145 Simply drawing on our own experience when we share also keeps us away
146 from the dangerous practice of advice-giving. It is not our job to tell someone
147 seeking recovery where to work, who to live with, how to raise their children, or
148 anything else outside the realm of our experience with recovery. Someone we are
149 trying to help may have problems in these areas; we can help best not by
150 managing that person's life, but by sharing our own experience in those areas.

151 Developing a personal style for carrying the message rests on a single
152 requirement: we must be ourselves. We each have a special, one-of-a-kind
153 personality that is sure to be an attraction to many. Some of us have a sparkling
154 sense of humor which ^{may} ~~is sure to~~ reach someone in despair. Some of us are ^{MARY}
155 especially warm and compassionate, able to reach an addict who has rarely been
156 the recipient of kindness. Some of us have a remarkable talent for telling the
157 truth, in no uncertain terms, to an addict literally dying to hear it. Some of us are a
158 valuable asset on any service committee, while others do better working one-on-
159 one with a suffering addict. Whatever our own personality makeup, we can be
160 assured that when we honestly try to carry our own message, we will reach the
161 addict we are trying to help.

162 Yet there are limits to what we can do to help another addict. We cannot force
163 anyone to stop using. We cannot "give" someone the results of working the
164 steps, nor can we grow for them. We cannot magically remove someone's
165 loneliness or pain. ~~There is probably little we can say that will convince a~~
166 ~~frightened addict to give up the familiar misery of addiction in return for the scary~~
167 ~~uncertainty of recovery.~~ Not only are we powerless over our own addiction, we

168 are powerless over everyone else's. We can only carry the message; we cannot
169 determine who will receive it.

170 It is absolutely none of our business to decide who is ready to hear the
171 message of recovery and who is not. Many of us have formed such a judgment,
172 and have been sorely mistaken, about ^{an addict's} ~~a newcomer's~~ desire for recovery. Multiple
173 relapses do not necessarily signify a lack of interest in recovery, nor does the
174 "model newcomer" demonstrate, without a doubt, a certainty of "making it." On
175 the other hand, it is our business, and our privilege, to share the message of
176 recovery unconditionally.

177 The principle of unconditional love is expressed in our attitude. Anyone who
178 reaches out for help is entitled to our compassion, our attention, and our
179 unconditional acceptance. ^{Any addict regardless} A newcomer should be able to pour out his or her
180 pain in an atmosphere free of judgments, ^{even silent ones} ~~even silent ones~~. Most of us have found
181 that we are able to feel great empathy for those who suffer from our disease
182 precisely because it is *our* disease. Our empathy isn't abstract, nor is our
183 understanding. Instead, it is born in shared experience. We greet each other with
184 the recognition reserved for survivors of the same nearly fatal catastrophe. ~~We~~
185 ~~understand, in a unique way, how someone walking into their first meeting feels.~~
186 This shared experience, more than anything else, contributes to the atmosphere
187 of unconditional love in our meetings.

188 Helping others is perhaps the highest aspiration of the human heart, and
189 something we have been entrusted with as a result of God working in our lives.
190 We would do well to remember to ask our Higher Power to continue working
191 through us in our efforts to carry the message. Diligently practicing the principles

192 of recovery will insure that the ^{connection} ~~channel~~ between ourselves and our Higher Power
193 remains open and that our influence over others is firmly rooted in spirituality.

194 ~~In fact,~~ spirituality ~~itself~~ becomes a way of life for us as we live by the principles
195 of recovery. The example of a life lived according to these principles is potentially
196 the most powerful message we can carry. We don't need to wait until we're "on"
197 the Second Step to practice the principle of open-mindedness. Courage and
198 honesty have a place in our lives even when we aren't writing an inventory.
199 Humility is always a desirable state, whether we are asking God to remove our
200 shortcomings, conducting business with a co-worker, or ~~merely~~ talking to a
201 friend.

202 To practice the principles of recovery "in all our affairs" is what we strive for.
203 Both in and out of meetings, no matter who is involved, no matter how difficult it
204 may seem, we make the principles of recovery the guides by which we live. Only
205 through the practice of these principles in our daily life can we hope to achieve the
206 state of grace necessary to maintain our reprieve from the disease of addiction.
207 Though this may seem a lofty goal, we have found it attainable. Our gratitude for
208 the gift of recovery becomes the underlying force in all we do, motivating our most
209 altruistic intentions and weaving its way through our lives and the lives of those
210 around us.

211 Even in silence, the voice of our gratitude does not go unheard. It speaks
212 most clearly as we walk the path of recovery, selflessly giving to those we meet
213 along the way. We venture forth on our spiritual journey, our lives enriched, our
214 spirits filled with love, and our horizons ever-expanding. The quintessential spirit
215 that lies inside each one of us, the spark of life that was almost extinguished by

216 our disease, has been renewed through working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics
217 Anonymous. And it is on the path paved with ^{these}~~those~~ steps that our future journey
218 begins.

219

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222

STEP TWELVE

"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."

In a sense, Step Twelve encompasses *all* the steps. We must make use of what we've learned in the previous eleven as we carry the message and practice the principles of recovery in all our affairs. Individually and collectively, each step has contributed to the extraordinary transformation which we know as a spiritual awakening.

Our awakening has been progressive, beginning with a spark of awareness in the First Step. Before we admitted the truth about our addiction, ^{we knew} ~~our spirits knew~~ only the darkness of denial. But when we surrendered, acknowledging that we couldn't arrest our addiction or hope for a better life on our own, a ray of light broke through the darkness, beginning our spiritual awakening.

Though each individual's experience of a spiritual awakening varies, some experiences are so common as to be almost universal. Humility is one of these common factors. We first began to experience humility when we opened our minds to the possibility that a Power greater than ourselves existed. For some of us, this experience was so astounding that we received an almost physical jolt from the knowledge that we weren't alone in our struggle for recovery. Step Two allowed us our first glimpse of hope. That hope had an immediate and powerful effect on our despairing spirit, providing us with a reason to go on.

Our desire for something different prompted us to a deeper level of surrender. In the Third Step, we gave up more. Not only did we admit that we couldn't

25 control our addiction, we went on to recognize that our will and lives would be
26 better left to the care of our Higher Power. Paradoxically, in this admission we
27 found our greatest strength. As we worked the Third Step, we began to
28 understand that we could tap the limitless resource of our Higher Power for
29 everything needed to heal our ⁱⁿ ~~wounded~~ ^{spirits} ~~spirits~~.

30 This included the courage we knew we would need to work the Fourth Step.
31 Many of us dreaded the process of self-appraisal called for in Step Four, despite
32 the gentle assurances of our fellow NA members that we would find spiritual
33 rewards in the process. Though we were afraid, we went forward, somehow
34 believing in the experience of other recovering addicts. Once our inventory was
35 completed, we no longer needed convincing. In the process, we had
36 experienced spiritual growth for ourselves. Our spirits were strengthened by our
37 emerging integrity. The shaping of values, so essential to our character, was just
38 one of the positive results we found in the Fourth Step.

39 Unlike the admission we made in the First Step, which was made in
40 desperation, the admission we made in Step Five was voluntary. This complete
41 disclosure of our innermost selves, made without reservation, resulted in a
42 breakthrough in our ability to accept ourselves. The acceptance of our sponsor
43 and the unconditional love of our Higher Power made it possible for us to judge
44 ourselves less harshly. We developed a little more humility with the awareness of
45 the exact nature of our wrongs. We began to understand that humility and self-
46 loathing are generally incompatible, unlikely to exist ~~in our spirits~~ at the same time.

47 With our awareness of the exact nature of our wrongs--our character defects--
48 and the humility inherent in that awareness, our desire to change increased

49 dramatically. Though we may have experienced some trepidation about
50 surrendering our character defects, we overcame our fears by drawing on the
51 trust and faith we had developed in a loving God. Trust and faith, two important
52 elements of a spiritual awakening, made it possible for us to become entirely
53 ready to allow God to work in our lives.

54 Consciously asking God to help us was an important development in the
55 awakening of our spirits. That request was tangible evidence of how much we
56 had changed spiritually. ~~We wouldn't have even asked such a thing unless we~~
57 ~~truly believed that our Higher Power would help us.~~ This was the point where
58 many of us began to sense just how powerful God is and just how powerful God's
59 love could be in our lives. Because we had asked for and been granted some
60 freedom from having to act on our shortcomings, we finally began to grasp what
61 the miracle of recovery offered us: unlimited freedom.

62 Carried along by the promise of continued freedom in our lives, we proceeded
63 to make ourselves aware of what we had done to others in our active addiction.
64 Again, we saw how the spiritual preparation of the previous steps made it possible
65 for us to withstand the pain and remorse of listing the people we harmed. Our
66 willingness to make amends to them all brought us further away from the grip of
67 self-obsession. We saw beyond the confines of our own lives and developed the
68 ability to feel empathy for others. Our search for recovery was no longer focused
69 on what we could get out of it for ourselves. ~~We had enlarged our view of things;~~
70 ~~as a result, our efforts in recovery began to be more generous.~~

71 Once we had engaged in the process of making amends in the Ninth Step, we
72 could see how it contributed to our spiritual growth. Our humility was enhanced

73 by our newfound appreciation of others' feelings. Our self-esteem grew along
 74 with our increased capacity to forgive both ourselves and others. We were able
 75 to give of ourselves. Most of all, we gained freedom--freedom to live in the
 76 present and to feel that we belonged in the world.

77 The discipline we practiced in the Tenth Step insured that we continued to
 78 breathe new life into our awakening spirits. We practiced ongoing adherence to
 79 our newfound values, thereby strengthening their importance in our lives. We
 80 saw that by making our spiritual development our primary focus, other aspects of
 81 our lives would progress naturally, as they were meant to all along.

82 Focusing our attention on our spiritual development brought us to the
 83 Eleventh Step. We had already become increasingly conscious of a powerful
 84 presence operating in our lives: a Power that could restore our sanity and remove
 85 our shortcomings. Through recognizing the love inherent in a Power capable of
 86 doing such things for us, we were able to better understand the loving nature of
 87 God. With such an awareness, is it any wonder that we began to seek God's will
 88 for us and the power to carry it out? Our spiritual awakening reached a high point
 89 in this step as we discovered the limitless spiritual freedom to be had. The
 90 spiritual void we felt at the beginning of our recovery had been filled with gratitude,
 91 unconditional love, and a desire to be of service to God and others. Undeniably,
 92 we have experienced an ~~awakening of the spirit~~ *spiritual work*

93 In order to cultivate this awakening, we have found it essential to express our
 94 gratitude and practice the principles of recovery in every area of our lives.
 95 However, this isn't something we do only to insure that our own recovery
 96 continues. Narcotics Anonymous is not a selfish program. In fact, the spirit of the

*Maybe
 @ little
 too much
 "God"*

97 Twelfth Step is grounded in the principle of selfless service. Upholding this
98 principle in our efforts to carry the message is of the utmost importance, both to
99 our own spiritual state and to those to whom we are trying to carry the message. →

100 Now we must ask ourselves, just what *is* "the message" we are trying to carry? *rewrite*

101 Is it that we never have to use drugs again? Is it that, by practicing the principles
102 contained within the Twelve Steps, we have had a spiritual awakening? Is it that,
103 through recovery, we cease being likely candidates for jails, institutions, and an
104 early death? Well, it's all of this and more. The message we carry is a message
105 of hope that an addict, any addict, can recover from the disease of addiction.
106 Whatever that means for each one of us is the message we carry to those
107 seeking recovery. *good stuff*

108 The ways in which we carry the message are as varied as our members.
109 There are, however, some basic guidelines that we, as a fellowship, have found to
110 be helpful. First and foremost, we share our experience, strength, and hope.
111 This means that we share our experience, not the theories we have heard from
112 other sources. This also means that we share our *own* experience, not someone
113 else's. Simply drawing on our own experience as we carry the message also *rw*
114 keeps us away from the dangerous practice of advice-giving. It is not our job to
115 tell someone seeking recovery where to work, who to live with, how to raise their
116 children, or anything else outside the realm of our experience with recovery.
117 Someone we are trying to help may have problems in these areas; we can help
118 best not by managing that person's life, but by sharing our own experience in
119 those areas.

120 Developing a personal style for carrying the message rests on a single
121 requirement: we must be ourselves. We each have a special, one-of-a-kind
122 personality that is sure to be an attraction to many. Some of us have a sparkling
123 sense of humor which may reach someone in despair. Some of us are especially
124 warm and compassionate, able to reach an addict who has rarely been the
125 recipient of kindness. Some of us have a remarkable talent for telling the truth, in
126 no uncertain terms, to an addict literally dying to hear it. Some of us are a
127 valuable asset on any service committee, while others do better working one-on-
128 one with a suffering addict. Whatever our own personality makeup, we can be
129 assured that when we honestly try to carry our own message, we will reach the
130 addict we are trying to help.

131 Yet there are limits to what we can do to help another addict. We cannot force
132 anyone to stop using. We cannot "give" someone the results of working the
133 steps, nor can we grow for them. We cannot magically remove someone's
134 loneliness or pain. Not only are we powerless over our own addiction, we are
135 powerless over everyone else's. We can only carry the message; we cannot
136 determine who will receive it.

137 It is absolutely none of our business to decide who is ready to hear the
138 message of recovery and who is not. Many of us have formed such a judgment,
139 and have been sorely mistaken, about an addict's desire for recovery. Multiple
140 relapses do not necessarily signify a lack of interest in recovery, nor does the
141 "model newcomer" demonstrate, without a doubt, a certainty of "making it." On
142 the other hand, it is our business, and our privilege, to share the message of
143 recovery unconditionally.

144 The principle of unconditional love is expressed in our attitude. Anyone who
145 reaches out for help is entitled to our compassion, our attention, and our
146 unconditional acceptance. Any addict, regardless of clean time, should be able to
147 pour out his or her pain in an atmosphere free of judgments. Most of us have
148 found that we are able to feel great empathy for those who suffer from our
149 disease precisely because it is *our* disease. Our empathy isn't abstract, nor is our
150 understanding. Instead, it is born in shared experience. We greet each other with
151 the recognition reserved for survivors of the same nearly fatal catastrophe. This
152 shared experience, more than anything else, contributes to the atmosphere of
153 unconditional love in our meetings.

154 Helping others is perhaps the highest aspiration of the human heart, and
155 something we have been entrusted with as a result of God working in our lives.
156 We would do well to remember to ask our Higher Power to continue working
157 through us in our efforts to carry the message. Diligently practicing the principles
158 of recovery will insure that the connection between ourselves and our Higher
159 Power remains open and that our influence over others is firmly rooted in
160 spirituality.

161 Spirituality becomes a way of life for us as we live by the principles of recovery.
162 The example of a life lived according to these principles is potentially the most
163 powerful message we can carry. We don't need to wait until we're "on" the
164 Second Step to practice the principle of open-mindedness. Courage and honesty
165 have a place in our lives even when we aren't writing an inventory. Humility is
166 always a desirable state, whether we are asking God to remove our
167 shortcomings, conducting business with a co-worker, or talking to a friend.

To practice the principles of recovery "in all our affairs" is what we strive for. Both in and out of meetings, no matter who is involved, no matter how difficult it may seem, we make the principles of recovery the guides by which we live. Only through the practice of these principles in our daily life can we hope to achieve the state of grace necessary to maintain our reprieve from the disease of addiction. Though this may seem a lofty goal, we have found it attainable. Our gratitude for the gift of recovery becomes the underlying force in all we do, motivating our most altruistic intentions and weaving its way through our lives and the lives of those around us.

Even in silence, the voice of our gratitude does not go unheard. It speaks most clearly as we walk the path of recovery, selflessly giving to those we meet along the way. We venture forth on our spiritual journey, our lives enriched, our spirits filled with love, and our horizons ever-expanding. The quintessential spirit that lies inside each one of us, the spark of life that was almost extinguished by our disease, has been renewed through working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. And it is on the path paved with these steps that our future journey begins.

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STEP TWELVE

"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."

In a sense, Step Twelve encompasses *all* the steps. We must make use of what we've learned in the previous eleven as we carry the message and practice the principles of recovery in all our affairs. Individually and collectively, each step has contributed to the extraordinary transformation which we know as a spiritual awakening.

Many of us have wondered how this spiritual awakening comes about. Does it happen all at once or does it occur slowly, over a long period of time? While there may be great variances within our experience about this awakening of the spirit, we all agree that it results from working the steps.

Our awakening has been progressive, beginning with a spark of awareness in the First Step. Before we admitted the truth about our addiction, we knew only the darkness of denial. But when we surrendered, acknowledging that we couldn't arrest our addiction or hope for a better life on our own, a ray of light broke through the darkness, beginning our spiritual awakening.

Though each individual's experience of a spiritual awakening varies, some experiences are so common as to be almost universal. Humility is one of these common factors (*We may still want to find another word for this*). We first began to experience humility when we opened our minds to the possibility that a Power greater than ourselves existed. For some of us, this experience was so astounding that we received an almost physical jolt from the knowledge that we

25 weren't alone in our struggle for recovery. Step Two allowed us our first glimpse
26 of hope. That hope had an immediate and powerful effect on our despairing
27 spirit, providing us with a reason to go on.

28 Our desire for something different prompted us to a deeper level of surrender.
29 In the Third Step, we gave up more. Not only did we admit that we couldn't
30 control our addiction, we went on to recognize that our will and lives would be
31 better left to the care of our Higher Power. Paradoxically, in this admission we
32 found our greatest strength. As we worked the Third Step, we began to
33 understand that we could tap the limitless resource of our Higher Power for
34 everything needed to heal us spiritually.

35 This included the courage we knew we would need to work the Fourth Step.
36 Many of us dreaded the process of self-appraisal called for in Step Four, despite
37 the gentle assurances of our fellow NA members that we would find spiritual
38 rewards in the process. Though we were afraid, we went forward, somehow
39 believing in the experience of other recovering addicts. Once our inventory was
40 completed, we no longer needed convincing. In the process, we had
41 experienced spiritual growth for ourselves. Our spirits were strengthened by our
42 emerging integrity. The shaping of values, so essential to our character, was just
43 one of the positive results we found in the Fourth Step.

44 Unlike the admission we made in the First Step, which was made in
45 desperation, the admission we made in Step Five was voluntary. This complete
46 disclosure of our innermost selves, made without reservation, resulted in a
47 breakthrough in our ability to accept ourselves. ^{& trust others} The acceptance of our sponsor
48 and the unconditional love of our Higher Power made it possible for us to judge

49 ourselves less harshly. We developed a little more humility with the awareness of
50 the exact nature of our wrongs. We began to understand that humility and self-
51 loathing are generally incompatible, unlikely to exist at the same time.

52 With our awareness of the exact nature of our wrongs--our character defects--
53 and the humility inherent in that awareness, our desire to change increased
54 dramatically. Though we may have experienced some trepidation about
55 surrendering our character defects, we overcame our fears by drawing on the
56 trust and faith we had developed in a loving God. Trust and faith, two important
57 elements of a spiritual awakening, made it possible for us to become entirely
58 ready to allow God to work in our lives.

59 Consciously asking God to help us was an important development in the
60 awakening of our spirit. That request was tangible evidence of how much we had
61 changed spiritually. This was the point where many of us began to sense just
62 how powerful God is and just how powerful God's love could be in our lives.
63 Because we had asked for and been granted some freedom from having to act
64 on our shortcomings, we finally began to grasp what the miracle of recovery
65 offers us.

66 Carried along by the promise of continued freedom in our lives, we proceeded
67 to make ourselves aware of what we had done to others in our active addiction.
68 Again, we saw how the spiritual preparation of the previous steps made it possible
69 for us to withstand the pain and remorse of listing the people we harmed. Our
70 willingness to make amends to them all brought us further away from the grip of
71 self-obsession. Our search for recovery was no longer focused on what we could
72 get out of it for ourselves. We saw beyond the confines of our own lives and our

73 efforts in recovery began to be more generous. We developed the ability to feel
74 empathy for others.

75 Once we had engaged in the process of making amends in the Ninth Step, we
76 could see how it contributed to our spiritual growth. Our humility was enhanced
77 by our newfound appreciation of others' feelings. Our self-esteem grew along
78 with our increased capacity to forgive both ourselves and others. We were able
79 to give of ourselves. Most of all, we gained freedom--freedom to live in the
80 present and to feel that we belonged in the world.

81 The discipline we practiced in the Tenth Step insured that we continued to
82 breathe new life into our awakening spirits. We practiced ongoing adherence to
83 our newfound values, thereby strengthening their importance in our lives. We
84 saw that, by making our spiritual development our primary focus, other aspects of
85 our lives would progress naturally as they were meant to all along.

86 Focusing our attention on our spiritual development brought us to the
87 Eleventh Step. We had already become increasingly conscious of a powerful
88 presence operating in our lives: a Power that could restore our sanity and remove
89 our shortcomings. Through recognizing the love inherent in a Power capable of
90 doing such things for us, we were able to better understand the loving nature of
91 God. The spiritual void we felt at the beginning of our recovery had been filled
92 with gratitude, unconditional love, and a desire to be of service to God and others.
93 Undeniably, we have experienced a spiritual awakening.

94 In order to cultivate this awakening, we have found it essential to express our
95 gratitude and practice the principles of recovery in every area of our lives.
96 However, this isn't something we do only to insure that our own recovery

continues. Narcotics Anonymous is not a selfish program. In fact, the spirit of the Twelfth Step is grounded in the principle of selfless service. Upholding this principle in our efforts to carry the message is of the utmost importance, both to our own spiritual state and to those to whom we are trying to carry the message.

Step Twelve has a paradoxical aspect in that the more we help others, the more we help ourselves. For instance, if we find ourselves troubled and our faith wavering, there are very few actions that have such an immediate uplifting effect on ~~us~~ helping a newcomer will. One small act of generosity can work wonders; our self-absorption diminishes and we end up with a better perspective on what previously seemed like overwhelming problems. Every time we tell someone else that Narcotics Anonymous works, we reinforce our belief in the program.

Now we must ask ourselves, just what *is* "the message" we are trying to carry? Is it that we never have to use drugs again? Is it that, through recovery, we cease being likely candidates for jails, institutions, and an early death? Is it the hope that an addict, any addict, can recover from the disease of addiction? Well, it's all of this and more. The message we carry is that, by practicing the principles contained within the Twelve Steps, we have had a spiritual awakening. Whatever that means for each one of us is the message we carry to those seeking recovery.

The ways in which we carry the message are as varied as our members. There are, however, some basic guidelines that we, as a fellowship, have found to be helpful. First and foremost, we share our experience, strength, and hope. This means that we share our experience, not the theories we have heard from other sources. This also means that we share our *own* experience, not someone else's. It is not our job to tell someone seeking recovery where to work, who to

live with, how to raise their children, or anything else outside the realm of our experience with recovery. Someone we are trying to help may have problems in these areas; we can help best not by managing that person's life, but by sharing our own experience in those areas.

Developing a personal style for carrying the message rests on a ^{simple} single requirement: we must be ourselves. We each have a special, one-of-a-kind personality that is sure to be an attraction to many. Some of us have a sparkling sense of humor which may reach someone in despair. Some of us are especially warm and compassionate, able to reach an addict who has rarely been the recipient of kindness. Some of us have a remarkable talent for telling the truth, in no uncertain terms, to an addict literally dying to hear it. Some of us are a valuable asset on any service committee, while others do better working one-on-one with a suffering addict. Whatever our own personality makeup, we can be assured that when we honestly try to carry ^{the} ~~our own~~ message, we will reach the addict we are trying to help.

Yet there are limits to what we can do to help another addict. We cannot force anyone to stop using. We cannot "give" someone the results of working the steps nor can we grow for them. We cannot magically remove someone's loneliness or pain. Not only are we powerless over our own addiction, we are powerless over everyone else's. We can only carry the message; we cannot determine who will receive it.

It is absolutely none of our business to decide who is ready to hear the message of recovery and who is not. Many of us have formed such a judgment, and have been sorely mistaken, about an addict's desire for recovery. Multiple

145 relapses do not necessarily signify a lack of interest in recovery, nor does the
146 "model newcomer" demonstrate, without a doubt, a certainty of "making it." On
147 the other hand, it is our business, and our privilege, to share the message of
148 recovery unconditionally.

149 The principle of unconditional love is expressed in our attitude. Anyone who
150 reaches out for help is entitled to our compassion, our attention, and our
151 unconditional acceptance. Any addict, regardless of clean time, should be able to
152 pour out his or her pain in an atmosphere free of judgments. Most of us have
153 found that we are able to feel great empathy for those who suffer from our
154 disease precisely because it is *our* disease. Our empathy isn't abstract, nor is our
155 understanding. Instead, it is born in shared experience. We greet each other with
156 the recognition reserved for survivors of the same nearly fatal catastrophe. This
157 shared experience, more than anything else, contributes to the atmosphere of
158 unconditional love in our meetings.

159 Helping others is perhaps the highest aspiration of the human heart, and
160 something we have been entrusted with as a result of God working in our lives.
161 We would do well to remember to ask our Higher Power to continue working
162 through us in our efforts to carry the message. Diligently practicing the principles
163 of recovery will insure that the connection between ourselves and our Higher
164 Power remains open and that our service to others is firmly rooted in spirituality.

165 Spirituality becomes a way of life for us as we live by the principles of recovery.
166 The example of a life lived according to these principles is potentially the most
167 powerful message we can carry. We don't need to wait until we're "on" the
168 Second Step to practice the principle of open-mindedness. Courage and honesty

169 have a place in our lives even when we aren't writing an inventory. Humility is
170 always a desirable state, whether we are asking God to remove our
171 shortcomings, conducting business with a co-worker, or talking to a friend.

172 To practice the principles of recovery "in all our affairs" is what we strive for.
173 Both in and out of meetings, no matter who is involved, no matter how difficult it
174 may seem, we make the principles of recovery the guides by which we live. Only
175 through the practice of these principles in our daily life can we hope to achieve the
176 state of grace necessary to maintain our reprieve from the disease of addiction.
177 Though this may seem a lofty goal, we have found it attainable. Our gratitude for
178 the gift of recovery becomes the underlying force in all we do, motivating our most
179 altruistic intentions and weaving its way through our lives and the lives of those
180 around us.


181 Even in silence, the voice of our gratitude does not go unheard. It speaks
182 most clearly as we walk the path of recovery, selflessly giving to those we meet
183 along the way. We venture forth on our spiritual journey, our lives enriched, our
184 spirits filled with love, and our horizons ever-expanding. The quintessential spirit
185 that lies inside each one of us, the spark of life that was almost extinguished by
186 our disease, has been renewed through working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics
187 Anonymous. And it is on the path paved with these steps that our future journey
188 begins.

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