

✓ final approval draft

WSCC 1992

with final committee changes - no copy edit

STEP ONE

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

As addicts, we have each experienced the pain, loneliness, and despair of addiction. Before coming to NA, most of us tried everything we could think of to control our use of drugs. We tried switching drugs, thinking that we only had a problem with one particular drug. We tried limiting our drug use to certain times or places. We may have even vowed to stop using altogether at a certain point. We swore we would never ^{the} do things we watched other addicts do, then found ourselves doing those very things. Nothing we tried had any lasting effect. Our active addiction continued to progress, overpowering even our best intentions.

As members of Narcotics Anonymous, our experience is that addiction is a progressive disease. The progression may be rapid or slow, but it is always downhill.

As long as we are using drugs, our lives will steadily get worse. It would be impossible to precisely describe addiction in a way in which ^{a way that is agreeable to everyone.} everyone would agree.

However, the disease seems to affect us in the following general ways: Mentally, we become obsessed with thoughts of using. Physically, we develop a compulsion to continue using, regardless of the consequences. Spiritually, we become totally self-centered in the course of our addiction. Looking at addiction as a disease makes a ^{sense to alot of addicts.} lot of sense to addicts because, in our experience, addiction is progressive, incurable, and can be fatal unless arrested.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we deal with every aspect of our addiction, not just its most obvious symptom: our uncontrollable drug use. The aspects of our disease are

3 25 numerous. By practicing this program, we each discover the ways in which our
 26 addiction affects us personally. Regardless of the individual effects of addiction on
 27 our lives, all of us share some common characteristics. Through working the First
 28 Step we will address the obsession, the compulsion, the denial, and what many have
 29 termed a "spiritual void."

4 30 As we examine and acknowledge all these aspects of our disease, we start to
 31 understand our powerlessness. Many of us have had problems with the idea that, as
 32 addicts, we are obsessive and compulsive. The idea that these words applied to us
 33 may have made us cringe. However, obsession and compulsion are aspects of our
 34 disease. ^{powerlessness} We need to understand and acknowledge their presence in our lives if our
 35 admission of powerlessness is to be complete. Obsession, for us, is the never-ending
 36 stream of thoughts relating to using drugs, running out of drugs, getting more drugs,
 37 and so on. We simply can't get these thoughts out of our minds. As we continue in
 38 our recovery, we will see how the obsession of our addiction can manifest itself in
 39 many areas. In our experience, compulsion is the irrational impulse to continue *to*
 40 using drugs, no matter what happens as a result. We just can't stop. We address *unk*
 41 obsession and compulsion here as they relate to our drug use because, when we first
 42 come into the program, our drug addiction is how we identify with each other and
 43 the program.

44 Denial is the part of our disease that makes it difficult, if not impossible, for us
 45 to acknowledge reality. In our addiction, denial protected us from seeing the reality
 46 of what our lives had become. We often told ourselves that, given the right set of
 47 circumstances, we might still be able to bring our lives under control. Always skillful
 48 at defending our actions, we refused to accept responsibility for the damage done by

49 our addiction. We believed that if we tried long and hard enough, substituted one
 50 drug for another, switched friends, or changed our living arrangements or
 51 occupations, our lives would improve. These rationalizations repeatedly failed us,
 52 yet we continued to cling to them. We denied that we had a problem with drugs,
 53 regardless of all evidence to the contrary. We lied to ourselves, believing that we
 54 could use again successfully. We justified our actions, despite the wreckage around
 55 us resulting from our addiction.

desperate 56 The spiritual part of our disease, the part we may recognize only by a feeling of
 57 emptiness or loneliness when we first get clean, is perhaps one of the most difficult
 58 areas for us to deal with. Because this part of our disease affects us so profoundly
 59 and so personally, we may be overwhelmed when we think about applying a
 60 program of recovery to it. However, we need to keep in mind that recovery doesn't
 61 happen overnight for anyone. All we have to do in the First Step is make an
 62 admission. We admit the spiritual part of our disease simply by realizing that we are
 63 lacking something inside.

not lacking - don't see 64 *As we start to look at the effects of our disease, we*
 65 If we are lacking something inside ourselves, our lives are sure to be
 66 unmanageable. We see it in all the things that are wrong with our lives. [Again, our
 67 experiences are individual and vary widely from addict to addict. Some of us
 68 realized our lives had become unmanageable because we felt out of control
 69 emotionally, or began to feel guilty about our drug use. Some of us have lost
 70 everything, our homes, our families, our jobs, and our self-respect. Some of us never
 71 learned how to function as a human being at all. Some of us have spent time in jails
 and institutions. And some of us have come very close to death. Whatever our

16. 8
72 individual circumstances, our lives have been governed by obsessive, compulsive,
73 self-seeking behavior and the end result is unmanageability.

74 Many of us recall the moment of clarity when we came face to face with our
75 disease. All the lies, all the pretenses, all the rationalizations we had used to justify
76 where we stood as a result of our drug use stopped working. Who and what we were
77 became more clear. We could no longer avoid the truth. Alone, terrified of what
78 the future held for us, we found the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

16. 8
79 Perhaps we arrived in NA without ^{recognized} seeing the problems we had for what they
80 were. Because of our self-centeredness, we were often the last ones to realize that
81 we were addicts. Many of us were persuaded by friends or family to begin attending
82 NA meetings. Other members received even stronger encouragement from the
83 courts. No matter how it occurred, our longstanding illusions had to be shattered.
84 Honesty had to replace denial before we could face the truth of our addiction.

10
85 We have found that we cannot recover without an ability to be honest. Many of
86 us came to NA after spending years practicing dishonesty. However, we *can* learn to
87 be honest and we must begin to try. Learning to be honest is an ongoing process; we
88 are able to become progressively more honest as we work the steps and continue to
89 stay clean. In the First Step, we begin to practice the spiritual principle of honesty
90 by admitting the truth about our drug use. Then, we go on to admit the truth about
91 our lives. We face what *is*, not the way things could be or should be. It doesn't
92 matter where we come from or how good or bad we think we've had it; when we
93 finally turn to Narcotics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps, we begin to find relief.

11
94 As we begin working the First Step, it is important to ask ourselves some basic
95 personal questions: Can I control my use of drugs? Am I willing to stop using? Am

11 96 I willing to do whatever it takes to recover? Given a choice between finding a new
97 way of life in NA and continuing in our addiction, recovery begins to appeal to us.

98 We begin to let go of our reservations, those parts of ourselves we won't
99 surrender to the program. Reservations can be anything: a belief that because we
100 never had a problem with one particular drug, that we can still use it; placing a
101 condition on our recovery such as only staying clean as long as our expectations are
102 met; a belief that we can still be involved with the people associated with our
103 addiction; a belief that we can use again after a certain amount of time clean; a
104 conscious or unconscious decision to work only certain steps. The most important
105 thing for us to know about reservations is that, ^{by} having them, we are reserving a
106 place in our program for relapse. ^{and,} ^{Reserving}

107 We realize that we cannot begin to recover unless we stop using drugs. Total
108 abstinence from all drugs is the only way we can begin to treat our addiction. ^{Reverse}
109 However, abstinence is only the beginning. Recovery really ^{delete.} begins when we start to
110 apply the spiritual principles contained in the Twelve Steps of NA to all areas of our
111 lives.

112 Our only hope for recovery is a profound emotional and spiritual change. Our
113 experience shows that it is necessary for us to be willing to do anything it takes to
114 receive this precious gift of recovery. In recovery, we will be introduced to spiritual
115 principles such as the surrender, honesty, and acceptance required for the First Step.
116 If we faithfully practice these principles, they will transform our perceptions and the
117 way we live our lives.

118 When we first begin to practice these principles, they may seem very unnatural
119 to us. It may take a deliberate effort on our part to make the honest admission

15
120 called for in Step One. Even though we are admitting our addiction, we may still
121 wonder if this program will really work. Acceptance of our addiction is something
122 that goes beyond our conscious admission. When we accept our addiction, we gain
123 the hope of recovery. We begin to believe, on a deep level, that we, too, can
124 recover. We begin to let go of our doubts and truly come to terms with our disease.
125 We become open to change. We surrender.

16
126 As we work the First Step, we find that surrender is not what we thought it was.
127 In the past, we probably thought of surrender as something that only weak and
128 cowardly people did. We saw only two choices: either keep fighting to control our
129 using, or just cave in completely and let our lives fall to pieces. We felt we were in a
130 battle to control our using and that, if we surrendered, the drugs would win. In
131 recovery, we find that surrender involves letting go of our reservations about
132 recovery and being willing to try a different approach to living life. The process of
133 surrender is extremely personal for each one of us. Only we, as individuals, know
134 when we've done it. We stress the importance of surrender, for it is the very process
135 that enables us to recover. When we surrender, we know in our hearts that we've
136 had enough. We're tired of fighting. A relief comes over us as we finally realize
137 that the struggle is over.

17
138 No matter how hard we fought, we finally reached the point of surrender where
139 we realized that we couldn't stop using drugs on our own. We were able to admit
140 our powerlessness over our addiction. We gave up completely. Even though we
141 didn't know exactly what would happen, we gathered up our courage and admitted
142 our powerlessness. We gave up the illusion that we could control our using, thereby
143 opening the door to recovery.

18
144 Many of us begin the process of surrender when we identify ourselves at an NA
145 meeting with our name and the words, "I am an addict." Once we admit that we are
146 addicts and that we cannot stop using on our own, we are able to stay clean on a
147 daily basis with the help of other recovering addicts in Narcotics Anonymous. The
148 paradox of this admission is evident once we work the First Step. As long as we
149 think we can control our drug use, we are almost forced to continue. The minute we
150 admit we're powerless, we never have to use again. This reprieve from having to use
151 is the most profound gift we can receive, for it saves our lives.

19
152 Through our collective experience, we have found that we can accomplish
153 together what we cannot do alone. It is necessary for us to seek help from other
154 recovering addicts. As we attend meetings regularly, we can find great comfort in
155 the experiences of those traveling this path with us. Coming to NA has been
156 described by many members as "coming home." We find ourselves welcomed and
157 accepted by other recovering addicts. We finally find a place where we belong.

20
158 Though we are sure to be helped by the sharing we hear at meetings, we need to
159 find a sponsor to help us in our recovery. Beginning with the First Step, a sponsor
160 can share with us his or her own experience with the steps. Listening to our
161 sponsor's experience and applying it to our own lives is how we take advantage of
162 one of the most beautiful and practical aspects of recovery: the therapeutic value of
163 one addict helping another. We hear in our meetings that "I can't, but we can."
164 Actively working with a sponsor will give us some first-hand experience with this.
165 Through our developing relationship with our sponsor, we learn about the principle
166 of trust. By following the suggestions of our sponsor instead of only our own ideas,

we learn the principles of open-mindedness and willingness. Our sponsor will help us work the steps of recovery.

21 Talking honestly with our sponsor about our drug use and how it affected our lives will help us work the First Step thoroughly. We need always to remember where we came from and where our addiction took us. We have only a daily reprieve from our active addiction. Each day, we accept the fact that we cannot use drugs successfully. The process of recovery isn't easy. It takes great courage and perseverance to continue in recovery day after day. Part of the recovery process is to move forward in spite of whatever may stand in our way. Because long-lasting change in recovery happens slowly, we will turn to the First Step again and again.

22 Even long periods of abstinence do not guarantee us continued freedom from the pain and trouble that addiction can bring. The symptoms of our disease can always return. We may find that we are powerless in ways we never imagined. This is where we begin to understand how the things we tried so hard to control are, in reality, completely beyond our control. No matter how our disease displays itself, we must take its deadly nature into account. As we do, we develop a fuller awareness of the nature of our disease.

23 The disease of addiction can manifest itself in a variety of mental obsessions and compulsive actions that have nothing to do with drugs. We sometimes find ourselves obsessed and behaving compulsively over things we may never have had problems with until we stopped using drugs. We may once again try to fill the awful emptiness we sometimes feel with something outside ourselves. Any time we find ourselves using something to change the way we feel, we need to apply the principles of the First Step.

24
191 We are never immune from having our lives become unmanageable, even after
192 years of recovery. If problems pile up and our resources for coping with them
193 dwindle, we may feel out of control and in too much pain to do anything
194 constructive for ourselves. We feel overwhelmed by life, and that feeling seems to
195 make everything worse. When our lives seem to be falling apart, we reapply
196 ourselves to the basics of the NA program. We stay in close contact with our
197 sponsor, work the steps, and go to meetings. We surrender again, knowing that
198 victory lies in the admission of defeat.

25
199 The feeling of love and acceptance we find in the Fellowship of Narcotics
200 Anonymous allows us to begin to recover from our addiction. We learn a new way
201 to live. The emptiness from which we suffered is filled through working and living
202 the Twelve Steps. We learn that our addiction is being addressed in all its
203 complexity by this simple program. We have found a solution to our hopelessness.

26
204 There is a deeply spiritual nature to our program of recovery. The Twelve Steps
205 of Narcotics Anonymous will take us on a journey that will far exceed our
206 expectations. Working and living the steps will lead us to a spiritual awakening.
207 Step One is the beginning of this spiritual journey. To get started on this journey,
208 we must become willing to surrender to this program and its principles, for our
209 future hinges on our willingness to grow spiritually.

27
210 We are starting a new way of life, one that offers great joy and happiness.
211 However, recovery doesn't exempt us from pain. Living life on life's terms combines
212 moments of happiness with moments of sadness. Wonderful events are mixed with
213 painful ones. We will experience a full range of feelings about the events in our
214 lives.

28
215 By honestly looking at what we have become in our addiction, we recognize the
216 powerlessness and unmanageability of our lives. Moving beyond our reservations,
217 we accept our addiction, surrender, and experience the hope that recovery offers.
218 We realize that we can no longer go on as we have been. We are ready for a
219 change. We are willing to try another way. With our willingness, we move on to
220 Step Two.

221

222 q:\steps\approval\step1-a2.doc

✓ final approval. doc

1

STEP TWO

2

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

3

4

In the First Step, we accepted our addiction and saw just how hopeless our lives

5

had become. We've been forced to give up our illusions. Now, we need to build on

6

our hope and come to believe that something can help us in our efforts to change

7

and continue in our recovery. Our surrender in the First Step leaves us with a deep

8

need to believe that we can recover.

9

This surrender makes it possible for us to feel hope. By admitting our own

10

powerlessness, we open our minds to an entirely new idea: (The possibility that

11

something greater than ourselves might be powerful enough to relieve our obsession

12

to use drugs. It is quite likely that, before coming to NA, we never believed in any

13

power but our own willpower, and that had failed us. NA introduces us to a new

14

understanding. A Power greater than ourselves that can restore us to sanity. We

15

draw hope from this understanding, and begin to comprehend what it means to

16

believe that something can help us. We find additional hope by listening to other

17

recovering addicts. We can relate to where they've been and draw hope from who

18

they've become. We listen closely at meetings and become willing to apply what we

19

hear to our own lives. As we begin to believe that there is hope for us, we also begin

20

to trust the process of recovery.

21

Our Basic Text states, "There is one thing more than anything else that will

22

defeat us in our recovery; this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward

23

spiritual principles. [This doesn't mean we must be unfailingly honest, open-

24

minded, and willing. We just have to try as best we can to practice these principles.

addition
for white
book

use B
the mm
word
drugs?

white
book

25 As we first approach Step Two, we can practice the principle of honesty by
26 acknowledging and sharing what we do or don't believe about a Power greater than
27 ourselves. Developing our open-mindedness requires some effort, but we can
28 practice this principle by listening to other recovering addicts share how they came
29 to believe. For many of us, the willingness to try something new came about simply
30 because we were so tired of our old ways. It seemed to us that because our own
31 power wasn't sufficient to restore our sanity, perhaps something else could, if we let
32 it.

33 Many of us felt that insanity was too harsh a word to describe our condition.
34 However, if we take a realistic look at our active addiction, we'll see that we have
35 been anything *but* sane. For the most part, our perceptions were not based in
36 reality. We viewed the world around us as a hostile environment. Some of us
37 withdrew physically and had little, if any, contact with anyone. Some of us went
38 through the motions of life but allowed nothing to touch us emotionally. Either way,
39 we ended up feeling isolated. Despite evidence to the contrary, we felt that we were
40 in control. We ignored or didn't believe the truths that were staring us in the face.
41 We continued to do the same things and expected the results to be different. Worst
42 of all was the fact that we continued to use drugs, regardless of the negative
43 consequences we experienced. Despite the warning signs that our drug use was out
44 of control, we continued trying to justify it. All too often, the result was that we
45 could no longer face ourselves. When we take a realistic look at our lives, there can
46 be no doubt that we desperately need a restoration to sanity.

47 Regardless of our individual interpretation of the term "restoration," most of us
48 agree that, for us, it means changing to a point where addiction and its

49 accompanying insanity is not controlling our lives. Though being restored to sanity
 50 is a life-long process, and individually we experience it differently at varying stages
 51 of our recovery, we all can see these results right from the beginning of our
 52 recovery. Initially, being restored to sanity means that we no longer have to use
 53 drugs. We go to meetings rather than isolating. We call our sponsor rather than *rewrite*
 54 sitting alone with painful feelings. We carefully consider our sponsor's suggestions.
 55 We work the steps, a powerful demonstration of sanity. We begin to believe that a
 56 powerful force can restore us to sanity. At long last, we feel hope for ourselves.

57 "We came to believe" implies a process. For some, this process is simple, and it
 58 may bring immediate results. Many of us arrived in NA so completely defeated that
 59 we were willing to try anything. Seeking help from a Power greater than ourselves
 60 *may have been* was the best idea we had ever heard. However, the process of coming to believe can
 61 be difficult, even painful. Many of us have found that acting as if we believe is
 62 helpful. This does not mean we should be dishonest. Rather, it means that if we
 63 have doubts, we practice the program as if we believe we *can* be restored to sanity.

64 Belief in a Power greater than ourselves does not come easily to all of us.
 65 *noticed 2d however* However, we have found an open mind indispensable when we approach this step.
 66 If we look around us, we find many reasons to believe. Our belief may simply be
 67 that we *can* recover from a life of active addiction. The freedom from the obsession
 68 to use may be our first experience of a Power greater than ourselves at work in our
 69 lives. Perhaps for the first time in many years, our obsession with drugs no longer
 70 controls our every waking moment. Knowing that we don't have to use today is a
 71 powerful belief in and of itself.

72 We start to develop faith through the process of coming to believe. It starts with
 73 hope. For some of us, this may be only a faint spark at first, perhaps just the thought
 74 that maybe, if we try to work this program, our lives will get better. Our hope grows *turn to*
 75 *faith as our lives begin to improve* as we begin to expect our lives to improve and trust the process of recovery. For
 76 many of us, faith can be described as a belief in something intangible. After all, who
 77 can logically explain the sudden lifting of an obsession to use drugs, yet this has
 78 happened for many of us. With our hope for a different life and the beginnings of
 79 our faith that recovery is possible, we start the process of coming to believe in a
 80 Power greater than ourselves.

81 We come from various walks of life and experience, so it is natural that we bring
 82 with us differing concepts of spirituality. In NA, no one is forced to believe any set
 83 ideas. Each one of us can believe in anything in which we want to believe. This is a
 84 program of spirituality, not a religion. Individually, we cultivate our own beliefs
 85 about a Power greater than we are. No matter what we understand this Power to
 86 be, help is available to us all.

87 In the beginning, many of us turn to the group or the love we encounter in
 88 Narcotics Anonymous as our Higher Power. An NA group is a powerful example of
 89 a Power greater than ourselves at work. Often in desperation, we enter a room full
 90 of addicts who share their experience, strength, and hope with us. As we listen, we
 91 know with certainty that they have felt the hopelessness and remorse from which we,
 92 too, have suffered. We can see that these addicts we can identify with are staying
 93 clean.

94 *NOT* As we observe other addicts practicing a new way of life without the use of drugs,
 95 we may come to believe that we, too, can recover. Watching other addicts stay clean

is compelling proof of the existence of a Power greater than ourselves. We notice the acceptance that recovering addicts show each other. We watch as addicts celebrate lengths of clean time that we think will be impossible for us to attain. Perhaps someone hugs us and tells us to "keep coming back." Members give us their phone numbers. We feel the power of the group, and this helps us start to heal.

Many of us use spiritual principles as a power greater than ourselves. We come to believe that, by practicing these principles in our lives, we can be restored to sanity. This makes sense to us because we have tried many times to think ourselves into a better way of life. We usually had good intentions, but our day-to-day existence rarely measured up to those intentions. Trying it the other way, practicing a better way of life by living according to spiritual principles, will eventually have an effect on our thinking.

It is not necessary that we define for ourselves the entire concept of a Power greater than ourselves. Those of us with many years of recovery find that our understanding of a Higher Power changes over time. Our belief grows, as does our faith. We come to believe in a Power which can help us far more than we originally thought.

As we search for understanding of a Higher Power, we can talk with our sponsor and other recovering addicts. We may ask them what their idea of a Higher Power is and how they have arrived at it. This may open our minds to possibilities we hadn't considered before.

While it is useful to question others about their spiritual beliefs, we must remember that our understanding of a Power greater than ourselves is up to each individual. Others can help us. We may even adopt the ideas of someone else for a

120 while or just believe that they believe. Eventually, however, we need to come to
121 believe for ourselves. The need for our own sense of spirituality is too vital to our
122 recovery for us to neglect this highly personal process.

123 For us, part of the process of coming to believe is accepting the evidence we see.
124 Our addiction caused us to deny the truths we saw. But now in recovery, we can
125 believe what we see. At first, we open our minds and try something new, somehow
126 believing that what we try might work. After we've taken a few small steps toward
127 belief and trust and have ^{seen} gotten results, we become willing to take bigger steps. We
128 find that we are no longer acting as if we believe. Our belief is now reinforced with
129 our own personal experience, some of which is unexplainable. We sometimes
130 experience remarkable coincidences in our lives that have no rational explanation.
131 We don't need to explain or analyze these occurrences. We can simply accept that
132 they happen, and be grateful for them.

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

141 Our humility and open-mindedness make us teachable. We allow others to
142 share what has worked for them. This takes humility, for we must let ~~of~~ go of our
143 fears about how we may appear to others. Some of the strongest suggestions we

144 may receive from other addicts are to attend meetings, to ask for help, to pray, and
145 to work the steps. Our experience has shown us that belief in a Higher Power leads
146 us in the direction of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. People tend to live what
147 they believe, and our newfound belief calls on us to live the program. No matter
148 what we choose for our personal Higher Power, we've come to believe that NA
149 works. We live what we believe by continuing on our path of recovery and working
150 the Twelve Steps to the best of our ability.

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

162 During these times, relying on the Second Step provides us with hope and
163 reminds us that we are not alone. If things don't feel right, we take time to think
164 and seek suggestions from our sponsor. We trust that, with help from other
165 recovering addicts and a Power greater than ourselves, we can be restored to sanity
166 in all areas of our lives. We draw upon what we have learned from going to
167 meetings and following directions. We accept that life on life's terms may not

rewrite.

always be to our liking or, more importantly, to our understanding. Sometimes we accept that sanity means simply that we don't act on our first impulse. We begin to make choices that help us rather than harm us. What worked for us in the beginning remains applicable, no matter how many years we have been clean. Once again, we reapply ourselves to the basics of this program: going to meetings, reaching out for help, and working the steps. Although we may feel despair, there is hope; a Power greater than ourselves is always available to us.

Along with the hope we derive from working Step Two, we find that our way of thinking is undergoing a radical change. The whole world looks different. Where before we had no reason to hope, we now have every reason to expect a dramatic difference in our lives. By being open-minded, we've opened ourselves to new ideas. We've stepped away from the problem and toward a spiritual solution.

This solution is evidenced by our open-mindedness and our willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves. We must now go on to Step Three to develop a relationship with the God of our understanding.

Q:\steps\approval\step2-a2.doc

1

2

3

4

9

5

3

4

might wonder why we need to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding. Or we may wonder what will happen to us if we place ourselves in God's care. We may fear that we won't be happy with what our lives will be like after working this step.

When we trust that there is growth in taking action despite our fear or uncertainty, we are able to work Step Three. Even though we do not know how our lives will change as we work this step, we can learn to trust that our Higher Power will care for us better than we could. The Third Step is our commitment to our own emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.

What began in the Second Step as belief in a Higher Power can become a fuller relationship with the God of our understanding in Step Three. The decision that we make in this step, and the relationship that results, will revolutionize our existence.

No one among us has ever made this decision and then gone on to live in perfect harmony with God's will. We can easily lapse into old behavior; it takes determination, time, and courage to change. Because we're not perfect, we simply continue to reaffirm our decision on a regular basis and then do the very best we can to live by it. Complete and unconditional surrender of our will and our lives is an ideal we strive to fulfill. Although we don't become perfect, we do make a profound change in this step. We are making a serious effort to live differently than we have in the past. From now on, we are going to be practicing this decision, and the way we relate to the world around us can change radically as a result.

In working Step Three, we begin to learn how to stop struggling. We learn to let go and trust the God of our understanding. If we take time to think and seek direction before acting, we no longer have to run on our own self-centered will.

Turning our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power provides a solution to the problems created by a life based in self-will, resentment, and control.

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

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

Turning our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding is a tremendous decision. We may very well wonder exactly how we are supposed to put this decision into practice. Because our individual beliefs about a Power greater than ourselves vary, there is no uniform way to put our decision into action. However, we have found some ways that we all can use to find a personal understanding of the Third Step. One is to continue our efforts to develop a personal relationship with our ^{a God of our understanding} Higher Power. Another is to give up our efforts at controlling everything around us. We relax our grip ^{H.P.} on the burdens we've been carrying and turn them over to the care of a Power greater than ourselves. Yet another way we can practice our Third Step decision is to continue with our

recovery by working the remainder of the steps. Our sponsor will guide us in applying the spiritual principles of recovery, showing us how to shift our focus away from our own self-interest and toward a more spiritually centered life.

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

The search for a God of our own understanding is one of the most important efforts we will undertake in our recovery. We have complete personal choice and freedom in how we understand our Higher Power. We can each find a Higher Power that does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Because we are powerless over our addiction, we need a Power greater than ourselves to help us.

Just as our freedom to have a God of our own understanding is unlimited, so is our freedom to communicate with our Higher Power in whatever ways work for us. Anytime we communicate with our Higher Power, whether it's simply with our thoughts or aloud at the close of a meeting, we are praying. Most of us ask our Higher Power for direction on a daily basis.

Our relationship with our Higher Power grows stronger as we practice faith. In our experience, talking to a Power greater than ourselves works. When we are

97 having trouble in a particular area of our lives or when we feel unable to stay clean,
98 our Higher Power can help; we only need to ask. With our prayers, we ask a Power
99 greater than ourselves to care for us. Each time we take this action, we strengthen
100 our faith and our decision to rely on our Higher Power.

101 Step Three doesn't free us from having to take action, but it does liberate us
102 from excessive worry about the results. If we want something--a job, an education,
103 recovery--we have to make the effort to get it. Our Higher Power will take care of
104 our spiritual needs, but we need to participate in our own lives; we can't simply sit
105 back and expect God to do everything. We are responsible for our recovery.

106 Our lives are meant to be lived. No matter how sincere our efforts at "turning it
107 over," we will make mistakes, wander off course, and experience moments of doubt.
108 However, with each setback we are given a new opportunity to renew our
109 commitment to live by spiritual principles. Part of the process of surrendering to
110 God's will is to surrender to spiritual principles such as honesty, open-mindedness,
111 willingness, trust, and faith. We try to align our actions with what we believe our
112 Higher Power would want for us, and then we deal with life as it happens.

113 We may hesitate working Step Three in all areas of our lives, especially in
114 matters we want to control. Our experience has been that we tend to hold on to
115 certain areas. Perhaps we think, "I can control my finances just fine," or "My
116 relationship is working, why do I need to turn that over to the care of my Higher
117 Power?" Working Step Three only in certain areas of our lives short-circuits our
118 spiritual development. We have found that our recovery benefits when we practice
119 the principle of surrender, to the best of our ability, in *all* areas of our lives. We
120 strive to work this step thoroughly.

121 We begin to see positive results from the decision we have made. We begin to
 122 notice changes, perhaps not in circumstances, but in the way we *deal* with them in
 123 our lives. Because we have made the decision to allow spiritual principles to work
 124 in our lives, we may notice a sense of relief. We are being relieved of a burden
 125 we've carried far too long: the need to control everything and everyone. We begin
 126 to react differently to the situations and people around us. As we gain acceptance,
 127 we cease to struggle against life on life's terms. Striving to maintain and build on
 128 our surrender, we are better able to live and enjoy life in the moment.

129 For some of us, deciding to turn our will and lives over to the care of the God of
 130 our understanding is a process, not an event. However, in making that decision, we
 131 do make a commitment to practice this step in our lives. When we are tempted to
 132 manipulate a situation, we recall this decision and let go. When we catch ourselves
 133 attempting to exert control over someone or something, we stop and instead ask a
 134 loving God to help us work this step.

135 Relinquishing control is not easy, but we can do it with help. With guidance
 136 from our sponsor and daily practice, we are sure to find ourselves learning how to
 137 get our egos out of the way so our Higher Power can work in our lives. Each time
 138 we are fearful over a situation, we can turn to this step and find the means to walk
 139 through our fear without resorting to our old ways.

140 Recovery doesn't exempt us from having to live through painful situations. Life
 141 goes on and may not always be pleasant. At some point in our lives, we may have to
 142 mourn the death of a loved one or deal with the end of a relationship. When such
 143 things happen to us, we hurt, and no amount of spiritual awareness will take our
 144 pain away. We do find, however, that the caring presence of a loving Power greater

than ourselves will help us get through our pain. We may find that we are able to feel our Higher Power's presence in the group, in our friends, or in talking to our sponsor. By tapping into that Power, we begin to trust and rely on it. We can cease questioning why painful things happen and trust that walking through the difficult times in our lives can strengthen our recovery. We can grow in spite of our pain, or perhaps in response to it.

Recovery is a process of discovery. We learn about ourselves, and we learn how to cope with the world around us. When we are sincere in our desire to allow our Higher Power to care for us, we begin to gain a sense of serenity. We notice a gradual change in our thinking. Our attitudes and ideas become more positive. Our world is no longer as distorted by self-pity, denial, and resentment. We are beginning to replace those old attitudes with honesty, faith, and responsibility: as a result, we begin to see our world in a better light. Our lives are guided by our emerging integrity. Even though we make mistakes, we become more willing to take responsibility for our actions. We learn that we don't have to be perfect to live a spiritual life. When we work Step Three with an open mind and heart, we find the results are far beyond our expectations.

As we experience this new way of life, we begin to realize that recovery is a priceless gift. We learn to trust; as we do, we open the doors to intimacy and develop new relationships. Where once we focused only on not using, we now can appreciate the many things that make our lives so valuable. We savor the laughter and the joy we hear expressed so abundantly in our meetings. As recovery becomes more central in our lives and we internalize the principles embodied in the steps,

our view of the world changes profoundly. As our awareness grows, so does our appreciation and faith in our Higher Power.

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

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

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

Q:\steps\approval\step3-a2.doc

final approval draft

STEP FOUR

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

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

Why work the Fourth Step? After all, we've been able to stay clean so far. But some of us are still haunted by a driving obsession to use drugs. Others find that the feelings of discomfort are more subtle; a nagging feeling that something isn't quite right, a sense of impending doom, or feelings of fear and anger that have no apparent reason. Still others may think they're doing just fine without a Fourth Step. However, our experience as a fellowship has shown that, sooner or later, members who don't work this crucial step relapse.

For many of us, our motivation to work the Fourth Step is quite simple: We're working a program of recovery and we want to continue. Because our disease involves much more than our drug use, recovery involves more than simple abstinence from drugs. The solution to our problem is a profound change in our thinking and our behavior. We need to change how we perceive the world and alter what our role is in it. We need to change our attitude. Whether our motivation stems from a desire to move away from our addiction or to move toward recovery doesn't really matter.

24 The Fourth Step is a turning point in our journey of recovery. It is a time for
25 deep personal reflection. The confusion that we attempted to mask with self-
26 deception and drugs is about to diminish. We are about to embark on a search for
27 insight into ourselves, our feelings, our fears, our resentments, and the patterns of
28 behavior that make up our lives.

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

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

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

What is meant by a "searching and fearless moral inventory?" We take stock of our assets and liabilities. We try to get at the bottom of who we are, to expose the lies we have told ourselves about ourselves. For years, we became whoever we needed to be to survive our addiction. After living a lifetime of lies, we began to believe those lies. Although we did discover some valuable truths in the First Step, the Fourth Step further separates fantasy from reality. We can begin to stop being the person we have invented and find the freedom to be who we are.

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

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

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

Consistent action on our Fourth Step is important. We can't afford to delay work on our inventory. ^{add 84} If we have a tendency to procrastinate, it is a good idea to set aside a certain amount of time each day to work on our inventory. Such a routine establishes our inventory as a high priority in our lives. If we put our Fourth Step away once we have begun, we run the risk of never returning to it. Once we begin writing, we need to continue our inventory until we are done.

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

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

113 In our inventories, we assess the emotional effects of our addiction. Some of us
114 became so skilled at shutting down our feelings with drugs or other distractions, that
115 by the time we came to our first meeting, we had lost touch with our own emotions.
116 In recovery, we learn to identify what we are feeling. Naming our feelings is
117 important, for once we do so, we no longer need to be afraid of them. Rather than

begin to deal

118 panicking over how we feel, we can specifically say how we're feeling. This gets us
119 away from our limited way of identifying feelings: either "good" or "bad" with not
120 much in between.

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

130 We look at our relationships as well, especially the manner in which we related
131 to our families. We don't do this to place blame for our addiction on our families.
132 We keep in mind that we are writing an inventory of ourselves, not of others. We
133 write about how we felt about our families and the way we acted on our feelings. In
134 most cases, we'll find that patterns of behavior we established early in life are what
135 we've carried with us up to the present. Some of our patterns and choices have
136 served us well, while others have not. Through the inventory, we search for the
137 patterns we want to continue and those we want to change.

138 Writing about all of our relationships is very important, and we'll want to pay
139 particular attention to our friendships. If we gloss over examining our platonic
140 friendships in favor of focusing on romantic relationships, our inventories will be
141 incomplete. Many of us come to NA never having had a long-term friendship

because of conflicts within ourselves. Those conflicts were the real grounds for the arguments we started with our friends, and our ensuing refusal to work through the disagreement and continue the friendship. Some of us felt that we would end up getting hurt in any close friendship, so before that happened, we arranged the end of the friendship ourselves. We may have feared intimacy to such a degree that we never revealed anything about ourselves to our friends. We may have induced guilt in our friends to ensure their loyalty, or indulged in other forms of emotional blackmail. If our friends had others in their lives, we may have felt so jealous and insecure that we tried to remove the threat of their other friends. Our behavior ranged from taking our friends hostage to taking them for granted. We may find several instances where we sacrificed our friendships for romantic relationships.

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

We may find that our sexual beliefs and behavior have caused problems in our relationships. *We may have settled for sex when we really wanted love.* We may have used sex to get something we wanted or believed that by having sex, we could extract a commitment from an unwilling partner. We ask ourselves if our sexual behavior has been based in selfishness or in love. We may have used sex to fill the spiritual void we felt inside. Some of us felt that our sexual *shame* practices were out of the norm and were ashamed as a result. After years of

compulsively acting on our fears and misguided beliefs about sex, we want to be at peace with our own sexuality. This is a very uncomfortable topic for most of us. However, if we want something different than what we've had, it's necessary that we begin the process of change by writing about it.

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

To experience serenity, we must begin to alter the self-defeating patterns that have prevailed in our lives. The Fourth Step helps us identify those patterns. We begin to see how we have maneuvered through life, perhaps not consciously planning our own misery but making choices which resulted in our lives becoming unmanageable. Most of us have blamed various people for the prices we paid for our addiction. We didn't want to accept that our addiction had a negative impact that we alone were responsible for. Some of us committed crimes and then complained about the consequences. Some of us were irresponsible at work and then objected loudly when we were held accountable. We beat a hasty retreat whenever life caught up with us. Our inventories will help us identify our responsibility for our actions and find those circumstances where we tend to place

190 blame elsewhere. Our booklet, *Working Step Four in Narcotics Anonymous*, can
191 provide more avenues to explore.

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

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

212 In our inventories, we will need to be aware of our assets. With most of us being
213 unaccustomed to looking for our character strengths, we might have some trouble

with this task. But if we examine our behavior with an open mind, we're sure to find situations where we persevered in the face of adversity, or showed a concern for others, or even where our spirit triumphed over our addiction. We begin to uncover the pure and loving spirit that lies at the core of our being as we look for our character assets. We begin to define our values. We learn what we can do and, more importantly, what we can't do if we want to lead productive and fulfilling lives. What we did in our active addiction will not work for us in recovery. Step Four allows us to chart a new course for our lives.

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

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

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

242

243 Q:\steps\approval\step4-a2.doc

244

245

fund Am

✓

Back

ction. Following our Third Step decision

DRAFT MATERIAL--NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

with the action of the Fourth and Fifth Steps will lead to a closer relationship with our Higher Power.

Our understanding of the spiritual principles we have practiced in the first four steps will be enhanced by working the Fifth Step. We experience honesty by making an admission just as we did in Step One, but we experience it on a deeper level. The admission we are about to make to ourselves in Step Five is especially important. Not only do we open up and tell the truth about ourselves, we also hear this admission from our own lips, breaking the pattern of denial that has plagued us for so long. We find new levels of honesty, especially self-honesty, when we squarely face the results of our addiction and see the reality of our lives. The risks we take in this step increase our trust in God, and nourish the faith and hope we first experienced in Step Two. We take our willingness a step further, thereby renewing the decision we made in Step Three. We draw on the courage we acquired in Step Four and find that we are capable of demonstrating more courage than we ever dreamed possible. This bravery is demonstrated not by our lack of fear but by the action we take in spite of our fear. We set a time to share our inventory; then, we show up and share at the scheduled time.

Another action which requires courage is our admission to ourselves. We need to focus particular attention on this aspect of the Fifth Step or we may find the benefits we derive from this step are not as meaningful as they could have been. As our Basic Text states, "Step Five is not simply a reading of Step Four." We want to make sure we are acknowledging and accepting the exact nature of our wrongs. We can even formalize this admission to ourselves if we think it will help. However, the

manner in which we make this admission to ourselves is not as important as the action itself.

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

As we share our most personal feelings and our most carefully guarded secrets, we may experience anguish. However, many of us have looked up and seen unconditional love in the eyes of the person hearing our Fifth Step. The feelings of acceptance and belonging we experienced at that moment helped us to feel a part of the program.

The knowledge that we are about to face feelings we have long avoided may cause a rise in our anxiety level, but we go on, encouraged by our sponsor to trust in *the* God. *of our Lord* The first thing we must realize is that the Fifth Step is not a quick fix for a painful situation. If we work this step expecting our feelings to go away, we are expecting the steps to numb us the way drugs did. We review our first four steps and see that their purpose is to awaken our spirits, not deaden our feelings. We will need support and understanding to cope with our feelings. If we choose an understanding individual to make our admissions to, we will have all the support we need.

Although there is no requirement that the listener must be our sponsor, most of us choose to share our inventory with her or him. In this way, we are most likely to benefit from the full range of experience that another recovering addict has to

71 share. After all, who can better understand what we are attempting than those who
72 have done it for themselves? Addicts more experienced in recovery than we are will
73 already have dealt with the matters we are just beginning to face. Such people can
74 share with us their experience and the solutions they have found through working
75 this step. The bond we share with another member of Narcotics Anonymous will
76 strengthen our connection with the program and increase our sense of belonging.

77 The person who listens to our Fifth Step should be someone who understands
78 the process of recovery we are involved in and someone who is willing to help us
79 through it. We have found that an ideal listener will have enough compassion to
80 honor our feelings, enough integrity to respect our confidences, and enough insight
81 to help us keep the exact nature of our wrongs within our field of vision. Knowing
82 that we are sharing *our* inventory, he or she will help us to avoid getting sidetracked
83 by blaming others for the things we've written about in our Fourth Step.

84 Although we know we are going to derive meaningful benefits from working this
85 step, we may still need to take a moment to reaffirm our surrender and the decision
86 we made in the Third Step. We can ask a Power greater than ourselves for the
87 honesty, courage and willingness to work this step. To invite God into this process,
88 we may want to say a prayer. The prayer can be anything that reaffirms our
89 commitment to recovery. Praying with the person hearing our Fifth Step can be a
90 profoundly intimate experience.

91 Not only do we pray to ask for strength and courage, many of us also ask our
92 Higher Power to listen as we make our admission. Why is it so important that we
93 also make our admission to God? Because this is a spiritual program and our whole
94 purpose is to awaken spiritually. Our willingness to approach our Higher Power

95 openly with our past and who we are is central to our recovery. In the past, some of
96 us have felt that we weren't worthy of a relationship with God. Our secrets kept us
97 apart from God, and blocked our ability to feel any acceptance or love from that
98 Power. When we reveal something about ourselves, we draw closer to our Higher
99 Power and experience the unconditional love and acceptance which springs from
100 that Power. The feeling that the God of our understanding accepts us no matter
101 what we've done enhances our acceptance of ourselves. The positive relationship
102 we are building with our Higher Power carries over into our relationships with
103 others as well.

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

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

us. But those examples aren't the nature of our wrongs. The nature of these wrongs is the dishonesty and manipulation we were demonstrating each time we lied. If we look beyond the dishonesty and manipulation, we'll most likely find that we were afraid no one would like us if we told the truth.

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

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

142 After taking our Fifth Step, we may feel a little raw or emotionally vulnerable.
 143 We've taken a major step in the healing process of recovery. ^{This person} What we've done
 144 could easily be thought of as "surgery of the spirit." We've opened up old wounds.
 145 We've exposed our most carefully constructed lies for the deceptions they were, and
 146 we've told ourselves some painful truths. We've dropped our masks in the presence
 147 of another person.

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

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

Our relationships begin to change after this step, including the one we have with the God of our understanding. Throughout the process of the Fifth Step, we turned to that Power when we were fearful, and we received the courage we needed to complete the step. Our belief and our faith grew as a result. Because of this, we're willing to put more of ourselves into building a relationship with God. Just like any other relationship, the one we develop with our Higher Power calls for openness and trust on our part. When we share our most personal thoughts and feelings with our Higher Power, letting down our walls and admitting we are less than perfect, intimacy develops. We develop a certainty that our Higher Power is always with us and that we are being cared for.

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

Q:\steps\approval\step5-a2.doc

final approval draft

STEP SIX

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

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

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

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

Plus

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

25 have exhausted our attempts to change on our own willpower. This process is
26 difficult and often painful.

27 Our growing awareness of our defects often causes us pain. We've all heard the
28 expression "ignorance is bliss," but we are no longer ignorant of our character
29 defects, and this awareness hurts. All of a sudden, we'll notice a wounded look in
30 the eyes of a friend after we've acted on one of our less endearing traits. We'll hang
31 our heads in shame, mumble an apology, and probably beat ourselves inwardly for
32 being so callous one more time. We feel sick inside, knowing how our actions
33 adversely affect the people in our lives. We are sick and tired of being the people
34 we have been, but this feeling compels us to change and grow. We want to be
35 different than we have been in the past, and the good news is that we already are.
36 Being able to see beyond our own interests and being concerned about the feelings
37 of others are striking changes, considering that our raging self-obsession is at the
38 core of our disease.

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

46 When we are confronted with our character defects, either by our own insight or
47 by someone we hurt, we begin by taking complete responsibility for our actions. We
48 don't avoid responsibility by saying something like, "Well, God hasn't removed that

49 defect yet" or "I'm powerless over my defects and that's just the way I'm going to be."
 50 We accept responsibility for our behavior--good, bad, or indifferent. We no longer
 51 have our drug use or our ignorance as an excuse to be irresponsible.

52 When we honestly admit our wrongs, we find humility. The humility we
 53 experienced in Step Five grows as we again sense our humanness and realize that
 54 we are never going to be perfect. We accept ourselves a little bit more, we
 55 surrender, and our willingness to change increases dramatically. We have already
 56 experienced remarkable changes in our emotional and spiritual nature through our
 57 continuous efforts to live by the principles contained in the previous steps. Despite
 58 our lack of familiarity with the realm of the spirit, we must remember that, in Steps
 59 One through Three, we were given the basic tools we need to negotiate the path of
 60 recovery. We carry within us the honesty it took to make our initial surrender, the
 61 faith and hope we developed in coming to believe in a Power greater than ourselves,
 62 and the trust and willingness required from us when we made our decision to turn
 63 our will and lives over to the care of God. Our hearts were touched by the humility
 64 of believing in that Power.

65 On this spiritual foundation we lay the principles of commitment and
 66 perseverance as we work the Sixth Step. We need the willingness to make a
 67 commitment to pursue our recovery despite the continued presence of character
 68 defects in our lives. We mustn't give up, even when we think no change has taken
 69 place. We are often blind to our own internal changes, but we can rest assured that
 70 what's happening inside us is evident on the outside to others. We trust that even
 71 though our vision may be blocked by the disease of addiction, God is hard at work
 72 on us. Our job is to keep on walking, even though it may feel as though each step

requires more strength than we can muster. No matter how difficult our progress, we must persevere. We can make use of the sheer grit and tenacity it took to maintain our active addiction by being steadfast and strong in our efforts to sustain our recovery.

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

Take a defect such as self-righteousness, for example, and imagine it in its normal, uninflated state--confident belief in one's own values. Strong, confident, and well-rounded people have formed values and principles to live by and believe deeply in their rightness. Such people live what they believe, and share those beliefs with others in a non-critical way when asked. Confidence in our beliefs is essential. Without it, we would be wishy-washy, unsure of our decisions, and probably somewhat immature in our dealings with the world. Confident belief becomes ugly self-righteousness when we insist that others live by our values. Attempting to enforce our insistence by manipulating or exploiting others makes this defect even uglier.

Or consider fear. The absence of fear in the face of a personal attack, catastrophic illness, or potential injury would signal insanity rather than serenity! We all have fears--of being alone, of not having our physical needs met, of dying, and many others. But when our fears become obsessively self-centered, when we

97 spend all of our time protecting ourselves from what *might* happen, we can no
 98 longer deal effectively with life in the here and now.

99 As we work Step Six, bridging the vast gulf that lies between fear and courage
 100 requires a great deal of willingness and trust on our part. Our fears of what we will
 101 be like without relying on the destructive behavior of our past must be overcome.

102 We will need to trust our Higher Power to do a good job on our character. We will
 103 need to believe that God knows best what we need. We must be willing to take a
 104 chance that what lies beyond the Sixth Step is going to be better than our current
 105 stock of fears, resentments, and spiritual anguish. When the pain of remaining the
 106 same becomes greater than our fear of change, we will surely let go.

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

114 As we write our list of defects and see how they have been at the root of our
 115 troubles, we need to be open-minded about how our lives would be without these
 116 defects. If one of our character defects is dishonesty, we can think about situations
 117 in our lives where we normally lie and imagine how it would feel to tell the truth for
 118 a change. If we put some effort into this exercise, we may feel a sense of relief at
 119 the possibility of a life free from having to cover small deceptions with major
 120 fabrications and all the complications inherent in dishonesty. Or, if we find defects

based in laziness and procrastination, we can visualize leaving behind our marginal existence and trading up to a life of realized ambitions, new horizons, and unlimited possibilities.

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

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

Part of the process of becoming entirely ready involves practicing constructive behavior. Because we now understand and recognize our destructive behaviors, we'll find the willingness to practice constructive behaviors instead. For instance, if we're hurt somehow, we don't have to curl up in a ball of self-pity, complaining about what a rotten deal we got. Instead, we can accept what is and work toward finding solutions. The more we do this, the more we form a habit of thinking constructively. It becomes natural to begin examining alternatives, setting goals,

145 and following through in the face of adversity. We don't have to spend time sulking
146 or pointlessly complaining about circumstances beyond our control. We may even
147 surprise ourselves with our cheer and optimism at times and it's no wonder,
148 considering how foreign such attitudes have been to most of us!

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

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

162 We will not, however, achieve a state of spiritual perfection, regardless of how
163 diligently we apply the Sixth Step to our lives. We will most likely see the defects we
164 deal with today manifest themselves in a variety of ways throughout our lifetime.
165 Even after years of recovery, we may feel devastated at the reappearance of some
166 old defect we thought had been removed. We are humbled by our imperfection--
167 but let there be no mistake, humility is the ideal state for an addict to be in.
168 Humility brings us back down to earth and plants our feet firmly on the spiritual

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

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

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

q:\steps\approval\step6-a2.doc

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 them removed 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~~ *further developing our relationship with a higher God of our understanding.* ~~experiencing God's love.~~ 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 is not the same as humiliation, 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 strengths and limitations and having faith in a Power greater than ourselves. 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 that loving Power to work in our lives, believing that God's wisdom far exceeds our own.

Even though we now possess some measure of humility, many of us may be somewhat confused by the word "humbly." We may have taken it for granted that God would remove our shortcomings immediately upon request. Those of us

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

We tried so hard to get it right. We were tired of our shortcomings. We were worn out from trying to manage and control them, and we wanted some relief. Oddly enough, this is precisely the attitude we hope to demonstrate in Step Seven, the attitude of humility. We admit defeat, recognize our limitations, and ask for help from a ^{God of our understanding} ~~Power greater than ourselves~~.

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

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

48 trust. Because our view of what we can hope for may be limited, many of us can't
49 even begin to imagine what our Higher Power has in store for us. If this is the
50 case for us, we must rely on ~~blind~~ faith. As in the previous steps, we simply have
51 to believe that God's will for us is good. Our faith gives us reason to hope for the
52 best.

53 In working this step, we move away from intellectualizing the recovery
54 process. Our concern is not to determine exactly how or when our shortcomings
55 will be removed. It's not our job to analyze this step. This step is a spiritual
56 choice, a choice that ^{goes beyond} ~~transcends~~ any emotional reaction or conscious act of will.
57 To choose to bypass it would leave us with only a heightened awareness of our
58 character defects and no hope for relief from those shortcomings. The resulting
59 pain might well be unbearable.

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

71 One of the changes we see is in our relationship with the God of our
72 understanding. Previously, we may have felt that God was far removed and did
73 not have much to do with us on a personal level. We may have had trouble
74 grasping the fact that each one of us could have a ^{H.P.} (loving God) always available to
75 us. Prayer may have felt artificial for quite a while, but we may now sense that we
76 are being listened to and loved when we pray.

77 Developing a relationship with the God of our understanding goes a long way
78 toward increasing our level of comfort when we ask to have our shortcomings
79 removed. The work we've done in the previous steps has furthered that
80 relationship. We've asked our Higher Power for honesty, open-mindedness, and
81 willingness and have been provided with the ability to develop those attributes that
82 are so vital to our recovery.

83 Each time we come up short in any of the qualities we are trying to attain or
84 when we have difficulty practicing spiritual principles, we turn to the God of our
85 understanding. In this step, we ask a loving God to remove our impatience, our
86 intolerance, our dishonesty, or whatever shortcoming is currently in the way. We
87 find that our Higher Power always provides us with what we need and our faith
88 grows as a result. When we ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings,
89 we may see little bits of them removed, they may simply be shoved out of the way
90 for a time so we can move forward on the path of recovery, or we may attain
91 complete freedom from having to act on those defects. The point is that we have
92 come to believe that only the God of our understanding has the power to remove
93 our shortcomings. We can actually ask our Higher Power to remove our

shortcomings in good faith, knowing that it will happen in God's time. This faith can transcend our own ideas of what we need and think we should have.

Regardless of how secure we feel in our relationship with the God of our understanding, we need to remember that our sponsor will guide us through working the Seventh Step. Just as he or she has guided us through the previous steps, our sponsor also helps us with our understanding of humility and in finding a way of communicating with our Higher Power that feels comfortable.

We need to remember that we are praying to a Power greater than ourselves. We ask humbly, knowing that, of ourselves, we are powerless. Some of us will recite a formal prayer that demonstrates humility when we ask our Higher Power to help us. Some of us will pray in a more casual manner, just as humbly but using ^{our own words} words that feel more natural and comfortable to us. Any communication with our Higher Power is prayer. However we choose to communicate with the God of our understanding, we feel a certain comfort come over us as we pray. We know that we are being taken care of.

With this knowledge comes freedom. Though not a cure by any means, working the Seventh Step gives us the freedom to choose. We know that if we live by the spiritual principles of recovery, we no longer need to wear ourselves out trying to arrange situations and outcomes. We trust the God of our understanding with our lives. 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. ^{Believing} Knowing that we are being cared for is a result of developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves. We are in the process of developing a conscious contact with a Higher

118 Power which we will strive to improve throughout our lives. We are conscious of
119 the God of our understanding and feel that Power's presence.

120 The process of the Seventh Step brings about a peace of mind that we never
121 dreamed possible. ~~We are now free to dream beyond our wildest imaginings.~~ We
122 sense that what is present throughout our search for spiritual growth is our ability
123 to feel our Higher Power's love for us. We glimpse a vision of complete freedom
124 from our shortcomings. It doesn't matter that we will not attain a state of
125 perfection or complete humility in our lifetime. The ability to contemplate this
126 grand vision and meditate upon it are rare and priceless gifts in their own right.

127 We are being changed. We've not only heard about the miracle of recovery,
128 we are becoming living, breathing examples of what the power of the NA program
129 can do. The spiritual life has ceased to be a theory we hear about in meetings--it
130 is now becoming a tangible reality. We can ^{see} witness a miracle simply by looking in
131 the mirror. The God of our understanding has taken us from spiritually
132 unconscious, hopeless addicts to spiritually aware, recovering addicts eager to
133 live. Although we've reached this point, the damage ^{caused by our} ~~we've done by living out our~~ our.
134 shortcomings needs to be addressed. Desiring continued recovery and freedom,
135 we go on to Step Eight and begin the process of repairing the path of destruction
136 we have left behind us. ^{make amends for the damage}
^{we caused for our addicts}

138 Q:\steps\approval\step7-a2.doc

139

140

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 our Higher Power 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. However, in order to gain true freedom from our defects, we need to accept responsibility for them. We need to do whatever we can to repair the harm we've done. In Step Eight we begin to rectify our wrongs. We begin to accept responsibility for our actions by listing all the people we have harmed and by becoming willing to make amends to them all.

While our efforts to make amends may make a difference in the lives of those we have harmed, this process has its greatest impact in our own lives. Our objective is to begin clearing away the damage we've done so that we can continue with our spiritual awakening. 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 past 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 are so deep that these

24 recollections can cause us to feel unbearable guilt. We want to be free of such
25 guilt. We begin by making a list of the people we've harmed.

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

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

46 Making the list and becoming willing may be difficult unless we overcome our
47 resentments. Most of us owe amends to at least one person who had also

48 harmed us. Perhaps we haven't truly forgiven that person yet and find we are
49 very reluctant to put his or her name on our list. However, we must. Why?
50 ~~Because~~ we are responsible for our actions. We make amends because we owe
51 them. We must let go of ^{resentments} ~~long-standing grudges~~ and focus on our part in the
52 conflicts in our lives. We won't get better and be able to live the spiritual life we
53 are seeking if we are still in the grip of self-obsession. We let go of our
54 expectations, and we let go of blaming anyone for our actions. Our idea that we
55 have been a victim must go. In the Eighth Step, we are not concerned with what
56 others have done to us. We are concerned only with accepting responsibility for
57 what we've done to others.

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

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

72 to the general welfare. Although we may find the majority of our amends list from
73 reviewing our Fourth Step, Step Eight isn't simply a restatement of our inventory.
74 We are now looking for the people, places, and institutions we harmed, not just
75 the types of harm we inflicted. We didn't just lie; we lied to *someone*. We didn't
76 just steal; we stole from various *people*.

77 The writing we did on our Fourth Step is not the only source of help we will be
78 given in compiling our amends list. Our sponsor can also help us. When we
79 shared our inventory, our sponsor helped us focus on the exact nature of our
80 wrongs. Our sponsor's insight helped us see how we had wounded people by
81 acting on our character defects, and will now help us determine who actually
82 belongs on our amends list. Many of us had trouble seeing how we had harmed
83 ourselves, and may have been surprised when other addicts suggested that we
84 add our own name to the list. Many of us have gone to extremes in matters of
85 accepting responsibility for ourselves. Some of us have had a tendency to deny
86 any responsibility, while others have taken on total blame for every disagreement.
87 Our flawed perceptions begin to fall away as we talk with ^{*our sponsor and*} other addicts, and we
88 find the clarity we need to ^{*will*} ~~take~~ the Eighth Step. With the help we have received,
89 we start to develop a realistic view of where our responsibility truly began and
90 ended.

91 Before we proceed in making a list, it is important that we understand what the
92 word "harm" means in the context of the Eighth Step. We may be inclined to think
93 of harm only in terms of physical suffering. However, there are many different
94 forms of harm: causing mental anguish, property damage or loss, inflicting long-
95 lasting emotional scars, betraying trust, and so forth. Though we may exclaim,

96 "but I never meant to hurt anyone!", this is beside the point. We are responsible
97 for the harm we caused no matter what our intentions were. Any time that people
98 were hurt, in any way, because of something we did, they were harmed. To gain
99 a better understanding of how we may have harmed people, we may want to "put
100 ourselves in their shoes." If we can imagine what it felt like to be the victim of our
101 reckless disregard for those around us, we shouldn't have any trouble adding
102 those names to our list.

103 In addition to understanding what harm means, we also need to understand
104 what "make amends" means. This step does not say that we become willing to
105 say we're sorry, although that may be a part of our amends. Most of the people
106 we've hurt have probably heard us say "I'm sorry" enough to last a lifetime. In
107 truth, we are becoming willing to do anything possible to repair the damage we've
108 done, particularly by changing our behavior.

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

117 Accepting the harm we caused, being truly sorry, and becoming willing to go
118 to any lengths to change is a painful process. But we need not fear our growing
119 pains, for our acknowledgment of these truths helps us continue our spiritual

120 awakening. Simply accepting the harm we caused increases our humility. Being
121 truly sorry is a clear indication that our self-centeredness has diminished, ~~and that~~
122 ~~we are availing ourselves of our Higher Power's love.~~ Willing to go to any lengths
123 to change, we are newly inspired.

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

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

137 We 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. Our commitment to recovery
142 includes becoming ready 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 brought about 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 from our past. Though we have yet to make peace with others, we've come a long way toward making peace with ourselves. With our new perspective, our trust in the God of our understanding, and our willingness, we go on to Step Nine.

Q:\steps\approval\step8-a2.doc

1

2

3

4

5

3

4

5

6

7

2

1

22

23

DRAFT MATERIAL--NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

24 We must be courageous when we work this step. Though the prospect of
25 making amends may frighten us, we turn to the God of our understanding for
26 strength. Our Higher Power is with us as we make each of our amends. We rely
27 on the presence of that Power, no matter how scared we are about approaching
28 the 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 motivation 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. To be certain our motives are based in spiritual

48 principles, we find it helpful to reaffirm our decision to turn our will over to the care
49 of the God of our understanding before making each of our amends. A Power
50 greater than ourselves will provide us with the guidance we need.

51 We should not expect a "pat on the back" or praise for living in accordance
52 with the principles of recovery. People may respond to our amends in many
53 different ways. They may or may not appreciate our amends. The relationships
54 we have with those people may get better, or they may not. We may be thanked,
55 or we may be told "It's about time you did this." We must let go of any
56 expectations we have on how our amends will turn out and leave the results to the
57 God of our understanding. It is very important that we do our absolute best to
58 make amends. Once we have done that, however, our part is finished. We can't
59 expect our amends to magically heal the hurt feelings of someone we have
60 harmed. We may humbly ask for forgiveness, but if we don't receive it we let that
61 expectation go, knowing we have done our best. As we are making amends, we
62 ask ourselves if we are doing this because we are truly sorry and have a genuine
63 desire to make reparations for what we've done. If we answer "yes" to this
64 question, we can be assured we are approaching our amends in the true spirit of
65 humility and love.

66 Handling difficult amends requires the assistance of our sponsor. Wherever
67 possible, we should ask for guidance on *all* of our amends, discussing each one
68 of them with our sponsor *before* we set out to make them. We tell our sponsor
69 what we are making amends for, what we are planning to say, and what we intend
70 to offer to set the situation right. What we intend to offer as amends should be
71 appropriate to the harm we caused. For instance, if we borrowed money from

72 someone and never paid it back, we don't merely apologize; we pay the money
73 back. We talk directly to the person we harmed and amend exactly what we did
74 wrong.

75 When we make amends to those we have held a resentment against ^{(in the}
76 past), an attitude of humility is imperative. We don't want to go to someone, intent
77 on making amends, and end up in a shouting match over who was injured more
78 severely. Even though we are sure to have amends to make to people who have
79 also harmed us, we must set our hurt feelings aside. Our responsibility is to make
80 amends for what we have done wrong, not to force others to admit how they have
81 wronged us.

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

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

96 loved ones. If we have neglected our families, we start spending time with them.
97 If we have been thoughtless, always forgetting birthdays and anniversaries, we
98 begin to be thoughtful instead, remembering those important events. If we have
99 been inconsiderate, always wrapped up in what we wanted and needed, we now
100 begin to be sensitive to the needs of others.

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

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

Approved

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

137 Choosing the best way to make amends requires careful consideration and
138 time spent searching our conscience for what is right. Some of us have to face
139 situations that can't be corrected. Our actions may have left permanent physical
140 or emotional scars,^{or} even caused someone's death. We must somehow learn to
141 live with such things. We live with indescribable remorse over acts such as these
142 and wonder what we could possibly do to make amends. This is where we have

no choice but to rely on our Higher Power. We may have difficulty in forgiving ourselves, but we can ask for the forgiveness of a loving God. We sit down, become quiet in the presence of our Higher Power, and ask for guidance in what we should do. Many of us have found answers in dedicating our lives to helping other addicts and other forms of service to humanity. There are no easy answers for problems like these; we simply do the very best we can, relying on our sponsor and the God of our understanding for guidance.

For many of us, the wreckage of our past includes such relatively minor things as outstanding arrest warrants for traffic violations, while others have committed crimes entailing very serious consequences. We may find ourselves in a dilemma 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. With the help of our sponsor and the God of our understanding, we are willing to do whatever it takes to maintain our recovery. We may also have to rely on legal advice before making such amends. Consulting a lawyer about these problems can be of great benefit.

Especially troublesome financial amends may also require professional advice. Many of us have amassed debts at an alarming rate. We may owe financial amends that are beyond our means to pay in the foreseeable future. Some of us may owe ~~medical~~ bills that amount to more than we can conceivably earn in the next several years. 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.

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; they are dependent on us for their food and shelter. 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 may 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 amends is a process rather than a "once and for all" occurrence. It takes great discipline, personal sacrifice, and commitment to continue to pay a bill for years and years, but we can regain our self-respect only by following through.

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

189 down and learn to communicate with our partners. We must become more
190 considerate, sensitive, and attentive to the needs of others.

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

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

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

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

*when
you
walk.*

213 truly different people. The extended nightmare of our addiction is finally beginning
214 to fade in the dawning light of our recovery.

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

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

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

237 horizon. We may stumble from time to time, but the Tenth Step gives us the
238 opportunity to pick ourselves up and keep walking forward. Our Higher Power
239 has given us an invitation to live, and we accept it with gratitude.

240

241 Q:\steps\approval\step9-a2.doc

242

1919. The year 1919 was a year of great activity for the American Medical Association. The Association held its annual meeting in New York City, and the results of the meeting were published in the Journal. The Association also published a special issue of the Journal, devoted to the subject of "The Medical Profession and the Public." This issue contained a number of articles, including one by the President of the Association, Dr. C. V. Starr, and another by Dr. J. H. T. Rogers, Secretary of the Association. The Association also published a number of other articles, including one by Dr. J. H. T. Rogers, Secretary of the Association, and another by Dr. J. H. T. Rogers, Secretary of the Association.

1919. The year 1919 was a year of great activity for the American Medical Association. The Association held its annual meeting in New York City, and the results of the meeting were published in the Journal. The Association also published a special issue of the Journal, devoted to the subject of "The Medical Profession and the Public." This issue contained a number of articles, including one by the President of the Association, Dr. C. V. Starr, and another by Dr. J. H. T. Rogers, Secretary of the Association. The Association also published a number of other articles, including one by Dr. J. H. T. Rogers, Secretary of the Association, and another by Dr. J. H. T. Rogers, Secretary of the Association.

1919. The year 1919 was a year of great activity for the American Medical Association. The Association held its annual meeting in New York City, and the results of the meeting were published in the Journal. The Association also published a special issue of the Journal, devoted to the subject of "The Medical Profession and the Public." This issue contained a number of articles, including one by the President of the Association, Dr. C. V. Starr, and another by Dr. J. H. T. Rogers, Secretary of the Association. The Association also published a number of other articles, including one by Dr. J. H. T. Rogers, Secretary of the Association, and another by Dr. J. H. T. Rogers, Secretary of the Association.

STEP TEN

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

Recovery in Narcotics Anonymous is about learning how to live. Incorporating the spiritual principles we learned in the first nine steps into our lives has made it possible to live in harmony with ourselves and others. Self-examination, confronting what we find in ourselves, and owning up to our wrongs are critical elements of conducting our lives on a spiritual basis. 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.

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 creating an awareness of what's going on in our lives today.

The importance of keeping in touch with our thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and behavior cannot be overemphasized. Every day, life presents us with new challenges. Our recovery depends on our willingness to meet those challenges. Our experience tells us that some members relapse, even after long periods of clean time, because they have become complacent in recovery, allowing their

25 resentments to build and refusing to acknowledge their wrongs. Little by little,
26 those small hurts, half-truths, and "justified" grudges turn into deep
27 disappointments, serious self-deceptions, and full-blown resentments. We can't
28 allow these threats to compromise our recovery. We have to deal with situations
29 such as these as soon as they arise.

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

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

44 Although forming a habit of working this step may be difficult at first, we must
45 persist. We can set aside some time during the day for focused self-appraisal
46 while gradually moving toward a goal of being able to look at ourselves
47 throughout the day. We keep going forward, striving each moment to become
48 ever more aware of ourselves. We need to develop self-discipline and the more

49 effort we put into doing so, the more we'll find that working the Tenth Step will
50 become as natural as breathing.

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

59 While we strive to maintain ongoing awareness throughout the day, it is also
60 helpful to sit down at the end of each day and quietly reflect on what has
61 happened and how we responded to it. Often, our sponsor will suggest that we
62 write out our Tenth Step. We may also make use of our informational pamphlet,
63 *Living the Program*. In this step, we ask ourselves the same types of questions
64 we asked in the Fourth Step; the only difference is that the emphasis is on *today*.
65 We look at our current behavior and ask ourselves if we are living by our
66 ~~newfound~~ values. Am I being honest today? Am I maintaining personal integrity
67 in my relations with others? Am I growing, or am I slipping back into old patterns?
68 We concentrate on the overall picture of our day.

69 In order to examine our day--or our life for that matter--in its entirety, we have
70 to draw on the humility we've acquired in the previous steps. We have learned
71 quite a bit about ourselves: how we've responded to life in the past, and how we

72 want to respond to life now. It takes a great deal of awareness to humbly
73 acknowledge our part in our own lives.

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

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

90 There may be other times in our lives when we find ourselves in a situation that
91 seems to require a compromise of our personal beliefs and values. For instance,
92 if we had gained employment at a company only to discover that our employer
93 expected us to indulge in questionable business practices, we could reasonably
94 expect to feel confused about the choices available to us. Deciding what to do
95 about such a difficult dilemma would be a tough decision for any one of us. We

96 may be tempted to make a snap judgment or expect our sponsor to provide an
97 easy answer; however, we have found that no one can solve such a dilemma for
98 us. While our sponsor will provide us with guidance, we must apply the principles
99 of the program for ourselves and arrive at our own decision. In the end, we are
100 the ones who must live with our conscience. In order to do so comfortably, we
101 must decide what is, and what is not, morally acceptable in our lives.

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

112 Once we're aware that we've been wrong--whether it's five minutes, five hours,
113 or five days after the fact--we need to admit our error as soon as possible and
114 correct any harm we've caused. As in the Ninth Step, we find that the process of
115 admitting our mistakes and changing our behavior brings about tremendous
116 freedom.

117 Of course, we must be just as careful when amending our current behavior as
118 we were when we made amends in the Ninth Step. For instance, if we find that we
119 were wrong because we sat in a meeting silently judging someone who shared,

120 we certainly don't need to go tell that person what we were thinking. Instead, we
121 can make an effort to be more tolerant.

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

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

139 We begin to see ourselves more realistically as a result of working the Tenth
140 Step. Many of us have remarked on the freedom we experienced through freely
141 admitting our mistakes and releasing ourselves from unrealistic expectations.
142 Where before we went from one extreme to another, either feeling better than
143 everyone else or feeling worthless, we now find the middle ground where true

144 self-worth can flourish. We feel renewed hope as we uncover long-neglected
145 assets in this step. We see ourselves as we really are, accepting our good
146 qualities along with our defects, knowing we can change with the help of a Higher
147 Power. We are becoming what we were meant to be all along: whole human
148 beings.

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

159 Healthier relationships are just one indication that the quality of our lives has
160 improved dramatically. Such indications merely reflect the intangible but very real
161 changes that have taken place inside us. Our entire outlook has changed.
162 Compared to the spiritual values we hold dear today, concerns such as "looking
163 good" or amassing material wealth pale in significance. By accepting the
164 challenge of self-appraisal called for in the Tenth Step, we've discovered that we
165 value our recovery and our relationship with the God of our understanding above
166 all else.

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

173

174

175 Q:\steps\approval\step10a2.doc

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 ⁱⁿ 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 our Higher Power's love and guidance directly into our lives.

For many of us, 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 to even 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

26 Step, we now seek to *improve* our conscious contact with the God of our
27 understanding through prayer and meditation.

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

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 the will of a Power greater
45 than ourselves is better for us than our own will. It has become second nature for
46 us to ask ourselves what our Higher Power would have us do in our lives rather
47 than attempting to manipulate situations so they happen according to our ideas of
48 what's best. We no longer see God's will for us as something we have to *endure*.
49 On the contrary, we make a conscious effort to align our will with our Higher

Power'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 as human beings and an equally heartfelt decision to rely on a Power greater than our own. Surrender, the stumbling block of our addiction, has become the cornerstone of our recovery.

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

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

With all this discussion of God, we may again find ourselves growing uncomfortable, perhaps wondering if this is where the "religious catch" we've anticipated is going to be revealed. We may wonder if our sponsor is now going to inform us that we must pray or meditate in a particular way. Before we get

74 carried away with such fears, we would do well to remember one of the basic
75 principles of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous: our absolute and unconditional
76 freedom to believe in any Higher Power we choose and, of course, our right to
77 communicate with our Higher Power in whatever way conforms to our individual
78 beliefs. Although some of us practice a traditional religion, only rarely do we hear
79 specific religious beliefs discussed in our meetings. We respect the rights of our
80 members to form their own spiritual beliefs and tend to frown on anything with the
81 potential to dilute the spiritual message of recovery.

82 In this encouraging atmosphere, most of us find it relatively easy to discard
83 our preconceived ideas of the "right" way to pray or meditate. Finding our own
84 way is another matter. We may have ~~only~~ a basic understanding of what prayer
85 and meditation are, prayer being the times we talk to a Higher Power and
86 meditation the times we listen for a Higher Power's answers. We may not be
87 aware of the many options that are open to us. Searching those options out and
88 exploring their usefulness to us can be uncomfortable and time-consuming. It is
89 only by being open-minded, and by taking action, that we are likely to find what is
90 right for us as individuals. We may experiment with a whole assortment of
91 practices until we find something that doesn't feel foreign or contrived. If we have
92 found that *everything* feels strange, then we ^{practice a form} ~~stick with a particular~~ form of prayer
93 and meditation until it no longer seems unnatural. Many of us have adopted an
94 eclectic approach, borrowing our practices from a variety of sources and
95 combining those which provide us the greatest comfort and enlightenment.

96 We are on a spiritual path which will lead us to a greater understanding of our
97 Higher Power. Many of us have remarked on the great joy we find along the 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 a Higher Power grows and changes through prayer and meditation. We find that it is too limiting to define our Higher Power 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 ~~forgot about them~~ ^{left them there}. We deprived ourselves of an opportunity to know someone else on a deeper level. Treating our Higher Power as something to be defined will rob us on a grand scale, halting further spiritual growth the minute we arrive at an absolute 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. Regardless of our state of mind when asking for guidance, we can be sure that

121 our consistent efforts to seek knowledge of our Higher Power's will, will be
 122 rewarded.

123 We should remember that Step Eleven asks us to pray *only* for the knowledge
 124 of God's will and the power to carry that out. Just as we opened our minds and
 125 avoided restricting our understanding of our Higher Power, we avoid placing
 126 limitations on what God's will for us can be. Though the temptation to pray for a
 127 particular result ~~in a relationship or for monetary success~~ may be great, we must
 128 resist the urge to do so if we want to experience the rewards of the Eleventh Step.

129 ~~This is not to say that we must sacrifice relationships and success if we want to~~
 130 ~~live according to God's will.~~ Praying for specific solutions to specific problems
 131 ~~may not be the answer.~~ As ideas come to us, it may seem as though we've been
 132 ~~provided with an answer to what's bothering us;~~ we may even go to great lengths
 133 ~~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. After spending a few minutes in
 136 prayer, seeking a ^{specific} solution to our unhappiness, we may suddenly get an idea that
 137 all our problems are caused by our boring job and demanding boss. We, as
 138 addicts, are subject to take such random thoughts and run with them, impulsively
 139 quitting our jobs. This scenario may seem extreme, ~~but~~ its point is that by praying
 140 only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out, we can
 141 avoid our former tendency to allow fleeting whims and superstition to dictate the
 142 course of our lives. Knowledge of our Higher Power's will does not usually come
 143 in a momentary blinding flash, but in a gradual awakening brought about by
 144 continued practice of prayer and meditation.

145 Practicing the Eleventh Step involves a daily discipline of prayer and
146 meditation. This discipline reinforces our commitment to recovery, to living a new
147 way of life, and to developing further our relationship with our Higher Power.
148 Through this daily practice, we begin to glimpse the limitless freedom we can be
149 afforded through God's love. We have found that following such a discipline also
150 results in a firm belief in our own right to happiness and peace of mind.

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

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

165
166
167 Q:\steps\approval\step11a2.doc
168

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 variations 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 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

25 allowed us our first glimpse of hope. That hope had an immediate and powerful
26 effect on our despairing spirit, providing us with a reason to go on.

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

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

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

49 humility with the awareness of the exact nature of our wrongs. We began to
50 understand that humility and self-loathing are generally incompatible, ~~unlikely to~~ ^{and can't}
51 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 as we worked Step Six. Though we may have experienced some
55 apprehension about surrendering our character defects, we overcame our fears
56 by drawing on the trust and faith we had developed in a loving God. Trust and
57 faith, two important elements of a spiritual awakening, made it possible for us to
58 become entirely ready to allow a Power greater than ourselves to work in our
59 lives.

60 Consciously asking the God of our understanding to help us in Step Seven
61 was an important development in the awakening of our spirit. That request was
62 tangible evidence of how much we had changed spiritually. This was the point
63 where many of us began to sense the enormous difference that our Higher Power
64 could make in our lives. Because we had asked for and been granted some
65 freedom from having to act on our shortcomings, we finally began to grasp what
66 the miracle of recovery offers us.

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

73 longer focused on what we could get out of it for ourselves. We saw beyond the
74 confines of our own lives, and our efforts in recovery began to be more generous.
75 We developed the ability to feel empathy for others.

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

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

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

95 In order to cultivate this awakening, we have found it essential to express our
96 gratitude and practice the principles of recovery in every area of our lives.

97 However, this isn't something we do only to insure that our own recovery
98 continues. Narcotics Anonymous is not a selfish program. In fact, the spirit of the
99 Twelfth Step is grounded in the principle of selfless service. Upholding this
100 principle in our efforts to carry the message is of the utmost importance, both to
101 our own spiritual state and to those to whom we are trying to carry the message.

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

109 When being of service in Narcotics Anonymous, many of us have chosen to
110 give back to the program in the same way we were helped when new. Some of
111 us whose first contact with NA was through the area phoneline find it rewarding to
112 serve on the phoneline. ^{Others} Many of us have ^{been} found ourselves drawn to H&I service
113 work because we first heard the message of NA in a jail or hospital. Whatever
114 form of service we choose to be involved in, we do so with our primary purpose of
115 carrying the message in mind.

116 Now we must ask ourselves, just what *is* "the message" we are trying to carry?
117 Is it that we never have to use drugs again? Is it that, through recovery, we cease
118 being likely candidates for jails, institutions, and an early death? Is it the hope that
119 an addict, any addict, can recover from the disease of addiction? Well, it's all of
120 this and more. The message we carry is that, by practicing the principles

121 contained within the Twelve Steps, we have had a spiritual awakening. Whatever
122 that means for each one of us is the message we carry to those seeking recovery.

123 The ways in which we carry the message are as varied as our members.

124 There are, however, some basic guidelines that we, as a fellowship, have found to
125 be helpful. First and foremost, we share our experience, strength, and hope.

126 This means that we share our experience, not the theories we have heard from
127 other sources. This also means that we share our *own* experience, not someone
128 else's. It is not our job to tell someone seeking recovery where to work, who to
129 live with, how to raise their children, or anything else outside the realm of our
130 experience with recovery. Someone we are trying to help may have problems in
131 these areas; we can help best not by managing that person's life, but by sharing
132 our own experience in those areas.

133 Developing a personal style for carrying the message rests on a simple
134 requirement: we must be ourselves. We each have a special, one-of-a-kind
135 personality that is sure to be an attraction to many. Some of us have a sparkling
136 sense of humor which may reach someone in despair. Some of us are especially
137 warm and compassionate, able to reach an addict who has rarely been the
138 recipient of kindness. Some of us have a remarkable talent for telling the truth, in
139 no uncertain terms, to an addict literally dying to hear it. Some of us are a
140 valuable asset on any service committee, while others do better working one-on-
141 one with a suffering addict. Whatever our own personality makeup, we can be
142 assured that when we sincerely try to carry the message, we can reach the addict
143 seeking recovery.

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

150 It is absolutely none of our business to decide who is ready to hear the
151 message of recovery and who is not. Many of us have formed such a judgment,
152 and have been ~~so~~ mistakenly mistaken, about an addict's desire for recovery. Multiple
153 relapses do not necessarily signify a lack of interest in recovery, nor does the
154 "model newcomer" demonstrate, without a doubt, a certainty of "making it." ~~On~~
155 the ~~other~~ hand, it is our purpose, and our privilege, to share the message of
156 recovery unconditionally.

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

167 Helping others is perhaps the highest aspiration of the human heart, and
 168 something we have been entrusted with as a result of a Higher Power working in
 169 our lives. We would do well to remember to ask the God of our understanding to
 170 continue working through us in our efforts to carry the message. Diligently
 171 practicing the principles of recovery will ensure that the connection between
 172 ourselves and our Higher Power remains open and that our service to others is
 173 firmly rooted in spirituality.

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

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

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

199

200 q:\steps\approval\step12a2.doc

