

Someone asked, “How long does it take to complete the Twelve Steps of Recovery?”

The answer is, it depends on individual circumstances. Some twelve steppers may continue “walking the steps” forever.

It is like going to the gym when you want to get in shape or look good. Will you only do it for a week or two? For a month? Or will you continue with the program for a long time for your own good?

Questions: Are you willing to do whatever it takes to achieve sobriety?

Remember, the Twelve Steps is a program that outlines a path to spiritual progress through a series of actions designed to encourage a complete mental, emotional, and spiritual shift in our perception.

Here are some tools from the 12 steps for everyday living.

- Hope Honesty Faith Courage Integrity Willingness
- Humility Forgiveness Discipline Perseverance

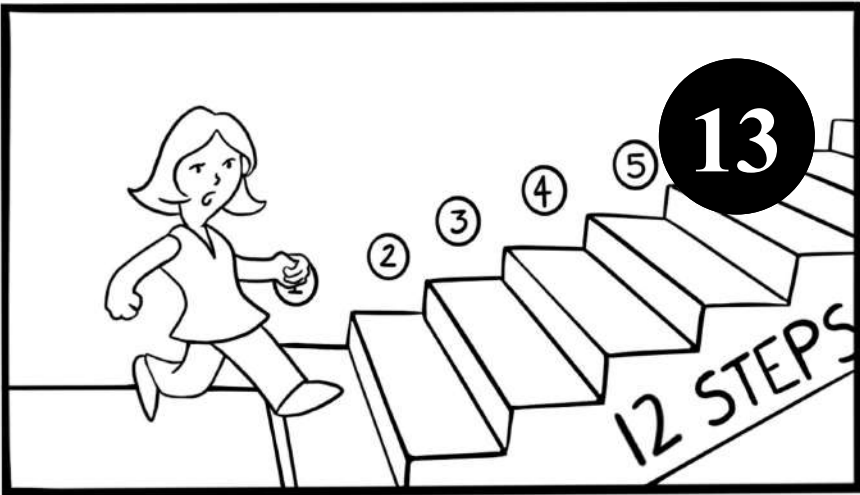


FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP ONE FROM AA

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

“Who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one, of course. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit that, glass in hand, we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only an act of Providence can remove it from us.”



In our next final 12 folders, we are going to cover material that comes directly from the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book from Alcoholics Anonymous. Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

So, let’s start by remembering that we already have worked through the first 12 folders of the program and we are halfway through our journey that has given us the experience of many good talks.

Do you remember folder #1 that was asking us “Do I have a problem” and then deciding in folder #2 that perhaps “... You are One of Us”...?

Even though we may have a lot of excuses, we also had many dialogues about God, making choices, and going over the actions we need to take.

Many of you have mentioned the fact that you have managed to live your life now without using any mind-altering substances.

Can you share with us what folder you remember to be your favorite and what the topic was?

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“I truly believe that the Twelve Step program (also known as Alcoholics Anonymous or A.A.) will go down in history as America’s greatest and unique contribution to the history of spirituality.”
- Richard Rohr

1. What does defeat mean to you?

2. Have you ever felt defeated?

3. What is the difference between humility and being defeated?

“But upon entering A.A. we soon take quite another view of this absolute humiliation. We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps towards liberation and strength.

Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bed-rock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.”

So, another old timer told me once, after wrestling with her first step, she recognized that it was the best day of her life because she realized from that point on, she was aiming up.

The same woman shared this little story with me,

“Once upon a time there was a great teacher of knowledge and holiness who lived with her husband and daughter. All three had this reputation for being wise.

A person asked the master, “Is it easy to attain wisdom or difficult?”

She replied, “It is as difficult as reaching the moon.”

Not satisfied with this answer, she asked her husband, and he replied, “ It’s very easy. It is as easy as drinking a glass of water.”

The person was intrigued, but out of doubt, they asked the same question to the girl.

And the little girl answered, “Why do people do that? If you make it difficult, it will be difficult. But if you make it easy, it will be easy.”

“How it Works”

Chapter 5 “How it Works” from the AA book reads, “**Rarely have we seen a person fail who has truly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves.**

There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty.

Their chances are less than average. They are those, too, who suffer from great emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest...”

Questions:

If you wish, are you willing to be honest about your own tendencies or addictions?

Are you willing to write down on a piece of paper whatever “good” you got from drinking or using?

Are you willing to write down all the bad things that happen when you are drinking or using?

Will you have the courage to write down what you would like from life in general?

Is it possible that you would like to experience the feeling of self-respect, belonging, love from others, forgiveness from God, family, and society? *A chance to start over? I know I do.*

FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP TWO FROM AA

**“Came to believe that a Power greater than
Ourselves could restore us to sanity.”**

From the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* Alcoholics Anonymous book on the last paragraph of page 33 we read,

“Therefore, Step Two is the rallying point for all of us. Whether agnostic, atheist, or former believer, we stand together on this step. True humility and an open mind can lead us to faith, and every A.A. meeting is an assurance that God will restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to Him.”



Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book*.

During Folder 11 in Finding the Way to Recovery, remember when we talked about “God, as you understand him?” So, let’s share a couple of our thoughts about that by answering the following questions.

If you were to be asked, “Do you believe in God or a higher power?”, how would you respond? If you do, how would you express your belief?

Next, if you wish, please share with us a personal experience of the insanity that you experienced while drinking or being under the influence.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous tells us that we should reach out to God so that he can restore us to sanity. Are you willing to believe that the God of your own understanding could restore you to sanity?

Remember, the only requirement is if “**You are willing to believe.**”

One definition of insanity is: *Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.*

Let me tell you a story about an old timer and her experience with what she believed was insanity. While undergoing treatment at a facility, she believed that she was insane because she thought the elevator was a listening device. The sense of paranoia was startling to the old timer to the point where she was convinced she was insane.

Was the old timer in this story insane? Was she temporarily insane because of the drugs she’s been using?

Like the old timer, many of us in the program can identify with this story. Some of our stories are so similar when it comes to what we remember while being intoxicated. And sometimes, only God knows what we did because oftentimes we don’t remember.

By any chance, do you relate to any of this? Please share if you wish.

When asked to give a description of what we think God looks like, many people refer to breathtaking photographs of the universe or the beautiful images of a sunset against the powerful ocean, mountains, forests, etc.

“... Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

Are you willing to believe in a higher power? Are there any obstacles preventing you from trusting in God or a higher power to intervene in your life?

Let me tell you a story that a chaplain from another facility shared with me. She was conducting a group service with some residents and the topic of asking God for a miracle in our lives came up.

One of them said, “ I would like God to help me in my court case so I can be freed and resume my life with my family. I hope that they will forgive me for all the crazy stuff that I have done to them while I was under the influence of alcohol and cocaine.”

So the question is, which would be a more logical request to God? Asking God to let her go free, as she wanted, to be with her family?

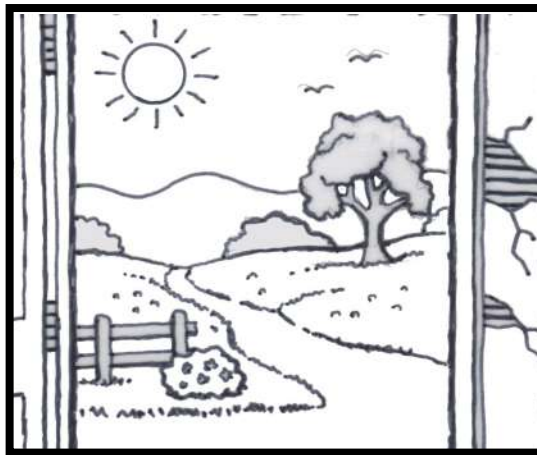
Or, asking God to help her fight her addiction, accept the fact that she is an addict, do whatever it takes to change, and join others that are looking for the same goal? Because only then will she truly be united with her family.

True recovery means regaining our self-dignity, sanity, and the courage to go back to society and ask for forgiveness, when possible, from those we hurt. And only then can we show that we have truly changed, and with the help of others we will continue to stay clean.

3rd Step prayer from AA book page 63

“We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him: “God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.

Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!”



We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free.

We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears,

Even though for many of us it was just that.



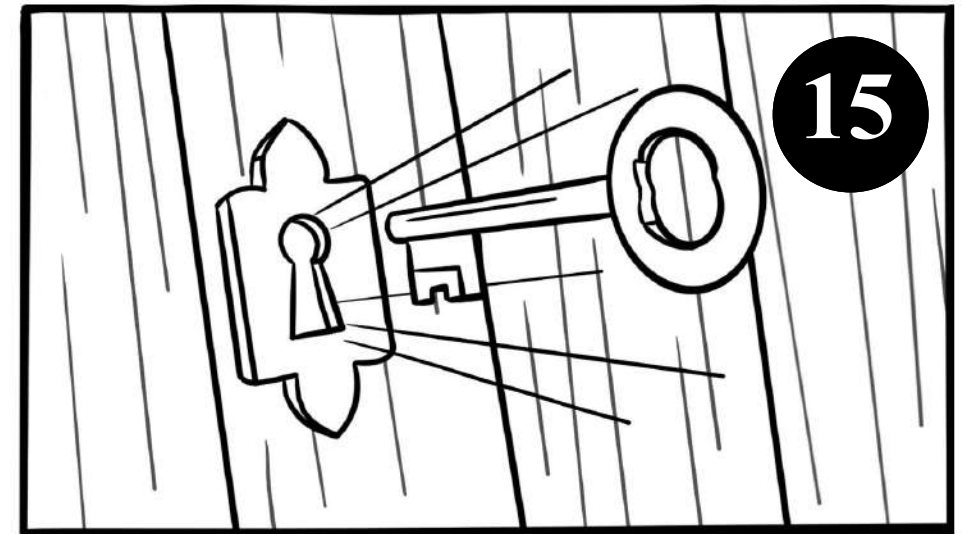
FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP THREE FROM AA

“Make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.”

“Practicing step three is like the opening of a door which to all appearances is still closed and locked. All we need is a key, and the decision to swing the door open. There is only one key, and it is called willingness. Once unlocked by willingness, the door opens almost of itself, and looking through it, we shall see a pathway beside which is an inscription. It reads, “This is the way to a faith that works.”

In the first two steps we were engaged in reflection. We saw that we were powerless over alcohol, but we also perceive that faith of some kind, if only in AA, itself is possible to anyone. These conclusions did not require actions; they require only acceptance.” (Found on Page 34 in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions AA book.)



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A friend in prison once said her will was to run wild. Due to this, she was ordered by the judge to attend 30 meetings in an AA group. But inside of her, she didn't give a damn. She found herself back in jail due to a warrant placed for not following the judge's order. This was her best thinking. So, we can say that her best thinking landed her back in jail.

Share your experience with how your will has landed you in trouble in the past?

Another story that we have is about Ava. Ava had been clean and sober for 15 years when she found herself going to a work-related training program away from home with fellow coworkers. At the end of the training, there was a celebratory dinner held for all the attendees. Now, nobody knew Ava's previous problems with drinking. On the tables at the celebration were all kinds of drinks to be consumed by all the attendees.

Ava's state of mind at the time told her, "Nobody knows me around here. A couple of beers will not hurt." However, there was still a small voice inside of her that told her otherwise. Ultimately, she did not pay attention to the little voice in her head telling her not to drink. And before she knew it, she had 8 drinks. And after that, she lost count and ended up wasted.

Little did she know her alcohol obsession was just doormat and her night ended in total intoxication. The next day, when Ava woke up, and realized she relapsed, she had an overwhelming feeling of guilt and shame for not trusting in God's will. She also blamed everyone else for her feeling like a failure for relapsing.

Perhaps we, by reading her story, noticed that there was a voice inside of her head telling her... "Don't do it".

If you would like to share, have you ever ended up like Ava? And later did you realize that you did have a chance not to go there...?

“Make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.”

This is the first of the twelve steps that requires action.

Definition of action is *the process of doing something to achieve or aim at an objective.*



What does turning your will and life over to the care of God, of your understanding, mean to you?

And how can we accomplish that? Where do we start?

The Big Book of AA tells us in a very clear way how difficult it may be for many. The end of page 63 reads, “**Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal house cleaning, which many of us had never attempted.**”

Let’s do some group exercises.

First, we’ll read from what an old timer has said about what she found in her own inventory. And next, we will try to name a few of the things that we might need to identify in our own inventory.

The old timer said, “Throughout my life, I abused a lot of drugs, consumed a lot of alcohol, looked for sexual fantasies, had crazy behaviors, and I always ended up alone.

I used to steal from anybody and everybody in order to maintain my addictions. I resented many of my relationships, including family and friends because I was hurt.”

What would you identify in your own inventory?



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

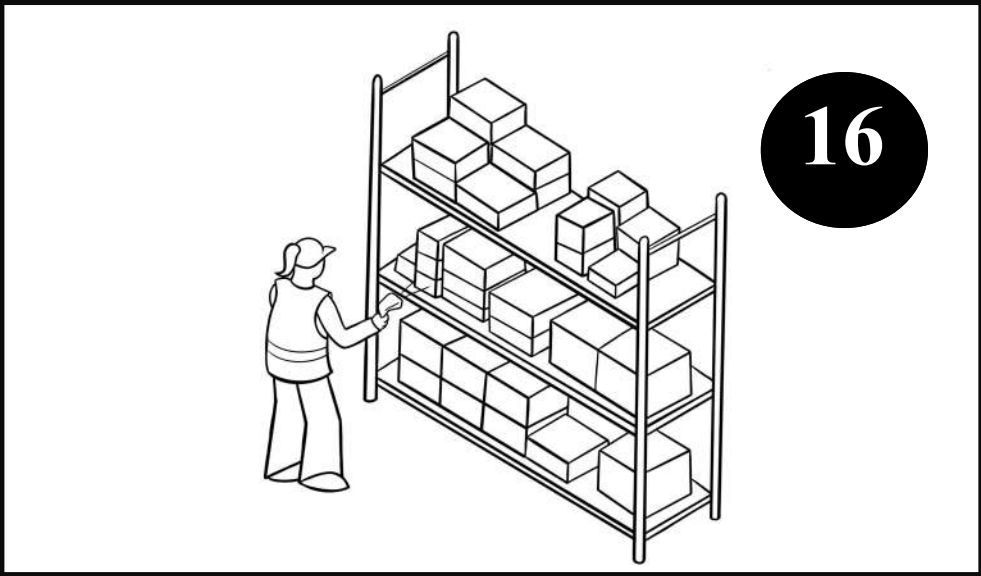
STEP FOUR FROM AA

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

“**Step four is a vigorous and painstaking effort to discover what these liabilities in each of us have been and are.**”

From page 64 of the Big Book we read, “**Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was step four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke.**”

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



Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book*.

One of our friends told us that six months after she gave up drinking and using, she decided to take a personal and moral inventory of herself and share some of her findings with us. And we are sharing them with you as a way of giving examples of what we may need to look at.

- She found out that she held too much resentment against her close family and friends because they were trying to make her stop.
- Sometimes she would get overly jealous about her partner and paranoid of what they might be doing behind her back.
- She noticed it was difficult for her to trust others because she didn't even trust herself.

Can you relate to any of the emotions or experiences that the person in the story was feeling? If you would like, can you share?

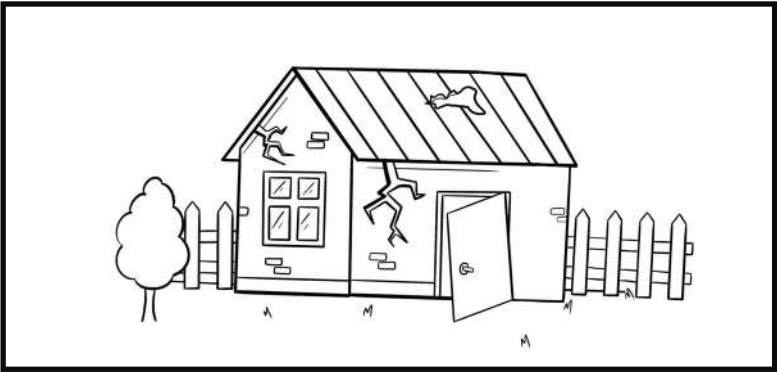


“Resentment is the #1 offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stems all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick.”

“We ask ourselves why we were angry. In many cases, we found that our self-esteem, our pocket books, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were “burned up”.”

Now we can ask ourselves, “have we ever felt this way?”

Don't forget to check the resentment list package that you will receive from your facilitator.



When our house is dirty and smelly, we have to take action. These actions often need to start within ourselves. Now, we are ready to take serious actions to clean up our own house.

From Twelve and Twelve page 6, we read, “ **How instincts can exceed their proper functions. Step Four is an effort to discover our liabilities. Basic problem of extremes in instinctive drives. Misguided moral inventory can result in guilt, grandiosity, or blaming others.**

Assets can be noted with liabilities. Self-justification is dangerous. Willingness to take inventory brings light and new confidence. Step Four is the beginning of lifetime practice. Common symptoms of emotional insecurity are worry, anger, self-pity, and depression. Inventory reviews relationships. Importance of thoroughness.”

Will you be able to answer this simple question: What do you think the Big Book of AA means when it talks about a personal house cleaning?

What do you think we need to clean up in our personal life?

When I was ready to do step 5, my sponsor advised me that I should write down what I considered to be my biggest offenses against other human beings in my life. She also reminded me that I should keep in mind that every time I have offended or hurt another human being, I have also offended God.

She suggested that I should not separate other human beings and God; This is a difficult step to do.

“ If we have come to know how wrong thinking and actions have hurt us and others, then the need to quit living by ourselves with those tormenting ghosts of yesterday gets more urgent than ever. We have to talk to somebody about them.”

We need to learn to trust and see the goodness of the Lord through others. If you wish, choose the right person to confide in and share with them your character defects, always hoping to be forgiven.

Taste and See the Goodness of the Lord.
- Psalm 34:8



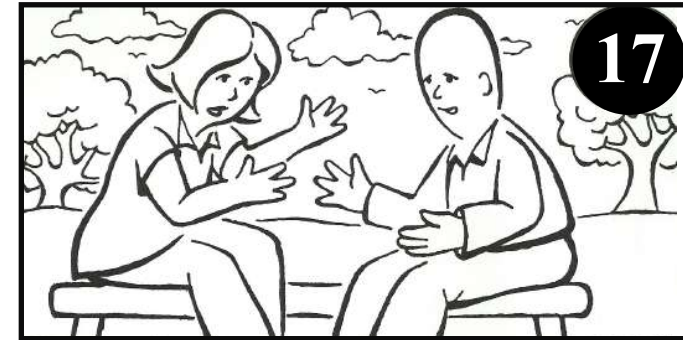
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FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP FIVE FROM AA

“Admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

On page 55 of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, it reads, **“All of A.A.’s Twelve Steps ask us to go contrary to our natural desires...they all deflate our egos. When it comes to ego deflation, few Steps are harder to take than Five. But scarcely any Step is more necessary to longtime sobriety and peace of mind than this one.”**



“Confession is an ancient discipline. Without fearless admission of defects, few could stay sober.”

In order to be prepared to make this step, we must take note of what our friends from A.A. tell us on page 58 of the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* Chapter 5 **“How it Works”**... **“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has truly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who can not or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves.”**

Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book*.

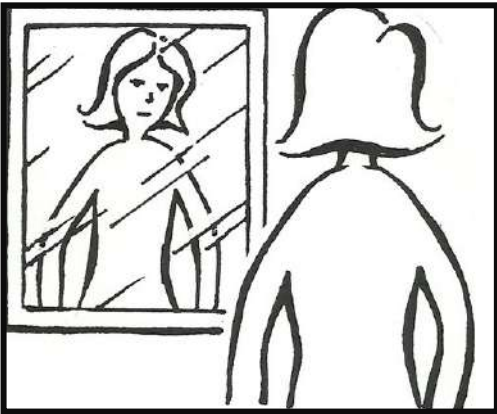
Next, we read on page 57 of 12x 12 the following, “ **When we reach A.A., and for the first time in our lives stood among people who seemed to understand, the sense of belonging was tremendously exciting. We thought the isolation problem had been solved.**

But we soon discovered that while we weren’t alone any more in a social sense, we still suffered many of the old pangs of anxious apartness.

Until we had talked with complete candor of our conflicts, and had listened to someone else do the same thing, we still didn’t belong.

Step five was the answer. It was the beginning of true kinship with man and God.”

“ “Step five works! It really does!” I marveled. I knew now that the man who was leaving was not the same man who had fearfully entered this Fifth Step sanctuary just a few hours previously.”



Have we ever felt isolated as a result of our using or drinking?

What are the barriers that keep us from sharing the exact nature of our wrongs?

Before we admit to God our wrongs, we should remember that we are talking to a merciful and powerful God of our own understanding that genuinely loves and cares for us (That is the kind of higher power I am looking for.)

Are you willing to come clean with your higher power?

Are you willing to ask for your higher power to reveal to you the consequences of your own actions?

Having recognized our own faults, are we ready to ask God for help in taking actions towards working on what has been revealed to us?

Step 5 asks us very directly that we must admit “**...to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrong.**”

“Yet many of us still hung back. We said, “ Why can’t God as we understand him” tell us where we are astray? If the Creator gave us our lives in the first place, then He must know in every detail where we have since gone wrong.

Why don’t we make our admissions to Him directly? Why do we need to bring anyone else into this?”

“When we are honest with another person, it confirms that we have been honest with ourselves and with God.”

“We’ll discover that love is never having to feel alone again; that God’s presence in our lives has become profound; and that the unity of the Fellowship of the spirit can be ours so long as we are willing to pass it on.”

- Chico C.

(This quote was taken from an article published by the A.A. Grapevine’s International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous.)

One of “the meetings gave me what my sponsor likes to call one of the most important words in the Big Book: A.A. put a “we” in my life. We admit we were powerless over alcohol... I no longer have to be alone. Fellowship and activity kept me coming back long enough to work the twelve steps.”

How do my character defects contribute to my addictions?

Can I name a character defect that I have that I might struggle the most with letting go of?

How can I allow God to help me remove my character defects?

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous tells us such intimate things that are so relevant to our own lives that it is hard not to believe in them. Many of us may relate to this experience that goes something like being “... **very impatient, I wanted the whole deal right away. That’s why I related so well to the story about the wide-eyed new person and an old timer. When the newcomer approached the old timer, envying his accomplishments and many years of sobriety, the old timer slapped down his hand like a gavel and said, “ I’ll trade you even! My thirty years for your thirty days—right now!”**



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP SIX FROM AA

“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

On page 63 of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book we read, **“This is the Step that separates the men (women) from the boys (girls).”** So declares a well-loved clergyman who happens to be one of A.A.’s greatest friends.

He goes on to explain that any person capable of enough willingness and honesty to try repeatedly Step Six on all his (her) faults—without any reservations whatsoever— has indeed come a long way spiritually, and is therefore entitled to be called a man (woman) who is sincerely trying to grow in the image and likeness of his (her) own Creator.”

What is the meaning of the term “character defect”? An example of this is the seven deadly sins: Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Greed, Lust, Gluttony.



One explanation of the term is the negative traits and behaviors all of us have that lead to our bad habits and self-destructive patterns. *If applicable, is there anything holding you back from willingly admitting your character defects and asking God to remove them?*

Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book*.

On page 501 from *The Big Book* of AA, in one of the chapters titled “Gutter Bravado” covers a story about a man (woman) that was “ **alone and unemployable, he (she) was given two options by the court, get help or go to jail, and his (her) journey toward teachability began.**”

Have we ever found ourselves in a similar position where we knew we had to make an important decision in our lives? Please comment.

Sometimes, something very serious may happen in our lives that brings us to the same situation where even though we know we have a major problem and want to stop, we don’t know how to go about it.

The same thing happened to me in 1999 when I was called by my bosses and given an ultimatum, in which I had to make a decision. I could either choose to go to AA and get sober on my own free will, or I could choose to lose my job that I love so much. So I can tell you with certainty that what they said in the Big Book is real, it happens, and the promise of a better life will come to be if you really work at it.

Now, we are given the opportunity to ask ourselves, “ *Am I really willing to take Step Six without any excuses or uncertainties?*”

Perhaps we can pay attention to part of what we read in step six on page 65 of the Twelve and Twelve, “ **Since most of us are born with an abundance of natural desires, it isn’t strange that we often let these far exceed their intended purpose.**

When they drive us blindly, or we willfully demand that they supply us with more satisfactions or pleasure than are possible or due to us, that is the point at which we depart from the degree of perfection that God wishes for us here on earth. That is the measure of our character defects, or, if you wish, of our sins.”

Sin refers to an immoral act that is considered a transgression against divine law—anything we say, do, or think that goes against what God wants. It is a deeply regrettable action that disobeys the will of God.

In one of the meetings that I was attending, an old timer, after hearing what I was sharing, pulled me aside and asked me a few questions. This made me see very clearly that I had many opinions and was ready to talk about my many problems, but I was overlooking the most basic problems I had.

“ My drinking and myself. I’d known for a long time that I desperately wanted off this merry-go-round, but I had no idea how to do it.”

My friends, now you do know how to do it, if you wish to take the suggestions from the Books of Alcoholics Anonymous. You see, in the AA program, I found out that I was learning a new way of living life.

“ But I did not know that the problem was with me. You see, I wanted the finest things in life, but upon realizing they took effort, I dismissed them.”

I found out that this program was a spiritual program, not a religious one, and had the example by watching many members enjoy life. They all agreed on one thing, and said to me that if I want to change my life, as they have changed theirs, I could as long as I become willing to do what they did.



THE MEMBERS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS ARE ACTUALLY INVITING ME TO JOIN THEM!!!!

IT FEELS GOOD TO BE WELCOMED!

We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn't do it. Avoid then, the deliberate manufacture of misery, but if trouble comes, cheerfully capitalize it as an opportunity to demonstrate His omnipotence.

AA Big Book,
page 133



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



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP SEVEN FROM AA

“ Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

On page 70 of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book we read, “ Since this Step so specifically concerns itself with humility, we should pause here to consider what humility is and what the practice of it can mean to us...

Humility, as a word and as an ideal, has a very bad time of it in our world. Not only is the idea misunderstood; the word itself is often intensely disliked.”

However, one way of understanding the term humility is that it means being freed from pride and bragging, and viewing ourselves as we really are without being arrogant.



Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book of A.A.*

On page 71 of the Twelve and Twelve we read, “ **But we are sure that no class of people in the world ever made a worse mess of trying to live by this formula than alcoholics. For thousands of years we have been demanding more than our share of security, prestige, and romance. When we seemed to be succeeding, we drank to dream still greater dreams.**

When we were frustrated, even in part, we drank for oblivion. Never was there enough of what we thought we wanted.”

Let’s be honest with ourselves, if it is possible that many times we want more than is due to us?

Are they right, in the Twelve and Twelve, when they say that sometimes we drink and use because we have excuses like:

We drink because it is too hot. We drink because it is too cold.
We drink because no one likes us. We drink because we just want to have fun.

The problem is that we never stop, do we?

“ The Seventh Step is where we make the change in our attitude which permits us, with humility, as our guide, to move out from ourselves toward others and toward God. The whole emphasis of Step Seven is on humility.”

What pain in your life stands in the way of your humility?

Has a painful situation you experienced ever brought you closer to seeking help from the God of your own understanding?

If you’d like, can you share any pain that has affected you in your life?

What are shortcomings?

One definition of shortcoming is weakness, a fault or failure to meet a certain standard. It is an imperfection, deficiency of conduct, etc.

Can you make a list of what you consider your own shortcoming?

Perhaps you and I can think of a time where our actions created bad situations for others, or that others ended up paying a big price for our failures. If you’d like, tell us about that experience.

One old timer told me that in order to ask God or our higher power for forgiveness, we better know exactly what we are asking for, we cannot just say “Forgive me for everything I have done the last summer when I was out of control”... It does not work that way.

When we do these kinds of self-reflection exercises, we really are trying to ask God for forgiveness and

“He will.”

From page 82 of the 12x12 we read, “ We should avoid extreme judgements, both of ourselves and of others involved. We must not exaggerate our defects or theirs. A quiet, objective view will be our steadfast aim.

Whenever our pencil falters, we can fortify and cheer ourselves by remembering what the A.A. experience in this Step has meant to others. It is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God.”



As we continue to live one day at a time sober, we must remember not to be afraid and to embrace the new life in front of us. Life is beautiful despite all its challenges and disappointments when we let love conquer all. Let’s start forgiving and loving ourselves so we can love others.

A.A. teaches that “ You can not give something you haven’t got.”



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP EIGHT FROM AA

“Made a list of persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

On page 77 of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book, we read, “Steps Eight and Nine are concerned with personal relations. First, we take a look backwards and try to discover where we had been at fault; next we make a vigorous attempt to repair the damage we had done; and third, having thus cleaned away the debris of the past, we consider how, with our newfound knowledge of ourselves, we may develop the best possible relations with every human being we know.”

The obstacles that prevent us from effectively practicing step eight include 1. “The first, and one of the most difficult, has to do with forgiveness. The moment we ponder a twisted or broken relationship with another person, our emotions go on the defensive.”

Forgiveness, how many times have we said “ I know God has forgiven me for all the sins I have done, but I will never forgive myself.” *So we must wonder, is this kind of thinking correct? Perhaps what we are saying is, “I am bigger than God. He can forgive me, but I never will.” Have you ever thought about that?*



Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book*.

Have you forgiven yourself for something that you have done in the past? If not, why not?

What emotions or hurts are stopping you from entering into the process of forgiveness?

2. “When listing the people we have harmed, most of us hit another solid obstacle. We get a pretty severe shock when we realized that we were preparing to make a face-to-face admission of our wretched conduct to those we had hurt. It had been embarrassing enough when in confidence we had admitted these things to God, to ourselves, and to another human being.”

Remember, we are called to become willing to make amends. We must prepare ourselves to do that before we actually do it.

Question 1

Question 2

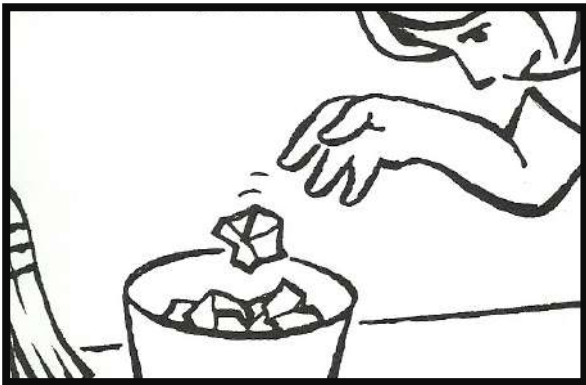
From Richard Rohr’s book, *Breathing Under Water*, on page 56 we read, “ **At any rate, we all need to do some clean-up work inside. For humans, there is only a slow softening of the heart, a gradual lessening of our attachment to our hurts, our victimhood as a past identity, or any need to punish or humiliate others.**

“Vengeance is mine,” says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). Vengeance against the self or vengeance against anything is not our job.

It might take a long time to “become willing” to make amends, and that is why some people go to Step 8 meetings for years. They learn to make lists, but not of what others have done to them, which is the normal ego style, and a pattern once practiced that is very hard to stop.

Instead of making lists of who hurt me, I now make lists of people/ have perhaps been hurt, failed, or mistreated, and then do something about it.

It might be a note, a call, a visit, a meaningful gift, an invitation, an outright apology. God will show you the best way, the best place, the best time, and the best words. Waiting and praying for them all.”



Tips for Forgiving Yourself:

- make up for any mistakes that have impacted others
- Open yourself up to change
- Feel remorse for your actions but don’t dwell on them
- Remember how you have grown and how you will grow in the future

BROKEN CHAINS



FREEDOM

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through.

1. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
2. We will not regret the past, nor wish to shut the door on it .
3. We will comprehend the word serenity.
4. And we will know peace.
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain insight into our fellows.
8. Self-seeking will slip away.
9. Our whole attitude and outlook will change.
10. Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.
11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we can not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them...



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP NINE FROM AA

“Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

On page 83 of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book we read, “ **Good judgement, a careful sense of TIMING, COURAGE, and PRUDENCE**—these are the qualities we shall need when we take Step Nine.”



Definitions of

COURAGE: the ability to face and overcome fear, danger, or adversity, even when we’re afraid.

TIMING choosing the right moment to take action or make a decision, often involving good judgement.

PRUDENCE: being careful and wise while making decisions, often considering potential risks or consequences prior

Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book of A.A.*

Examples of Courage

- Daniel in the Lions’ Den: After refusing to cease praying to God despite King Darius’ order, Daniel was thrown into a den of lions. However, through God’s protection, he rose victorious, leading the King to praise Daniel’s God.
- David vs. Goliath: Through his firm faith, shepherd boy David miraculously defeated the Philistine giant Goliath with a single stone from his sling.
- The Hebrew boys: After refusing to bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue, they were thrown into a furnace and set on fire. Miraculously, they came out unharmed with what appeared to be a divine figure beside them, praising their God for the miracle.
- Queen Esther: After courageously revealing her Jewish identity and through petitioning to King Xerxes, she saved an entire generation of Jewish people from Haman’s evil plot that sought to exterminate them.

Step #9 puts us in uncomfortable positions that may be challenging and extremely difficult. However, we can not let fear detour us from taking this courageous step of making amends.

What is stopping you from making amends?

What does making amends mean to you?

RESPONSIBILITY

From page 78 on March 10th from the *Daily Reflexion* book we read,

“ TODAY IT’S MY CHOICE

“...we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P.62

With the realization and acceptance that I had played a part in the way my life had turned out came a dramatic change in my outlook. It was at this point that the A.A. program began to work for me.

In the past I had always blamed others, either God or other people, for my circumstances. I never felt that I had a choice in altering my life. My decisions had been based on fear, pride, or ego.

As a result, those decisions led me down a path of self-destruction. Today I try to allow my God to guide me on the road to sanity, I am responsible for my action—or inaction—whatever the consequences may be.”

Why is it, do you think, that we alcoholics/addicts have a hard time taking responsibility?

Do you often find yourself repeating the same unproductive or harmful patterns in your life? Are you struggling to break free from addiction or negative habits? If so, a daily personal inventory worksheet might be just what you need to take control of your life.

A personal inventory list is a tool used in various self-improvement programs, including Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), to help individuals identify their character defects and areas for improvement.

The tenth step inventory journal is a daily practice that involves taking a spot check of your emotional and behavioral state and reflecting on your actions throughout the day.

1. *What are three things I'm grateful for today?*
2. *What did I do well today?*
3. *What could I have done differently?*
4. *How did I show kindness to others today?*
5. *What progress did I make towards achieving my goals?*
6. Regularly review your daily inventory to identify patterns and areas for improvement.



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FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP TEN FROM AA

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

On page 8 of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book we read, “**Can we stay sober and keep emotional balance under all conditions? Self-searching becomes a regular habit. Admit, accept, and patiently correct defects. Emotional hangover. When past is settled with, present challenges can be met.**”

Varieties of inventory. Anger, resentment, jealousy, envy, self-pity, hurt pride—all led to the bottle. Self-restraint first objective. Insurance against “big-shot-ism.” Let’s look at credits as well as debits. Examination of motives.”



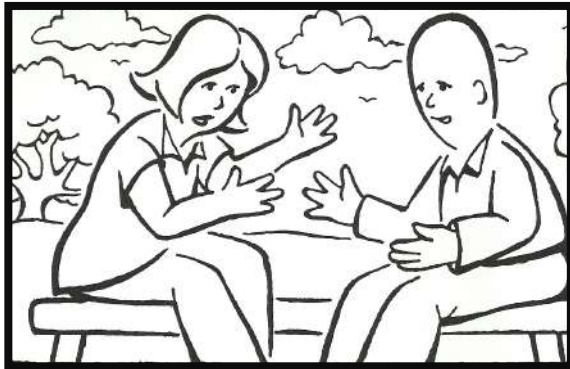
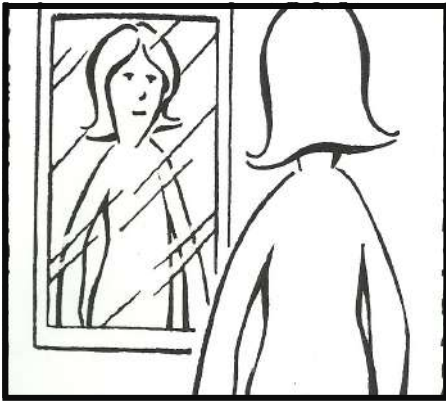
Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book of A.A.*

On page 84 of *The Big Book* we read, “ **This thought brings us to *Step Ten*, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past.**

We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime.

Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.

We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.”



“But who can detect his own failing? Cleanse me from my hidden faults”

- Psalm 19:12

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

- 2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Oftentimes our weakness keeps us connected to God’s grace, for true repentance and prayer occurs when we promptly admit we were wrong.

Let’s take some time to reflect.

What are some of your weaknesses?

How can you allow God’s grace to be made perfect in your weakness?

On page 86 of *The Big Book* we read, “ **When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest, or afraid? Do we owe an apology?**

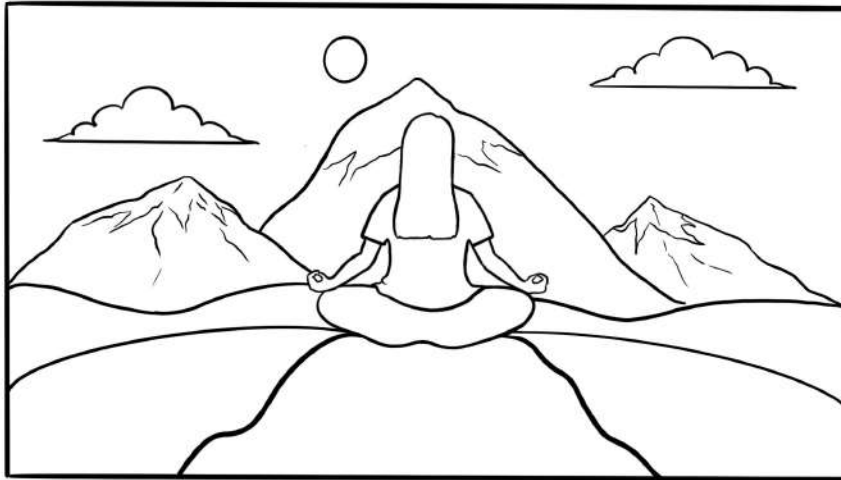
Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better?

Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?

But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others.”

“Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”

“Lord, make me a channel of your peace—that where there is hatred, I may bring love—that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness—that where there is discord, I may bring harmony—that where there is error, I may bring truth—that where there is doubt, I may bring faith—that where there is despair, I may bring hope—that where there are shadows, I may bring light—that where there is sadness, I may bring joy...” (page 99 of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions)



FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP ELEVEN FROM AA

“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.”

On page 96 of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* we read, “Prayer and meditation are our principal means of conscious contact with God. We A.A.’s are active folk, enjoying the satisfactions of dealing with the realities of life, usually for the first time in our lives, and strenuously trying to help the next alcoholic who comes along. So it isn’t surprising that we often tend to slight serious meditation and prayer as something not really necessary.

To be sure, we feel it is something that might help us to meet an occasional emergency, but at first many of us are apt to regard it as a somewhat mysterious skill of clergymen, from which we may hope to get a secondhand benefit. Or perhaps we don’t believe in these things at all.”



Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book*.

When we worked through the first nine steps, we prepared ourselves for the adventure of a new life. It is through the practice of these last steps that we will enter our spiritual world, experiencing the joy that comes when we stop fighting against everything and everyone—even our addiction. As a result of these steps, we have recovered our sanity.

How does this work?

Prayer is not a ritual, but a RELATIONSHIP, it is not a speech or a series of incomprehensible words, it is living, it is “getting out of oneself” and escaping to your higher power. He does not carry the possession of the body, but the position of your soul.

Many people do not pray, they only ask, because some of us are quick to ask, but slow to thank.

Prayer

If you’d like, share with us how you pray.

Next, describe how you feel after praying.

Some forms of prayers include:

- Prayers of Praise
- Prayers of Petition
- Prayers of Intercession
- Prayers of Guidance

Meditation

Meditation is a practice where an individual uses techniques, such as mindfulness, to focus their attention on a specific thought or activity. This helps train the mind to be more aware and present, leading to a clearer mental state and greater emotional calmness and stability. It also is often used to reduce stress, promote relaxation, and enhance personal and spiritual growth.

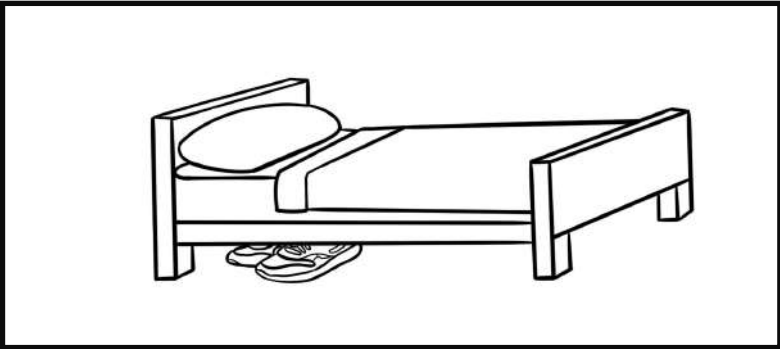
Let’s Meditate!

Suggestion: Meditation Exercises

- Silence
- Soft music
- Breathing exercises
- Prayer

“I pray that you all put your shoes way under the bed at night so that you gotta get on your knees in the morning to find them. And while you're down there thank God for grace and mercy and understanding. We all fall short of the glory, we all got plenty.”

– Denzel Washington

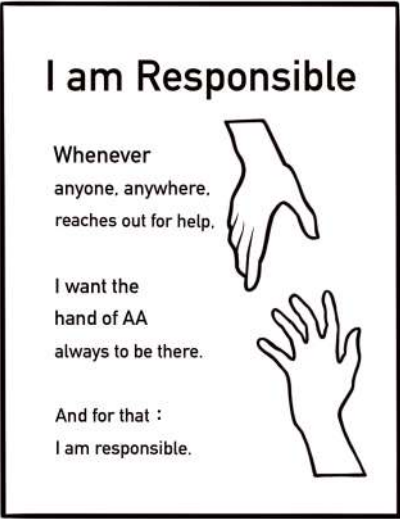


The twelve steps are a lifeline to a new way of living. See the attached testimonies of people that have completed the twelve steps.

“The twelve steps for me are a new way of living, having a clear blueprint to follow helps teach me how to change my ways.”

“The 12 steps are a transitional process from the old me to the new me. They are instructions on how to live and behave from now on.”

“The 12 steps to me are a stepping stone to a new and better way to live. These are tools to achieve that change in order to become a better person.”



“The 12 steps have helped me see myself, life, others, and God with a new set of eyes. They enabled me to live free of my addictions and begin a new path of finding my way to recovery.”

A vision for you... Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.



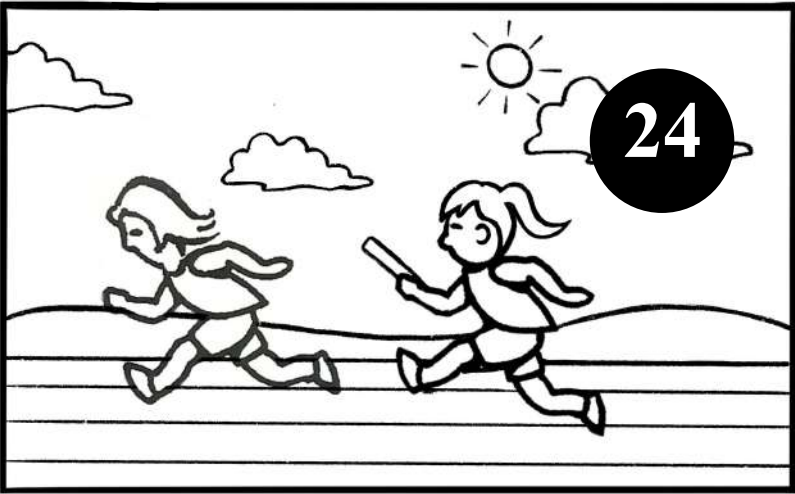
FINDING THE “WAY” TO RECOVERY

STEP TWELVE FROM AA

“ Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

On page 106 of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* we read, “ **The joy of living is the theme of A.A.’s Twelfth Step, and action is its key word. Here we turn outward toward our fellow alcoholics who are still in distress. Here we experience the kind of giving that asks no rewards...**”

It also says, “ **Our Twelfth Step also says that as a result of practicing all the Steps, we have each found something called a spiritual awakening. To new A.A.’s this often seems like a very dubious and improbable state of affairs. “What do you mean when you talk about a ‘spiritual awakening’?” they ask.**”



Please note, everything in bold is taken directly from the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *The Big Book*.

Have you ever experienced a moment of clarity in the middle of a period of chaos in your life where you perhaps were able to see what you needed to do, but then, did not follow up? Perhaps it was too much work, impossible to do.

On page 107 we read an explanation of all the twelve steps, it reads, “ **Step One** showed us an amazing paradox: We found that we were totally unable to be rid of the alcohol obsession until we first admitted that we were powerless over it. In **Step Two**, we saw that since we could not restore ourselves to sanity, some Higher Power must necessarily do so if we were to survive. Consequently, in **Step Three** we turned our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

For the time being, we who were atheist or agnostic discovered that our own group, or A.A. as a whole, would suffice as a higher power. Beginning with **Step Four**, we commenced to search out the thing in ourselves which had brought us to physical, moral, and spiritual bankruptcy. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory.

Looking at **Step Five**, we decided that an inventory, taken alone, wouldn’t be enough. We knew we would have to quit the deadly business of living alone with our conflicts, and in honesty confide these to God and another human being. At **Step Six**, many of us balked—for the practical reason that we did not wish to have all our defects of character removed, because we still loved some of them too much.

Yet we knew we had to make a settlement with the fundamental principle of **Step Six**. So we decided that while we still had some flaws of character that we could not yet relinquish, we ought nevertheless to quit our stubborn, rebellious hanging on to them. We said to ourselves, “ **This I cannot do today, perhaps, but I can stop crying out ‘No, never!’**” Then, in **Step Seven**, we humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings such as He could or would under the conditions of the day we asked.

In Step Eight, we continued our house-cleanings, for we saw that we were not only in conflict with ourselves, but also with people and situations in the world in which we lived. We had to begin to make our peace, and so we listed the people we had harmed and became willing to set things right. We followed this up in **Step Nine** by making direct amends to those concerned, except when it would injure them or other people.

By this time, at **Step Ten**, we had begun to get a basis for daily living, and we keenly realized that we would need to continue taking personal inventory, and that when we were in the wrong we ought to admit it promptly.

In **Step Eleven** we saw that if a Higher Power had restored us to sanity and had enabled us to live with some peace of mind in a sorely troubled world, then such a Higher Power was worth knowing better, by as direct contact as possible...”

So, “our message to the next suffering alcoholic and which finally translated the Twelve Steps into action upon all our affairs is the payoff, the magnificent reality, of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

How do you feel about taking the message of hope to others?

What does spiritual awakening mean to you?

After gaining insights from the twelve steps of AA, in what ways do you think you could pay it forward? What steps do you plan to take?

