

These worksheets can be downloaded from the Hills website, www.thehillscenter.com, and you can write on the pages to your heart's content.

Step One

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

Here is where healing begins. We don't get anywhere until we've completed the first step in the recovery process. You might get through this step in your own personal and private way, but sometimes it helps to work on Step One in a more formal way. My personal opinion is, Whatever works for you. I know some of you may have gone through this step several times. If so, perhaps it's time to try a new way through it. Or, maybe you've been sober for a while and would like to go through the steps as a refresher.

Remember, your powerlessness is due to a disease, not a moral failure. Something inside us makes us want to drink and take drugs, makes us obsess about it. We have become compulsive and self-absorbed and pretty fucking miserable. We make our loved ones miserable, as well. Of course, we are often in denial at this point, too. It's “someone else's fault,” right? Someone's expectations are just too high, so we get high. And it's shameful to admit we are messed up.

Starting Step One will be proactive in finding happiness again. Accept your situation with an open mind. You need to surrender, at this point, if you haven't already done so, due to arrest or injury. Maybe you don't think you need to do this at all, in which case you will probably change your mind before you finish this step. Of course, you need to stop drinking and using drugs before you achieve Step One. It may seem that all is lost right

now, but you must get through this painful step to begin your journey. Don't confuse powerlessness with weakness. This simply means the driving force in your life is out of control. The thing that creates change is intense personal pain. The more emotion and pain you can work through will bring you closer to the psychic shift toward recovery.

It might help if you write down your thoughts, to arrive at answers to the following questions:

- When I am obsessing about using drugs or alcohol, my thought patterns focus on _____
- Usually, the consequences of this are _____
- I also behave compulsively when I _____
- My disease has affected me in these ways: _____
- I have been obsessing about _____
- I acted compulsively most recently when I _____
- Even though I know better, I have been telling myself and others that my behavior is due to _____
- I think my addiction isn't so bad because _____
- I have been avoiding taking steps because I am afraid I will learn _____
- The signs that I cannot ignore my disease any longer are _____
- I first suspected I had a problem when _____
- My reaction to the word *powerless* is _____
- When I first decided I was never going to drink or do drugs anymore, this is what happened: _____
- I have done extreme things to maintain my addiction to drugs or alcohol, such as _____
- When I am high and acting out, this is what I do: _____

- Signs that my life has become unmanageable are _____

- I have done certain things that are illegal, as a result of my addiction or alcoholism, such as _____
- I have had these troubles with my family members and friends: _____
- I think of only myself and not about others when I _____

- I have ignored trouble signs about myself or my family or work when _____
- When I get high, I am usually doing it to change my feelings about _____
- I believe that I can still control my addiction if I _____

- The one thing that I would never be able to do if I'm not high is _____
- I might be able to keep my addiction under control if I _____

- My reservations about giving up my addiction are _____

- I know I am an alcoholic or an addict, but _____
- If I agree that the only way to recovery is to "surrender" to it, then I will feel _____
- Since I no longer need to cover up my disease, then I can also finally be honest about _____
- I am willing to live my life differently in order to _____

- I will stop rejecting these things without trying to accept them first: _____
- In recovery meetings, I have trouble believing _____
- I am practicing being open-minded by _____

- I am going to give recovery an honest effort by _____

- I accept who I am and can practice humility _____
- I am now starting to feel hopeful about _____
- I have made peace with the fact that _____
- Accepting my disease is necessary for continued recovery because _____
- I feel ready to move on to Step Two because _____

Step Two

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

Okay, now that you've ditched your illusions, here's the good news: there is hope. The insanity and pain in your life can be eliminated! The second step will help you fill a void and realize you can be healed. Admitting that your prior life was "insane" might seem extreme, but the Big Book defines insanity as "repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results." Remember how many times you told yourself. "This time will be different"? After you've said this (and it failed to prove true) for ten or twenty years, that qualifies as "insane." This is when you notice sanity returning, because you start to make better choices in your life. You start to think before you act.

This step is not about religion. Remember, I am not a religious person, so I am here to remind you that Step Two is not about religion. Although the program is spiritual in nature, it works for people who are atheist, agnostic, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, pagan, Gaian, alien, Mayan, or doorknob. It is whatever works for you. As you know, I discovered my higher power working with a teenager in New York City, and I declared from that moment on that this was how I personally defined the

higher power in the 12 steps. Our personal histories play a large role in the power we believe in, and rightly so. You can also take your time to define your higher power—you don't have to decide right now what that power will be.

Over time, you will choose your own power, preferably one that is loving and kind and that can help you stay sane and in recovery. Don't worry about who or what this power is. The group meetings are a good higher power in themselves, and so is the group of people within the meetings. As long as you understand that this power has the ability to restore you to sanity, and it is a power greater than you alone, it is a valid realization you can work with.

This is the step where you replace desperation with hope. If you're like me, you tried everything else before starting the 12 steps, and you may not be sure this will work, either. Yet while sitting in an AA meeting, you have met others who have the same disease that you have. You can trust them, because they've been where you've been, right? When you realize that they are staying clean and doing all right, you will start to feel hope. One day, during a meeting or after a meeting, this realization will knock you upside the head.

During the years to come, hope will be rejuvenated for you in this community. You will feel some painful moments, to be sure, but something hopeful will replace that pain. The pain will not be more than you can bear, and you will not go through it alone. Recovery, growth, change, and a greater sense of freedom are inevitable when you achieve this step. You will have no more secrets or isolation. Think about these topics as you work on Step Two:

- Today I feel hopeful about: _____
- I used to think I could control my drinking/drugging by _____

- I can't believe my addiction made me do this: _____
- My disease made me I overreact when I _____
- My addictive insanity told me I could solve all my problems by _____
- The mistake I most often keep repeating is _____
- Here are things that are more powerful than I am:

- My fears about believing in a higher power are _____

- Stories about power that I have heard from others in recovery include _____
- I can help build my belief in power over time by _____

- Here are signs that a power greater than me is working in my life: _____
- I need sanity right now in order to _____
- I need to stop doing these things in order to restore my sanity: _____
- Because sanity takes some time to achieve, here's what I will do when I get angry or frustrated in the meantime:

- In sobriety, I notice that one thing I no longer get insane about is _____
- I know that I can't recover alone, so I will be open-minded today about receiving help by _____
- My life has changed so far in recovery, which can be seen

- Here's a story I heard in a 12-step meeting that I have actually applied to my own life: _____
- I am now willing to do this, which I would never do before:

- Here's an action I took or a decision I made that demonstrates my sense of faith in my recovery: _____
- These are the fears I have in trusting in my sobriety:

- Here's something I can do to prove my trust in a power greater than myself: _____
- I can seek help from my higher power by _____
- When I have had enough humility to seek help from my sponsor or at meetings, this is what has happened: _____
- Today, this is what I can do to help myself "come to believe": _____

Step Three

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

In this step, "God as we understood Him" is the same thing as "higher power." Now, let's transform your sense of hope and trust into action. You may not understand the steps yet, and that's okay, but it's time to make a decision. You may not like making decisions all on your own, without the help of alcohol or drugs. Decisions require responsibility, and this is a big one, so it may take some time. You are not expected to make wholesale changes to your life all at once.

The third step suggests we turn our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding. This means we will allow someone or something to care for us but not control us. This is a decision about changing direction, to stop fighting against the natural flow of events in our lives, to stop trying to control everything ourselves. After all, we haven't done such a great job. We are accepting that a power greater than ourselves

will do it better. This is when you can explore what the word *God* means to you personally. Your understanding of “God” doesn’t have to be certain or complete or even resemble any other person’s definition. Maybe all you know is what God isn’t. Our goal here is to start a search for the meaning as it pertains to you. This definition may grow and change with time, but for now, let’s work with what we can.

If you hate making decisions, well, now’s the time to learn how to face them head on. Turn your life over to the God of your understanding, which is something I decide to do every single day. It’s a decision I make in my heart and spirit, if not always in my mind. It’s internal and natural to me now.

Making a decision means nothing unless we take action to affirm it. In the past, we simply followed our impulses and acted selfishly in our pursuit of drugs and alcohol, remaining isolated. We forgot we had a conscience, let alone a higher power. This isn’t about giving up on making personal goals. It’s about starting to consider what our higher power intends for us, starting with sobriety. Our concept of this Power may change over time, especially if we feel the need for more caring.

Also, you might find success in first turning over your destructive self-will. Not just your addiction, but your will. Then, gradually or quickly, you will turn over your life to that higher power. Your family, your finances, your work, your friendships, your children, your health—you must let it all go. The action you need to take may simply be making the declaration that you will turn over your will and your life to your higher power or will go to a meeting or will reach out to your sponsor. You often feel more willing after you experience the deepest despair. Use that pain to your advantage, and take action to commit to a Higher Power.

Hope is born when you start to see that life is full of possibilities. It can be a thrill when you begin to believe that you can

truly achieve your heart's desire. This builds faith and gives you courage to take more steps toward fulfillment. When you apply that faith, you start to build trust. Sometimes you have to "turn it over" repeatedly, and remind yourself every day of this mantra, even when you're having a lousy day. But it will give you freedom. Write down your thoughts to finish these sentences:

- I have acted on my self-will, excluding thought of all others, when I _____
- This is what makes me feel peaceful and makes it easier for me to remain _____
- My fears about making this decision, even just for today, are _____
- The areas of my life I have trouble "turning over" are _____
- The action I will take today to follow through with my decision is _____
- If I pursue what I want, will my goals hurt myself or anyone else? How? _____
- My own will was not enough to guide me, which proved true when _____
- When things are going well in recovery, I sometimes forget that it is from God's will and not my own, such as when _____
- I feel uncomfortable about the word or concept of "God" because _____
- Today, my understanding of a power greater than myself is _____
- I will try to communicate with my higher power today by _____
- This is how I feel about the God of my understanding: _____

- It is difficult to believe in any sort of God when things like this happen: _____
- I may not understand the higher power, but I will ask for acceptance and strength about _____
- My higher power has helped me confront fears and frustrations when _____
- My current higher power is not working as it should, so I will change it by _____
- My life will change when I turn it over to my higher power by _____
- I have trusted my higher power to care for my life when _____

- When I think about surrender and willingness, I _____

- I reinforce my decision to allow my higher power to care for my life when I _____
- I am willing to let recovery prevail in my life, and I can show it by _____
- To me, hope means _____
- To me, faith means _____
- To me, trust means _____
- I have seen proof of positive action when I _____

- Here is the evidence that I am confident in recovery: _____
- Recently, I demonstrated my commitment to recovery by _____

- My lingering reservations about turning over my will and my life to a higher power are _____
- I feel more courage now to do this: _____

Step Four

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

The reason you drink or use drugs is because you feel you are a “victim.” A victim of your parents, the courts, your boss, your girlfriend, your husband, whomever. You are drowning in self-pity. Yet there is no power in being a victim. The fourth step is about taking personal responsibility for your behavior, looking at your own role in this situation. This step shows you how to begin to find out who you are, how you can like yourself, and how you really can reach happiness and serenity, if you stop being a victim and empower yourself to change. Steps Four through Nine are the ones you will repeat over and over again in the years to come. Every time you do Step Four, you will discover more and deeper insights into who you are, as you get closer to that healthy core inside yourself. You might see another way that you’ve caused someone harm or another form of denial or addiction.

As you learn more about yourself, this step will bring you closer to a sort of spiritual awakening. This step is where you identify exactly what you did wrong, for the purpose of finding true freedom. You felt isolated, depressed, and confused long before you started drinking and drugging. Taking this sort of inventory lists all of the sources of your pain and personal conflicts and expunges them so that they no longer have any hold over your actions.

“Searching and fearless” are sweeping and ambitious words. You have to be fearless because it takes courage to be honest, even when you’d just as soon forget some of your most shameful transgressions. You have to make a seemingly endless list, even when you’re tired of thinking about things you did wrong. You have to maintain faith in the process and trust your higher power

to guide you through it. This step is one of the most difficult, because it requires a lot of work. Take your time. Do a little at a time. But do a little every day or every other day. Don't put it down for long. It is easy to avoid this, but give yourself permission to feel fear.

The word *moral* here refers to your own morals—not society's morals or someone else's code. It's your personal code. They are your personal values and principles. Many times, your resentments or fears are related to other people or an organization. Feel free to write whatever you need, but remember to bring it back to your role in the situation. Ask your sponsor for help.

Your inventories might reveal bad behavior patterns that need adjusting, a need to end relationships or let go of old resentments and anger. Most of us are afraid of change, even if it's ultimately for our own good. We're afraid to think about some things we've done in the past. We're afraid to learn just how much our addictions hurt us and others. We're afraid of more pain. We are afraid even to let go of fear.

Remember to incorporate the first three steps into this one: willingness, honesty, faith, and trust. Get a notebook or a computer or whatever you're comfortable with using to make a list. A long list! Find a private place, and ask your higher power for the ability to be searching and fearless. Write down old feelings that you can't forget or forgive, and think about the ways in which you set yourself up to be disappointed and hurt. Take breaks and talk with your sponsor throughout this step. These lists help you identify patterns of destructive behavior and will help release you from cycles of anger and self-destruction.

In addition to actually writing down your inventory, separately from this, think about these things while you work the fourth step. Some of these issues may not apply to you, but most of them do, in one way or another.

- My fears about working this step are _____
- Being searching and fearless, for me, means _____
- I can handle this inventory because I discussed it with _____
- The values and principles important to me are _____
- I resent the following people: _____
- The reasons are _____
- I resent these schools, employers, churches, or groups: _____
- The reasons are _____
- I acted the way I did because _____
- I developed resentments because I didn't want to believe _____
- My own role in causing these resentments was _____
- My resentments have affected my relationships with _____
- The recurring themes in my list of resentments are _____
- I have the most trouble letting myself feel _____
- I covered up how I really felt by _____
- I shut down my feelings because _____
- My feelings are triggered when I think about _____
- I acted the way I did in those situations because I _____
- Now that I have identified these feelings, I will _____

- I feel guilty or ashamed about _____
- Things I did that make feel guilty or ashamed include _____
- I acted that way because I believed _____
- I am afraid I'll be hurt when _____
- I'm afraid I will lose _____
- I am afraid of _____
- I have disguised my fear by _____
- The thing I fear most about exposing _____
- If I reveal this, I am afraid this will happen: _____
- My fear of being hurt has affected my relationships _____
- I compulsively seek relationships by _____
- The repeating dynamic for my family is _____
- I have avoided intimacy or commitment with partners and friends by _____
- I hurt someone because I was afraid he/she would hurt me first, when I _____
- In my relationships, I consider others' feelings as _____
- I set myself up as a victim when I was in a relationship with _____
- The patterns I see regarding my relationships with friends and neighbors are _____
- The patterns I see regarding my relationships with coworkers are _____
- I have had problems at work when _____
- My school friends make (or made) me feel _____

- My feelings about people in authority are _____
- I am a member of certain organizations, including _____

- Sometimes my expectations in relationships are not fulfilled because _____
- I feel shy sometimes because early experiences with trust and intimacy _____
- I ended a relationship that could have been salvaged when _____

- I am different person when I'm around _____
- I overcompensate by _____
- The most damaging aspects of my relationships are _____

- I can have healthier relationships if I _____
- My relationship with my Higher Power is _____
- I confused love with sex when I _____
- I used sex to avoid loneliness when I _____
- I am ashamed of my sexual behavior when I remember _____

- I am comfortable with my sexuality because _____

- I am comfortable with other people's sexuality, except _____

- To me, a healthy relationships means _____
- I was abused, when _____
- This is how I feel about the abuse: _____
- I will take these steps to ask my higher power for help and to restore myself to wholeness _____
- I feel ashamed about the time I abused someone, when I _____

- Right before I was abusive, I was thinking or feeling _____
- I will get through the painful aspects of this step by _____
- My best qualities are, in my opinion, _____
- Other people tell me that I am good at _____
- I show concern for others when I _____
- I practice my spiritual life when I _____
- My relationship with my sponsor is _____
- I have accomplished these goals: _____
- I am planning to reach these goals: _____
- I show my gratitude for my recovery when I _____
- I am committed to living by these values: _____
- Something that is hard for me to admit to in my inventory is _____
- I have not yet admitted to this secret: _____
- One story I frequently tell that is not really true is _____

Step Five

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

After Step Four, you should feel some sense of relief, but the hard part is not finished yet. Now you need to admit the nature of your wrongs—to God, to yourself, and to another person—by revealing the inventory from Step Four. You will feel more fear, perhaps, that you will be judged or rejected. Reading this list out loud to someone is not easy because it might stir up old feelings

from the past, may make them all seem too real. Yet by now you should see that others in recovery have survived this step. Others in recovery who have healthy relationships with friends and family gained the most benefits from Step Five.

This step will move you toward real change, whether you think you want it or not. You know you need to change. You will gain in courage and trust through this step, by working through your fears and making admissions. Ask your higher power for courage. Share your concerns with your sponsors or members of your recovery group. Move forward, despite your fears.

You may not understand the exact nature of your failings until you are finished with this step. Making your admission to another person will help you understand your failings. For most of us, that person is our sponsor. He or she will help you understand what you are truly responsible for and also what you are not responsible for. Your sponsor might also share with you from his or her own inventory, and you will learn that you are not unique. Of course, you may also choose someone else whom you trust, but your sponsor understands the process and may provide the greatest insight, without judgment. This step helps you be honest with yourself and develop further trust in someone else. Some of it will be painful, and you will want to shut down and not listen to what your sponsor says. Remember, though, that caving in to fear has not helped you in the past. Be courageous, because completing this step will change the course of your life. You were not great at commitment when you were drinking and drugging. This step will prove that you can stay committed.

Consider these topics:

- The fears I have at this point are _____
 - The first four steps prepared me for this by _____
-

- The God of my understanding means I will admit the nature of my wrongs to the higher power by _____
- I admitted my addiction when I started the First Step. Now I admit to my innermost self that _____
- This admission will change the direction of my life by _____
- I feel confident about whom I will admit these to, because that person is _____
- I will learn more about my inventory when I share it because _____
- I observe certain patterns in my behavior, such as _____
- The exact nature of my wrongs differs from my actions, in that _____
- This practice of trust makes me feel _____
- The fifth step will make my life better because _____
- I will work up the courage for this step by _____
- The time and place for admitting to another person is scheduled for _____
- Without using alcohol and drugs, I sense my feelings are different because _____
- I am a good person, right at this moment, because _____
- I am a good person now, in spite of _____
- After sharing my inventory, I feel a sense of _____
- After the fifth step, my relationship with my higher power _____
- My view of myself has changed _____
- This step has exhausted me, but now I feel ready to _____

Step Six

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

By now, you should be developing a stronger sense of hope, and you’re probably feeling somewhat humble—“humility” means you are able to see yourself more clearly. You’ve learned how the defects in your character have harmed yourself and other people. You have identified patterns in your behavior that compensate for your defects. This step enables you to eliminate your defects, and you may feel motivated to plow right through.

As with other steps, however, this one takes a while. You may be impatient to remove these defects, but you still need to be ready. This step requires you to study just how this will happen. If only a higher power can remove these defects, then what role can you play in the process? You still must confront your fear of change and step into the unknown once these defects are gone. Some of these defects are things you considered “survival skills,” after all. What if you lose your job or turn into a boring person? What if there is nothing left after all of your defects have been removed? These are normal thoughts during this step. No one is perfect, after all. Writing your thoughts on these topics will help you with this step:

- Some of my defects are things I sort of like about myself, such as _____
- The parts of me that will be removed are _____
- I have been through the sixth step before, and I find this defect is still with me: _____
- I believe this defect can be removed by _____
- I have changed already in these other ways: _____
- In stressful situations, I will avoid my defects by _____
- I will get help dealing with my recurring defects by _____

- When I try to control my defects myself, the results are _____
- Instead of suppressing my defects, I will have my higher power remove them by _____
- I can take action to show that I am ready by _____
- I will not analyze my defects but will raise my awareness of them by _____
- I will find love not by using my defects but by _____
- When I practice one of my character defects, it is because I am feeling _____
- I can live without this defect by instead doing _____
- When I slip back into a character defect, I won't despair. I will _____
- Today I showed my commitment to recovery by _____
- Today I am willing to be honest, even when I _____
- I am not ready to have my character defects removed today _____
- I will get out of my own way to let the Higher Power in, when I _____
- I am still afraid that _____
- I will not be too critical with myself about _____
- I have increased by trust in God by _____
- Today I am proud of myself, for I wish I were more _____
- I would like to think about others more, so I will _____
- When I can stop worrying about all of the lies I have told in the past, I will spend more time on _____
- I now see myself in the future as doing these things: _____

Step Seven

“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

It probably seems as if the 12 steps do a lot of overlapping, but there are reasons for this blended process. In Step Six, you were ready for the removal of character defects; in Step Seven, you will become spiritually prepared to ask your higher power to remove them. Part of the preparation means learning what “humbly” means. You also have to learn how to replace the character defects with spiritual principles.

Humility serves a purpose in your life. Please remember that it bears no relation to humiliation or worthlessness. Humility is your humanity. Humility is the healthy part of you that is left after you strip away the traits of addiction: denial, ego, manipulation, lies, and games. You have learned how well you can control your own life, in sobriety. Perhaps you now recognize that kindness is not the same thing as weakness. By now, you’ve realized that it’s totally acceptable for you to show your feelings. You started these steps feeling misunderstood, self-pity, and defensiveness, but now you see how you actually created your own misery yourself. You have wasted many opportunities and made some bad choices.

With humility, you allow yourself to feel some compassion for yourself. You’re not perfect. No one is. Even normal people make bad decisions once in a while. You’re doing your very best now. You are making connections with other people and admitting your failings.

There are many ways to think of your higher power, including as God. I consider these words interchangeable, so do not be alarmed by my reference to God. It is what you believe it is, regardless of what it is called. By the same token, the ritual you use to communicate with your higher power is often referred to as “prayer.” You may call it whatever you like, but it is helpful to

learn to understand “prayer” when it is used in this context. Ask others in recovery how they “pray” to their higher powers. Do not attempt to remove your shortcomings on your own; it won’t work.

You will make this request of your higher power more than once. In fact, you will ask it repeatedly, for the rest of your life. It’s not a hard thing to do. Then, get out of the way. It will take some time to see the results of this step, but stay out of your own way.

- The healthy parts of myself that I now recognize are _____

- Humility affects my recovery by _____
- My relationship with the God of my understanding is now _____

- My higher power can do more for me than simply help me stay sober. My higher power can _____
- My ritual for communicating with my higher power—my act of “prayer”—is _____
- I will ask my higher power to remove my shortcomings by _____

- I will invite my higher power to work in my life by _____

- I will maintain awareness of my higher power by remembering to _____
- Knowing that my higher power is caring for me makes me feel _____
- I have accepted my powerlessness over my addictions, as well as over my _____
- My feelings about surrender now are _____
- In order to avoid impatience with this step, I will _____
- I recently took advantage of an opportunity for growth when I _____

- I will avoid thinking of myself as too powerful by _____
- I feel I have become a better person because _____

- I feel I am a different person since I started the steps because _____
- The shortcomings that have been removed or lessened in my life are _____
- My life feels more spiritual because _____
- To nourish my spiritual life, I _____

Step Eight

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

Now that you have started to repair yourself and develop a relationship with your higher power, it is time to bring other people into your healing. These are people you love, people you don't love, people you don't even see anymore, people you harmed on purpose or by accident, old friends and family, and new friends as well. This is about identifying damage that you may have caused—not figuring out why you hurt someone or whether you intended to cause hurt; just whether identifying that you hurt someone, period. It is possible that damage you caused to others is beyond repair or that you were not actually responsible, even though you believe you are. Simply identify the injury and who it affected, and decide whether you are now willing to make amends. Many of these situations might be the same ones you identified in previous steps, but this is a new angle from which to work through them.

This step does not require you to make the amends, only to become willing to do so. It is enough, in this step, to make a list

of people, including those to whom you may have already made amends. Many family members and coworkers are probably already pleased that you have stopped drinking or using drugs, so that damage may already be in repair. Yet this isn't really about being willing to apologize. This step is about being willing to change. Conversations with people you have hurt are a powerful means of spiritual growth for you, as much as they might also comfort others. This step is about letting you feel equal to other people, instead of feeling inferior or shameful. You will address your responsibilities, and then you will be free.

Discuss this step with your sponsor (as with all steps), who will help you identify what was harmful in your past. Some harmful behaviors are more subtle than others, of course. Maybe you're not even sure whether you caused harm to anyone or exactly what kind of harm you may have caused. If you are unsure, include that person on your list anyway, because you might recall the details later. Sometimes you did something harmful but are not sure who exactly was harmed by it. If as a student you cheated on a test, you harmed other students and your teacher, as well as yourself, so you all belong on the list. Losing an old friendship, even though you're not sure why it happened: this belongs on your list. Include people who offered to help you, but you rebuffed them. Add to your list the people you railed at in the rehab center.

This is not about running around apologizing to everyone you know. Your sponsor will help you consider what to do about confessing "too much" to your loved ones. Sometimes confirming a marital infidelity or a criminal activity will only cause further harm, which is not the goal. In addition, some of these people also harmed you. This is the step where you must set aside blame and resentment. This step helps you reach forgiveness, for them and for yourself.

You might be tempted to avoid this step, because you may not want to talk to some of these people. Write down as many names as you can remember. Your sponsor will help you decide on the best approach for each one. He or she will also provide support and encouragement. It may help to think about the following:

- I will slow down and discuss with my sponsor whether I should make amends for _____
- I feel resentful about making amends for _____
- I will make amends for the harm I caused myself by _____
- I am willing to make amends now because I have faith that _____
- I am less willing to make amends about _____
- I will pay the money I owe to _____
- I will forgive and make amends even for _____
- My experience with honesty in the previous steps has shown me that I can _____
- It is important to accept responsibility for the harm I caused because _____
- The higher power will give me these things to help me become willing to make amends: _____
- I am afraid that _____
- These are the names I wasn't willing to put on the list at first, but now I will: _____
- Today I observed a character defect in someone else, and I felt _____
- I am feeling more connected to _____
- I feel more compassion and empathy for _____

Step Nine

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

This step would simply not be possible until you have completed the first eight. How on earth could you possibly sit down with all of the people you've hurt, unless you were this well prepared? But you are ready now: you have a relationship with a higher power, you understand your personal responsibility, and you have developed humility and willingness. Now you should strengthen your self-awareness and sense of forgiveness, because you will need them throughout this step.

Step Nine is not achieved in a specific time period. Many of you will complete it, or you might continue making amends for years. You will also spend years making even more amends to your loved ones, simply by practicing your newly acquired spiritual principles. Even after you pay off your debts, you have other “debts” to consider, such as personal favors from friends and coworkers and avoiding future debts. This list may never end, and that's okay.

If you've done Step Nine before, you might feel a little hesitant, remembering what you went through the last time you did this. Most of you probably had some positive experiences with this step already, but not all everyone you've hurt has a positive reaction and offers you instant forgiveness. However, it is not your job to predict how you will be received. It is merely an opportunity to repair what you damaged in the course of your disease, so that you can lay old problems to rest. If someone you hurt also hurt you, you are not making amends for both of you—only for your part. Asking forgiveness also requires acts of forgiveness on your part. It's about resolution, restoration, and restitution.

Working with your sponsor will help you stay focused and help you decide whether to make amends face-to-face with someone or in some other way. Your sponsor will help you determine whether some amends will cause more harm than good and should not be made. You might also seek legal counsel, if you have committed a crime, and weigh such effects on your loved ones. Some people to whom you owe amends may have long passed away, in which case you might contact their children or make a donation to an appropriate charity. Each situation in your life is different, and your conversations will guide you in understanding what to do, either directly or indirectly.

Of course, you have a huge amount of fear that the damage cannot be repaired, and, in some cases, it may not be. But you will free yourself of the burdens, and this process will change you for the better, despite the painful moments. You will start to feel lighter, freer, and maybe even ecstatic that you are able to heal some old hurts. You have proved your humility and your commitment to in a better life.

- Humility helps me in this step by _____
- Making amends, to me, means _____
- Making amends is a further commitment to change because _____
- I am preparing for this step by _____
- I am looking forward to making amends to _____

- I am fearful about making amends to _____
- I have faith that I can pay off financial amends because _____

- My expectations about making amends are _____
- If my amends are not well-received by someone, I will _____

- Some of the names on my amends list are complicated situations because _____
- Amends I make that could have very serious consequences are _____
- I owe amends to someone who has passed away, so I will think of a unique way to make amends for that by _____
- When I can't find someone on my amends list, I will _____
- When someone tells me that he or she cannot or will not forgive me, I will _____
- I feel much lighter after making amends to _____
- I felt the effects of someone's feelings other than my own when I made amends to _____
- I am having trouble finding forgiveness for _____
- I will wait a longer time to make amends to _____
- I realize now that I played a role in my own misery when I felt hurt by _____
- I can see now how I was hurt inadvertently by someone else who had problems when _____
- I know my Higher Power forgives my actions because _____
- I felt pretty awful after I made amends to _____
- I won't lose hope if I receive a bad reaction because _____
- I feel my freedom growing with this step, because _____
- I will follow through with certain amends, such as _____

- Remembering what I did will prevent me from ever doing this again: _____
- I feel less angry and more forgiving about _____
- Instead of carrying around guilt and resentment, I will start to do this more: _____
- I will further make amends to myself by planning a goal to _____
- I felt the hurt when I heard this while making amends to someone: _____
- I didn't realize how much hurt I had caused when I _____
- I feel more love now because _____
- I give to myself now, and to others, when I _____
- I am less judgmental of others because _____
- I realize I trust more people now because I _____
- I forgive myself for _____
- I feel less obsessed now about _____
- Making amends to others makes me feel _____
- Step Nine has taught me that _____
- I can share this story with others as a good example of Step Nine: _____

Step Ten

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

By now, you are probably feeling different. Maybe you feel less angry, more honest, more concerned about others, but these changes are not guaranteed to stay with you. You have to be

vigilant and continue to ask yourself how you react to things, how much faith you still feel. You are probably more aware of how your actions affect others, and perhaps you pay more attention to how other people react to you. If you sense you've done something that hurt someone, now you may feel a natural instinct to step up and admit your mistakes right away.

You might need to focus on certain difficulties, and this step will help you identify them. As you continue to take a personal inventory, you may confront new challenges that arise during your recovery. You are simply more aware of everything you do and see. You assess your feelings and tie them to particular events or actions. Perhaps you feel crappy, even though you are doing pretty well overall. Maybe you're avoiding some difficult steps or indulging in some old behavior. Maybe you feel angry about something, and you are doing your best to suppress it, because you know it's not a good feeling. You still have a right to get angry about something or sad or confused; don't ignore this feeling. Take a positive action to remedy it, or get out of the situation entirely. Or, instead of suppressing a negative feeling, see if you can simply let the feeling go.

Points of confusion may be clarified and remedied by conversations with your sponsor. The goal here is simply to stay aware, to stay balanced, to focus on positive things, instead of negative ones, and not to be hard on yourself. This ritual will become second nature to you, over time. You won't sit down and make a list every day, but you will pay attention, which will make you feel better.

- I am confused about my feelings and my actions when _____
- I recently admitted I was wrong when _____
- I am trying to be less rigid in my new attitude by _____
- I am less demanding of others when I _____

- When someone says something hurtful to me, I _____

- I made a mistake when _____
- When I am wrong, it affects _____
- I can't identify what I did wrong when _____
- It's hard not to blame the other person for my wrong when _____

- I have accumulated new wrongs recently, such as _____

- But I am grateful for _____
- I made the problem worse when I talked immediately to _____

- When I promptly admit my wrongs, I change my behavior by _____
- When I take my personal inventory, I notice positive things, too, such as _____
- I stopped insisting I was right when _____
- My new life in recovery is _____
- I feel uncomfortable about acknowledging that I now do this well: _____
- Today I took a personal inventory and _____
- I will correct or maintain this by _____
- Today I reaffirmed my faith in my higher power when I _____

- I was of service to other people today when I _____

- I saw some old patterns in my life today, and I _____
- I felt fear about _____
- I am taking myself less seriously about _____
- Today I am feeling _____

- I am willing to change because _____
- Today I wish I had _____
- I felt conflict when _____
- I owe amends to _____
- I would have done this differently: _____
- I will remember to do this again: _____
- Today I talked about my recovery with _____
- I feel good about _____
- I did not take my usual "easy way out" today when _____

- I was tired today, but still I _____
- The last time I went to a meeting _____
- My self-honesty is helping me _____
- I am amazed at how honest I am about _____
- It is hard for me to maintain integrity when _____

- I change the subject when _____
- I felt bad about my reaction when _____
- The tenth step has helped my relationships by _____

- I feel a sense of community with _____
- It feels natural to admit my wrongs, because _____

- I feel as valuable as anyone else now, because _____

- I act differently now when I _____
- I live in the present more easily now, because _____

- I feel more harmony when _____
- I have found more meaning and purpose _____

Step Eleven

“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.”

“God as we understood Him”: remember, that’s your higher power, no matter what you call him or her or it. This higher power, this God as you understand Him, is an entity with which you have already made a conscious contact. You developed awareness of, and learned to trust, your higher power in earlier steps. You called on this entity to help you through some difficult stages. This step teaches you to reach out to that entity, in what is referred to as prayer and meditation. If you don’t like those words, please find a way to work around them, or call these communications whatever you prefer. But prayer and meditation are what will strengthen your connection to this higher power and keep you on a spiritual path of great fulfillment. Members of AA refer to “prayer” when they mean talking to your higher power and to “meditation” when listening to your higher power.

Your path is uniquely your own and always will be. It depends on what religion or traditions you practice, where you live, what you do, and what you believe. Because you have changed a great deal in the course of your recovery, you may need to make adjustments for a changing spiritual life as well. It is an enjoyable experience, to explore your spiritual path. If you find something you don’t like or can’t accept, then move along down a different path. You will encounter new people and new ideas and possibly be astounded by things you learn. No matter how long you have lived in a particular religious or cultural setting, the steps in recovery will cause a shift in spirituality, and you should be flexible about following where it leads. You will learn new things about yourself along the way, and that may be the most amazing part of it all.

Remember, spirituality is not the same as religion. This is about spiritual principles and relying on a power greater than ourselves, whether that power is God, Allah, Mother Nature, or an AA group. Discovering your spiritual path is up to you, and it can't always be found in religious institutions. That is why this is always a new journey in recovery. Talk with people, read books, discuss this with your sponsor. Your path will come into focus, even if you change course a few times. There is no hurry. Enjoy the journey, and one day your higher power will knock you on the head, clear as day.

- My ideas about a higher power/God have been changing _____
- I feel the presence of my higher power when _____
- I now understand about my higher power that _____
- My higher power is _____
- I have felt the transformative power of this God when _____
- The spiritual path of my childhood was _____
- Now my spiritual path is _____
- I feel that my higher power cares for me because _____
- I now have an open mind about _____
- I am going to try new paths of spirituality, such as _____
- My path is _____
- I explore my spirituality when I _____
- I have confidence in my path, even though I'm not sure where it will lead, because _____
- My spiritual journey helps my recovery by _____

- I encourage the spiritual exploration of others, even if I don't understand it, because _____
- I maintain contact with my group members, even if my spiritual path is different, because _____
- My spirituality has helped me in fellowship with others by _____
- Even with my higher power, I need my group meetings in order to _____
- When I work with newcomers, I advise them about their higher powers by saying _____
- My spiritual path has contributed to my recovery by _____
- The forms of prayer that I use are _____
- In my prayers, I ask God to help me _____
- When I pray, I feel _____
- Praying helps me put in perspective things such as _____
- In moments of silence, I _____
- Prayers at group meetings make me feel _____
- I quiet my mind by _____
- I am open to meditation when _____
- After meditation, I feel that my decisions are _____
- Meditation has helped me _____
- I am conscious of my higher power when _____
- I see how the higher power works in my life when _____
- In hard times, my higher power _____
- I work to improve my contact with higher power by _____

- God's will for me is _____
- God's will for me is not _____
- I go along with the will of my higher power when I _____

- When I set goals, I let in my higher power so that _____

- If I am honest about who I am, then my higher power _____

- I know I am living God's will for me when _____

- I think that God's will for me _____
- I feel I have the power to carry out God's will when _____

- Being assertive is okay when _____
- It is good to be cautious when _____
- I have a sense of humor about the times God shows me _____

- I have a commitment to prayer and meditation _____

- I feel most comfortable when I pray _____
- I am sometimes confused about _____
- I feel peace of mind when _____
- Today I meditated and _____
- I once prayed for and then regretted it when _____
- Some of my family members seem to wish that my recovery _____

- These things have changed in my life since I started my spiritual journey: _____
- The choices I make now are _____
- I defend my faith when _____

- I am no longer afraid of _____
- I have received from my higher power _____
- When I listen to other people now, I _____
- I look at my addiction now as _____

Step Twelve

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

Your personal spiritual awakening is unlike anyone else's. Yet in your group meetings, you may hear others talk about having similar reactions: feeling free, caring more about other people, and participating in life more fully. To other people, your enlightenment may seem unbelievable. Your friends and family tell you that you seem like another person. You remember where you started from, and even you barely recognize your old self. This change took a lot of time. Indeed, you are still on the path of spiritual awakening and always on the road in recovery. You have slowly built a relationship with a higher power, which provides inspiration for further growth.

One day, when you work the steps all over again, you will have a different experience. You will then recognize meaning in actions that you didn't see before. But having completed the steps for the first time is a tremendous achievement. You are more honest, now, more willing, and your spiritual awakening continues to grow. You may not even think about drinking or using drugs anymore. Can you even believe it? It was one miracle to stay clean and sober, and then, on top of that, you gained self-respect, made new friends, helped other people, and paid old debts. Along the way, someone somewhere gave you a reason to

believe it could happen. Maybe it was a stranger at a meeting, your sponsor, the love of your family, or your higher power.

You will still encounter challenges in life. You may lose faith when bad things happen, but it will come back. You will receive messages of motivation when you need them, if you hang in and remain open to them. You can stay in recovery as long as you have hope. Now, you should carry that message, the one that saved you, by sharing it with others who need it. "We can only keep what we have by giving it away." Go to meetings, take on a service position, or become a sponsor for a new member. Sharing your message might become a challenge, because certain people aren't always ready to listen.

- My spiritual awakening is _____
- I have seen lasting changes in myself, such as _____

- I feel fellowship when I _____
- I carry this message to others who need it by _____

- I am sponsoring someone but _____
- I will carry the message another way when I fail, such as _____

- I get my ego out of the way when I _____
- When I see another addict or alcoholic behaving destructively, I _____
- I remain available when I _____
- Something I heard early in recovery that didn't make sense to me until much later was _____
- Even if I have had a terrible day, there's a positive message to carry, such as _____
- I go to my group meetings regularly because _____

- Other group members, like me, are _____
- I feel accepted because _____
- I connect with other recovering addicts and alcoholics because _____
- One example of another person's story that helped me is _____
- I practice the principles of recovery when I _____
- I practice compassion when I _____
- When someone I know relapses, I _____
- I give others the benefit of the doubt, such as _____
- When I feel an old urge to control a situation, instead I switch to trust and then _____
- When I start to feel self-righteous, I switch to a principle of humility by _____
- I find it difficult to practice the principles when _____
- I need to spend more time working on _____
- I feel that unconditional love is _____
- I will carry the message when _____
- When I perform selfless service, I feel _____
- When I have a setback, the principle of steadfastness _____
- Today I am grateful for _____
- I plan to revisit Step One when _____
- I feel good about _____
- Now I feel as if I can do something I couldn't do before, such as _____
- I will express my gratitude by _____