

THE RECOVERY
PATH- FROM
ADDICTION TO
HOPE

William J McRea

Copyright © 2022 Bill McRea

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 9798835124749

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the countless number of people that suffer from addictions. Many people suffer in silence or are afraid to seek out solutions. We hope this book finds its way into their hands so they can see that there is a Recovery Path in front of them. Many people find themselves in a profoundly depressed state due to their addictions and there are ways to live your life, so you have the joy you were meant to have. We dedicate this book to helping everyone find that

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	6
CHAPTER 1.....	9
CHAPTER 2.....	26
CHAPTER 3.....	37
CHAPTER 4.....	54
CHAPTER 5.....	63
CHAPTER 6.....	82
CHAPTER 7.....	103
CHAPTER 8.....	112
CHAPTER 9.....	120
CHAPTER 10.....	127

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We dedicated this book to those who suffer from addictions, but we would be remiss not to acknowledge those people and organizations that have helped the writer of this book find joy and serenity. Many people find sobriety through the organization AA and they are a wonderful organization that has served millions of people and been of great comfort and solution for many addicts. The Recovery Pathway outlined in this book is largely based upon the AA 12 steps.

We have modified the steps to accentuate the importance of the spiritual aspect of recovery. This was inspired by the group Celebrate Recovery. Celebrate Recovery takes the 12 steps, includes the biblical comparatives, and provides the group and social interaction needed to overcome addictions. Without Celebrate Recovery the author of this book would not be sober.

We would also like to acknowledge the support and dedication of

many fine churches around the world, But mostly the Community Bible Church (aka **CBC**) in San Antonio TX. **CBC** is an amazing church with many wonderful pastors and ministries that helped people. Pastor Ed Newton and Frank Kirby have been powerful sources of inspiration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William (Bill) McRea was born in Butte Mt in 1962 lived in California for 40 years and now resides in Texas. Bill has degrees in agricultural science and accounting and finance from the University of California at Davis. Bill and his father started a company in 1976 that focused on agricultural supplies in California. Ultimately that company grew to be nationwide, and Bill served as Vice President and then Chief Executive Officer until the company was restructured and the agricultural components sold off during the early 2000s. Bill continues to operate this business now in the field of software development, lead generation, and marketing. Bill is also the founder and managing director of the Recovery Path Charities.

Bill struggled with alcohol addiction for many years ultimately resulting in a near-death experience in 2015. That experience led Bill to renew his Christian faith and become very involved in helping other people overcome addictions. Bill discovered Celebrate Recovery in 2017. By the spring of 2018, he attained sobriety. Since that time, he has worked as a sponsor with many struggling alcoholics, drug and sex addicts. It is through this process, and continuing education from Celebrate Recovery, that he has dedicated his life to helping people who struggle with addictions find sobriety. Bill founded and funded the Recovery Path Charities whose sole purpose is to reach out and find people struggling with addiction and share with them the Recovery Path.

CHAPTER 1

OVERCOMING ADDICTION THROUGH 12 STEPS OF RECOVERY

Addiction is characterized by a great yearning for something, a lack of control over its use, and continued participation with it despite negative effects. Addiction alters the brain, first by altering how it registers pleasure and subsequently by distorting other basic impulses like learning and motivation. Although overcoming an addiction is difficult, it is possible. Addiction has a lasting and profound effect on the brain, manifesting itself in three ways: a strong desire for the object of addiction, a lack of control over its use, and a willingness to engage in it despite negative consequences.

For many years, scientists believed that only strong drugs and alcohol could create addiction. However, neuroimaging technology and recent study have revealed that behaviors, such as gambling, and shopping may also impact the brain.

All pleasures are registered in the same way by the brain, regardless of whether they result from a psychoactive substance, a monetary incentive, a sexual experience, or a nice meal. Pleasure has a particular imprint on the brain: dopamine is released in the nucleus accumbens, a collection of nerve cells underneath the cerebral cortex. The nucleus accumbens dopamine release is so closely linked to pleasure that neuroscientists refer to it as the brain's pleasure center.

From nicotine to heroin, all drugs of abuse generate a particularly intense rush of dopamine in the nucleus accumbens. The risk that using a substance or engaging in a pleasurable activity will lead to addiction is directly related to the rate at which it stimulates dopamine release, the strength of that release, and the consistency with which that release occurs.

Even administering the same medicine in various ways might affect how probable it is to develop an addiction. Smoking or injecting a drug intravenously, instead of ingesting it as a pill, provides a faster, stronger dopamine signal and is more likely to lead to drug abuse. By flooding the nucleus accumbens with

dopamine, addictive substances bypass the brain's reward mechanism. The amygdala generates a conditioned reaction to particular stimuli, whereas the hippocampus stores memories of this immediate sensation of fulfillment.

Previously, scientists assumed that the sense of pleasure alone was sufficient to keep people from pursuing an addictive chemical or activity. A recent study, however, reveals that the issue is more nuanced. Dopamine not only adds to the pleasure experience but also plays a function in learning and memory, two important factors in the shift from appreciating something to getting addicted to it.

According to contemporary addiction theories, dopamine combines with another neurotransmitter, glutamate, to take over the brain's reward-related learning system. This system is critical to life's existence because it connects behaviors necessary for human survival (such as eating and shopping) with pleasure and reward.

The reward circuit in the brain contains parts of the brain

involved in motivation, memory, and pleasure. Substances and behaviors that are addictive excite the same course—and then overwhelm it. When we are repeatedly exposed to an addictive drug or action, nerve cells in the nucleus accumbens and the prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain involved in planning and executing tasks) interact in a way that links enjoying something with desiring it, prompting us to seek it out. That is, this process encourages us to behave to find the source of our enjoyment.

Over time, the brain adjusts in such a manner that the desired drug or activity becomes less enjoyable. In nature, the only way to get a reward is to put in the time and effort. Addictive medicines and behaviors give a quick fix, filling the brain with dopamine and other neurotransmitters. Our brains do not have a simple mechanism to deal with the bombardment.

Addictive medicines, for example, can produce two to ten times the amount of dopamine than natural rewards do, and they do so faster and more consistently. Brain receptors get overloaded in an addicted person. When noise becomes excessively loud, the brain responds by creating less dopamine

or deleting dopamine receptors, which is analogous to dialing down the volume on a loudspeaker.

Dopamine has less of an influence on the brain's reward center as a result of these adjustments. Addicts generally discover that the desired substance no longer provides them with the same level of pleasure over time. Because their brains have evolved, they must take more of it to achieve the same dopamine "high." This is known as tolerance. Compulsion takes hold at this moment. The pleasure associated with an addictive drug or action fades, but the memory of the intended result and the urge to repeat it (the craving) endure. It's as though the typical motivational machinery has stopped working.

Cravings not only lead to addiction but also relapse after a period of abstinence. A heroin addict may be at risk of relapse if he sees a hypodermic needle, but another individual may begin drinking again if he sees a bottle of whiskey. Conditioned learning explains why people who acquire an addiction are in danger of relapsing even after years of sobriety.

Do You Suffer From An Addiction?

It is not always easy to determine whether you have an addiction. Admitting it is also difficult, owing to the stigma and humiliation associated with addiction. However, admitting the problem is the first step toward rehabilitation. If you respond "yes" to any of the following three questions, you may have an addiction issue and should, at the very least, visit a health care specialist for additional assessment and advice.

- Do you use the drug or participate in the action more frequently than you used to?
- Do you experience withdrawal symptoms when you stop using the substance or engaging in the behavior?
- Have you ever lied to someone about your drug usage or the breadth of your behavior?

The Spiritual Principles of Recovery: 12

Ways to Put Them into Action Every Day

The spiritual principles of recovery are a roadmap to

fulfillment and strength in recovery that correlate to the original 12 steps of 12-step recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Celebrate Recovery (CR), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Gamblers Anonymous, and others. These principles are given out as a guideline for people seeking spiritual growth and personal development while navigating the waters of addiction recovery. Addiction treatment in a 12-step program necessitates honesty, openness, and willingness.

The rehabilitation process, as described by organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, and Narcotics Anonymous is a continual way of life since addiction is a disease with no cure. The approach to treating your addiction as an illness, according to 12-step organizations, is to follow the principles and knowledge passed down by previous alcoholics and addicts who have successfully maintained their recovery. Above all, the 12 Steps of AA believe that if you mimic the drive, consistency, and unwavering devotion of those who have gone before you in the 12 Step Model, you, too, will be successful in recovery.

Spiritual principles of recovery are guiding concepts that teach us the value of things like patience and thankfulness to heal ourselves from the inside out. People in recovery may easily apply these ideas since they frequently need to remind themselves that their mission as addicts and alcoholics is to better themselves and grow closer to God, not only keep away from drugs and alcohol. The way to recovery is to use the 12 spiritual principles of recovery, as well as the 12 steps and help from other alcoholics or addicts who have succeeded in creating and sustaining a sober lifestyle. In effect, addiction is both a biological and spiritual disease and should be treated as such.

Acceptance, hope, faith, bravery, honesty, patience, humility, willingness, brotherly love, integrity, self-discipline, and service are the 12 spiritual principles of recovery. The following are the spiritual principles of recovery, outlined in chronological sequence with the relevant step:

Step 1: Acceptance.

Step 2: Hope.

Step 3: Faith.

Step 4: Have Courage

Step 5: Be Honest

Step 6: Patience.

Step 7: Be humble.

Step 8: Be Willing

Step 9: Brotherly Love.

Step 10: Integrity

Step 11: Self-discipline

Step 12: Serve.

Individuals are supposed to implement each principle as they move through the 12 Steps, taking the time to reflect on the purpose behind the practice and how it might improve their life in recovery. Furthermore, 12-step support groups frequently engage in mantras, or prayers, that align their aims and desires

in sobriety and aid them in managing everyday challenges. For best results, you should implement these prayers into your daily spiritual rituals. They can and do support your efforts to become sober.

Whether you follow a monotheistic religion like Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, a non-theistic religion like Buddhism or Taoism, or are agnostic or atheistic, spirituality is an important element of your recovery journey.

Having stated that, most people have a tough time prioritizing their spiritual health, and their focus often wanders away from spiritual upkeep as life's distractions consume their time. Remember every day should begin with some sort of spiritual ritual that keeps you focused on humility and purpose. If you're having trouble with your spiritual well-being, here are 12 ways you may put the spiritual principles of recovery into practice every day:

Recovery Acceptance

Things may not go as planned several times throughout the

day. When you've just missed the bus to work or the workplace has run out of coffee, practice acceptance. Acceptance is by far one of the most beneficial concepts to employ.

Change Is Possible

Hope may help you in times of need, hardship, or misery. Sit quietly for a few minutes and express your hope that everything will turn out as it should. If things don't work out, remember that you'll be OK. Remember all battles are won before they even begin. Once you've uncovered the power of your spiritual self you will understand

Belief in a Higher Power

Praying, meditation, communicating to your higher power, and other forms of faith practice are all examples of faith practice. Faith is putting one's hope in a force higher than oneself. While your higher power may differ from the offer, who is Christian, it's important to practice your faith daily.

The Will to Persist

Stand up for what you believe in today, whether it's creating a boundary or addressing your supervisor about an idea you have. It might be frightening to practice bravery, but it is also rewarding. Using your own will to overcome addiction will not work. Later on you will learn how to surrender your will to your higher power.

Relationship Integrity

It is rather simple to practice honesty. Today, practice honesty by not lying, hiding up the truth, sugar-coating it, or leaving anything out. Did you arrive at work five minutes late? Accept it. Do you adore your friend's outfit? Tell the truth to them. To be honest, the more you practice it, the simpler it becomes.

Patience for others

Take a long, deep breath and exhale instead of blaring your horn at the automobile in front of you. Patience is a virtue.

Stubbornness replaced with humility

Rather than fighting about how you're right (even if you know you're wrong), exhibit humility by apologizing for your mistakes. It may feel like a defeat at first, but you will feel better about yourself and how you treat people thereafter. Humility used to seem like a weakness, but once you approach life this way you gain power and authority over your life and choices.

Willingness to change

Say yes to that after-work yoga session with a coworker to practice willingness. We are often eager to state that we want something, but we are hesitant to make the necessary changes to obtain it. Demonstrate your willingness by demonstrating that you are willing to do anything to get favorable results!

Strangers' Brotherly Love

Practicing brotherly love may be as simple as assisting a neighbor with their food shopping. Brotherly love may be demonstrated by doing anything from holding the door for someone to assisting someone in need.

Life Integrity

Integrity is defined as honesty combined with a firm set of moral principles. Today, practice integrity by refusing to compromise your ideals in any scenario. Did the clerk give you an additional \$10 by mistake? By saying anything, you may demonstrate your honesty. Is your coworker asking you to extend your lunch break by 20 minutes? Say no because you should only make decisions based on your principles. Simple changes like these empower you to better cope with bigger situations.

Self-discipline is a Relapse Prevention Strategy

Be a decent person when no one is looking to practice self-discipline. Have you had a difficult day at work and want to cancel plans with sober support so you can crash on the couch for the night? Have the fortitude to do what is best for you and your rehabilitation, regardless of how you feel. Do you have the luxury of being sluggish at work since your boss is away for the day? Practice self-discipline by performing the task regardless

of who is watching you. Remember your sobriety is the most important choice you make on a daily basis. Discipline will keep you focused on the correct choices and practices.

Giving Back Through Service

One of the spiritual foundations of recovery that many individuals in recovery claim as the one that keeps them sober is service. You can practice service by chatting to someone who is struggling, assisting your old neighborhood in sorting through their photos, or by providing advice to someone who is hurting, and so on.

Serving in AA, CR or NA might be as simple as putting up chairs for a meeting, pouring coffee, or assisting with cleanup. You may also go old school and undertake community work to demonstrate your appreciation for the community in which you reside. Service opportunities abound!

There are various spiritual concepts of recovery, and they all emphasize, among other things, being someone of integrity. These spiritual principles correlate to each of the 12

stages of AA and NA, and programs based on the 12-step model require you to apply these concepts in all aspects of your life. As a result, spiritual concepts assist you in not only abstaining from alcohol and drugs but also in becoming a better person. Personal development is an important aspect of healing. Working on a 12-step recovery can help with this progress! Self-awareness is the first step in becoming a better person. Self-awareness begins with reminding yourself of your objectives and the person you want to be. This should be done daily. As a result of practicing these spiritual concepts, we evolve into the best versions of ourselves. As a result, if we follow the 12-step plan and spread the wellness messages that have helped other alcoholics stay sober, we will be able to stay sober as well. In reality, the last phase refers to spiritual awakening!

Prayer for Serenity

The Serenity Prayer is the prayer spoken at the end of each Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting and should be part of your daily spiritual routine. The prayer's objective is to act

as a daily reminder of the connection between inner serenity and abstinence from substance abuse. Acceptance on a minute-by-minute basis is required for serenity.

A person suffering from a drug use problem may have a craving for control that prevents them from finding peace of mind. They may become irritated because they cannot control the conduct of others and resort to drugs such as alcohol to manage their feelings, even though the control provided by your addiction is a sham.

The Serenity Prayer is a gentle reminder that acknowledging a loss of control and letting go can assist break the cycle of substance misuse.

The Serenity Prayer in its entirety is as follows:

God, grant me the serenity

To accept the things I cannot change,

The courage to change the things I can,

And the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,

Enjoying one moment at a time;

Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;

Taking, as Jesus did,

This sinful world as it is,

Not as I would have it;

Trusting that You will make all things right

If I surrender to Your will;

So that I may be reasonably happy in this life

And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.

CHAPTER 2

STEPS ONE AND TWO- A COMPLETE

GUIDE

We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.
Romans 7:18 NIV

After many years of denial, healing from addiction can begin with a simple acknowledgment of powerlessness. This is the first step in the Alcoholics Anonymous, CR, and Al-Anon groups' 12-step regimens. When addiction takes hold honesty is generally one of the first things to disappear. As the situation worsens, the addicted person begins to lie about how much they consume, and others around them begin to cover for their behavior.

This cycle of lying and harboring secrets can carry on for years, creating an atmosphere of distrust. The children could become entangled in the lie. It's a genetic disorder after all.

Diseased thinking has the potential to completely rule your life. Although they may maintain the idea of control,

their lives become chaotic as addiction takes over. It is devious, perplexing, and strong.

However, when someone eventually breaks the pattern of denial, rehabilitation can begin. The first step is to accept our weaknesses.

How exactly does that work?

When one member of the family, whether an addict or a non-addict member of the family, finally admits they have no control over their addiction and begins a road of recovery, it can have a ripple effect and inspire others to find their recovery.

Step One and How to Get to it

Members of Alcoholics Anonymous, celebrate recovery, and Al-Anon Family Groups provide valuable insight into the 12-step therapeutic concepts. Many people believe that taking the first step is the most difficult thing to undertake.

Some folks attend their first meeting following a jolt. You may be confronted about your addiction by a friend or family member. You may experience a medical emergency or be pulled up for a DUI. You resolve to take action and attend a meeting.

It's difficult to accept you're weak and unable to clean up the mess and be the responsible one if you live with someone who is an addict. You may continue to make things work and thereby become a part of the problem. Only by accepting your powerlessness can you begin to transform yourself. You must give up the illusion of power. You can begin with step one and work your way through the remaining 12 stages and 12 traditions.

You might not be prepared to attend a meeting the first time you decide to go. You have the option of leaving early or continuing to deny that you have a problem. However, you may return when you are ready to take the first step and accept you have no control over alcohol. Twelve-step programs will be available when you are.

What Does it Mean to be “Powerless”

People frequently dismiss the notion that they are helpless. The individual who is becoming clean for the first time may be a single mother of four wonderful children. They could be a tenured professor with a degree in a highly specialized specialty. Because addiction does not discriminate, they might be anyone. Furthermore, every individual on the planet possesses power: the power to change, love and develop, try new things, and become new people.

No one is helpless in the broadest sense, yet a person might be powerless in the face of the effects of alcohol, other substances or habits. And that's exactly what the First Step is saying: once an addict or alcoholic drinks that first drink or takes that first dose of their favorite drug, they'll want more, and the drive to use will take precedence over everything else in their lives, regardless of the consequences.

Here's what author and interventionist Jeff Jay has to say about Step One and being powerless:

"In AA, CR, and Al-Anon, the first half of the [First] Step says: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol." It does not say we were powerless over our choices, our life, or our relationships with other people. It says we were powerless over alcohol, and that limiting phrase, that tight focus on the drug, is critical.

"To break our addiction, we have to admit that we can't change what it does to us. It affects our brain, our body, and our spirit, and there's no sense in denying it. We're powerless over the effect the chemical or behavior has on us. We're not going to get good at drinking or drugging, we're not going to get more rational about it. We're not going to get better at controlling. We've tried it a hundred times already."

"What about the term

"unmanageable"? My life is going well."

Unmanageability should also be defined more precisely, because someone with a fantastic career, a loving spouse, or a lovely home may claim, "My life seems very

manageable." They may look at all that is going well and reject the notion that life is no longer manageable. That's only natural and fair. However, in the later phases of addiction, everything is stripped away, and an addicted individual who refuses to rehabilitate is frequently left with nothing.

Unmanageability may be thought of more simply: drinking or taking drugs is producing issues in a person's life. Perhaps life hasn't yet become completely unmanageable, but a person has lost friends or love partners because of their addiction, or they risk criminal or work-related penalties, and they continue to use. The warning signals are there, and while it may not be unmanageable right now, it will be soon.

The key condition for a successful First Step is a person's recognition that they do have an addiction disorder. When a person admits to their impotence and acknowledges that they don't have to do something about their addiction yet, they should not regard themselves as weak-willed or unable. Step One simply asks a person to admit that they have an addiction problem and that their life is more difficult as a

result of it.

If you can admit and accept that you have an addiction and that it is creating issues, you have finished the First Step of Alcoholics Anonymous and have officially begun your recovery.

Step Two and How to Get to it

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philippians 2:13 NIV

Because they don't completely comprehend what this step implies, persons who are seeking to recover from alcohol or other addictions may be discouraged from joining recovery groups such as AA, CR, and Al-Anon.

First, we must define what is meant by "sanity." Most addicts do not believe they are actually mad, and they may even believe being classified as such is ridiculous. In this

circumstance, though, insanity may be best represented by the following Albert Einstein quote: "Insanity is defined as doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome."

This description applies to the vast majority of addicts. People frequently try numerous times to recover control of their alcohol usage, such as limiting their drinking to the evening. However, after all, is said and done, we find ourselves in the same spot. This never works for a serious alcoholic or addict.

By acknowledging insanity, we are also proclaiming that our present way of thinking may not be the most logical or sane. This is the point at which individuals who want to quit their addiction must identify a "higher power." This is sometimes misinterpreted to suggest that a person must believe in the Christian God or another religious figure, but this is not the case. The second step's purpose is to recognize that there is something or someone bigger out there.

Consider the possibility that you do not exist. Is the world going to continue without you? Is the universe still here? The majority of individuals would respond "yes" to these questions. Step 2 has been partially accomplished just by accepting that there are influences outside of oneself. This stage is about having hope and being open to the notion that a person might look to a higher power for both inspiration and mercy.

- Maintain an open mind to set yourself up for success. Be open to the prospect of seeking assistance and support from sources other than oneself. You'll be able to visualize the concept of long-term healing more easily this way.
- Maintain your modesty. Recognize that you may not be able to conquer your addiction on your own.
- Learn what it means to be sane. It means to cease repeating the same detrimental conduct in the hope that it will improve.

Participating in addiction treatment to form a support

group will not "cure" a person. While necessary, it is not a long-term solution to the condition of addiction. We must find another power to be with us at all times since our minds will never be silent and will nag at us from time to time, urging us to take drugs or alcohol. Negative thoughts and sensations may creep up on us gradually, often when we least expect them.

You may have heard the expression "your greatest thinking brought you here" if you've ever attended an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Now is the time to acknowledge that there is something greater than us. This phase isn't so much about believing in God as it is about accepting and surrendering to the support you require. You must agree that there is yet hope. You'll go nowhere if you're cynical.

While working through step 2, you don't need to know exactly who your higher power is. You must be certain that your thoughts and feelings are not, by any means, reflective of the entire picture. It's about finding something to motivate you, keep you going, and help you accept the fact that you're here

for a reason.

Furthermore, this aim should symbolize a personal goal that is greater than simply being an alcoholic or addict. Remember that this is a spiritual program, not a religious one. That being said, there is nothing wrong with having a conventional view of God.

CHAPTER 3

STEPS THREE AND FOUR- A COMPLETE GUIDE

We made a decision to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing

*to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans
12:1 NIV*

The first two steps establish the groundwork for Step Three, which is a monumental act of trust in which we resign our will to the care of our Higher Power. Step Three is the most hardest of the steps. Individuals who have not previously participated in a particular religious belief system may struggle with this idea. The beauty of Alcoholics Anonymous is that it meets you right where you are. What makes your Higher Power is open to interpretation, giving each person the flexibility to define it as they see fit. A Higher Power may be a religious entity for some, but it may be anything or anybody who inspires people to make major life changes for others.

Step Three and How to Get to it

Step Three is an action step, whereas the previous two phases of the 12 Step Program were cognitive, focused on thoughts or reflections. This phase necessitates moving ahead

in recovery under the protection, provision, and Will of a Higher Power, totally surrendering to its protection, provision, and Will to lead your journey. The 12 Step Program encourages spiritual growth. Accepting Step Three represents a proactive choice, a decision to submit your recovery path to your Higher Power. This step emphasizes the notion of "letting go and letting God," as opposed to muscling your way through the recovery path on your own. Indeed, the decision to surrender to your Higher Power is the key to going beyond the sickness of addiction.

The Third Step prepares the way for the next critical step, a challenging step that necessitates the time-consuming process of performing a self-inventory. We are not truly capable of completing Step Four in an honest and comprehensive manner unless we have freely given our recovery to our Higher Power. Step Three lays the groundwork for the rest of the 12 Step Program.

Making the decision to surrender your will and life to my Higher Power will be thoroughly described to you

following the second step. You will recognize that this is not an action step after having this honest and open dialogue with a sponsor. This is a decision, similar to many others you've taken in the past, but this one you'll stick to. Do a fourth and fifth step if you wish to practice on this step.

Practicing AA Step 3

In practice, how does Step 3 look? The solution is unique to you and your rehabilitation. Remember that Step 3 needs you to make a choice—to admit that you prefer to surrender rather than keep control. There are a few suggestions on how you might put your decision to "let go and allow God" into action.

- Select your "higher power." As you'll see further down, "God" does not always refer to a religious god. Instead, consider it your own interpretation of a greater force in which you may place your confidence and rely. Part of practicing Step 3 is recognizing who or what your higher power is so that you may begin to surrender your will and

your life to that entity.

- Proceed to the Serenity Prayer. In fact, most Alcoholics Anonymous meetings now begin with this prayer. The Serenity Prayer is a means to actively accept your higher power and relinquishes control over things you can and cannot alter.
- Observe and determine what is and is not under your control. Allowing your higher power to take over and guide you to let go of the urge to control everything in your life on your own. Instead, begin by asking yourself, "Can I do something about this right now—and if so, would that action be beneficial or detrimental for me?" Consider making a list of the most major stresses in your life and categorizing them into buckets so you can see everything you're able to release to your higher power.

The initial decision made in Step 3 happens in a second, but it's a decision you'll have to make every day for the rest of your life in sobriety. So, in a sense, Step 3 takes only a few seconds to accomplish but takes a lifetime to master. That is

why it is critical to discover sustainable and resonant methods to convey Step 3 throughout your journey.

Common AA Myths Step Three

Myth 1: You Have to Believe in "God."

The most common mistake about Step 3 is that it requires you to believe in a Christian God in order to perform it. Although Step 3 mentions "God," this does not imply that all members must be of a specific faith or creed to finish the step or even join Alcoholics Anonymous.

While AA is a spiritually based organization, the 12 Steps may be practiced by anybody, whether they have a strong religious faith or none at all. In fact, Step 2 uses the phrase "Power" rather of "God," and Step 3 continues, "...it is only by action that we may cut away the self-will that has always obstructed the admission of God—or, if you prefer, a Higher Power—into our life." While we encourage everyone to accept this position please understand, the author of this book is a

strong Christian and encourage everyone to consider the benefits of the Christian path.

The term "as we understood him" in Step 3 is critical—each individual may perceive God to be whatever they require it to be. Your higher power might be your general spirituality, your family, or a group of close friends you love and trust. You can even pick your fellow AA group members as a higher power—any collective entity to whom you are prepared to turn for responsibility and support.

Myth Two: You Lose Your Independence

Another common misconception about Step 3 is that it deprives you of all autonomy. The actuality, however, is exactly the contrary. You don't have to suddenly modify all of your habits to become entirely passive. Consider that by joining Alcoholics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, or other, you've already decided to place your faith in a collective community to assist and guide you through your recovery—a decision that you renew every time you attend a meeting. If

you have a sponsor, you've already resorted to someone else for advice rather than making all of your own judgments. Everyone will need a sponsor by the time they get to step 4 and 5.

A sponsor is an important part of your rehabilitation. They should have had similar experiences, completed a step study, and been clean for at least a year. Attending small group meetings at AA, CR, or Al-Anon might help you locate a sponsor. Listen to those who participate in a small group meeting and follow up with them afterward. This is an excellent moment to approach potential sponsors. If you can't find a sponsor at your local small group meeting, check the national sponsor registry at INeedASponsor.com.

The sponsor is exclusively in charge of helping you through the 12-steps. They are not therapists and cannot perform your work for you, but they make fantastic companions and mentors.

Finding a good sponsor will be crucial to your success.

This is your life and your decision. Find a sponsor, but be prepared to walk on if there is a problem or you do not like their manner. I've sponsored scores of men, and the most are doing fantastically well; others have resigned or gone on to another sponsor. Their decision to change sponsors has no bearing on my opinion of them as persons. We remain friends, and I continue to help them in any way I can. So, keep in mind that your sponsor should be concerned with what is best for you, not with what is best for them.

The most important characteristic in a sponsor is someone you can trust. I've told my sponsor things that I've never told anybody else in my life. That is the level of confidence required. Remember that whatever you tell your sponsor, God already knows. He merely wants you to confess it to yourself and someone else at this point.

Step 3 requires you to entrust your life to "the care of" a higher power. When someone or something cares about you, they do not instantly take over your entire existence. Surrendering to someone else's care permits you to have faith

that caring hands will guide you to a sober life. In fact, this decision may be the most autonomous statement of free will you've made during your entire addiction journey. Instead of allowing your addiction to make your decisions for you, you have chosen this route for yourself.

What Comes Next After AA Step 3?

Step 3 of the AA program must be completed before proceeding with the rest of your 12-step journey. According to Alcoholics Anonymous, the "success of the entire program will depend on how thoroughly and seriously" you embrace and work through this third step.

This is due to the fact that electing to hand over authority to a higher power is just that—a decision. The actual work of turning that choice into a plan of action, which then takes you out of the spiral of addiction. After all, just because you decide to buy a new automobile doesn't guarantee your bright new wheels will appear in your driveway. You must take measures that will result in your decision becomes a reality.

Step 3 of the 12-step process eases you into the emotional work that will be required throughout the balance of the 12-step process. It prepares you to accept whatever occurs next since it is now in your higher power's hands. Whatever the past requires you to reflect on, whatever future reparations you must make, you have surrendered to fate, God, or whatever power you acknowledge in order to focus on the next correct action.

Step Four and How to Get to it

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord. Lamentations 3:40 NIV

Step 4 through 12 lay out a plan for achieving precisely that. Step 4 demands you to do a "searching and courageous moral inventory" of yourself, which may be a difficult process as you peel back layers of your addiction to discover your own deeper realities. However, with the help of your higher power,

to whom you've surrendered your will and your life, you'll be one step closer to recovery.

Step Four of AA's Twelve-Step Program of Recovery is infamously known as the "scary" step, owing to the fact that it is a critical step toward successful and long-term recovery. Because the general premise of Alcoholics Anonymous is that addiction is only a symptom of spiritual disease, the actual issue lies in character faults that must be confronted and, if possible, addressed. This necessitates a deep, bare-it-all assessment that will serve as the roadmap for your success.

The rewards of completing Step Four include increased sobriety, spiritual growth, and progress in mending your connections with your HP, yourself, and other people. What is the most important need for this action step? Honesty...Be truthful! This critical step will help both you and those around you. In case you didn't already know, holding secrets jeopardizes our recovery, and we've all had secrets that almost killed us. Our secrets, both within and outside of sobriety, keep us sick.

Almost everyone enters recovery having difficulty distinguishing between reality and fiction in their own life. The fact is that the "drunkalogues" and war stories we've acquired over the years are woven into the fabric of whom we think we are. However, when we work on our step inventories, we gain a fresh perspective on the larger picture, on patterns, selfishness, and our responsibility in circumstances, and in the process, we develop an accurate self-appraisal with real self-worth as the reward.

At this point, you've undoubtedly realized that recovery is a process of constant personal development and enlightenment that feels so amazing that you wish everyone you knew was experiencing it! Although you may be pink-clouded and enjoying the clarity that comes with recovery, the fact is that our previous addiction destroyed our capacity to reflect honestly on our life. Addiction induced erroneous thinking, which hindered our ability to comprehend the harm and mayhem (the liabilities) it wreaked on all of our relationships. So, before we could safely go forward, we

needed a framework in which we could honestly sort out our history. That structure is provided by the Step Four inventory.

Step Four will assist you in identifying negative ideas, feelings, and actions that have governed your life. You probably excused terrible conduct in the past by blaming other people, places, or things for the issues you caused. You will now begin to accept responsibility for all of your previous and present acts. This may include admitting to painful, humiliating, or uncomfortable experiences, thoughts, emotions, or acts. But that's fine; everything is fine since your ideas, feelings, and beliefs are the origins of your addicted habits.

While compiling your inventory, you will be able to explore all of your proclivities toward:

- Resentments/Anger
- Fear
- Relationships
- Self-pity and self-will

- Pride
- Guilt/shame
- Sex/Abuse
- Secrets
- Assets

How To Make An Inventory: Searching And Being Risk-Free

So, how exactly do you do a personal inventory? Most of the individuals you will be counting on to help you through Step Four will most likely feel that there is no definite right or incorrect method to perform this step. What is vital, in my opinion, is that we adhere to the overall idea of self-honesty and that we are prepared to be "searching and courageous" in our quest of truth. When we say "fearless," we don't mean you won't experience fear; we mean you won't allow your anxieties to prevent you from doing a full inventory. Step Four entails committing to rigorous honesty as you focus on events in your life, including your own shortcomings (but not on the

weaknesses of others).

Old-timers will review the seven deadly sins as outlined in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, while others will benefit from a review of some of the more significant events in their lives. Using the Big Book's method is a vital framework for evaluating the biggies: resentments, anxieties, and sexual behavior.

Questions To Ask While Taken The Fourth Step

Here are some questions to assist guide and prepare you for Step Four; they are not intended to replace the Fourth Step inventory as outlined in the Big Book of AA:

- What persons, places, or things do you hold grudges towards, and what caused those grudges?
- What factors contributed to your resentment?
- How have your resentments influenced your life, your relationships with others, and your connection with

yourself?

- What or who are you afraid of, and why? And how do you react to your worries in a harmful or bad way?
- What or who makes you feel humiliated or guilty?
- What emotions do you have the greatest difficulty allowing yourself to experience, and how do you express them?
- What impact has your anxieties and resentments had on your friendships, as well as your family, job, and personal relationships?
- Have you ever had an obsessive need for sex? Have you ever tried to replace a spiritual vacuum or loneliness with sex? Have any of your sexual behaviors caused you or others harm?

Check-in on what spiritual ideas you are putting into practice in your life, how your trust in a higher source has increased, and how you are expressing thankfulness for your recovery.

Be prepared to feel thrilled, uneasy, or both after

completing a Fourth Step inventory. Whatever happens, remember to congratulate yourself on a significant success, since you now have the basis for your independence. After completing Step Four, you will have a plan for success as well as a map to assist you navigate yourself on the path of long-term sobriety! The only thing left to do is notify your sponsor that you are ready to go on to Step Five.

CHAPTER 4

STEPS THREE AND FOUR- A COMPLETE GUIDE

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

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. James

5:16a NIV

Step Five of the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Step Program is critical to the basic personality change necessary to

overcome an alcohol and/or drug addiction. The fifth step, in its most basic form, is essentially a confession of personal wrongdoings and the start of your spiritual housecleaning.

Although we recognized the specific nature of our wrongs in step four, the process of cleaning away the debris of the past will not be complete until we have shared those wrongs with someone else in step five. Inviting a well-chosen individual to be a part of this healing process assists us in being aware of our own self-delusion, areas where we have not been completely honest, and patterns of damaging ideas and actions.

The great emotional and mental relief you will experience (combined with profound personal understanding) makes the fifth step a beneficial practice. The accomplishment of step 5 signifies a return to sanity and a much greater understanding of who and what we are.

AA ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

STEP FIVE DESCRIPTION

We couldn't quit using or drinking until we recognized our addiction to ourselves and submitted to the Alcoholics Anonymous program. The same may be said for the admission we make in the fifth phase. We are unlikely to be ready or able to choose another way of life unless we honestly discuss and comprehend the specific nature of our wrongs.

Remember that executing the fifth step for the first time will be weird. To sit down with another person and tell them about your flaws, secrets, and bad habits, or to tell them about how you've injured others. You will have stomach knots, emotional outbursts, perspiration, and stammering when you speak. But after finishing it in a matter of hours, you'll feel fantastic!

So take a deep breath, say a prayer, pocket your pride, and shine a light on every character quirk and dark nook of your history. When exposing your most upsetting recollections to another person—most likely your sponsor—be as honest as you can with that person, considering who you are and who you want to become. Don't be afraid to be open and honest.

Sharing our inventories with someone who can listen with compassion allows us to release our thoughts and hearts, allowing us to be open to accept unconditional love. Yes, you read that correctly: no matter what you've "done," you will not be condemned or disgraced.

STOPPING THE CYCLE

While working on step five, the repetition of the same sort of circumstance and patterns of behavior becomes quite clear! We begin to pay attention to what is causing our addiction patterns and why we behave out in the ways that we do. This is an exciting stage in recovery because we can begin to refer to these patterns of behavior as "character faults." Destructive habits typically reflect fundamental character flaws, which serve as the engine that propels the majority of our outlandish activities.

This effectively takes us into steps six and seven, where we begin an in-depth study of how each of our faults contributes to our illness and then ask God (or your HP) to remove them all.

INTO ACTION: WHY SHOULD YOU TAKE THE FIFTH STEP?

Why should you go through a fifth step? If the reasons listed above aren't enough, you should do it because there are some detrimental memories or ideas that can only exist in the dark, and shining a light on them can permanently banish them.

Most of the time, an alcoholic lives a double life worthy of an Oscar nomination. The alcoholic, more than most individuals, is an actor who portrays the persona that they want others to see to the outside world. We no longer have to do this after finishing step five of AA. Once we've completed this stage, we may look the world in the eyes, let our concerns go, and feel perfectly at rest... "on the Broad Highway, strolling hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."

But don't just take my word for it. Check out what the AA Alcoholics Anonymous "Big Book" says about working step five:

“We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story.”

– A.A. Big Book, p. 72-73

QUESTIONS TO ASK IN THE FIFTH STEP

If you've been putting off performing step 5, bear in mind that throwing it all out there on the table gives a perfect opportunity to finally let it all go. You get to clear the cobwebs from your past that are keeping you stuck. Here are some topics to consider before and after completing Step Five:

- How long have I been living alone with my "wrongs" and secrets? How do I feel about confessing my mistakes (my secrets) to another? Is it time for me to discuss and let go of anything that is impeding my recovery?
- Can I admit and accept the specific nature of my mistakes?
- What concerns do I have about completing my fifth step?
- Did I designate a time and location for my fifth step? When and where?
- Do I feel that completing my fifth step will improve my

life? How?

- Has doing the fifth step affected my relationship with a higher power?
- How has my perception of myself altered as a result of going through step five?
- Is there anything I forgot to mention, or did you leave something out?

- Is it possible for me to seek for aid in letting go of something that no longer works?

AFTER COMPLETING STEP FIVE:

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS

Your harsh self-evaluation is complete. Congrats!

You've made a step to clear away the garbage that has gathered as a result of living a life based on self-will. Be prepared for the unexpected. After living in constant terror of the other shoe

dropping, you may be pleasantly delighted to discover that what begins in anguish ends in tranquility. This is the intriguing recovery paradox.

You'll probably feel for the first time that you're able to accept that you're OK just the way you are right now.

Accepting yourself as you are now does not imply that you will stop trying for progress; rather, it means that you will be free to travel further in life than you have ever gone before.

In my experience, the actual miracle is that as a consequence of working the fifth step, all of our relationships begin to shift, not just with ourselves and other people, but also with a higher power—whatever that may be for you.

Each step we take in the 12-step program deepens our genuine commitment to the program and to recovery. Getting a sponsor, working the steps, finding a home group, making a commitment, and attending meetings... each of these seemingly little activities puts us on the path to freedom and a new way of

life.

CHAPTER 5

PROGRESSION TO STEP SIX AND SEVEN

How Does Step Six Work?

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

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

James 4:10 NIV

Each of these 12 recovery steps is aimed at assisting persons with an addiction in working toward long-term sobriety. Step 6 focuses on acceptance, which entails accepting character flaws as they are and then letting them go.

After recognizing and confessing flaws in Steps 4 and 5, members of 12-step recovery groups are forced to question themselves if they are truly willing to put up some of those flaws. These flaws or patterns of behavior and coping have been with the person for a long period. While they may be familiar, it is critical to identify how these old habits have contributed to the individual's difficulties.

If the preceding steps have been completed properly and honestly, accepting the truth may sometimes generate a sense of remorse, which is a fantastic motivator to become "completely ready" to have those flaws repaired. The capacity to become ready, like all other steps, comes from a higher power—a power larger than yourself.

Steps 4 through 7 of the 12-step program are designed to address some of the personal concerns, weaknesses, and character flaws that may have contributed to your choice to start drinking in the first place.

If you merely quit drinking and do not address any of these other issues, you may find yourself being set-up for relapse. For example, if the way you show anger or manage rejection causes problems for those around you, you may wind up damaging a relationship, which may lead to you picking up a drink again.

Furthermore, if you "just" stop drinking and do not address your other issues, you may become a "dry drunk," which means you may become bitter and angry. In such situation, you may be sober but miserable.

Why Is Step 6 Necessary for Recovery?

Step 6 is critical in the process because it focuses on the willingness to modify the previous behaviors that lead to the

addiction. If you stop without addressing these issues it makes it more likely to revert to previous habits.

That is why Steps 4–7 are located in the midst of the 12 steps. If you do not accept your flaws and take measures to fix them, a spiritual awakening may never occur. It all comes down to being truthful to yourself and the people around you. Identifying and acknowledging your flaws is not the end of the process. The key to finding a solution is to become "completely ready."

What You Could Do?

Practical steps you may take to analyze and overcome your harmful behavior include:

- Make a list of your flaws, limitations, and obstacles.
- Make a note of how the issue affects your conduct for each one.
- Make a list of how this flaw affects you and others.
- Consider what emotions are linked with this limitation.

Is the goal of such acts to lessen or conceal painful emotions?

Thinking about these difficulties in this way might help you better understand how they affect your moods and behavior. It can also help you recognize the advantages of altering, which can increase your willingness and enthusiasm to change.

Step 6 History

Step 6 introduces the phrase "character flaws." It is critical to recognize that the roots of this statement may be traced back to how alcohol and drug use were conceived in previous versions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The DSM classified alcoholism and addiction as personality disorders when Alcoholics Anonymous first started. It was a psychological approach to addiction that saw substance usage as the outcome of addictive personality features.

Consider how different your life would be if you didn't partake in these practices. What are some more productive tactics you may employ instead?

Alcohol and drug abuse are now recognized as brain-based illnesses by academics and physicians. However, many of the habits that emerge from alcohol and substance abuse, such as denial, are roadblocks to recovery. Recognizing harmful behaviors and being willing to modify them are critical for long-term rehabilitation.

Strategies that Work

There are certain things you can do to prepare for Step 6. These are some examples:

Humility

Working Step 6 is just completing the first five stages and being humble. This is difficult for many addicts. The first five stages appear difficult at first, but they complete them.

Then comes the "humble" portion. How do you humble

yourself? If the first five steps' lessons sink in, you will discover humility. If you somehow missed the message, go back and work on them again, figure out what went wrong, and then attempt this step again.

People also frequently reminisce on moments when they wounded friends, family, and employers but justified their actions and blamed the victim. People may feel guilt and sorrow as they progress through the stages and accept responsibility for their acts and omissions. Humility can assist people in recognizing how previous mistakes must be remedied. People might then seek atonement by making apologies.

Acceptance

Stage 6's purpose is not to participate in self-condemnation or shame. Instead, it is about looking at yourself honestly and acknowledging the factors that have contributed to your drinking issue. By demonstrating acceptance to yourself and then surrendering to a higher power, you may

work toward letting go of the habits that are preventing you from fully attaining your objectives.

Specificity

It is critical to be precise about some of the character flaws that may have contributed to the formation and maintenance of an alcohol use problem throughout Stage 6. Instead of merely admitting that you have anger issues, investigate the underlying causes and effects of that anger. You must first acknowledge and embrace these flaws before you can genuinely accept and let go of them.

Questions to Consider While Taking the Sixth Step

There are various questions you may ask and answer to assist you to move through step 6, including:

- Do you have any reservations about finishing step six?

What exactly are they?

- What does it mean to you to have a higher power eliminate your flaws?
- What are your obligations during this stage?
- Do you believe in the possibility of change? Have you changed much because of the preceding steps?
- Do any of your flaws make you happy? Is this making it more difficult for them to quit?
- Do you have any flaws that you feel are irreversible? Do you want them removed?
- What does surrender mean to you? How can surrendering assist you in completing this step?
- What can you do to demonstrate that you are prepared for this next step?

Step 6 Activities to Complete

Several tasks must be completed at this stage. Not everyone will be required to complete all of them. Completing these actions provides a road map through step six. As an example:

- List and describe each of your flaws. Explain how your conduct displays each flaw.
- Explain how your actions affect you and the others in your life.
- Describe your life if you stopped engaging in these practices.
- What new behavior may each replace?
- Once you've finished this list, write an affirmation for each flaw you've identified. Create three to five positive statements you can tell yourself to keep you from indulging in prior behavior.

If you were prone to lying about your addiction and other activities, for example, a good remark to make might be "I am an honest person who does not lie about drinking."

How Does Step Seven Work?

We humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and will forgive us
our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

1 John 1:9 NIV

Each of the 12 recovery steps is aimed at assisting persons with addiction in working toward long-term sobriety. Step 6 focuses on acceptance, which entails accepting character flaws as they are and then letting them go.

Step Seven of the Twelve Steps is about removing character flaws and replacing them with humility and spiritual values. Working on the seventh step necessitates ongoing reflection and a commitment to being truthful, fearless, and modest.

We learned our strengths and weaknesses while working on phases four and five. Step 6 trained us to deal with these characteristics so that we may be ready to act in Step 7.

Step Seven

So here's the deal: quitting booze and drugs is a

significant shift. I'm sure you've figured it out by now! Moving forward to step seven includes us in the personal shift of intentionally letting go of our liabilities, flaws, acts, and feelings. This transformation takes effort and action.

Simply requesting that your flaws be deleted will not result in their removal. It is your responsibility to be aware and make new choices. Many persons in recovery take solace in the fact that God can and does eliminate their character flaws when they ask.

You've been peeling away age-old layers of denial, ego, self-centeredness, and other liabilities that engulfed you when you were active in your sickness while working on the previous six steps. When we reach step seven, we are ready to stop worrying about what we will obtain in life and start thinking about what and how we can offer to others in the world.

God has never left me empty-handed in my experience; everything I've lost has been replaced with something greater. My God encouraged me to give up the drink and the drug so

that I could focus on something more important. This is what I mean by humility.

Step Seventh and Humility: The Mistaken Virtue

When it comes to practicing your seventh step, having a decent view of oneself is essential. It is just recognizing the reality of your life and your role in the world. It is the studied skill of being "right-sized" in AA words. When you respectfully ask your God to erase your flaws, you are understanding that you are neither too big nor too tiny. Your sense of entitlement or grandiosity has vanished, as have your feelings of humiliation, sorrow, or unworthiness.

You've already made your first step toward humility by acknowledging your impotence and unmanageability. When recovering addicts practice step seven, they usually understand that humility is not a condition of despair or groveling, but rather a state of calm, serenity, and acceptance of "living on life's terms." Humility empowers us.

"The acquisition of greater humility is the basic principle of each of twelve steps," according to The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. The seventh step is a continuous opportunity for us to accept the goal of humility as a crucial component of remaining clean.

Wishing Does Not Make It Happen: Introduction To Step Seven

Taking action entails hard labor. I know most of us despise the word "work," but the type of job I'm referring about here has nothing to do with punching a time clock and toiling away for eight hours. Working on the 12-steps simply means focusing our efforts on being disciplined and devoted to our long-term sobriety and recovery. It takes effort to stand up for ourselves, to be patient, or to bear the emotional discomfort of new actions.

It requires effort to recognize our flaws and change our reactions. The more you become acquainted with your flaws, the more you realize, "this seems familiar, I'd best stop and pay

attention to this!" When a reply feels forced, it's likely that something must be changed. The good news is that through practicing humility in Step Seven, you will get a true understanding of your own humanity and the ability to care for yourself and others. We're all in this together, and we're all alike.

Putting Step Seven into practice means that when you intentionally summon the fortitude to say "no" to a buddy who attempts to guilt or humiliate you into saying "yes," you are truly working your recovery program. You are working on Step Seven when you create a boundary, halt when irritated, practice restraint of tongue and pen (a key one for long-term peace), and choose not to interact with people, places, and things that trigger you.

Step Seven Questions and Actions for Getting Right-Sized

Making adjustments to our mental activity, in addition to embracing and expressing our feelings, is part of being right-sized in Step Seven. As we practice new life skills, we progressively learn to bring the many aspects of ourselves into a healthy balance. A daily dosage of prayer, meditation, and affirmations can be quite beneficial for certain people.

Here are some questions to assist you navigate Step Seven:

- How has my appreciation for God evolved?
- How did the preceding six phases prepare me for the seventh?
- When doing the seventh step, how can being conscious of my own humility help?
- How do I intend to petition a God of my comprehension or a higher force to remove my flaws?
- In step seven, how does the spiritual idea of "surrender" function for me?
- Am I at ease with prayer and meditation, even if it means inventing my own?

- Is my sense of perspective or "reality" out of whack lately?
- Have there been occasions when I was able to avoid acting on a character flaw and instead follow a spiritual principle?
- Are there any flaws in my life that have been eliminated or at least decreased in their hold over me?

Affirmations can also be used. Here are a few ideas:

- I accept myself completely, "good" and "bad."
- Today, I will create an asset and eliminate a flaw.
- Today, I will remember that I have options and freedom.

The "Seventh Step Prayer" is an excellent approach to prioritize your day:

“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.”

Step Seventh: Moving Forward

We exercise our freedom from addiction by growing our assets, dismissing faults, and creating new choices as we practice our seventh step.

Step Seven exemplifies the oft-quoted 12-step proverb "progress not perfection." Requesting that your flaw be eliminated humbly is not a guarantee. Some of our flaws will linger with us despite our best efforts, while others are returned to us for free whenever we want to re-engage with them.

Instead of comparing ourselves to others, we may assess our success in recovery in reference to who we were when using. We may reflect on our own experience, recognize our own abilities, and employ them with humility, seeking only an honest way of life in sober reality.

Deep and permanent transformation takes time, and no one ever completely overcomes their flaws. They do, however,

fade away when we become conscious of them and take action, one at a time, one day at a time.

Remember that spiritual principles meet us at our place of action, thus, while we cannot control the path of life, we can influence every spiritual step we make.

CHAPTER 6

PROGRESSION TO STEP EIGHT AND NINE

How Does Step Eight Work?

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

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Luke 6:31 NIV

Step 8 is the most challenging for many individuals. This is because it is the step when you prepare a list of the individuals you have harmed as a result of your drinking.

It's one thing to confront the damage caused by drinking with yourself and God — something you

accomplished during your moral inventory. Even confessing to someone who can empathize is easier than confronting those you've damaged.

However, step 8 permits you to start living a peaceful life and dealing with personal relationships. Step 4 of the 12-step program is frequently viewed by recovering alcoholics as personal house cleaning. Step 8 is similar, but focuses on cleaning up your social life.

What Is Involved in the Eighth Step?

Begin step 8 of the 12-step program by compiling a list of the individuals you've affected as a result of your drinking. List the precise ways you harmed each of them.

It makes no difference whether the injury was intended or not. Include anybody on the list who may have been damaged by you.

This requires painful reflection on situations you'd rather forget. But keep in mind that the stages leading up to this

one were all difficult. You've laid a strong foundation that will help you go through step 8.

When you've finished your list, utilize it to plan the changes you'll make in step 9. And, if it won't do further harm, you ask their forgiveness, but only if the opportunity is right.

Finally, you want to take restorative action and learn how to live soberly in the world. This prepares you for the following phase, which is to mend connections with people.

What Does It Mean to Make Amends With Someone?

Some individuals mistake making amends for apologizing, but the two are not synonymous. Making amends may require apologizing, but it also includes more than just expressing "I'm sorry."

Consider an apology to be a bandage. You apply it over

the wound and it fades away over time. Saying you're sorry masks the pain and may make others feel better, but it doesn't right the injustice.

A former addict cannot just apologize for the grief they have caused others and expect the harm to be undone. Making amends allows you to reconnect with those you've wronged in a more profound and meaningful way than an apology. It necessitates honesty, self-awareness, and accountability. While we make amends, we do not expect forgiveness.

The Importance of Step 8

Step 8 is significant because it allows you to start mending shattered relationships. It does not ensure that this will occur, but it is the first step in that direction.

It's also about accepting responsibility for your part in addiction recovery and in life and cleaning up your act. This entails keeping yourself accountable for your actions without emphasizing your or others' flaws.

Even if the relationship was harmed mutually, you are ready to make amends at this stage.

Finally, this stage is significant since it continues the preceding phases' honest presence. As most recovery addicts would attest, honesty brings liberation and opens the way to joy.

Releasing Resentment

When you're sober, you're free to live in the present moment rather than always anticipating the next horrible thing to happen.

Remember that things take time as you progress through this level. Rushing serves no use. During this level, your sponsor will give a lot of instruction and will help you avoid doing things incorrectly.

Recognize whether you're hesitant to start or go through step 8 because of animosity. Because you resent the person

who wounded you, you may be hesitant to make amends with them.

This does not exclude you from forgiving them. The penalty of hanging on to resentment is missing out on the freedom provided by the 12 steps. Forgiving those that harmed you is truly the most important step to finding relief from your additions. Forgiving those that harmed you leads directly to serenity.

Many individuals are amazed at how quickly they can forgive and let go of self-pity. Be patient and allow your pleasant sentiments to emerge.

Questions to Ask Yourself in Step 8

There are various questions you may ask and answer to assist you move through step 8, including:

1. Are resentful sentiments preventing you from making amends?
2. Have you been hesitant to take this step? If so, please

explain why.

3. What is the point of knowing the precise nature of your wrongs?
4. Why is it critical to accept responsibility and be open about the hurt you've done to loved ones?
5. Is there anyone on your list who may harm you or make you seem bad if you try to make amends?
6. Would making apologies with someone on your list endanger them?
7. Why isn't saying "I'm sorry" enough to make up for the harm you've done?
8. Why can't you just stop abusing substances without confessing your mistakes and making amends?
9. Do you need to make any financial adjustments? Is your present financial condition preventing you from doing so?
10. Can you imagine your life after the changes you've made?
11. Do you wish to make atonement to those who have also harmed you?

How Do You Finish This Step?

The first stage in this process is to establish a list of everyone with whom you need to make apologies.

Make a note of this list. Keeping a mental list is insufficient to finish step 8. This "right-sizes" the list and prevents it from expanding out of control in your mind.

Making a list assists you to begin letting go of any animosity you have in personal relationships that have damaged you.

Your list should contain the names of any and all people you can think of whom you may have injured. Even if you're not sure if you owe someone an apology, put their name on the list.

Once you have a comprehensive list, classify it as follows:

- People, you should make apologies to as soon as you become sober
- People to make apologies in order to avoid additional harm

The next stage is to assess the harm your addiction has created in your life. In the following phase, you'll start righting wrongs. Step 8 requires you to be fearless and honest with yourself. Now is when your relationship with God, your family, and your sponsor is critical.

It's critical to understand that you don't have to restrict your list to simply those who you feel will accept your attempt to make apologies. Even if your efforts are rejected, everyone must be involved.

Step 9: Breaking It Down

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

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 5:23-24 NIV

We may be trekking the road to joyful destiny at this point in our step work, but we've reached the stage when we must repair what we left behind on a route of shattered relationships. As active addicts and alcoholics, we most certainly lied, deceived, or stole in order to get, use (and conceal) our drug of choice... because addiction is a moral disaster.

Step Nine is the ideal opportunity to let go of the terrible feelings we have about our history and to dramatically restore relationships. Walking about with the weight of reparations that need to be made stinks, in my opinion. More significantly, living with the residual guilt and humiliation

from previous wrongdoings inhibits us from progressing and puts us in danger of relapse!

You've undoubtedly noticed that keeping clean and sober and following the Twelve Steps helps things get better. That's because we're improving. Becoming a "better person" implies that we are less eager to engage in damaging actions, owing to our awareness of how much they cost us in human misery. That self-centeredness is replaced with an awareness of other people, and we learn to care instead of being apathetic. We begin to be unselfish where we were selfish. We begin to forgive where we were furious.

ANALYSIS OF STEP NINE

So, what is Step Nine? Step Nine is the big one, the one that has probably caused us some worry since it entails making apologies.

It is advised that wherever feasible, we make direct reparations to people. What does this imply? There are three

types of amendments:

Direct Amends entail accepting personal responsibility for your acts and approaching the individual with whom you wish to reconcile.

Indirect Amends entail repairing damage that cannot be rectified or undone by actions such as volunteering and assisting others.

Living Amends means when you demonstrate to others and to yourself that you have made a true lifestyle change and are committing to yourself and those you have wronged that you will and have abandoned your prior harmful practices.

We've already started making reparations by modifying some of our habits, attitudes, and beliefs. The phase of the reparations process in which we improve ourselves affects everyone around us and continues long after we've talked directly to someone we've injured.

There are often many anxieties and expectations when

it comes to making apologies to people. We may be terrified of making financial restitution, as well as rejection, retaliation, and a variety of other unfavorable events. Making apologies, on the other hand, does not necessarily have to be a tense, unpleasant, or joyless affair. In fact, you may discover that you are enthusiastic about the prospect of repairing a relationship or that you are looking forward to the relief you will experience after making particularly difficult reparations or paying off a debt. Cleaning up the past brings about freedom, the freedom to live happily in the present.

You may get your head in the game by concentrating on the aim of the Ninth Step to keep things as simple as possible. Remember the three Ninth Step ideas or "The Three R's" linked with making amends: Reconciliation, Resolution, and Restitution

Reconciliation is the process of restoring anything to its original state, which is generally something that has been damaged. This might include repairing our reputations and even trust in a relationship.

As recovering addicts we are likely to have prior events that haunt or distress us in some manner. Solving these challenges entails coming up with answers and solutions and putting them to rest.

Restitution, as it pertains to the Ninth Step, is the act of returning something tangible (or abstract) to its rightful owner.

Our sponsors can assist us in exploring each of these principles so that we may acquire perspective on the nature of our unique amendments while remaining focused on what we're meant to be doing. The idea is to maintain our attention on ourselves and our "side of the street," so to speak.

Even though we may be anxious to pull the Band-Aid off and get an apologies done, it is critical that we not be rash or irresponsible in our attempts to make amends! For the greatest potential outcome, some thinking and planning are required. On the other side of the same AA coin, it is critical that you do not put off making apologies. Why? Because, in my experience, many people in recovery have relapsed because

they let their concerns prevent them from completing Step Nine.

It's crucial to be realistic, as with all of our past step work: completing your Ninth Step cannot be neatly confined within a certain time limit. We don't finish our Eighth Step list and then start ticking off "done" amendments as we would on a shopping list. Indeed, some of our reparations may never be completed, and our efforts may continue throughout our recovery. The fact is that every day we attempt to avoid harming our families, friends, coworkers, and even strangers- and instead practice loving conduct with them- is a day when we've made apologies. Even seemingly solid reparations like paying off a past-due obligation aren't always completed once and for all. Paying off debts and not lying, stealing, or cheating will be continuous Ninth Step practices throughout our life.

THE NINTH STEP: WHEN DOES IT CAUSE HARM?

Life is difficult, and it is not always simple or black and

white. As a result, certain Step Nine modifications may necessitate some ingenuity and patience. Working on this step should never result in more harm to others.

There may be occasions when confronting another individual directly or seeking reparation is difficult or detrimental to that person. For example, there may be a circumstance in which the person (or individuals) we damaged are unaware of what we did, and learning about it may further harm them. Or there might be circumstances that have been exacerbated by the presence of other addicts or charges of taking more than just money. There are several types of scenarios, each of which must be considered on an individual basis.

Again, our sponsor can advise us on how to manage each one. They can help us examine our motivations for wanting to notify others about our addiction or apologize. You might want to consider if that individual truly needs to know. And, if so, what would be the benefit of disclosing such information?

If we are open-minded while discussing our amends list with our sponsors, we may begin to think about these types of circumstances in ways we haven't thought about them previously. In reality, we frequently realize that what we believed was the apparent way to make apologies was, in fact, incorrect.

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES IN NINE STEPS

Humility is defined as the absence of pride or arrogance, as well as the attribute or state of being humble. The spiritual values of humility, forgiveness, and love will be highlighted in the Ninth Step. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less

We learn humility through reflecting on the harm we have caused others (and ourselves) and accepting responsibility for it. We accept responsibility for setting things right after admitting our mistakes to ourselves. Nothing beats the feeling of enhanced humility that comes with making apologies in

your Ninth Step and acknowledging the self-empowerment and self-love that comes with it.

We come to realize the significance of granting forgiveness to others when we make apologies and experience forgiveness. It feels great to exercise forgiveness and release animosity! Positive reinforcement is an excellent motivator for putting the spiritual principle of forgiveness into practice as much as possible. By forgiving others, we begin to see our own humanity, which allows us to be less judgmental than we were previously. We realize that because we generally intend well, we may extend that notion to others. It's worth noting that when someone genuinely causes us damage, we've learned that harboring resentments only serves to deprive us of our own peace and tranquility, so we prefer to forgive them sooner rather than later. Forgiveness of those that harm us is the most important step towards serenity.

We've been practicing the spiritual concept of love by being clean and sober throughout our rehabilitation. We've eliminated many of the negative attitudes, viewpoints, and

sentiments we used to have by Step Nine, making way for love in our lives. As we grow in love, we feel compelled to share it by cultivating existing connections, forging new ones, and selflessly giving our recovery, time, and resources with others in need.

Guilt and shame are unneeded bonds that tether us to our history. We may break those ties and gain the liberation from addiction that we have craved by adopting these spiritual concepts.

You've probably heard that the steps are written in a particular order for a purpose. This is because each stage supplies the spiritual preparation we'll need for the next. This is especially clear in the Ninth Step. Never in a million years would we have thought that one day we'd be able to sit down with the folks we'd injured and make direct atonement! This would not be feasible without the spiritual preparation provided by the preceding phases.

QUESTIONS AND GUIDELINES

FOR STEP NINE

There are many scary sensations before, during, and after the ninth stage of making apologies. It is critical to recognize that the way things feel does not always correspond to the way things are. We presume that since we are fearful, we have something to be afraid of. However, this is not true. To prepare for this phase, we should let go of whatever expectations we have about how our apologies will or should turn out.

Here are some questions to assist you go through Step Nine:

1. Making apologies is not the same as committing to a continual process of reform.
2. Do I have reservations about making amends? Is it possible that someone may seek vengeance or reject me?
3. In what ways does the Ninth Step need a new level of surrender to the program?
4. What about my financial restitution? Do I believe that the God of my understanding will provide for my needs

even if I am sacrificing to make amends?

5. Why does it make a difference how my amends are received?
6. How can other addicts, my sponsor, and my Higher Power help me through this?
7. Which names on my Eighth Step list are made more difficult by circumstance? Do I owe any reparations that, if made, may have major consequences? What exactly are they?
8. What habits do I need to change?
9. What urgent intentions do I have to make apologies to myself? Do I have any long-term ambitions that I might use to make apologies to myself? What exactly are they? What can I do to make things happen?
10. Have I taken responsibility for the harm I created and accepted responsibility for healing that hurt?
11. What experiences have I had that have let me recognize the damage I've inflicted more clearly? How has this contributed to my growing humility?
12. What are the advantages of implementing the forgiving

principle for me? What are some examples of how I've put this theory into action?

Living our Ninth Step demands us to avoid incurring additional debts, wrongdoings, or transgressions. Avoiding such future obligations is just as important to us as making regular payments on past-due bills.

CHAPTER 7

ALL ABOUT STEP TEN

How Does Step Ten Work?

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

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 1 Corinthians 10:12

Continuing to do something in our everyday life typically implies improving at it. So, it is with Step Ten. Nobody loves admitting they are wrong; it is much easier to

blame others. Admitting when we are wrong and being accountable for our side of the street as soon as possible is critical to maintaining our spiritual growth in recovery. The wonderful aspect about incorporating the Tenth Step into our daily lives is that the more we practice self-discovery, honesty, humility, and contemplation, the fewer apologies and amends we need to make!

Taking a personal "inventory" in Step Ten entails assessing our emotional disturbances, particularly those that may lead us back to drinking or other drug use.

According to *The Big Book*, we are frequently troubled because we find some person, place, object, or circumstance - some truth in our life – undesirable. A common reaction to disruption is to blame our feelings and responses on others. Alcoholics and addicts have often perfected the technique of nursing grudges and finding fault in to fine art! When we declare that someone "makes us" furious, agitated, or terrified, we tend to give them authority over our life.

In actuality, we frequently say or do something that contributes to the existence of these conflicts in our lives. Step Ten instructs that we accept responsibility for our acts and clean up our mess as soon as possible. This necessitates being willing to let go of greed, dishonesty, wrath, or fear at the instant they arise. Step Ten puts the spiritual qualities of vigilance, maintenance, and persistence into reality.

Recognizing what is functioning and balanced might help us identify what is out of balance and not working. Continuing to conduct personal inventory isn't only about identifying when we're wrong; we can't recognize when we're wrong unless we've also identified when we've handled things "rightly" as a foundation for comparison. Working with our sponsor in Step 10 to identify the times and situations when we do things correctly is beneficial in developing a personal value system. This is just as important as recognizing our liabilities when completing a personal inventory.

Working on the Tenth Step entails continuing to do what we've done so far for our recovery: being honest, having

trust and faith, and paying attention to our behaviors and responses. We've learned to pay attention to how our actions influence others, and when the consequences are unpleasant or hurtful, we move forward quickly, accepting responsibility for the harm done and attempting to remedy it. This is what it means to conduct personal inventory and recognize our errors as soon as possible. Even if completing the first nine steps of has profoundly improved our lives, since we have the disease of addiction, we may always return to where we started. Vigilance is the cost of our good recovery.

Step Ten will help us be conscious of ourselves and our destructive tendencies long before they take hold. We may learn to focus on the good acts we are taking rather than beating ourselves up because we are feeling lousy. As addicts, we have a tendency to pass judgment on how we are feeling, and anything that feels unpleasant makes us want to stop quickly. When we evaluate the situation, we must remember that the way we are feeling makes perfect sense!

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUALITY

The recovery program is founded on spiritual concepts and ideas. The virtues of honesty, perseverance/self-discipline, and integrity are highlighted in Step Ten.

At this point in our recovery, the breadth and depth of our honesty is astounding. Earlier in our recovery, we could see our genuine reasons long after a circumstance had passed, but today we can be honest with ourselves while the issue is still happening. This notion of honesty began in Step One and is now realized in Step Ten.

For us addicts, having self-discipline and endurance is virtually counter-intuitive. We were undoubtedly self-seeking and self-absorbed when we were using our drug of choice, constantly taking the easy way out, giving in to our desires, and rejecting any opportunity for personal growth. The self-discipline necessary for our rehabilitation requires us to perform some things no matter how we feel. For example, we must attend frequent meetings even if we are fatigued, preoccupied with work or pleasure, or depressed. We attend meetings, phone our sponsor, work with others, and follow

spiritual principles because we have determined that we desire recovery, and these are the acts that will assist ensure our sustained recovery.

The concept of integrity can be complicated, as keeping promises and keeping our word is only a tiny portion of it. Integrity in recovery appears to be the art of recognizing which principles to apply in any particular scenario, and in what proportion.

When we woke up, most of us realized that we had never been able to have any type of long-term relationship, let alone one in which we handled our disagreements in a healthy and mutually respected manner. Whether it was roaring arguments with individuals who never addressed the underlying issue that generated the disputes, or not standing up for ourselves and avoiding confrontation because it seemed simpler to burn a bridge than to work through a problem and establish a stronger connection. All of this is part of continuing to do our personal inventory in order to identify our greatest liabilities and assets. Let us elaborate.

FEELINGS, GOOD AND BAD

Step ten emphasizes the need of continuing to take personal inventory and appears to claim that we do so exclusively to discover when we are incorrect. But how can we determine when we're wrong unless we also have instances when we're correct to compare? Identifying the instances when we do things correctly and developing personal ideals are just as important as identifying our liabilities.

The Tenth Step instructs us to apologize when we are wrong swiftly, but this assumes that we always know when we are wrong! Most of us do not, at least not right away. With the regular practice of performing a personal inventory, we become more adept at determining when we are incorrect. We utilize Step Ten to keep a constant awareness of how we're feeling, thinking, and, most crucially, acting.

PERSONAL INVENTORY STEP TEN

QUESTIONS

- These questions can cover the broad areas of interest in

a personal inventory:

- Is there ever a period in my life when I am unsure about the distinction between my feelings and actions? Write something about it.
- Have there been moments during my rehabilitation when I was mistaken and didn't realize it till later? What exactly were they?
- What impact do my "wrongs" have on my life? Other people's lives?
- Why is a tenth step even required? What is the point of keeping a personal inventory?
- What does admitting you were wrong right away mean to you?
- Have there been times in my recovery when I felt awkward admitting anything I did well (or "right")? Describe.
- How and why does the Tenth Step assist me in living in the present?
- What have I changed as a result of going through Step

Ten?

We may swiftly make apologies and continue living a life in peace and harmony if we make a deliberate effort to check our intentions and hearts each day to see whether we've been acting out with even tiny things like judging, being snippy, or insulting. This is one of the ways we maintain our sobriety. This is how we join the "spiritual realm."

So far, your step practice has focused on developing a conscious knowledge of yourself and God. Your daily meditations, step practice, meeting participation, and fellowship have all been acts of prayer and mediation. Step 11 will find you working on improving this conscious interaction and being aware of the spiritual remedy!

CHAPTER 8

PROGRESSION TO STEP ELEVEN

How Does Step Eleven Work?

We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and power to carry that out.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Colossians 3:16a NIV

In step 11, you uncover your higher power's plan. You also try to grasp it better and put it into action. It is a spiritual organization that urges members to discover their greater purpose. It is up to the individual participant whether this is through their relationship with God, another higher force, CR,

or AA. All folks who want to stay sober are invited and encouraged to attend. It makes little difference whether they practice a particular religion, are religiously inactive, or are agnostic or atheist.

Eleventh Step Prayer

“Lord, make me a channel of thy 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 an 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.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather a comfort than to be comforted--to understand than to be understood--to love than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life. Amen”

We recommend you say the serenity prayer daily to keep focused on what you can and cannot control. Also, how your relationship with God will determine your results; there will be hardships and struggles along the path.

The Goal of Step 11 (Prayer and Meditation)

Step 11 includes prayer, meditation, and silent thinking. Instead of turning to alcohol or narcotics for serenity or consolation, you turn to treatment or your higher power.

By reaching this stage, many participants have attained some kind of spirituality. Step 11 is when you develop a deep understanding of your higher power via prayer and meditation if this is not the case. Some call it a spiritual awakening.

Can an Agnostic or Atheist Pray or Meditate?

Yes.

Although these practices may appear alien or difficult to individuals who do not believe in or are unsure about their belief in God, being calm, quiet, and thoughtful is feasible. Listen to your ideas, look for the proper solutions throughout the day, and seek help when things get tough. That direction might come from inside or from outside of oneself.

Whether you approach step 11 by asking God for direction every day or self-reflection, the outcome is nearly always the same.

Meditation practitioners claim that to practice, they require:

- A location that is quiet and free of disturbances
- Pose that is comfortable
- Focus
- Open-mindedness

People who pray think that the same thing is required. Prayer and meditation assist you in focusing your attention on a specific objective, such as being receptive to hearing a message or relaxing. You can utilize audio or video recordings to assist

you if you have difficulty focusing during the meditation or praying process.

Prayer and meditation can help reduce difficulties that contribute to despair, anxiety, and other triggers that used to make you want to drink.

Prayer and meditation also release dopamine the primary biochemical responsible for addiction. The healthy release of dopamine from prayer and meditation can relieve the desire to consume alcohol and drugs or participate in activities that are addictive.

How Do You Put Prayer and Meditation into Action?

Knowing how to pray or meditate and incorporating these practices into daily life varies from person to person.

Understanding how to pray or meditate is a challenge for some.

Making these activities a part of their rehabilitation is essential

for others.

If you want to include meditation into your everyday routine, consider the following:

- Make time each day to pray or meditate. Intentionally listen to your higher power and allow it to enhance you.
- Request that those in your life respect your prayer and meditation time. During this period, you must be able to focus and not be distracted.
- Consider rewarding yourself after practicing meditation or prayer for a specified length of time. You might, for example, arrange a coffee date with a pal. After a week of daily prayer or meditation, you can also schedule a time to read a favorite book or watch a TV show.
- Begin a notebook in which you write your ideas throughout your prayer and meditation periods. Include this recording in your practice. For example, you may spend five minutes setting up your prayer or meditation place, 15 minutes praying or meditating, and another five minutes writing down your thoughts.

How to Complete Step Eleven

Members who do not often meditate or pray may find the following suggestions for working on step 11 beneficial:

- Avoid being fixated on the labels God or higher power. This is not about following a specific faith. Your objective is to achieve serenity and accept your life's path.
- Don't be concerned about your posture or stance. There is no one manner to pray or meditate that is "correct." The essential thing is that you are at ease and are not distracted by your body or other bodily difficulties. Some individuals prefer conventional meditation or prayer positions, which is also great.
- Make sure that you are attentively listening. Many individuals believe that prayer is all about begging God for stuff (and it can be). However, it is equally critical to listen. Meditation is almost entirely about listening. For others, the line between prayer and meditation is as

simple as this. Prayer is talking to God, whereas meditation is listening.

- Please be patient. While praying or meditating may seem unpleasant at first, it will soon become more comfortable. In time it becomes enjoyable and comforting.

Step 11 is critical in your addiction therapy and recovery from drug misuse because it causes such a dramatic shift in your perspective of yourself and the world.

You are undergoing profound inner transformation and reconnecting with something that did not play an active role in your life before you became clean.

If you are having difficulty with step 11, especially the notion of a higher power or any component of your spiritual practice, your sponsor or accountability partners to help.

CHAPTER 9

STEP 12- END OF THE PROGRAM

How Does Step Twelve Work?

Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore them gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

Galatians 6:1 NIV

The 12 Steps are similar to a recipe for a particular cake, bringing about a personality transformation that allows us alcoholics to recover from our alcoholism. When we've finished baking the wonderful spiritual experience cake and reached step 12, it's time for my favorite part: putting the icing

on the cake!

In their most basic form, the 12 steps of A.A. constitute a treatment for the disease of alcoholism. They are a collection of universal guiding principles that bridge the gaps between religion, history, culture, and wisdom traditions. They lay out a plan of action that, if followed, will eliminate the addiction from your mind, link you to a Higher Power, and show you how to help others who are still struggling.

THE PRINCIPLES OF STEP 12:

1. Honesty
2. Hope
3. Faith/Action
4. Courage
5. Integrity
6. Willingness
7. Humility
8. Love Between Brothers/Sisters

9. Justice/Discipline

10. Perseverance

11. Spiritual Intelligence

12. Service

The term "spiritual awakening" can refer to a variety of things. To put it simply, a spiritual awakening is just a psychological shift that, among other things, reduces our addiction to alcohol. It can be a profound and instantaneous experience for some, while for others it is a continuing co-current component of working the 12 steps.

In his book, Bill W., the co-founder of AA, describes a sudden, bright "white light" and life-changing event for him: "I stood atop a hilltop where a big wind blew." A breeze of spirit rather than air. It blasted right through me with enormous, clear vigor. Then came the brilliant realization, 'You are a free man.'"

It gives me goosebumps every time I read that, since Bill never drank again after that. Many more free men and women exist now as a result of his efforts. Most of us have "aha" moments that may or may not be accompanied by a white light on a regular basis as part of the spiritual awakening that occurs over time in a subtle and progressive manner.

THE MESSAGE

I am accountable anytime anyone, wherever, asks for help; I want the hand of AA to always be there, and I am responsible for that.

The second element of the 12th step is spreading the word of recovery to others. This is not due to AA becoming a cult; rather, "we retain what we have by giving it out." To put it simply, when we collaborate with others, our lives change. So we don't help another alcoholic because they're sick—we help another alcoholic because we're sick, and helping others is part

of our rehabilitation.

The following are the most crucial aspects of AA Step 12 to remember:

- The Twelve Steps are an attraction program, not an advertising program. We lead by example, therefore speak with others when they are ready, and when the time comes, they will ask, "How can I obtain what you've got?"
- Keep your message for the individual who is addicted to alcohol (and/or drugs) to what it was like for you, the outcome of your actions, and the fact that you did not become drunk or stoned.
- When speaking with a newbie, avoid labeling them as alcoholics or addicts. Tell your tale honestly and let others determine if it rings true for them.

Carrying the message may sometimes be as easy as

providing a warm, loving, nonjudgmental environment for other alcoholics to return to, as well as a handshake or embrace that says, "We're here for you—come on in—and keep coming back!"

The beauty and eloquence of AA Step 12 are only two of the numerous benefits of working the A.A. program. When you witness individuals heal, help others, and lose their loneliness, life takes on a whole new meaning. Contact with newcomers and with each other is a bright point in our new life.

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES

We can finally accomplish, feel, and believe things we couldn't before we experienced a spiritual awakening as a consequence of our efforts. This gift of sobriety, which is a new condition of consciousness and being, is truly the frosting on the cake.

On a daily basis, we have the chance to put into

practice what we have ultimately attained: honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love. Practicing the 12 steps in all of our affairs, believing in a higher power, cleaning house, sharing our experience, strength, and hope, and being involved in service one day at a time for the rest of our lives...is like eating cake with icing every day.

CHAPTER 10

LIFE AFTER THE 12-STEPS

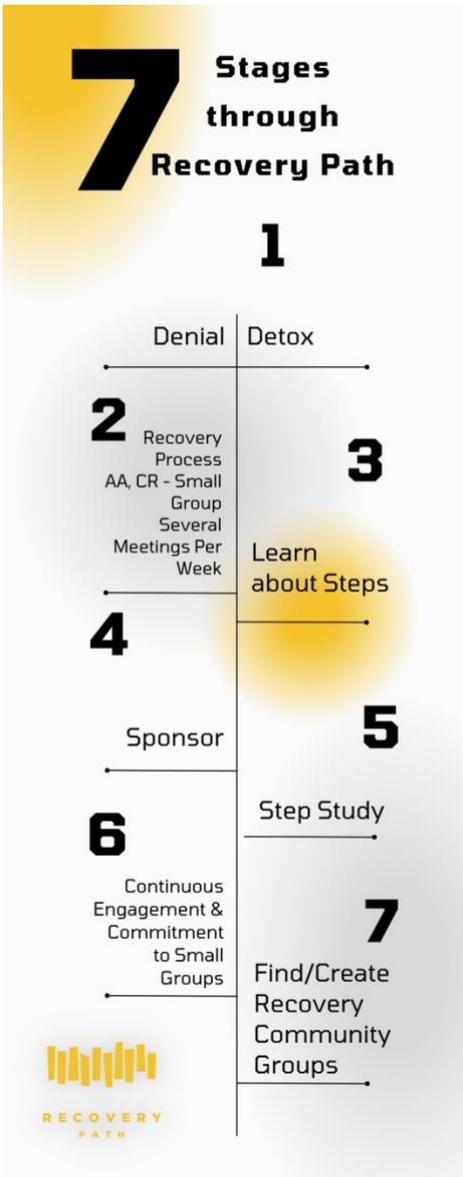
We've been on a journey; the entire 12 steps are designed to teach you how to live your life sober of addictions. Sometimes it's good to look back at how we started to gain an appreciation of how far we've come. The 12-step process is really a formula for spiritual growth and understanding. If you've followed the process as outlined, attended small group meetings, and have a sponsor you will find your life has already improved in many ways. That's the power of the process. We learn a sense of knowing we have the tools to handle most problems in our life. That's what the 12-steps are, a mature way to resolve conflicts and conduct our lives.

It is important to understand that completing the 12-steps is not like getting a college diploma you can hang on your wall. Once you are done...if you've done this right... you discover you are never done. Why would you want to be done growing your spiritual life, living healthy, and having amazing relationships with people?

Think back, when you were in your addiction, you were surrounded by people that wanted to keep you in your addiction. Yet despite all these "friends", we found ourselves living in private regret, doubt, and guilt. Alone at night we toss and turn and struggle with our thoughts. Troubled we dive back into our addiction for relief. It's the only way we know how to cope, and we have become comfortable and even accepting of our increasing isolation. Even when we are surrounded by people we are living in our own misery, and with time we become completely Isolated, lonely, and miserable. Escalation of our addiction will undoubtedly lead to

our spirit giving up and then death. Death when in Isolation is the worse outcome I could ever imagine. Truly the wages of sin are death and permanent isolation from God and love. I've been there! It took a near-death experience to get me to open my heart. My addiction killed me, and God saved me to share this message with you.

Staying sober requires continually working the steps, helping others with addiction, being of service, being a sponsor, and attending small group meetings frequently. This may seem like a pain and something you don't want to "be stuck with" but consider this. At a small group meeting, you always have an opportunity to socialize with fellow strugglers. You will have many things in common, but the most important thing will be the spiritual awakening that comes from doing the 12 steps in earnest. That spiritual connection should be centered on a



relationship with God.
Undoubtedly you will find a few people you can form a bond with.

This is the true key to maintaining sobriety. Form small groups of people whom you can become family. People you love and feel comfortable with. People you can call and express your struggles and draw strength and comfort from.

These Recovery

Community Groups (RCG) are your group of peeps whom you have no hesitation sharing your problems with BEFORE you elect to step back into addictive

behavior. I know in my own recovery just having a group I can text and say, “I am having a lousy day” and have them respond reminds me I am not alone and that I am not Isolated. God is always in community with you, but he knew it was not good for man to be alone, and thus he created woman. God is enough, but he means for us to be in a community with each other.

The Recover Path is a long and joyous struggle and there are many steps and milestones you must achieve to find serenity. Each one is designed to lead you to the next, but they are designed to lead you to God and his goal for us to live in a community with his guiding hand. Some may struggle with the concept of continuing to work on the steps and staying engaged with our recovery groups. At the same time, the best people, and best friends I have ever made are folks that shared this journey with me. My RCG checks in with each other several times a day, and we meet at

least once a week to share our journeys, pray for each other and stay sober together.

So now you are at a crossroads. You can choose a life that leads to isolation and death that separates us from love, or you can learn to surrender to God and experience love, community, and spiritual growth.

Your Recovery Path is in your hands, we can supply the process and motivations, but your recovery depends on you and your relationship with God.

We hope to see you on the path.
