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**WHY STUDY THE 12 STEPS?**

1. "Practicing the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has a profound and positive impact on abstinence from substances and on life functioning. These benefits occur whether the Steps are worked as part of mutual-help group attendance or are facilitated within the context of professionally delivered treatment. In recent years, scientists have been studying the mechanisms by which the 12-Step philosophy exerts its effects. Studies have shown that the approach works by increasing social networks in support of abstinence and by increasing an individual's confidence in maintaining sobriety. These factors, in turn, lead to improved health and substance use outcomes." *Addiction Professional 2009 May-June;7(3):16-19*

2. "Research studying 12-step mutual aid groups, specifically those focused on alcohol, has shown that participation in the groups promotes an individual's recovery by strengthening recovery-supportive social networks; increasing members' ability to cope with risky social contexts and negative emotions; augmenting motivation to recover; reducing depression, craving, and impulsivity; and enhancing psychological and spiritual well-being. Thus, with perhaps the exception of spirituality, many of the same mechanisms of behavior change thought to operate in professional treatments also appear to be important benefits of AA participation."

*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016.*

3. "Affiliation with 12-step fellowships during and after treatment is helpful in maintaining short-term abstinence, especially for those who attend regularly or become actively engaged with the 12-step program of recovery. Post-treatment 12-step affiliation is also a critical ingredient in the recovery process, increasing the likelihood that gains made during treatment are reinforced and sustained. From a recovery perspective, 12-step groups have the unique advantage of being consistently and widely available in the communities where members live. The chronic, relapse-prone aspect of addictive disorders make it necessary for many substance users to have access to lifelong support that formal treatment cannot provide. Further, 12-step groups often engage members more intensely and for longer periods than do professional treatment programs." *J Psychoactive Drugs. 2002; 34(3): 305-311.*

4. "Less religious individuals seem to benefit as much as more religious individuals. Women and older adults are more likely to be engaged and benefit from these groups. People who maintain regular attendance are more likely to achieve long-term recovery. Participation in these groups can educate people on the benefits of a full treatment program. In other words, those who benefit from 12-Step programs are those who are committed to making the program work, who engage in other treatment as well as being engaged in the 12-Step program, and those who stay involved with the 12-Step group on a long-term basis. In particular, incorporating a 12-Step program as part of the individual's aftercare program can help reinforce the lessons learned in rehab long after formal treatment is over." *Textbook of Substance Abuse Treatment (4th ed. pp. 511-521). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.*

**WHAT IS A SPONSOR?**

1. With the help of others, you can accomplish great things. That's why Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) includes sponsors who can help guide you through their program and more specifically the 12 steps. This person is generally someone who has a good amount of sobriety under their belt and feels comfortable helping others through difficult times in sobriety. Although there are no formal rules, it's recommended that a sponsor has at least one to two years of sobriety before they begin to sponsor. A sponsor is an understanding and sympathetic person who you can trust and turn to with problems associated with alcohol and sobriety. Sponsorship is a vital tool for the 12-step pathway of recovery.

2. When you attend AA meetings you might hear the group talk about sponsorship and how if you become a member of the fellowship, you should find a home group and a sponsor. This is important because both a home group and a sponsor can help keep you accountable.

Additionally, when you're new to sobriety, you'll have a lot of questions and concerns that a sponsor can help you address. You might not agree with everything your sponsor says, and if their ideas or suggestions seem unusual, you are free to ask questions and speak openly and honestly. Each member of AA has one sponsor. Although it is suggested that you choose someone who you are comfortable with and someone who has a sense of sobriety that you desire, you may feel at some point that a particular sponsor isn't right for you. You may freely select a different sponsor when you choose. The goal is to have someone who will help your growth in the program of AA.

3. Sponsorship is beneficial for both parties involved. By helping another person, sponsors find they are also helping themselves and strengthening their own sobriety, making it easier to live without alcohol or drugs. Sponsorship can be very satisfying; it fills the need to help others during dark times and it allows you to take action by passing on the message of sobriety. AA literature tells us that, "A.A. members who have actually worked the Steps of A.A. as a way to attain sobriety, are often in the best position to share their experience, strength, and hope. The most successful sponsors seem to be men and women who have been in A.A. long enough to have a good understanding of the A.A. program outlined in the Twelve Steps."

4. There is no one way to be a sponsor. The rules are not set in stone. Each person has their own recovery program in AA, and this means that each sponsorship relationship will be unique. All members should approach sponsorship with their own morals, experiences, and personalities. Some sponsors are rigid and want their sponsee calling them every day and give specific reading homework. Other sponsors are casual and want the newcomer to take the initiative in requesting advice and asking questions. In order to be a good sponsor, you must have the qualities of patience, understanding, compassion, and the gift of time. The best you can do is share your experience, strength, and hope and tell newcomers what worked for you. Use your moral compass and the principles of the 12 steps to guide you. Strive for progress not perfection and the power of the steps will lead the way.

**SPIRITUALITY AND THE 12 STEPS**

1. “I want to dispel the belief that practical life and spiritual life are separate, or even opposed. Instead, the more spiritual you are, if your growth is based on self-awareness and the expansion of consciousness, the more you will attain life's greatest rewards. You will become a success on your own terms, whatever they are.” (Deepak Chopra, author)

2. Spirituality can be defined as the belief that there is more to reality than what we know through our senses. Spirituality is a quality of the individual, a religion is an organized community of individuals. Religions focus on beliefs, rituals, and practices oriented to bringing individuals within the community into closer relationship with the divine. Spiritual wellness means being connected to something greater than yourself, an ultimate reality that can go by the name of God, Yahweh, the Great Spirit, Allah, Brahman, Atman, “higher power” or a wide variety of other names.

Discuss: How have you seen the connection between the practical and spiritual in your own life or the life of others?

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3. Spirituality has the power and capability to help make our decisions and choices easier, ground us during periods of change and give us the resiliency or ability to survive with grace and inner peace in the face of hard times. Both spirituality and religion emphasize values and moral actions, and both can provide meaning, purpose, and hope to life. To be spiritually minded does not mandate you take up a religious practice. However, an organized faith community may be one route you choose to take to boost your spiritual wellness.

4. The journey to spiritual wellness begins with a first step – believe. “I am fundamentally an optimist. Part of being optimistic is keeping one’s head pointed toward the sun, one’s feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death.” (Nelson Mandela, freedom fighter). Sometimes we feel alone but a power greater than ourselves knows us and sees us. Sometimes, we are helped through other people. Sometimes, we are inspired to know in our mind and in our heart what we need to change or do differently.

Discuss: When was a time when you felt you were being helped by a power greater than yourself?

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5. Everything in the universe is interconnected is a major finding of modern physics. It is also a tenet of all major religions and spiritual paths. We cannot be separate from the universe even if we try. If everything is interconnected, then it logically follows that the universe is one with many parts. The floor touches the door to outside; the door touches the porch or sidewalk; the

sidewalk touches the street; the street goes so many places; and so on and so on. Therefore, although we can feel like outsiders and we can be treated as outsiders, in reality there are no outsiders and no insiders. We are connected even if right now we don't experience or feel that connection. (Linehan, 2015)

6. Many have written about our connection to the natural forces that exist in the universe. "Are not the mountains, waves and skies a part of me and of my soul, as I of them?" (Lord Byron, poet) "We invent nothing, truly. We borrow and re-create. We uncover and discover. All has been given, as the mystics say. We have only to open our eyes and hearts, to become one with that which is." (Henry Miller, novelist) "The cosmos is within us. We are made of star-stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself" (Carl Sagan, astronomer)

#### OBJECT CONSTANCY ACTIVITY

Step 1: Look at (identify something in the room)

Step 2: Close your eyes for a minute

Step 3: Open your eyes

Object Constancy originates from the concept of Object Permanence — a cognitive skill we acquire at around 2 to 3 years old. It is the understanding that objects continue to exist even when they cannot be seen, touched, or sensed in some way. This is why babies love peekaboo — when you hide your face, they think it ceases to exist. According to psychologist Piaget, who founded the idea, achieving Object Constancy is a developmental milestone.

Discuss: If we close our eyes and do not experience something right in front of us, did that mean it disappeared from the universe and was no longer connected to us?

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7. The spiritual may be the most personal element of your own wellness. When striving to develop and practice this quality we need to find techniques and approaches that work for us. Although people can help us along the way, the route to spiritual wellness is something you must learn to master on your own. Spiritual wellness strongly emphasizes the importance of building inner resources and inner thoughts in order to give meaning to life's experiences. Since spiritual wellness involves one's values, beliefs, and purpose, it can be achieved in several ways—both physically and mentally. Similar to the other aspects of wellness covered in this course there is no "one size fits all" approach. Your journey may involve the following:

- Spending time meditating, praying or practicing mindfulness. Quiet time alone pondering the meaning of life
- Building awareness through journaling
- Serving others
- Spending time in nature
- Appreciating music and the arts

- Practicing acceptance
- Being curious. If something happens that makes you even the slightest bit curious, take time to explore the experience even deeper.
- Becoming part of a faith community

Discuss: Which of the above have you found helpful? Are there other things that have helped you become more spiritually minded?

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8. Generally, people like to live a life with meaning and purpose. When these goals are met, you will be able to develop a harmony with your inner self and the outside world. This is a lifelong journey that evolves based on unique circumstances, individual experiences and global events. Along with other aspects of wellness our spiritual level fluctuates throughout life. As part of these fluctuations it is natural to experience a variety of emotions along the path – both positive (hope, forgiveness, acceptance, joy) and negative (doubt, fear, disappointment, conflict).

9. Spiritual wellness not only allows you to seek meaning and purpose in human existence, but it also allows you to appreciate your life experiences for what they are. It grants you balance. Having a spiritual element in our lives can even help us heal when suffering from physical or behavioral health conditions. “He who has a Why to live for can bear almost any How”, (Nietzsche, philosopher)

10. Studies have found that religious involvement is related to better coping with stress and less depression, suicide, anxiety, and substance abuse (Koenig, 2009). Unlike many other coping resources, spirituality is available to anyone anywhere at any time, regardless of financial, social, physical, or mental circumstances (Koenig, 2009). Accessing religion can also create opportunities for building support networks, which may be helpful in dealing with the stressors individuals living with behavioral health conditions encounter (Corrigan et al., 2003).

Discuss: What emotions have you experienced on your spiritual journey? How have your beliefs provided meaning and purpose during challenging times?

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HARD THINGS ACTIVITY

Read these four steps and write your thoughts and idea below.

Step 1: Think about something hard you have been through that made you stronger.

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Step 2: What did you learn from that experience?

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Step 3: Now, think of something hard you are going through right now.

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Step 4: How can you work with your “Higher Power” to get the help and strength you need (and have shown in the past) for what you are going through today?

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11. Spiritual concepts are often universal beliefs, but depending on our own experience can be described using vastly different words. When talking about spirituality it’s important to be understanding. Other’s spiritual beliefs may not be in alignment with your own. Look for commonalities across various practices and cultures. Not only are there a number of belief systems, religions, and faiths, but people are at different stages in their own spiritual journeys. You may know people who have never considered spirituality as a component of their well-being, others may be lifetime followers of a particular faith. Be mindful and understanding of these differences. Remember, “there are no outsiders in the universe.”(Linehan, 2015)

**YOUR "CORE" WORKSHEET**

Explore your inner self or spiritual core by answering these questions.

What gives my life meaning and purpose?

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What gives me hope?

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How do I get through tough times? Where do I find comfort?

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Am I tolerant of other people's views about life issues?

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Do I make attempts to expand my awareness of different ethnic, racial and religious groups?

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Do I make time for relaxation in my day?

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Do my values guide my decisions and actions?

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**STEP 1: HONESTY****The 12 Steps of Alcoholic Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. Many of us began our addictions out of curiosity. Some of us became involved because of a justifiable need for a prescription drug or as an act of deliberate rebellion. Many began this path when barely older than children. Whatever our motive for starting and our circumstances, we soon discovered that maladaptive behavior relieved more than just physical pain. It provided stimulation or numbed painful feelings or moods. It helped us avoid the problems we faced— or so we thought. For a while, we felt free of fear, worry, loneliness, discouragement, regret, or boredom. But because life is full of the conditions that prompt these kinds of feelings, we resorted to our addictions more and more often. Still, most of us failed to recognize or admit that we had lost the ability to resist and abstain on our own.
2. Rarely do people caught in addictive behaviors admit to being addicted. To deny the seriousness of our condition and to avoid detection and the consequences of our choices, we tried to minimize or hide our behaviors. We did not realize that by deceiving others and ourselves, we slipped deeper into our addictions. As our powerlessness over maladaptive behaviors increased, many of us found fault with family and friends. We plunged into greater and greater isolation separating ourselves from others, especially any Higher Power.
3. When we resorted to lies and secrecy, hoping to excuse ourselves or blame others, we weakened spiritually. With each act of dishonesty, we bound ourselves with cords that soon became as strong as chains. Then a time came when we were brought face to face with reality. We could no longer hide by telling one more lie or by saying, “It’s not that bad!”

4. A loved one, a doctor, a judge, told us the truth we could no longer deny—the addiction was destroying our lives. When we honestly looked at the past, we admitted that nothing we had tried on our own had worked. We acknowledged that the addiction had only gotten worse. We realized how much our maladaptive behaviors had damaged relationships and robbed us of any sense of worth. At this point, we took the first step toward freedom and recovery by finding courage to admit that we were not just dealing with a problem or a bad habit. We finally admitted the truth that our lives had become unmanageable and that we needed help. The amazing thing about this honest realization of defeat was that recovery finally began.

#### ACTION STEPS

##### 5. Become willing to abstain.

Even though people's addictions are different, some truths, like this one, never vary—nothing begins without an individual's will to make it begin. Freedom from maladaptive behaviors and being clean begins with a tiny flicker of will. People say individuals finally become willing to abstain when the pain of the problem becomes worse than the pain of the solution. Have you come to that point? If you have not and you continue in your addiction, you surely will reach that point because addiction is a progressive problem. Like a degenerative disease, it eats at your ability to function normally. The only requirement to begin recovery is the desire to stop participating in the addiction. If your desire is small and inconsistent today, don't worry. It will grow!

6. Some people recognize the need to be free from addiction but are not yet willing to begin. If you are in that situation, perhaps you can begin by acknowledging your unwillingness and considering the costs of your maladaptive behaviors. You can list what is important to you, what you value most. Then look for contradictions between what you believe in and hope for and your behavior. Consider how your actions undermine your values. You can ask for help to you see yourself and your life —with all your divine potential—and what you risk by continuing in your maladaptive behaviors. A recognition of what you lose by indulging in your behaviors can help you find the desire to stop. If you can find even the smallest desire, you will have room to begin Step 1. And as you progress through the steps of this program and see the changes that come into your life, your desire will grow.

##### 7. Let go of pride and seek humility

"It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.", Saint Augustine (faith leader). Pride and honesty cannot coexist. Pride is an illusion and is an essential element of all addiction. Pride distorts the truth about things as they are, as they have been, and as they will be. It is a major obstacle to your recovery.

8. Most of us think of pride as self-centeredness, conceit, boastfulness, arrogance, or haughtiness. All of these are elements, but the heart, or core, is still missing. The central feature of pride is hatred toward or hostility toward our Higher Power and our fellowmen. Pride is essentially competitive in nature; we pit our will against others. Our will in competition to God's will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unchecked. The proud cannot accept a Higher

Power giving direction to their lives. They pit their perceptions of truth against His knowledge, their abilities versus His power, their accomplishments against His works. As you become willing to abstain and admit the problems you face, your pride will gradually be replaced with humility.

#### 9. Admit the problem; seek help; attend meetings

When we indulged our addictions, we lied to ourselves and others. But we could not really fool ourselves. We pretended we were fine, full of daring and excuses, but somewhere deep inside we knew. We knew we were sliding down a slippery slope toward greater and greater sorrow. Denying this truth was such hard work that it was a big relief finally to admit that we had a problem. Suddenly, we allowed a tiny opening for hope to slip in. When we chose to admit to ourselves that we had a problem and we became willing to seek support and help, we gave that hope a place to grow. We were then ready to take the next step of attending a recovery meeting.

10. You will find attending recovery meetings helpful for at least two reasons. First, at these meetings you will study specific principles that, when applied, will help you change your behavior. Second, these meetings are a place to gather with others seeking recovery and with those who have already taken this path and are living proof of its effectiveness. In recovery meetings you will find understanding, hope, and support.

#### STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING

11. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 2: HOPE****The 12 Steps of Alcoholic Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. “Hope is a waking dream”, Aristotle (philosopher). When we realized our powerlessness most of us felt stripped of any hope. Those of us who had grown up with no concept of a Higher Power were certain we had exhausted every avenue of help. Meanwhile, those of us who believed in a Higher Power were convinced they were too disappointed in us to help. Either way, Step 2 presented us with an answer we had either never considered or else had discarded—to turn to a Higher Power and find hope.

2. Finally, humbled, we reached out for help. Following what felt to us like the tiniest ray of hope, we began to attend recovery meetings. When we first came to meetings, we were filled with doubts and fears. We were frightened and possibly even cynical, but at least we came. There we heard men and women honestly describe what their lives had been like, what happened to change them, and what it was like to live in recovery. We discovered that many of the people we met in the meetings had once felt as hopeless as we felt. But now they were laughing, talking, smiling, meditating, praying, studying, and writing in their recovery journals.

3. Gradually, the principles they shared and practiced started to work for us. As we kept coming back, we began to feel something we had not felt in years— we felt hope. If there was hope for others who had been at the very brink of destruction, maybe there was hope for us too! We were grateful to hear that if we would humble ourselves, there would be no behavior, no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no offence exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness.

4. In this atmosphere of faith, we found hope and began to believe that we could be delivered from this burden. We followed the example of our recovering friends. We found ourselves blessed with the ability to maintain our abstinence one day at a time. As we took Step 2, we became willing to replace trust in ourselves with faith in the love of others and a power greater than ourselves. We took this step in our minds and in our hearts, and we experienced the truth that the foundation of recovery must be spiritual.

5. As you take the steps recommended in this guide, you will experience the same truth. It is worth every effort. This program is spiritual, and it is a program of action. If you follow these principles and allow them to work in your life, you will find yourself being restored to spiritual health through your newfound relationship with a Higher Power. They will help you begin to see your choices more honestly and clearly; you will make decisions in harmony with these principles.

6. “When we meet real tragedy in life, we can react in two ways - either by losing hope and falling into self-destructive habits, or by using the challenge to find our inner strength. Thanks to the teachings of Buddha, I have been able to take this second way.” Dalia Lama (religious leader). For some of us this miracle was almost instantaneous; for others, recovery has been more gradual. However, it may occur for you, you will eventually be able to say with us that you are rescued and enjoy a perfect brightness of hope.

7. “I am fundamentally an optimist. Part of being optimistic is keeping one’s head pointed toward the sun, one’s feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death.”, Nelson Mandela (revolutionary, President of South Africa). When words cannot provide the help we need or express the joy we feel, when it is simply pointless to attempt to explain that which is unexplainable, when logic and reason cannot produce an understanding about the injustices and inequities of life, when mortal experience and evaluation are insufficient to produce a desired outcome, and when it seems that perhaps we are so totally alone, we are blessed by the ‘tender mercies’ of a Higher Power and made strong. The simpleness, the sweetness, and the constancy of these moments will do much to fortify and protect us in the troubled times in which we do now and will yet live.

8. Some individuals who hear or read this message erroneously may discount or dismiss in their personal lives the availability of these tender mercies. We may falsely think that such blessings and gifts are reserved for other people who appear to be more than we feel we are. You will see tender mercies in your life as you learn to watch for them and as you come to believe that a power greater than yourself can indeed help you recover.

## **ACTION STEPS**

### 9. Meditate, pray, read and ponder

As you let go of pride and begin to consider bringing a Higher Power back into your life, you will start to think in more meditative or prayerful terms. You will find how good it feels to express

your feelings and needs. You will feel you have reopened a conversation with someone who will always answer you, not always with a *yes* but always with love. At last you will begin to experience the healing effects of breaking out of self-imposed isolation.

10. The desire to communicate with a Higher Power will lead you to seek wisdom out of the best books. As you learn of others who found answers, your hope will grow that you can find answers too. As you write your thoughts, you will receive additional impressions. Study thoughtfully and you will find answers to your questions and needs.

#### 11. Believe in a Higher Power

Many people grow up with some concept of a Higher Power. They may even have had a simple belief in God, but often do not connect their personal struggles with a need for His power in our lives. The action required in Step 2 is simply to become willing to practice believing in the love and tender mercies of a Higher Power and this His guiding influence is available to all. You can come to know the power of this love by watching for the tender mercies in your own life and in the lives of others.

#### STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING

12. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 3: TRUST IN GOD****The 12 Steps of Alcoholic Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. Step 3 is the decision Step. In the first two steps, we awakened to what we could not do for ourselves and what we needed a **power greater than ourselves** to do for us. Then in Step 3 we were introduced to the only thing we could do. Decide to open ourselves and surrender our entire lives—past, present, and future—and our will about our lives to a Higher Power. Step 3 was an act of agency. It was the most important choice we ever made. The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to offer. The many other things we could give are actually things God has already given or loaned to us. But when we begin to submit ourselves by letting our wills be swallowed up, then we are really giving something.
2. When we took Step 3, we faced the truth that recovery was far more the result of a **power greater than ourselves** than our own efforts. That power worked the miracle when we invited it into our lives. Step 3 was a decision to allow a power greater than ourselves to help us recover and free us from our maladaptive behaviors. It was a decision to allow this power to direct our lives, remembering of course that we always have the ability to choose. By continuing to follow this spiritually focused program of recovery we trusted our lives to a power greater than our self. “Whenever the mind, unsteady and restless, strays away from the Spirit, let him ever and forever lead it again to the Spirit. Supreme joy comes to those whose hearts are one with God.” Bhagavad Gita 6:26-28 (ancient Indian text).

3. When we first attended recovery meetings, we may have felt pressured or even forced by others to be there, but to take Step 3 we had to decide to act for ourselves. We realized that changing our lives this much had to be our own decision. It wasn't about what our parents did, what they were doing now, or what they wanted. Neither was it about what our spouses, families, or friends thought, felt, did, or did not do. We saw we had to be willing to stay clean and sober regardless of anyone else's opinions or choices. Our willingness was the solid foundation on which the balance of recovery rested.

4. "Every morning we are born again. What we do today is what matters most," Buddha (teacher, religious leader). When we took this Step, we felt terrified of the unknown. What would happen if we humbled ourselves and surrendered our lives and wills completely to the care of another? For many of us, childhood had been very hard, and we were terrified of becoming as vulnerable as little children again. We were convinced by past experiences that making a definite commitment was nearly impossible, given the insanity surrounding us in this world. We had seen too many commitments broken. We had broken too many ourselves.

5. The best some of us could do was try what our recovering friends had suggested: "Don't use. Go to meetings. Ask for help." Those who had walked the steps of recovery before us invited us to experiment with this new way of living. They patiently waited for us to become willing to open the door just a little bit. At first our efforts were anxious and halting. We kept giving our trust and then taking it back. We worried that others would be displeased at our inconsistency and withdraw their support and love from us. But they didn't.

6. Gradually we allowed a Higher Power to demonstrate the healing power and safety of following these steps. Eventually each of us realized that to change we not only had to give up our maladaptive behaviors, but we also had to turn over our entire will and life over to God. As we did so, we found Him patient and accepting of our faltering efforts to surrender to Him in all things. Our ability to withstand temptation is now grounded in the continual submission of our will. When we express our need for the Higher Power available to us, we begin to feel that power within us, fortifying us against the next challenge. We have learned to accept life on God's terms.

7. This submission to a power greater than ourselves is hard work. It requires us to rededicate ourselves at the start of each day and sometimes every hour or even from moment to moment. As we are willing to do so, we find the grace, or enabling power, to do what we could not do for ourselves. Continued submission reduces strife and brings more meaning to our lives. Small things like traffic jams are no longer cause for upset. We no longer fear our creditors. We accept responsibility for our actions. We accept and treat others as we would like to be treated. Our eyes, our minds, and our hearts are finally open to the truth that life is challenging and will always have the potential to bring us sorrow and frustration as well as happiness.



8. Each new day we renew our submission. This is what most of us mean when we say, “One day at a time.” We have decided to let go of the self-will and self-seeking that were at the root of our addictions and enjoy another 24 hours of the serenity and strength that come from trusting in the goodness, power, and love of a Higher Power.

#### Action Steps

#### 9. Make time to regular connect with your Higher Power through worship

Taking Step 3 and trusting in a Higher Power can be like putting on a new pair of glasses and seeing everything with new eyes. When you make the decision to turn over your will, you begin to experience comfort and joy. Do your best to set aside a time each day or week to connect with your Higher Power through worship. To worship is to show a lot of love and adoration for something. Going to religious services is just one form of worship — so is embracing nature, meditation, prayer, singing, reading out of the best books. Whatever you decide to do, as you worship consider the gifts that a power greater than ourselves offers you. Then renew your commitment to accept and follow His will for your life. As your recovery progresses, you will begin to experience the reality that with the help of a power greater than yourself nothing is impossible.

#### 10. Decide to change what you can change; accept what you cannot change

You may not be able to change some things in your life, but you can change your willingness to trust in a Higher Power. As you learn to trust you will learn that, “In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success”. KETUVM (Hebrew Bible). These words—adapted from a prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr (ethicist) and known as the “Serenity Prayer”—can help you as you decide to trust, “God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. “You can accept with serenity the current reality of your condition when you trust in God’s ability to help you. You can accept with serenity that although you cannot control the choices and actions of others, you can decide how you will act in each situation you face. You can decide with courage to trust and act according to your Higher Power. You can turn your will and life over to that power’s care. You can decide to do what it asks.

#### STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING

11. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 4: Truth****The 12 Steps of Alcoholic Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. When you took Step 3, you decided to trust in a power greater than ourselves. In Step 4, you make a searching and fearless written inventory of your life, surveying or summarizing the thoughts, events, emotions, and actions of your life, making your inventory as complete as possible.
2. Doing a fearless and thorough inventory of your life will not be easy. When we say *fearless*, we do not mean you will have no feelings of fear. You will likely experience many emotions as you survey your life, including embarrassment or shame or fear. *Fearless* means you will not let your fears stop you from being thorough in the inventory process. In Step 4, it means you commit to rigorous honesty as you focus on events in your life, including your own weaknesses, and not on anyone else's weaknesses.
3. In the past you probably justified bad behavior and blamed other people, places, or things for the problems you had created. Now you will begin to take responsibility for past and current actions, even though you may need to acknowledge painful, embarrassing, or difficult events, thoughts, emotions, or actions.
4. If the thought of making a searching and fearless inventory of yourself feels overwhelming, know you are not alone. Our hearts go out to you. We remember our struggles to find the willingness to complete this Step. Many of us wondered if we might skip Step 4 entirely and still overcome our addictions. Eventually we had to believe the words of those who went before us:

“Without a searching and fearless moral inventory, . . . the faith which really works in daily living is still out of reach” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* [1981], 43).

5. Addiction crippled our ability to reflect honestly about our lives. It limited our ability to understand the damage and havoc—the liabilities—it caused in all our relationships. We needed a framework through which we could sort out our past honestly. Step 4 provided that framework; it was the “vigorous and painstaking effort to discover what these liabilities in each of us have been, and are” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, 42).

6. Through this inventory, we identified negative thoughts, emotions, and actions that ruled our lives. By discovering those destructive elements in our lives, we took the first step toward correcting them. Doing an inventory was difficult, but this step opened the door to the additional faith and hope we needed to continue our recoveries and overcome addiction.

#### How to do an inventory

7. Once we had admitted the need for Step 4, the next questions became, “But just how do I do an inventory? What tools will I need?” An inventory is a very personal process, and there is no single right way to do it. You can consult with others who have already done an inventory and seek guidance in doing your own. They will help you be truthful and loving as you sort through your memories and feelings.

8. One way to do an inventory is to list memories of people; institutions or organizations; principles, ideas, or beliefs; and events, situations, or circumstances that trigger positive and negative feelings (including sadness, regret, anger, resentment, fear, bitterness). Some items on the list may appear multiple times. That is okay. Do not try to sort or judge or analyze at this point. For now, the most important thing is to be as thorough as possible.

9. As you do your inventory, look beyond your past behaviors and examine the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that led to your behavior. Your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are actually the roots of your addictive behaviors. Unless you examine all your tendencies toward fear, pride, resentment, anger, self-will, and self-pity, your abstinence will be shaky at best. You will continue with your original addiction or switch to another one. Your addiction is a symptom of other “causes and conditions” (*Alcoholics Anonymous* [2001], 64).

10. Some people group their lives according to age, grades in school, places lived, or relationships. Others start simply by brainstorming. You will probably not remember everything all at once. Continue to be prayerful or meditative and allow things to be brought to your remembrance. Leave this process open ended and add to your inventory as your memories come. Once you have finished your list, seek guidance in learning from each memory. Some people organize this part of their inventory into a table or chart with columns under each of the five headings listed below. They restrict their entries to brief statements. Others create a page for each entry on their list, and then write answers in each of the five categories.

11. Incident. What happened? In just a few words, give a short description of your memory of the stimulus or event. Think more in terms of a summary rather than a long story.

Self-examination. How did your thoughts, beliefs, character weaknesses or strengths affect the situation? Do you see any evidence of pride, self-pity, self-deception, or self-will in your attitudes and actions? Be sure to record also those times when you acted right.

Feelings. What were your feelings at the time of the incident? What are your feelings now about it? Consider how your fears may have contributed to it.

Behaviors. What action or behavior resulted from the incident?

Consequences. What was the effect on you or others?

12. God can help you humble yourself and face the truth, even if the truth is painful. With His help you can recognize your strengths and weaknesses. Questions like these may help:

- *What outcome did I want in this situation and why?*
- *How did I try to control the situation?*
- *Was it any of my business?*
- *What actions did I take or omit to get what I wanted?*
- *Did I ignore reality?*
- *Were my expectations reasonable for myself and for others?*
- *Did I lie to myself or to others?*
- *Did I ignore the feelings of others and think only of myself?*
- *How did I act like a victim to control others, get attention and sympathy, be special, and so on?*
- *Did I resist help from God and others?*
- *Did I insist on being right?*
- *Did I feel slighted for lack of recognition or acknowledgment?*

Four necessary elements

13. Four elements are critical to a successful moral inventory—writing, honesty, support, and prayer. These elements of a moral inventory will help you recognize and overcome shortcomings.

Writing. The inventory of your life will be most effective if you write it. You can hold a written list in your hands, review it, and refer to it when necessary; unwritten thoughts are easy to forget, and distractions can easily interrupt you. As you write your moral inventory, you will be able to think more clearly about the events in your life and you will be able to focus on them with less distraction.

14. Some people try to avoid writing their moral inventory, feeling embarrassed or fearful about their writing ability or about someone else reading what they write. Don't let these fears stop you. Your spelling, grammar, penmanship, or typing skills do not matter. You can draw stick figures, if you must, but get your inventory on paper. Until you put it in a tangible form, you still haven't done your fourth Step. As you complete the fourth Step, remember that perfectionism—trying to do your inventory perfectly and to please others—can block you from being complete.

15. The fear of someone reading what you have written can be a genuine concern, but you can overcome it. Those of us who have done an inventory have had to face this fear. We had to do all we could to keep our inventory private and then trust in the results. We had to care more about healing than about our ego or reputation. The inventory required us to call on a Higher Power's help to protect and guide us as we accomplished it. You must remember that Step 4 is an act of stepping out of shadows of shame and admitting your need to change. If you will be mindful about how and where to keep your inventory pages private, you will be guided to do what is best.

16. Honesty. Being honest with yourself about your life can be terrifying. Often people avoid looking too closely at themselves in the mirror of the past, fearing the reflection may reveal the truth of what their lives have become. Now as you take the fourth Step, you must face the truth about your life and your fears squarely.

In your inventory, you will not only discover your weaknesses, but you will also understand and appreciate your strengths better. Include in your inventory your good traits and the positive things you have done. In truth, you are a combination of weaknesses and strengths. As you become willing to see the whole truth about your past—good and bad—you put the past in proper perspective. You will be helped to change your life's course and fulfill your divine potential. You will learn that you are like all other humans, with strengths and weaknesses. You can begin to face others on equal footing.

17. Support. The encouragement and support of others who understand recovery can help you in your efforts. They can guide you in discovering the method, structure, or approach that will work best for you in reviewing your past. They can encourage you if you get discouraged.

Meditation or Prayer. As you consider the magnitude of Step 4 and the challenge it represents, think of how you have been helped in each previous step. As you turned to your Higher Power for comfort, courage, and guidance, you found the help that will continue with you as you do an inventory. "Start by doing what is necessary then do what is possible and the suddenly you are doing the impossible." (Saint Francis of Assisi, religious leader). If you pray or meditate each time before you sit down to write your inventory, you will be helped. You will learn this reality as you take this seemingly impossible Step— God can and will always be there for you, if you ask.

## Freeing yourself from the past

18. Some people are concerned about looking into the past for fear of inadvertently creating false memories from vague or exaggerated impressions. In doing your inventory, consider only those memories that are plain enough to be addressed and sorted through. Here again, trusting God is the answer. If you conduct your inventory with sincere prayer or meditation, with real intent, having faith in God, you can trust Him to bring those things to your remembrance that will help in your recovery.

19. One result of completing Step 4 is that you take a major step toward freeing yourself from behaviors that defined your past. The reflection of yourself that you will see as you complete this step can inspire you to change the direction of your life if you will let it. You do not have to be what you have been. By asking for guidance as you examine your life, you will come to recognize your experiences as learning opportunities. You will find that uncovering weaknesses you have suffered with for so long will allow you to move forward to a new life.

**ACTION STEPS**20. Write in a personal journal

"In the diary you find proof that in situations which today would seem unbearable, you lived through, looked around and wrote down observations, that this right hand moved then as it does today, when we may be wiser because we are able to look back upon our former condition, and for that very reason have got to admit the courage of our earlier striving in which we persisted even in sheer ignorance." Franz Kafkai (Holocaust survivor). For many of us, an inventory was our first effort to write about our lives. A personal journal can continue to be a very powerful tool of recovery.

21. When you meditate and write about your life, you give yourself an opportunity to help you see and understand the potential lessons that come from each of your experiences. If you are not currently keeping a journal, we encourage you to start. If you are already keeping one, we encourage you to be more thoughtful as you write so you enrich your understanding through.

22. Make an accounting of your life, past and present

Completing an inventory will take time. There is no need to rush through it, but you need to get started. Where you begin is not as important as eventually examining your past as far as your memory and inspiration will take you. Just write as memories come into your mind. What you write is private, and you will share it only with a trusted support person you will thoughtfully select when you take Step 5. Your inventory is about you and your relationship with yourself and others. As you gather courage to see yourself as you really are, your eyes will be opened and you will begin to see yourself as someone with a divine birthright. Take this step and keep your eyes on that birthright.

**23. Remember your failings no more**

After you have completed your written inventory and when the time is right, those portions that include negative or angry expressions, accounts of personal wrong doing, and any other sensitive matters that should not be shared with others or passed down to future generations should be destroyed. The destruction of these writings can be a symbol of the changes in your life and a powerful way to let go.

**STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING**

24. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 5: CONFESS****The 12 Steps of Alcoholic Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. A common characteristic of many who have suffered from addiction is a sense of isolation. Even in a crowd or while engaged in activities where others might feel a sense of connectedness, we felt like we didn't fit in. As we came to recovery meetings, we began to emerge from the emotional isolation in which addiction thrived. At first, many of us just sat and listened, but eventually we felt safe enough to speak and share. Still, we kept many things to ourselves—shameful things, embarrassing things, heartbreaking things, things that made us feel vulnerable.

2. We did honest and thorough inventories in Step 4, but that was a private experience. We were still left alone with the shame of the past. Not until we took Step 5 were we able to throw off the chains of our isolating secrets and gain some perspective on ourselves and the past. Confession began a process of disclosure where we shared expressions of remorse with friends, family, and others. It was part of an ongoing effort to repair and reestablish broken relationships. Confession also involved seeking forgiveness from God, as we understand him, through meditation or prayer.

3. We found it best to take Step 5 as soon as possible after completing Step 4. Postponing it would have been like acknowledging an infected wound without cleansing it. Step 5 seemed overwhelming, but as we asked for help, we found courage and strength. We selected a trusted person to whom we could disclose the exact nature of our wrongs. We tried to select someone who had gone through Steps 4 and 5 and who was well-grounded in recovery. We began the



meeting inviting help from our Higher Power and then we read our inventories aloud. The individuals who listened to our inventories often helped us see lingering areas of self-deception. They helped us put our lives into perspective and avoid exaggerating or minimizing our accountability.

4. Writing our inventories was like recording hundreds of separate scenes from our lives. In Step 5, we had a chance to see our lives unfold, scene after scene, in a flowing narrative. As we did, we began to recognize patterns of weaknesses that had influenced our choices. We started to understand our tendencies toward negative thoughts and emotions (self-will, fear, pride, self-pity, jealousy, self-righteousness, anger, resentment, unbridled passions and desires, and so on). These thoughts and emotions were truly the exact nature of our wrongs.

5. In completing Step 5, we demonstrated our commitment to a new life based firmly on telling and living the truth. Once we honestly and thoroughly completed Step 5, we were left with nothing to hide. We outwardly demonstrated our desire to give away all our unwanted behaviors so that we could receive a greater knowledge and the love and support of many good people who rallied around us.

#### ACTION STEPS

##### 6. Begin to seek forgiveness; be honest with yourself and others

The sooner you begin this process, the sooner you will find the peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness. Use great care and wisdom when selecting someone to whom to disclose your wrongs. Do not share such sensitive information with individuals you suspect might extend improper guidance, provide misinformation, or have difficulty maintaining confidences. Those with whom you share your inventory must be extremely trustworthy in both word and deed.

##### 7. Let peace come into your life

Occasionally you may observe individuals in recovery meetings or in other situations who seem to rehearse continually their shortcomings or the wrongs others have committed against them. They are always confessing but never finding peace. Do not confuse Step 5 with an obsessive desire to dwell on negative things. The intent of Step 5 is exactly the opposite. We take Step 5 not to hold on to the things we confess but to begin to distinguish evil from good for ourselves and to choose good.

#### STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING

8. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 6: CHANGE OF HEART****The 12 Steps of Alcoholic Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. After the rigorous emotional and spiritual cleansing of Steps 4 and 5, most of us were amazed at the transformation in ourselves. We meditated or prayed more intently, pondered more regularly, and kept a journal more consistently. As we took Step 5, many of us met with our sponsors and sought help in changing. Most of us found we were tempted less intensely and less often. Some of us were already free from our addictions. With such mighty changes in our behavior and our lives, some of us wondered why we needed more steps.

2. As time passed, though, we noticed that abstinence seemed to make our character weaknesses more visible, especially to ourselves. We tried to control our negative thoughts and feelings, but they continued to reappear, haunting us and threatening our new lives of abstinence. Those who understood the spiritual implications of recovery urged us to recognize that while all the outward changes in our lives were wonderful there were even more blessings to come. Our friends helped us see that if we wanted not only to avoid our addictions but actually lose the desire to return to them, we had to experience a change of heart. This change of heart or desire is the purpose of Step 6.

3. “How?” you may ask. “How can I even begin to accomplish such a change?” Don’t be discouraged by these feelings. Step 6, like the steps before it, may feel like an overwhelming challenge. As painful as it may be, you may have to admit, as we did, that recognizing and confessing your character weaknesses in Steps 4 and 5 did not necessarily mean you were ready to give them up. You may realize that you still cling to old ways of reacting to and coping

with stresses in life—maybe even more so now that you have let go of your maladaptive behaviors.

4. Probably the most humbling thing to acknowledge is that you still harbor a prideful desire to change without help. Step 6 means surrendering all remnants of pride and self-will. Like Steps 1 and 2, Step 6 requires you to humble yourself and admit your need for the transforming power of a higher power. That power has enabled you to accomplish each step to this point. Step 6 is no exception.

5. As you seek help with this step you will not be disappointed. If you trust and have patience with the process, you will see your pride gradually replaced by humility. As you weary of your own unaided effort to change, and as soon as you turn to a Higher Power you will witness once again love and power in your behalf. Your resistance to letting go of old patterns of behavior will be replaced by an open mind that gently suggests a better way of living. Your fear of change will diminish.

6. As the process of change takes hold in your heart, you will find the false beliefs that fueled negative thoughts and feelings gradually replaced by truth. You will grow in strength as you continue to study and ponder its personal application. Through others you will learn the truth that you are not beyond healing. The desire to blame others for the condition of your character or to rationalize your way out of a change of heart will be replaced by the desire to be accountable and submissive.

7. You will be blessed with a change of disposition that will unite you with your Higher Power in mind and heart. You will find rest from the isolation that caused the fears which contributed to your addiction. As you yield to these promptings you can be assured that a new disposition or character will grow out of your willing heart. A growing desire to be sanctified will make you ready for a change in your very nature.

8. This process of change has been described like this; God works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. God takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold men by changing their environment. God changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but God can change human nature.

#### ACTION STEPS

##### 9. Be willing to allow your heart to be changed

As you experience the miracle of ongoing recovery— first from destructive addictive behaviors and then from character weaknesses—you will experience true change. You will begin to awaken, to come to yourself. As you yield your heart and grow stronger in humility, your resolve not to repeat past behaviors will become firmer and firmer. Delivered from the bondage of the past, you will feel more and more comfortable among others in recovery.

**10. Be willing to be changed so imperfections may be removed**

Whether your addiction has been to alcohol, drugs, gambling, pornography, self-destructive eating patterns, compulsive spending, or another behavior or substance that represents your need to run and hide from stress or challenges in your life, you can come to realize that it all began in your mind and heart. Healing also begins in your mind and heart. As you become willing to change you will learn of this healing power. By taking Step 6, you increase your commitment to abstain from past addictions through a deepening relationship with a Higher Power. You continue to accept that God must truly become everything to you in order to save you from weaknesses of thought, word, and action.

**STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING**

11. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 7: HUMILITY****THE 12 STEPS OF ALCOHOLIC ANONYMOUS**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. All the Steps require humility, but Step 7 requires it most explicitly. The humble heart we developed in Step 6 brought us to our knees in Step 7 to ask that our shortcomings be removed. When we had progressed to this point, we were ready to pray and meditate without any other motivation but our desire to become one in heart and in mind with God, as we understand Him. No longer were we satisfied with a change in habits or even in lifestyle. We were finally ready to have our very nature changed. Genuine sorrow filled our hearts, not only because we had suffered or made others suffer but because we regretted that even in recovery, we still could not remove our own shortcomings.

2. Having felt a portion of this higher love, we desired to give up our maladaptive behaviors, even the inclination to use so we might know our Higher Power better. Finally, voluntarily, with all our hearts, we offered our whole souls asking for forgiveness. We had finally come to realize that no other name, no other way nor means, can give us a complete decrease of our wrong choices. Holding nothing back we pled with our Higher Power that in His infinite mercy he would forgive us for all our pride, transgressions, and shortcomings. We asked that He grant us grace, that through Him we might maintain this new way of life.

3. God did not begin such a revolutionary change of our entire character until we allowed Him to do so. Step 7 was our decision. We had to humble ourselves deliberately. We had to surrender self-sufficient pride and admit that our efforts to save ourselves had been

insufficient. We had to feel and live the truth that “we are all beggars” and that recovery will not happen by our own efforts.

4. Step 7 marked for each of us the moment when we finally yielded without reservation to the truth taught in the Christian story of the Prodigal Son, a rebellious son who rejects his father's upbringing. Proudful and strong, the son heads-off to a far-away land, leads a wild life of adventure, and squanders everything of value. Not until he's confronted with failure and despair, does he return home, repentant and willing to do anything to win back his father's favor. To his surprise, and the surprise of others, he's welcomed, without question, into his father's loving and forgiving arms. No amount of time, no amount of money, and no amount of rebellion could get in the way of the father's patience and unconditional love for his son. "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke). Of course, the awesome message of this parable is that God, like the Prodigal Son's father, is patient and gracious with all of His children. He is willing to welcome each of us home into His loving and forgiving arms.

5. We had not become entirely free from the desire to use. We had to learn to accept life on God's terms and wait upon His purposes and His timing—even in the removal of our shortcomings. In taking Step 7, we learned to live with humility and patience when our burdens were lightened but not removed. We finally abandoned the idea that we could become perfect by ourselves, and we accepted the truth that God desires us to conquer our weaknesses in this life by coming to Him.

6. Each Step comes with a warning, though, and Step 7 is no exception. We who have embraced these principles must warn you that you cannot expect to take this Step without sacrifice—and rightly so. When you put everything into your Higher Power's hands, you have finally done all you can to receive His unmistakable witness that addictive behaviors are forgiven, that your past is truly in the past.

#### ACTION STEPS

##### 7. Seek for the power of God's love to become effective in your personal life by daily meditation or prayer

One effective form of meditation or prayer is to focus on a story, event, phrase or word to understand its meaning and application in your own life.

##### Mediate or pray humbly for God to do for you what you cannot do for yourself

By keeping a simple meditation or prayer in your heart, God what will you have me do? You will be continually reminded of your total dependence upon Him. The love of God, yours for Him and His for you, will help you form one relationship to which you can give yourself without reservation. You sought this love all the years you were trapped in addiction. In Step 7, you will find a way to obtain peace.

**STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING**

8. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 8: SEEK FORGIVENESS****THE 12 STEPS OF ALCOHOLIC ANONYMOUS**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. Before our recovery, our addictive lifestyles were like a tornado full of destructive energy that cut through our relationships, leaving much wreckage behind. Step 8 was an opportunity to make a plan to clean up the wreckage and rebuild all that could be saved. When we felt the healing power of God's mercy, as we understand him, we felt eager to reach out to others and to mend broken relationships. We learned, however, that impulsively rushing to make amends without taking time for prayer and perhaps counsel from a trusted adviser could be as detrimental as not making amends. Step 8 was an assurance against harming others when we began contacting them in Step 9.
2. Before we could rebuild relationships, we needed to identify the relationships that were damaged. We began to list people we had harmed, but many of us found we could not list these people without being distracted by feelings of resentment toward those who had harmed us. We honestly confessed our negative feelings to our Higher Power. In response, He showed us that we faced the same decision as the man who having been forgiven of all his debts, needed to forgive others.
3. If you find yourself facing this problem, you may need to do as many of us have done. Before you make a list of people from whom you need to seek forgiveness, first list those people you need to forgive. Don't be surprised if some names appear on both lists. People often get caught in terrible cycles of exchanging hurts with others. To break these cycles of mutual resentment, someone has to be willing to forgive.



4. To begin this process of forgiveness, we once more found the tool of writing to be invaluable. Next to the names of the people we needed to forgive, we recorded the way we originally felt when the hurtful incidents happened and what we were still tempted to feel. The list helped us be specific in our prayers as we shared all our unresolved feelings. We pled for His grace to help us extend to others the same mercy He gives us. If we found people on our lists that we had an especially difficult time forgiving, we took the counsel to meditate or pray for their welfare, asking all the blessings for them that we would want for ourselves.

5. As we prayed or mediated for help to forgive others—even if it felt insincere at first—we were eventually blessed with a miraculous sense of compassion. Even in extreme situations, people who have taken this approach have received the ability to forgive far beyond themselves. One woman spent several weeks writing about her childhood and praying for her abusive father. She testifies with joy that going through this process helped relieve her of many negative, painful feelings. In making a similar effort, we have learned that by making a thorough inventory of our resentments and acknowledging them, we finally ceased to be victims of those who hurt us. Once we honestly attempted to let go of offenses toward us, we found we were able to finish our lists of those we hoped would forgive us.

6. As you reach this point and begin your list, you should pray or meditate for guidance. These guidelines may help. Ask yourself, “Is there anyone in my life, past or present, who I feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, or ashamed around?” Write down their names and resist the temptation to justify your feelings or excuse your negative actions toward them. Include those you meant to hurt, of course, and also those you did not intend to hurt. Include those who have passed away and those you have no idea how to contact. You will deal with these special cases when you take Step 9. For now, as you work through Step 8, focus on your willingness to be rigorous and unrelenting in your honesty.

7. To be thorough, look for things you neglected to do or things you left undone that hurt others. Don’t leave out little things. Think honestly about the harm you caused others as you indulged in your addiction, even if you were not aggressive toward them. Admit the harm you did to loved ones and friends by being irresponsible, irritable, critical, impatient, and dishonorable. Look for anything large or small that added to another person’s burdens or that saddened or challenged someone. Look for the lies you told or promises you broke and ways you manipulated or used others. List everyone who was affected. You may find your Step 4 inventory a useful guide in this process.

8. Finally, after you have listed everyone you have harmed, add one more name to the list—your own. When you indulged in your addictions, you harmed yourself as well as others. As you work, remember that Step 8 is not an exercise in casting guilt or shame on anyone—either yourself or those on your lists. God will lift the burdens of guilt and shame as you take one more honest look at troubles in your relationships and your part in them. By becoming willing to make amends, you benefit from the peace of knowing that He is pleased with your efforts. This Step helps you take the actions that help enable you to be set free from your past. Being willing, you become ready to take Step 9.

**ACTION STEPS****9. Forgive yourself and others; make a list of people you might have offended or harmed**

In Step 8, you begin an amazing adventure in relating with a new heart to yourself, to others, and to life. You are ready to contribute peace to the world rather than add contention and negative feelings. You are willing to give up judging anyone and to stop taking inventory of others' lives and faults. You are ready to stop minimizing your own behavior or making excuses for it. You are willing to take another thorough inventory—this time of those you have harmed.

10. Although you may be terrified to consider it, you can become willing to meet the people on your list when the opportunity arises. You can prepare to do all you can to make amends to them. You can live by faith in the God, not in fear of what others might do. You can become willing in Step 8 to live a life guided by principles rather than by shame or fear.

**11. Seek the gift of charity; pray/meditate for others**

Charity is a gift we receive as we learn to follow God and as we love Him with all our hearts, minds, and souls. Filled with this pure love from Him and for Him, we find ourselves able to love others as He has loved us. We become able to forgive the faults of others and to make amends for our mistakes. In preparation for making amends, many of us have found the following exercise helpful. Think of someone for whom you have had hard feelings. For two weeks, deliberately and pray or meditate for him or her each day. Keep a record of changes in your thoughts and feelings about that person.

**STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING**

12. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 9: MAKE AMENDS****THE 12 STEPS OF ALCOHOLIC ANONYMOUS**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. As we moved on to Step 9, we were ready to seek forgiveness. As we faced Step 9, we knew we could not carry out our desires unless God, as we understand him, blessed us with His Spirit. We needed courage, good judgment, sensitivity, prudence, and appropriate timing. These were not qualities that most of us possessed at that time. We realized that Step 9 would once more test our willingness to humble ourselves and seek His help and grace.
2. Because of our experiences in this challenging process, we offer a few suggestions. It is very important that you are not impulsive or careless as you attempt to make amends. It is equally important that you do not procrastinate making amends. Many recovering individuals have relapsed when they allowed fear to keep them from doing Step 9. Pray and meditate for guidance and consult with a trusted adviser for help to avoid these pitfalls.
3. Sometimes you may be tempted to avoid meeting with a person on your list. We recommend, however, that you resist this temptation, unless, of course, a legal restriction keeps you from meeting with someone. A spirit of humility and a feeling of honesty can repair damaged relationships when you make reasonable efforts to meet in person. Let people know you are approaching them to make amends. Respect their wishes if they indicate they would rather not discuss the matter. If they give you the chance to apologize, be brief and specific about the situation you remember. Details are not necessary. The purpose is not to explain or describe your side of things. The purpose is to admit those wrongs you have committed, offer an apology, and make restitution wherever possible. Do not argue with people or criticize them,

even if their response is not favorable or accepting. Approach each person in a spirit of humility, offering reconciliation, never justification.

4. Apologizing for some actions can be particularly challenging. For example, you may have to address matters that could have legal repercussions. You may be tempted to overreact or to make excuses and avoid making amends. You should prayerfully seek ecclesiastical or professional counsel before taking any action in these very serious cases.

5. In other cases, you may have no way of making amends directly. The person may be dead, or you may not be able to discover where he or she lives. In such cases, you can still make amends indirectly. You can write the person a letter expressing your regret and desire for reconciliation, even if the letter cannot be delivered. You can give a gift to the person's favorite charity. You can find someone who reminds you of that person and do something to help him or her. Or you may be able to do something to help a member of the family anonymously.

6. There may be times when approaching another person or seeking to provide restitution is painful for that person or even harmful. If you think that might be the case, discuss the situation with a trusted adviser before proceeding. This part of recovery must never lead to the further harm of others. Also, at times you may have caused harm that is beyond human ability to repair. Sometimes restitution is not possible in real terms. Instead, a subsequent example of "goodness" provides a compensating form of restitution. From the moment you decide to adopt these true principles as your new way of life, you begin to make amends.

7. After making amends for most of your past actions, you may still have one or two people you feel like you cannot face. Do not despair. Many of us dealt with the same reality. We recommend you take your feelings to God in honest meditation or prayer. If you still have great fear or anger toward an individual, you probably should postpone meeting with him or her. To overcome negative feelings, you could pray for charity and to see the person as God sees him or her. You could look for positive reasons why restitution and reconciliation will help. If you do these things and are patient, God can and will—in His own way and in His own time— give you the ability and the miraculous opportunities to be reconciled to everyone on your list.

8. Upon completing Step 9 to the best of your ability, you have finally done all you can to put yourself in harmony with God. You have begun to experience a new life of hope—not in yourself but in the love of God. You have gone down into the depths of humility and found the God waiting to embrace you. You have done all you can to heal relationships and become reconciled to others. You have at least partially entered into His rest; remaining there has become your greatest desire. You are learning to recognize and follow personal revelation better, which leads you to live in harmony with the teachings of God. Even in your most difficult moments, you feel a new kind of peace.

**ACTION STEPS****9. Love others; Find ways to serve wherever you are.**

In the past, if you were religiously active, you may have been motivated by fear of the judgment of God or of what others would think. Perhaps you acted out of a sense of duty. Today you recognize that service is a way of coming unto God. It is a way of expressing love to Him. It expresses a continuing need for His power and gratitude for His divine help. Consider whether your activity in a church is still motivated by fear or duty or if it is a natural outgrowth of your reborn faith in God.

**10. Be willing to do what is necessary to make amends**

In taking Step 9, you must avoid becoming discouraged if others do not receive your apologies well or if they do not believe you have really changed. Making amends may take time and patience. Give others time to realize that this time is different. This time you are not making empty promises; you are living to overcome your addiction and character weaknesses. Eventually, abstinence and changed behavior will speak for themselves.

**STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING**

11. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 10: DAILY ACCOUNTABILITY****THE 12 STEPS OF ALCOHOLIC ANONYMOUS**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. By the time you come to Step 10, you are ready for a new way of living. The first nine Steps helped you learn a pattern of life based on spiritual principles. These principles now become the foundation on which you build for the rest of your life.
2. In taking the first nine Steps, you have seen miraculous changes in your life. You have experienced love and tolerance, and you have developed a desire for peace. Your desire for your addiction has all but disappeared. When you are tempted, you often find yourself recoiling from your addiction rather than desiring it. You feel humility and awe of what God, as you understand Him, has done that you could not do alone. The final three Steps will help you maintain your new spiritually minded way of life, so they are often called maintenance Steps.
3. Honest, prayerful self-appraisal and immediate repentance must be a continual part of your life. To retain what you have gained, you must stay in fit spiritual condition. You do this by asking searching questions about your feelings, thoughts, motives, and conduct. Through daily self-evaluation, you will keep from slipping into denial and complacency.
4. As you learned in Steps 4 and 5, an inventory that includes only your behaviors is not sufficient to change your heart. You also have to examine your thoughts and feelings. This principle is just as true in Step 10. Continue to watch for pride in all its forms, and humbly take your weaknesses to God as you did in Steps 6 and 7. If you feel worried, self-pitying, troubled,

anxious, resentful, carnal minded, or fearful in any way, turn immediately to God and allow Him to replace these thoughts with peace.

5. As you pay attention to your thoughts and feelings, you can also discover any negative beliefs you still hold. Ask God to remove these. In taking Step 10, you will no longer have to resort to justifying, rationalizing, or blaming anything or anyone. Your goal will be to keep your heart open and your mind focused on the lessons God has taught.

6. Most of us follow Step 10 by taking inventory each day. As you plan your day, meditate or pray about your motives. Are you doing too much or too little? Are you taking care of your basic spiritual, emotional, and physical needs? Do you serve others?

7. Ask yourself these and other questions as you seek balance and serenity in your day. As the day unfolds, you can quickly stop negative thoughts or feelings that threaten to overwhelm you. Be especially alert for old behaviors or thinking patterns during highly stressful situations. Some people think of this type of inventory as a time-out. During this time-out, take a few moments and apply to your immediate situation each principle you have learned in following the Steps. You will soon remember how essential it is to rely on God in all your efforts to recover. You can say to yourself in a moment of crisis, "What character weakness in me is being triggered? What have I done to contribute to this problem? Is there anything I can say or do, without pretense, which will lead to a respectful solution for me and the other person? God has all power. I'll relax and trust Him."

8. If you have taken a negative action toward another person, make amends as quickly as possible. Cast aside pride and remind yourself that sincerely saying "I was wrong" is often just as important in healing a relationship as saying "I love you." Before you go to bed, examine your entire day. Ask yourself if you still need to counsel with God about any negative behaviors, thoughts, or feelings. In addition to counseling with God, you can talk to an adviser or a friend in the program, someone you can trust to be objective about your thinking.

9. You will continue to make mistakes as you interact with others, but a commitment to Step 10 is a commitment to take responsibility for mistakes. If you examine your thoughts and actions each day and resolve them, negative thoughts and feelings will not increase until they threaten your abstinence. You no longer have to live in isolation from God or others. You will have strength and faith to face difficulties and overcome them. You can rejoice in your progress and trust that practice and patience will ensure continued recovery.

#### ACTION STEPS

#### 10. Be committed to self-appraisal; continue to strengthen your relationships with others in recovery

We can all remember a time when we were afraid to look honestly at our own behaviors. Trying to avoid such moments was one reason many of us isolated ourselves from family and friends. However, as we progressed through this program of rigorous honesty, we began to understand

the value of self-appraisal. Now we no longer fear the opportunities for self-appraisal that come through recovery.

11. Regular spiritual checkups help us navigate life's highways and byways. We can all benefit by looking deep inside our hearts during reverent moments of meditation and prayer and asking ourselves this simple question, 'Am I true?' "The question becomes more powerfully useful if we are completely honest with our answers and if it motivates us to make course corrections that keep us on the path of recovery. As you participate in opportunities for self-evaluation, you will find yourself growing in love for the fellowship of recovery.

12. Examine your thoughts, words, and deeds daily; immediately set right any wrongs

Step 10 represents acceptance of the truth that you must continue to live by spiritual principles. If you stray from them, change immediately and ask God at once to restore your peace through His Spirit. Honesty and humility can strengthen you. You will become more conscious of God's presence in your life as you call on Him to help you stay spiritually clean. You will learn to value progress and to forgive imperfection in yourself and others. You will lose the desire to be at odds with anything or anyone. Self-appraisal becomes a way of life as you let go of fears and overcome temptations one day at a time.

**STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING**

12. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.



**STEP 11: PERSONAL REVELATION****THE 12 STEPS OF ALCOHOLIC ANONYMOUS**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. As we studied and practiced the Steps of recovery, we became familiar and comfortable with a life based on humility and acceptance of God's will, as we understand him. Gone were the angry, confused times when, if we meditated or prayed at all, we did either in an attitude of stubborn self-will or whimpering self-pity. We began to live so that the constant and most recurring question in our minds, touching every thought and deed of our lives, was God what will you have me to do?'
2. In Step 11, we made a lifelong commitment to seek one day at a time to know God's will and to have the power to carry it out. Our greatest desire was to improve our abilities to receive guidance from Him and to conduct our lives accordingly. This desire was such a great contrast to the attitudes we had when we were lost in our addictions.
3. If you were like us, before you began to recover you thought hope, joy, peace, and fulfillment would come from an earthly source. Whether this source was alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, dishonest spending, or unhealthy eating—whatever your particular addiction was—your effort was to get by in a world where you felt confused, lost, and alone. When others tried to love you, perhaps you couldn't feel it. Their love was never enough. Nothing satisfied the hunger you felt. As you have lived the principles of recovery, however, your heart and life have changed.

4. You have begun to understand and appreciate your need for God, and His role in your life and to treasure His light. You have begun to realize you are not just talking to yourself when you feel your conscience guide you. Clumsy and unpracticed as you may have felt initially, you now meditate and pray to a Higher Power for a closer relationship with Him. Prayer and meditation have become the lifeblood of your new life. Where these used to be a neglected duty, your heart's desire is now to come before God at least morning and evening and pour out your heart to Him in. As you work through Step 11, you will come to realize even more that you will receive knowledge or personal revelation of God's will for you.

5. You will grow in your ability to resist temptation as you study, pray or meditate. Learning to receive revelation takes practice and patience. You can prepare yourself by studying and trying to live according to God's teachings. You can prepare by being ready to receive, write down, think about, and follow the guidance you receive. When you express gratitude to God for the blessings you have received, your capacity to receive guidance will increase.

6. As you keep yourself free from your addictions, you will be more able to receive God's guidance. We must try to never do anything to drive away His Spirit. We should never take things into our bodies or do things with our bodies that leave us without spiritual protection against deception. Prayer or meditation are powerful antidotes to fear and depression. Step 11 represents a commitment to improve your relationship with God through a lifetime practice of seeking guidance daily and obeying the commandments.

#### ACTION STEPS

##### 7. Come to God, as you understand him, for direction and power through private prayer or meditation

Over the course of recovery, many of us learned to arise early and seek a period of quiet solitude for study, meditation and prayer. If you haven't done so already, schedule time for prayer or meditation, perhaps in the morning. During this time, you can put God first, before anyone or anything else in the day. Kneel if you are physically able. Pray, often aloud, to God, seeking His help to guide you. Then study, using whatever have become your 'scriptures' and to guide your meditation.

8. Writing will once again be a powerful tool of self-expression and appraisal as you record your thoughts and feelings in a journal. You can also record impressions of counsel, comfort, and wisdom that come to you. When this precious time of private meditation has ended, do not cease to pray. Silent prayer, in the depths of your heart and mind, will become your way of thinking throughout your days. As you interact with others, as you make decisions, as you deal with emotions and temptations—counsel with God. Invite and seek His Spirit to be with you continually, that you might be guided to do the right thing.

##### 9. Meditate throughout the day on the scriptures and other inspired literature; continue to pray

In many ways, Step 11 is a natural continuation of your efforts in Step 10 to stay aware of the truth in your life. As you plan your days, go about your activities, and retire to bed at night, let

your heart be drawn out to God continually. One idea is to take a thought from what you have read in your morning studies and meditate upon it frequently during your daily activities. This practice will help you keep your mind in tune with truth. By nature, we all tend to be undisciplined, yet by looking to God, you will find the humility to continue submitting to Him.

#### STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING

10. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

**STEP 12: SERVICE****THE 12 STEPS OF ALCOHOLIC ANONYMOUS**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

1. Service will help you grow throughout the rest of your life. In Step 10, you learned to evaluate your life each day and to be accountable for your actions. In Step 11, you learned to remember God, as you understand him, from moment to moment so you might have His guidance as continuously as possible. Step 12 involves the third anchor—service to others—that ensures a continued recovery and a remission of sin. To remain free of addiction, you must get outside yourself and serve. The desire to help others is a natural result of spiritual awakening.

2. You have a message of hope for other addicts, for all afflicted and troubled people who are willing to consider a spiritual approach to changing their lives, and for anyone seeking truth and goodness. The message is that God is a God of miracles, just as He has always been. Your life proves that. You are becoming a new person through His love. You will share this message best through your efforts to serve others. As you serve, your understanding and knowledge of this process is strengthened and deepened. Sharing your story of is one of the most important services you can offer. Bearing the burdens of others through acts of kindness and selfless service is part of your new life.

3. Men and women who turn their lives over to a Higher Power will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their

opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Whoever will lose his life in service will find it.

4. Be thoughtful as you consider ways to serve, seeking always to be led by His spirit. If you are willing, you will find many opportunities to share the principles you have learned. You will find ways to share your story with others and opportunities to serve them in many other ways. As you do so maintain humility by focusing on the principles and practices you have learned. Only then can you be assured that your motives and inspiration are good. Be sure to give freely, not expecting a particular result. Respect the agency of others. Remember that most of us had to “hit bottom” before we were ready to study and apply these principles. The same will be true for most of those you desire to help.

5. When you become aware of others who deal with addiction in their lives or the lives of their loved ones, you may want to let them know about the 12 Steps. Tell some of your story to let them know that you can relate. Don't give advice or try to fix them in any way. Simply inform them of the program and the principles that have blessed your life. You may discover that if an addict is not ready to embrace these principles, perhaps a family member or friend of the addict may be receptive. Virtually everyone living in these perilous times could benefit by learning and applying them. When you do something for someone else or share the message of hope and recovery, you must not allow another person to become too dependent on you. Your responsibility is to encourage others who struggle to turn to God guidance and power.

6. As you try to help others, you must understand that it will be difficult for them to remain in recovery if family members do not support them or do not understand that recovery takes time. Anyone can recover, however, no matter how others—even closest loved ones—choose to react. As you carry to others the message of recovery through these principles, you must be patient and meek. There is no place in your new life for ego or any sense of superiority. Never forget where you have come from and how you have been rescued by the grace of God.

7. In your enthusiasm to help others, be sure to keep a balance between sharing the message and working on your own program. Your primary focus must continue to be to apply these principles yourself. Your efforts to share these ideas with others will be only as effective as the recovery you maintain. These principles you have learned and practiced to overcome your addiction are the same principles that will lead you in all aspects of your life. Using these principles, you can endure to the end as the Lord has commanded, and you can do so with joy.

#### ACTION STEPS

##### 8. Share your story; use your talents in serving others

Your witness of the love and mercy of a Higher Power is no longer a theory. It has become a living reality. You have experienced it for yourself. As you have become aware of His love for you, you have also become aware of His love for others. Share your story with your family in word and deed in the privacy of your own home. Share your story as you join in servicing others and as you live life in a more loving way. You can also share your story in community settings.

A.A. offers great opportunities for service. You can serve others by attending meetings and sharing your experience, faith, and hope. You can support others and strengthen them.

9. Serve others who struggle with addiction by sharing the principles of recovery; apply these principles in all aspects of life

As you have practiced these principles you have learned that they apply in every aspect of life. You can share this message with others through your example and your words of encouragement. When you meet people throughout the day, greet them with a smile. Show gratitude for what they do. When opportunities arise, tell your story of the hope that comes through the 12 Steps.

STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING

10. Studying the Steps will help you begin your recovery. This study will increase your understanding and help you learn. The thoughts of writing may frighten you, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress through the Steps. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.