



Narcotics Anonymous,  
**It Works:**  
How and Why

World Service Conference  
Literature Committee  
Unapproved Literature  
for Review and Input

**CORRECTED AND  
REPRINTED 9/87**

#### A NOTE ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This volume contains two different versions of the same book. The first section, Volume I, consists of the review-form manuscript which was distributed in 1985 with a blue cover. The second section, Volume II, comprises the approval-form manuscript which was distributed from 1986 to 1987 with a white cover. At the direction of the World Service Conference, both are joined together in this volume for the purpose of further study, review and comment by N.A. literature committees.

It should be noted that neither of the two volumes has been approved by the World Service Conference. They are draft items and should not be read in Narcotics Anonymous meetings. At the 1987 World Service Conference an ad-hoc committee was formed for the purpose of collecting additional input on this book prior to its completion. This review and input process will continue through 1987 and early 1988. When the ad-hoc committee has received sufficient input, it will be turned over to the World Literature Committee so that the book may be finalized and submitted to the N.A. Fellowship once again.

***Narcotics Anonymous,  
It Works: How and Why***

**Narcotics Anonymous,**  
**It Works: How and Why**

**Part One: The Twelve Steps**



*World Service Conference  
Literature Committee  
Unapproved Literature  
for Review and Input*



©1985, 1986 by World Service Office, Inc.  
All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America  
ISBN 0-912075-06-6  
ISBN 1-55776-009-8

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reprinted  
for adaptation by permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

VOLUME ONE

---

**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY**  
*Review Form, 1985*

## FOREWARD

Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. The Program of Narcotics Anonymous, often referred to as N.A., is based on 24 principles. These principles are specifically defined in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions which were originally borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous and adapted for use in N.A. Thousands of addicts have achieved total abstinence and ongoing recovery through the application of these principles.

In 1982, the book *Narcotics Anonymous* was first published. In its pages, the disease of addiction was described by recovering addicts who shared their personal experiences, strength and hope. This book outlined a better way of life, and became known as a Basic Text of recovery. It provided general information and discussion about the principles of recovery found in the Program of Narcotics Anonymous.

The present text is intended to provide a more in-depth explanation of the principles of the N.A. Program. The experience of countless recovering addicts has demonstrated that the N.A. Program works. These addicts have shared, through their collective wisdom, that the answer to *how* it works is the Twelve Steps. The answer to *why* it works, is the application of the Twelve Traditions. Appropriately, this text is entitled *IT WORKS: How and Why*.

*IT WORKS* was designed to be used as a supplement to the Basic Text. There are 24 chapters; each addresses one of the 24 principles of the program. Numerous quotes from the Basic Text appear, and are referenced with page numbers so that readers may refer to the original source. In conjunction with the

Basic Text, it is hoped that this book will furnish addicts, with a desire to stop using, a practical means of achieving total abstinence and ongoing recovery.

Because addiction is a threefold illness, affecting us physically, mentally and spiritually, any discussion of the principles of recovery necessarily involves discussion of a Power greater than ourselves. Throughout these pages, you will find reference to God, a Higher Power and God as we understand Him. We use these phrases interchangeably, to mean only one thing: A Power greater than ourselves who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. The Fellowship of N.A. encourages you to search out and discover for yourself, a God of your own understanding. In using the term "God, as we understand Him," we do not mean to imply male gender. We use these words only for the sake of simplicity, and acknowledge that each individual is entitled to develop and believe in his/her own personal concept of a Higher Power.

The information for this text was drawn from the experiences of recovering addicts throughout the United States. Particular effort was made to solicit participation from N.A.'s earliest members, who shared valuable knowledge and perspective, especially with regard to the Twelve Traditions. The contributors for this book are too numerous to acknowledge, and in fact decline special mention in the spirit of anonymity. We therefore humbly dedicate this book to the entire Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We speak to its newest and yet-to-be members, without whom there would be no opportunity to share the miracle of recovery. We also speak to its older members, to whom we are eternally indebted for showing us the way to a better life. With these thoughts in mind, this book is offered, in a spirit of humility and gratitude, in the hope that all addicts may find recovery through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.

In loving service,

WSC Literature Committee



## CONTENTS

Foreward                   vii

Introduction               1

### THE TWELVE STEPS

Step One                   6

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

Addiction is a physical, spiritual and emotional illness with symptoms of alienation, denial, physical dependency and feelings of inadequacy. Powerlessness means the inability to control events--using. Recognition that we don't have power. Unmanageability in trying to control others, stealing, lying, cheating, using material possessions to "fix" us. Nothing worked--we tried to get the outside together, but the inside fell apart. Hitting bottom is crucial to spiritual growth.

Step Two                   10

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

Step One left us with a void because we can't keep ourselves clean. We couldn't use anymore and had nowhere else to turn. We had only our insanity to lose. It is necessary to admit defeat before we can become open-minded. We had to get rid of old ideas about God. Coming to believe means being willing to believe. There is a variety of paths to faith. Usually, belief comes a little at a time. Restoration to sanity gives us a relationship with God so that we can proceed with faith.

## Step Three 17

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

Step Three calls for a decision--action. This is a major decision in the beginning of recovery. Surrender may be painful, but to surrender is to win. We were unsuccessful at running the show--self-will leads to using. Willingness is all that is required. Turning it over is letting go of old ideas, sharing burdens with our Higher Power. God's will is doing our best, sharing recovery with other addicts, accepting life on life's terms. In practicing Steps One, Two and Three daily, we go to God with our everyday problems.

## Step Four 22

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

The first three steps pave the way for the Fourth Step. We rely on our Higher Power and our sponsor. In being searching and fearless, we strive for self-honesty. There are many ways to write an inventory, but it is most important that it be written. We write about assets and liabilities--humility, kindness, forgiveness and tolerance as well as relationships, resentments, self-pity, dishonesty, pride and fear. We learn to identify the patterns of addiction which chained us to our past. This self-knowledge, accompanied by more action, brings freedom.

## Step Five 31

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

Admission prevents self-justification and rationalization--Choose another human being--a sponsor is usually best, but anyone we trust will suffice. We admit our shortcomings to God, to ourselves and to another human being. The exact nature of our wrongs are the character defects and addictive behavior patterns we discovered through writing. The results include not regretting our past anymore, a sense of belonging in the N.A. Fellowship, improved self-esteem and self-acceptance.

Step Six

37

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

The knowledge we gained through Steps Four and Five can be painful--Step Six offers relief. Awareness necessitates action. Fear may be manifested in trying to dictate which defects are removed, or resisting letting them go. We combat fear with faith. Willingness is the foundation of recovery, and is necessary to spiritual growth. We realize it is an ongoing job and that there are different levels of willingness. We couldn't remove these defects by ourselves, but God can. We ask ourselves some questions to see if we are ready before proceeding on to Step Seven.

Step Seven

43

*"We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."*

The goal of Step Seven is an improved relationship with our Higher Power. Humility involves a realistic evaluation of ourselves and realizing that we are not perfect. A change in attitude--letting go of self-aggrandizement. Humbly asking for freedom from defects: "I can't, we can." Shortcomings are human failings. Applying Step Seven is an ongoing process. If we lose faith when our defects aren't immediately gone, we go back to the previous steps--slow, continuous progress; action and prayer.

Step Eight

47

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

The purpose of Step Eight is to free ourselves from the guilt of the past, experience spiritual healing. Need to be thorough. In countering fear--trust our Higher Power, draw on strength gained through previous steps. We consider where, when and how we have harmed our friends, neighbors, family, employers, and people close to us. Making the list begins the process of becoming willing.

## Step Nine 51

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

Being direct and thorough. In active addiction, we were not responsible for consequences. Now, by being responsible, we no longer have to fear the past. We exercise prudent judgment, realizing that some wrongs can never be fully corrected. As a result, we experience a clear conscience, are able to stop rationalizing. We sever our ties with the ugly past, and we begin to feel good about who we are.

## Step Ten 58

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

Through the previous steps, we cleaned house. Step Ten keeps it clean. Necessary because hidden fears lead to relapse. We recognize guilt, fear, self-centeredness and resentment. We don't want to use, so we must live by spiritual principles. Regular practice--daily basis. Reviewing day's events, assets and liabilities, seeing where we were wrong, making a gratitude list. Promptly admitting wrongs, asking God to remove our defects, forgiving ourselves and others.

## Step Eleven 66

*"We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out."*

Asking for God's plan for us and guidance; we experience peace and joy. Looking for God's will gives us inner strength to face problems. We develop conscious contact by practicing accepting conditions as they are, and by practicing praying and meditating several times a day. Prayer is asking God for help in good times as well as bad. We begin and end our days with prayer, as well as praying spontaneously throughout the day. The answers to prayers sometimes come mysteriously. Through meditation, we communicate and utilize a Higher Power in our lives. We become open and receptive to the voice within, and gain serenity and a renewed commitment to the Twelve Step way of life.



Step Twelve

70

*"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."*

The Twelve Steps hold answers to all our living problems. They provide a basis for enjoying a life and serving others. A spiritual awakening is the result of the preceding steps. May be a sudden jolt or gentle awareness. In carrying the message, we share our experience, strength and hope. We demonstrate recovery by living it. Practicing these principles in all of our affairs is being willing to change. We set aside old ideas and apply the steps to our daily affairs. We gain a new strength and find God as a source of nurturance. We strive for self-improvement and take responsibility for our actions. We become more open-minded to new ideas, experience respect and love, and become able to live clean and grow.

## INTRODUCTION

This book contains 24 chapters which discuss and explain the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. These principles form the basis of the Narcotics Anonymous Program. The Twelve Steps are the basic framework by which our lives change from addiction to recovery. The Twelve Traditions provide for groups what the Twelve Steps do for individuals. The widespread growth of Narcotics Anonymous and the recovery of thousands of addicts point to the beneficial necessity of holding to these principles.

The Twelve Steps offer us a solution to the disease of addiction, and an alternative to the miserable existence we have known before. Through practicing and applying each of the Twelve Steps, we discover the gift of recovery. This miracle is a gift in every sense of the word: It is unconditional and perhaps undeserved. As we stay clean and take each of the Twelve Steps, we realize that it is truly a privilege to apply these principles.

Before beginning the steps, an addict must have a desire to stay clean. With the willingness to avoid the first fix, pill or drink, total abstinence and recovery become possible. Living the Twelve Steps enables us to stay clean. In this way, a miracle happens: The obsession for drugs is lifted, and we experience recovery.

Never before were we able to go beyond the areas in our lives where fear stepped in and we stopped. There were always times when fear and terror would overwhelm us and we knew we could not go on. We all experienced a quitting point. However, most of us, even in the depths of our active addiction, wondered what was on the other side of that imaginary line we could never cross.

The Twelve Steps initiate the process of being restored to sanity. A Power greater than ourselves takes over. At the points where we always retreated before, we become able to stand face-to-face with this Power. Through this Power, we are

given a healing surge of life which carries us through our fears and anger. It ignites in us the will to live and the desire to know the truth. We seek the spiritual truth about ourselves, about our fellow human beings, about God, as we begin to understand Him, and about the universe in which we live.

Addiction is a lonely disease of isolation. Through the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, however, we find that we no longer have to be alone. When we examine the steps, we see that each of the first eleven begins with the word "we." This tells us to seek counsel and companionship as we embark on our new path. We find it helpful to use a sponsor or other experienced N.A. member in taking the Twelve Steps. We draw on the experience of those who came before us to guide us in applying these principles. These addicts freely share with us what was freely shared with them: Recovery from addiction. They guide us and teach us, through example, how to live by these dynamic principles.

In the process of taking the steps, we may view them as a privilege or as a problem. As long as we apply them, our viewpoint is not important. We may cry; we may complain or feel sorry for ourselves; we may even get angry. However, from the experience of addicts who have held both postures, relating to the steps as a privilege rather than a curse is infinitely more helpful and serene. Viewing the steps as punishment leaves us unnecessarily critical of ourselves. In this misguided attitude, we may inadvertently bludgeon ourselves with the spiritual tools which were meant to heal us. However, if we gratefully and willingly grasp the opportunity to apply these principles, we find more energy and peace with which to live the Twelve Steps.

When we first come to Narcotics Anonymous, many of us want to recover any way we see fit. By the nature of our disease, we are close-minded and distrustful, and most likely find it difficult to take suggestions. We may try to

apply some of the N.A. principles, while disregarding those which are more demanding or uncomfortable.

Through painful experience, frequently accompanied by relapse, we find it is absolutely crucial to abandon our familiar, self-centered ways and begin accepting direction. This is the only way we achieve the open-mindedness and humility necessary to begin recovering. As we surrender self-will and begin concerning ourselves with our groups and other recovering addicts, we find that the wisdom of accepting direction is practical in applying the Twelve Traditions as well as the Twelve Steps.

The traditions exist in order to keep the N.A. Fellowship true to its purpose of recovery. In this way, the philosophy of N.A. is not changed. Adherence to the principles of the Twelve Traditions ensures the growth and continuation of the Fellowship. When problems arise, we apply the Twelve Traditions exactly as they are written--not the way we think they ought to read. If we faithfully follow these principles, the N.A. Fellowship grows in an atmosphere of love and acceptance; we are able to assist other addicts in recovery. We therefore avoid chaos, controversy and disruption, which could threaten the recovery of addicts everywhere.

When any of the Twelve Traditions are violated, tact and diplomacy must be utilized in addressing these sensitive matters. Most addicts have been wrong so many times in the past that we become self-righteous, and thrill at the opportunity when we are right for once. We may be tempted to rush into a discussion, hurling accusations and demanding judgment. However, this attitude is self-defeating, and frequently causes more harm than good. If we have applied the Twelve Steps in our lives, we have begun to develop a basic understanding and compassion for ourselves and others. We have seen that the need to always be right rarely leads to contentment or beneficial solutions. We now draw on our rudimentary ability to



be tactful in approaching these difficult situations. While we acknowledge the need to protect our Fellowship through application of the Twelve Traditions, it is also important that this vigilance be balanced with diplomacy and understanding.

In resolving actions which violate the Twelve Traditions, we keep in mind that no N.A. member ever intends to harm the Fellowship. Since our very lives depend on the N.A. Program, imperiling N.A. is, in effect, imperiling our own existence. Most of us realize this on an intuitive level, and may react violently or fearfully to events which we perceive as threats to the welfare of N.A. It is very helpful to remember this concern when we see mistakes. Just as we did not choose to live miserably in active addiction, we understand that no recovering addict consciously chooses to disrupt the N.A. Fellowship. With this perspective, we approach the person or persons involved in a spirit of helpfulness and cooperation. We avoid antagonistic confrontations, striving instead for cooperative efforts in solving our common problems. We allow them time to think over our suggestions, being careful always to treat them with respect and dignity.

If we are unable to solve problems using sincere tact and diplomacy, we look to the experience of other members lending advice and guidance. Just as we utilize a sponsor in practicing the Twelve Steps, it is also helpful to solicit the advice of experienced members in questions of the Twelve Traditions. We may prepare a factual, objective letter for our area service committee, or region if necessary. However, it is always best to resolve problems before this level if possible, keeping foremost in mind the welfare of the group and N.A. as a whole.

The spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are not subject to negotiation. They need no interpretation. Hence, this book does not offer interpretations of these principles, but rather explanations and instructions on their application.

The principles of the N.A. Program are the keys to freedom from addiction. Our experience has shown that there are no boundaries on that freedom, as long as we refrain from using. May a loving Power greater than yourself be with you as you learn to apply the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. As you practice these principles in all of your affairs, you will find a freedom and joy you never knew existed. These spiritual truths are the sum of the Narcotics Anonymous Program, and it is through them that IT WORKS!

## STEP ONE

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

Addiction is a progressive disease which affects us physically, mentally/emotionally, and spiritually. "The physical aspect of our disease is the compulsive use of drugs: the inability to stop using once we have started. The mental aspect of our disease is the obsession, or overpowering desire, which leads us to using even when it has destroyed our lives. The spiritual part of our disease is our total self-centeredness."<sup>1</sup> Drugs became a physical and emotional necessity. Our lives became centered around the getting and using of drugs. In this pursuit, we became alienated from the rest of society. This disease is so subtly cunning that one of its symptoms is the denial that we have it. Other symptoms are physical deterioration, various specific and vague fears, guilt, feelings of inadequacy and emotional pain. We often thought one certain drug was the problem and that substituting another type of chemical would relieve that problem. Even when we knew that using was causing us problems in one or more areas of life, we believed that we knew how to stop on our own. We changed our environment, lovers, and jobs in futile efforts to quit or control our using.

Until we can fully accept that we are powerless over the disease of addiction, and that our lives have become unmanageable, we are incapable of finding meaning in the rest of the steps. The First Step involves the admission that we have the disease of addiction. This stops the process of denial and allows us to recognize our problem. Then we begin to take steps toward recovery.

It makes little difference how or when we realized we are powerless over our addiction. A more important point to us is the acknowledgement that, before coming to N.A., we felt so miserable we just couldn't go any further without help. We needed relief--now. Powerlessness indicates an absolute inability to control

events in our lives. At various times in the past, temporary abstinence was probably forced upon us by fear, institutions or lack of money. Some of us interpreted these temporary periods of abstinence to mean that we could control our use of drugs. We told ourselves repeatedly that we could stop if we really wanted to; yet it was very difficult to admit the times when we wanted to stop but couldn't. "Powerlessness means using *against our will*."<sup>2</sup> The admission of powerlessness is central to recovery. It is not a sign of weakness, but simply a recognition that when it comes to drugs, power is not something we possess. The term "willpower" has no meaning for us when we try to control our use of drugs. As we progress in our recovery, we will realize that power is not one of our human characteristics, but rather it is an attribute of God.

Admitting powerlessness requires breaking through our denial. Many of us tried switching drugs when our "drug of choice" became troublesome. Even switching from one to another didn't help, and we found we couldn't stop if we wanted to. We were not only powerless over specific drugs, but over our disease of addiction, which made us use drugs compulsively and obsessively.

Even after we stop using, we encounter denial. We may find ourselves denying that we were ever addicts. Some people say, "We have a disease that tells us we don't have a disease." We must break through this denial to take the First Step. Our addiction has most likely been pointed out to us numerous times by others. However, only *we* can make this deeply personal realization. Denial of the problem as well as justifying and rationalizing our actions are all part of the disease of addiction. Some of us clung to the notion that life had "dealt us a bad hand," rather than admit that we were addicts and could not manage our own lives. Our Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*, says that, "When some of us have doubts, we ask ourselves this question: 'Can I control my use of any form of mind or mood-altering chemicals?'"<sup>3</sup> Honestly appraising ourselves is infinitely safer than going



out to try some "controlled using." Once we can break through our denial, we begin to see our powerlessness and we begin to recover.

Honest admission does not come swiftly or easily for many of us. Our pride, ego and dishonesty block our ability to come to terms with the failure to control our drug use. The bottom line is that through willpower, we could not stay clean. It is only through honest admission that our addiction is arrested and recovery begins.

Learning that help was available and that we could once again live with some semblance of sanity was great news to us. We were tired of using drugs and of the pain they brought us. We had tried every imaginable excuse to justify and rationalize our addiction. Drugs had simply stopped working the way we wanted them to. Most of us had nowhere else to turn when we came to Narcotics Anonymous for help. We were amazed to learn that just for today we never have to use again.

Admitting powerlessness is only the first part of Step One; the second half states, "that our lives had become unmanageable." Unmanageability is a direct result of addiction. It is another symptom of the disease. While practicing our addiction, we probably did not realize that through our actions, we were trying to control the outcome of every situation to fit our self-centered desires. We did not realize that when we didn't pay our bills or were late with our rent, and when we pushed people away, it was a direct result of our addiction. Many of us stole, cheated and lied to get drugs.

It doesn't matter whether we "hit bottom" in the gutter or in a mansion; what matters is that we had no power over how we felt. We lived in the dark reality of fear. We lived in self-pity because we were convinced that no one understood us. We realized on an emotional level that we were somehow different from non-addicts, not only in terms of our using, but also in terms of how we felt.

Yet we couldn't understand ourselves any better than they. Our confusion and the unmanageability of our lives drove us deeper into depression and hopelessness.

Whether we were homeless and penniless, or still had nice homes, families and material possessions, we came to realize that our lives were unmanageable. We saw that people and possessions did not work to "fix us" or make us feel okay, and we then considered that we were the problem. Some of us had to be institutionalized and broken before we could admit defeat and reach out for help. Still others of us came to N.A. feeling we weren't "as bad as" others we met. However, the clean addicts in N.A. showed us that we could recover without going through the pain of further active using and its consequences of jails, institutions and death.

We admit powerlessness and complete defeat because we have tried everything we could think of and still we suffered. We realize that we have applied all of our resources, and nothing has worked to relieve us of our addiction.

Often powerlessness and unmanageability are realized through the help of an experienced sponsor who guides us through the Twelve Step recovery process. Many addicts have also found early in recovery that writing about powerlessness and unmanageability can be a very effective tool. This is suggested because it is easier to see on paper how drugs have affected our lives. Our sponsors point out how the humility we gain through admitting complete defeat provides a foundation for our ongoing spiritual development.

We can only stop the progression of our addiction by abstaining from drugs. We stay clean and experience recovery by going to meetings and developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves. It is only by being honest in Step One that we become open-minded and willing to try the remaining eleven steps as a means of recovering from our hopeless addiction. Unless we are truly tired of

living the way we were, there is little chance of recovery. We must believe, above all else, that there is hope *if* we stay clean and apply the Twelve Steps in our lives.

In N.A., we treat the cause of the problem: Addiction, not the apparent symptoms: Drugs. We get and stay clean so we may recover from the disease of addiction. Our goal is not just simple abstinence, it is recovery. After admitting we are powerless over our addiction and that our lives have become unmanageable, we are then ready for Step Two.

We go on to Step Two, but we are never finished with Step One. The reality of our addiction is with us each day.

## STEP TWO

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

Upon coming to Narcotics Anonymous, some of us had little difficulty with the First Step. It became obvious that we were powerless over drugs--that drugs were, in fact, an insane power greater than ourselves. Although perhaps not comprehending it fully, we knew we were addicts and out of control. But the Second Step may seem insurmountable. Some of us have turned our backs to our Higher Power. Others fear their Higher Power has turned its back to them. Still others of us vigorously deny that a Power greater than ourselves has ever existed. In coming to grips with this step, we find we have to change some of our strongest convictions. At first, this seems an impossible task. Going back to the First Step and contemplating our powerlessness over our addiction helps by lowering our defenses. It makes Step Two more approachable.

Step One is the admittance step and Step Two is the acceptance step. After admitting we are powerless over drugs and recognizing that we cannot manage our lives, many of us feel crushed and defeated. In this state of broken despair, we become willing to accept help. Self-knowledge and willpower have not kept us

living the way we were, there is little chance of recovery. We must believe, above all else, that there is hope *if* we stay clean and apply the Twelve Steps in our lives.

In N.A., we treat the cause of the problem: Addiction, not the apparent symptoms: Drugs. We get and stay clean so we may recover from the disease of addiction. Our goal is not just simple abstinence, it is recovery. After admitting we are powerless over our addiction and that our lives have become unmanageable, we are then ready for Step Two.

We go on to Step Two, but we are never finished with Step One. The reality of our addiction is with us each day.

## STEP TWO

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

Upon coming to Narcotics Anonymous, some of us had little difficulty with the First Step. It became obvious that we were powerless over drugs--that drugs were, in fact, an insane power greater than ourselves. Although perhaps not comprehending it fully, we knew we were addicts and out of control. But the Second Step may seem insurmountable. Some of us have turned our backs to our Higher Power. Others fear their Higher Power has turned its back to them. Still others of us vigorously deny that a Power greater than ourselves has ever existed. In coming to grips with this step, we find we have to change some of our strongest convictions. At first, this seems an impossible task. Going back to the First Step and contemplating our powerlessness over our addiction helps by lowering our defenses. It makes Step Two more approachable.

Step One is the admittance step and Step Two is the acceptance step. After admitting we are powerless over drugs and recognizing that we cannot manage our lives, many of us feel crushed and defeated. In this state of broken despair, we become willing to accept help. Self-knowledge and willpower have not kept us

clean. We begin to see that no human power can take away our addiction. As addicts, we have no defense against the first fix, pill or drink. Our defense has to come from a Power greater than ourselves.

Many of us do not have a lot to lose at this point. What do we have to live for? To go on as we were would mean misery or death. We are truly in a tight spot: We know we cannot handle using anymore, and yet we are powerless to save ourselves. Not wanting to die, we choose to come to believe. There is nothing else to do. Faced with the simple choice -- believe or die -- some of us don't have time to figure it all out; we grab at the first feasible conception of a Higher Power and hang on. Once we stop resisting the concept of a Power greater than ourselves, the door to faith can be opened.

Some of us, on the other hand, have not lost complete control of our lives. Perhaps we are still in the experimental stages of our addiction. We still have material possessions, families and friends. We are fortunate to realize we are addicts before we lose everything. Although it is difficult, it is necessary to admit complete defeat because we can only receive help when we are open to it. An undefeated addict is not open. In the First Step, we learned that the admission of powerlessness and unmanageability is the foundation upon which our recovery is built. When our actions and feelings begin to cause us more pain than we can tolerate, we become willing to recognize the need and ask for help.

Few of us come to Narcotics Anonymous with the belief that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. However, in our experience, we have learned that such a Power is vitally important to our recovery. Most of us have tried using external changes to stop using drugs and achieve some form of peace or sanity. These escapes included doctors, jobs, different towns, friends, and lovers. Yet the results were nil. Our pain and desperation forces us to become willing to believe in some kind of Higher Power.

Being as honest, open-minded, and willing as we can be with ourselves is indispensable in doing this or any of the Twelve Steps. It takes honesty to admit that we are not the greatest power there is and to admit that we need to be restored to sanity. It takes open-mindedness to consider what powers are greater than ourselves which we can trust, and in which we can have faith. It also takes willingness to take this step. A willingness to believe that there is some positive force or power which can restore us to sanity is all that is asked of us by Step Two.

Most of us have been acquainted, at some time in our lives, with a Higher Power or Creator. Sometimes we called upon that Spirit in desperation after an overdose, frantically bargaining for our lives, "If You'll only bail me out this time, God..." Disappointed at how short-lived our reprieve from that crisis was, we became disillusioned with any concept of a Higher Power who would answer our pleas for help. At other times, because of feelings of guilt or fear associated with our actions, we chose to ignore or forget any belief in this Power. It is only when our lives became too painful to continue that we became ready to ask for help.

Still others of us came to N.A. with a preconceived idea of a vengeful God who controlled our lives through reward and punishment. One of our most difficult tasks was to change that conception to one of a Power which was loving and forgiving, one which only wanted the best life for us. This became easier as we talked with others who had experienced the many benefits from successful acceptance of the Second Step and who had achieved a conscious contact with a Higher Power through daily practice.

For those of us who perceived our own human power as ultimate in determining our direction in life, the acceptance of a Power greater than ourselves was a challenge. For us, "acting as if" and accepting that others had the right to believe as they did somehow worked to create enough willingness and humility to

accept it. Eventually each of us realized, perhaps at the cost of bitter pain, the need to move from our position at the center of the universe into a sense of joining with others in the Fellowship.

Our understanding of a Higher Power is up to us. The needed Power can be the group itself or it can follow a religious tradition. The only thing we want to emphasize is that you should feel comfortable with your Higher Power and be able to make the statement that your Higher Power cares about you. If you can accept the fact that a large number of addicts like yourself have found a way to live clean through the steps of Narcotics Anonymous, then you only have to believe what you see in order to experience Step Two.

N.A. has many members. Our collective Spiritual Power is certainly greater than that of any individual member. What is impossible for one alone is often light work for the many, because the many are a Power greater than yourself. Just look around with an open mind and you will see a positive power all around N.A. You can call it love, or the Fellowship, or you can call it God. It doesn't matter; by looking and listening as openly as possible, you find that N.A. has the power to help addicts.

Agnostics, atheists, believers and the devoutly religious are all subject to the disease of addiction. We all could see ourselves somewhere within this range when we first got to N.A. Narcotics Anonymous does not demand any specific belief or faith from any of its members, and neither does this step. Step Two is a principle which has made our recovery possible. If you have a desire to stop using, then we suggest these steps as a program of recovery. They have proven themselves in our own experience and lives.

"We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could *restore us to sanity.*" Each of us, as a result of our own experience, has a different idea of what sanity and insanity mean. The wording of the Second Step states that we can be

restored to sanity, implying that we were insane. We do not have to be in a straight jacket to be insane. Our Basic Text tells us that, "Insanity is repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results."<sup>4</sup> When we examine our behavior, we see that we have been unpredictable, irresponsible, irrational and unreasonable. Our minds are not sound when we are obsessive or compulsive.

Another aspect of our insanity is the belief that we are self-sufficient. We isolated ourselves from other people and felt that we were different. Often this behavior occurred well before we ever took our first drug. When we started using, we seemed to get some relief from the pain we felt. But as our disease progressed, our insanity simply got worse, and using drugs no longer stopped the pain. Seeing our disease in these terms gives us the opportunity to consider "restoration to sanity" as the experience of "coming home." We rejoin the human race through the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We find the willingness to give up our painful isolation, and allow ourselves to be "a part of" rather than "apart from."

We can choose to see sanity as *freedom from the need to use drugs today*. Restoration to sanity allows us ongoing recovery from our addiction. Our belief that a Power greater than ourselves exists and can produce a change in us, allows us to change. The Second Step offers us the sanity through which our lives are made whole and new. Being restored to sanity is bringing back health and balance to our lives.

Simple words are ineffective to explain how we came to believe. For each of us it's been different. For some, it was a magic moment of realization, profound and even mystical. But most of us built belief in a Higher Power a little bit at a time. For many of us, this belief was long in coming because of our lost ability to have faith in anyone or anything other than ourselves. Step Two says that, "We came to believe", not that we *have* to believe everything right now. Faith is built slowly but surely through ongoing recovery and a willingness to look for a



Higher Power working in our lives. The roads are many, and wider than we may think, to a belief in a Power greater than ourselves. That's where our freedom begins.

Faith offers us freedom. Faith is not an easy word to define, but we know from our experience that those of us who have it function better than we could while using drugs, or existing without them. Faith gives us the courage to take chances and live a life of new meaning and opportunity. This new life is what is meant by being "restored to sanity." Once we take Step Two, we are soon rewarded with a faith that becomes deeper and more meaningful as long as we continue to be willing and open-minded.

A man once talked about his "magic magnifying mind." He said that whatever he focused his mind on seemed to grow and become larger. We find this is true for many of us. If we concentrate on our hopelessness and helplessness, we begin to feel worse and worse until we become overwhelmed. However, if we turn our attention to the newfound friend we have in a Power greater than ourselves, and the bit of faith we are developing, we find that this faith also grows and becomes stronger. The more we exercise and practice what limited faith we have, the more we seem to have.

We'd hardly be human if we didn't doubt sometimes and waver on the road of recovery. When this happens, we need to know that we're still accepted in N.A. and not be afraid to talk about it. Coming to believe is a gradual process which requires continued practice. As we begin to find some order in the universe, most of us come to believe that a Higher Power is supplying us with all our needs. We come to meetings and experience recovery. We receive the power to overcome the desire to use, and realize that clean living is the beginning of a new life.

When the cry for a clean life is in our hearts, it is heard. A spiritual awakening does come from willing and open-minded recovery. When we become

willing to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, our hearts and minds become fertile ground for the seeds of character change. We find that we can trust our Higher Power as one who is loyal to our best interest. As we lose our fear of God, we lose our fear of life. We feel new hope and gain a desire for ongoing recovery in our new life.

As our faith increases and our relationship with the God of our understanding strengthens, we begin to develop confidence in our life. We no longer awake each morning in terror, anticipating another day of disasters, because we have experienced the miracle of staying clean and we know it is not due to our own power. When we do feel the old familiar panic again, we simply wait for it to subside, because we now know in our hearts that, "this too will pass." As long as we stay clean, we need never suffer the horrors of addiction again. Already we have seen our lives improve in countless ways, and we are beginning to get a glimpse of the life God has planned for us--a life which includes real friendship and love, service, contentment, fulfillment and a measure of peace.

Of course we still have problems, and probably act largely on self-will. We see now that we can place our confidence in our Higher Power and utilize God's power in all of our daily affairs.

We found that when we had a true desire to find this Power, it became apparent to us. We realized that the miracles of recovery, so common in Narcotics Anonymous, are concrete manifestations of a benevolent Power. As we began to utilize this Power through prayer, we found an unending source of strength and direction. Although many of the world's injustices and tragedies which disillusioned us in the past may not change, we found that reliance on a Power greater than ourselves provided the acceptance and tolerance we needed to face life on life's terms.

### STEP THREE

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

Step Three calls for a decision. With promptness and determination, we give up our control and make a decision to surrender our lives to the God of our understanding. We trust that a Power greater than ourselves can provide us with the daily strength to stay clean and recover.

To make a decision is to start a course of action. In Step Three, we are not turning our will and our lives over to the care of God; rather, we make a decision to do those things which will result in our gradually surrendering to our Higher Power.

Many of us have had great difficulty in making any kind of decisions in our lives. This is a human trait, and very typical of addicts. We experience anxiety whenever choices confront us, because our perfectionism demands that we make the "right" choice. Following through on the decisions we do make may also be hard for some of us. However, in Step Three we learn that making a decision implies awareness, commitment and action.

Making a decision to turn our wills and lives over to the care of God is the most important decision we can make. For this reason, newcomers are often advised to not make any major decisions during their first year of recovery. What constitutes a "major" decision? This question can often be difficult to answer and should be discussed with a sponsor. Delaying major decisions may be necessary because it usually takes about a year to completely detoxify our minds and bodies. Years of chemical abuse to our bodies and minds causes radical mood swings, making it difficult for us to make reasonable decisions. Therefore, we advise new members to delay making major decisions in their day-to-day lives, concentrating

instead on the one decision which promises to improve their entire life: To turn their will and lives over to the care of God as they understand God.

Surrender is the underlying principle of the Third Step. For some people, it brings up a host of fearful images: Defeat, loss, loss of control and failure. Yet we say in Narcotics Anonymous that *to surrender is to win*. How can this be?

Most of us suffered before we became willing to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding. Becoming honest enough to admit the need to surrender is often painful.

However, we win when we surrender because we give up our attempts to control our addiction, our delusions that we can manage our lives alone, and our insanity. We receive the power, strength and guidance that make it possible for us to recover and lead responsible and productive lives.

Addicts who fail to incorporate a belief in a Power greater than self often return to active addiction. In the Second Step, we learned that this Power could be the N.A. group, Fellowship, literature or any Power greater than self. Before we can take Step Three, we must come to terms with the spiritual deficiency of our addiction. We see clearly that any life run on self-will can only bring suffering. "Running the show" was a favorite pastime of ours, even though people, places and things constantly disappointed us. "If only", "maybe" and "next time" comprised a large part of our daily dialogues. We couldn't even run our own lives, yet we attempted to run the lives of others. In Step Three, we make the decision to stop that destructive pattern of thinking; we make a commitment to commence a lifestyle of recovery. When we surrender our will and lives over to the care of God, we gain a way of living in the world that provides us with much happiness and peace within. For most of us, this new way of life is unlike any kind of experience we have ever known.

Willingness is all that is needed to start on Step Three. If necessary, we can pray for this willingness. Honest and sincere attempts in pursuit of a Higher Power will result in new awareness and willingness.

Turning our will over to this Higher Power creates space to receive that serenity for which we all strive. This means we no longer struggle with situations over which we are powerless. We find ourselves letting go of the things we cannot handle. We are willing to stop playing God.

We do not make this Third Step decision lightly. We are fully conscious of where our wills, plans and designs have led and left us. When we sincerely ask God to take over the care of our wills and lives, we had better be ready. When we are sincere, we *always* see results.

"Turning it over" simply means letting go of our old ideas and allowing our Higher Power to take charge of our lives. By using this spiritual principle, we often find new ways to deal with problems that were previously impossible to solve. In this way, we gain a newfound freedom by which we can share our burdens with this Power we've learned to trust. Our reliance continues to grow if we place faith in our Higher Power. We step aside; we give up attempts at control; we let a Higher Power shape our reality--these are some of the ways we can "turn it over."

Some addicts find that writing about the willingness to take Step Three increases our awareness. At times when we retrieve our will and catch ourselves again trying to run the show, we refer to our writing and remember the decision we made. Turning over our wills and lives relieves us from the burden of managing our lives alone. A way that has worked for many of us is to take this step with a sponsor. We may choose to pray on our knees, but this is not necessary. Our obsessive concern for self is diminished if we ask for help, and are willing to be helped. Some of us have used this prayer:

God,

I am now willing to put my life into your care. Align my will with Yours and help me to recognize and carry out Your will. Open my heart so that I may be a free and open channel for Your love. Take away my fears and doubts, that I may better demonstrate Your Presence in my life. Thy will, not mine, be done.

Although we may not use these particular words, it is the expression of this idea to our own individual conception of a Higher Power that makes it possible for us to develop a working relationship with that Higher Power. Making this decision revolutionizes our lives.

Belief in a Higher Power and a decision to turn our will and our lives over to this Power enables us to experience personal growth and freedom. We find that God's will is really quite simple. It is doing the best we can at the tasks put before us, and not comparing our best with another person's best. It is a calmness or peace within, and freedom from the inner turmoil which signals self-will. We believe our Higher Power wants us to be creative, spontaneous, vital, joyous, cooperative, loving and free--to not be burdened by the everyday ups and downs of life, but to ask for God's guidance and strength and follow our hearts. Most importantly, we believe that God's will for us is to be happy, and to share this joy with other addicts.

God's will may not necessarily be for whatever happens--wars, tragic accidents and the like. But God's will is that we addicts learn to accept "life on life's terms" without using, even over the most painful problems. As we incorporate this new attitude into our approach to life, we find our place in the order of things. This is a brand new experience for addicts. In active addiction, we were always out of place and behaved inappropriately. When we become willing, only then do we open ourselves to the possibility of change.

Just as we practice Steps One and Two on a daily basis, so we need to reaffirm our Step Three decision every day. When we have problems in our daily lives, we turn to our Higher Power for help. These problems may arise in situations with which we have difficulty coping, people who disagree with us or don't act the way we wish they would, or needs and desires we feel are unfulfilled. In reviewing our First Step, we realize we are powerless over these situations. We have probably already exerted a great deal of energy trying to shape things as we saw fit. Frustrated, disappointed and perhaps a little frightened, we turn to our Higher Power.

At some level of consciousness, we may intuitively understand that the problem probably has something to do with us. Even if we have been unjustifiably wronged, we are the ones who are unhappy about the situation--therefore, the problem lies with us. Our experience has demonstrated over and over again that the only people we can change are ourselves. At this point, we realize that changing our attitudes is necessary.

In our Second Step, we contemplated what it meant to be restored to sanity. Situations such as these are prime examples of the Second and Third Steps in action: We appraise the troublesome situation, acknowledge our own limitations and powerlessness, affirm our belief that God can restore us to sanity (and provide some relief from our self-centered feeling); and we make a decision to turn the situation over to God. When we "turn over" our problems to God, we do so in the full knowledge that it is because our own power and wisdom have fallen short. Even after exhausting all our resources, if we still find ourselves unable to adequately control or manage our daily lives (as all addicts do), then it makes good sense to ask our Higher Power to do it for us. Even though we may have no idea what God has in store for us, we believe that it is better than we could provide for ourselves.

Many of us feel that Step Three is the key that opens our hearts and minds to let this Higher Power enter. Through the trust and faith gained in this step, we begin to fulfill a spiritual need. We come to rely on something other than ourselves. It is upon this spiritual fulfillment that a foundation is built for recovery.

Step Three allows us to grow in our understanding of spirituality. As our relationship with our Higher Power changes and grows, we find new opportunities to trust this Power in our lives. We have time and energy for real life. We find something to replace our obsession with drugs and self.

We live a spiritual program of recovery which is what keeps us clean. The Third Step makes it possible to take the remaining steps. A whole-hearted decision to apply this step in our lives will increase our willingness and improve our ability to work the other steps. After we decide to turn our lives over to a Higher Power we can approach Step Four with the assurance that we will be successfully guided through it.

#### STEP FOUR

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

The Fourth Step is an action step; it is a cleansing of the mind and spirit. The decision we made in Step Three is an important one, but it will have no lasting effect unless it is accompanied by a confrontation with our innermost faults and defects. In Step Four, we look at the things which prevented us from being happy, that kept us using drugs. Chemical abuse is only a symptom of our disease. In Step Four, we learn about the true nature of addiction.

We do this by taking an inventory of ourselves. This personal inventory is similar to the ones businesses take. It is to see which items are useful and which



Many of us feel that Step Three is the key that opens our hearts and minds to let this Higher Power enter. Through the trust and faith gained in this step, we begin to fulfill a spiritual need. We come to rely on something other than ourselves. It is upon this spiritual fulfillment that a foundation is built for recovery.

Step Three allows us to grow in our understanding of spirituality. As our relationship with our Higher Power changes and grows, we find new opportunities to trust this Power in our lives. We have time and energy for real life. We find something to replace our obsession with drugs and self.

We live a spiritual program of recovery which is what keeps us clean. The Third Step makes it possible to take the remaining steps. A whole-hearted decision to apply this step in our lives will increase our willingness and improve our ability to work the other steps. After we decide to turn our lives over to a Higher Power we can approach Step Four with the assurance that we will be successfully guided through it.

#### STEP FOUR

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

The Fourth Step is an action step; it is a cleansing of the mind and spirit. The decision we made in Step Three is an important one, but it will have no lasting effect unless it is accompanied by a confrontation with our innermost faults and defects. In Step Four, we look at the things which prevented us from being happy, that kept us using drugs. Chemical abuse is only a symptom of our disease. In Step Four, we learn about the true nature of addiction.

We do this by taking an inventory of ourselves. This personal inventory is similar to the ones businesses take. It is to see which items are useful and which

are obsolete, what works and what doesn't, and what can be done to improve the whole operation.

In Step Four, we do much the same with ourselves. We take a good long look at what has occurred in our lives. We are convinced that fear, in its numerous forms, is what crippled us. But since it is difficult to step back and look at fear directly, we concentrate on the various masks it wears.

Pride and fear have caused us to rationalize every possible form of deviant behavior and thought. Our problem is not only the behavior, but also the rationalization. Without taking personal inventory, we go on doing what we have always done. We need to bring our patterns of behavior out into the open so that we can examine them. We need to look at ourselves and our behavior to see what is unproductive and blocks our recovery.

Before actually writing Step Four, we need first to keep in mind that by having done the first three steps, we have come to believe in a Higher Power who can give us the strength to walk through the fear of doing a fearless moral inventory. Another suggestion is that we work closely with our sponsors. Once we are ready to begin, we pray that the God of our understanding will give us the honesty, strength and power to complete Step Four.

We need not be apprehensive when we begin this step, as it clearly relieves the years of pent-up guilt experienced by many addicts. Too often we approach this step as if we are not good enough or clever enough to take an inventory. The job may look too big for us, which in fact it is. We realize that this is not a task we can complete on our own. Now that we have become willing to practice the first three steps of Narcotics Anonymous, we exercise all our new faith in a Higher Power. This indeed will give us more than enough strength to inventory our lives. Our new-found faith will cast out the fear we lived with for so long and give us the courage to explore thoroughly the patterns of our behavior patterns which we

established early in life, set virtually in concrete during our active addiction and carried into our early recovery.

A sponsor, or friend whom we trust in the Fellowship, can share their experience with us as we reach this all-important phase of our recovery. We often find comforting similarity in the items we put on paper which caused so much grief in our lives. If we remain too fearful to begin a thorough inventory, we might begin by listing our fears and the reasons we have them. Eventually, however, we will see the need and become willing to thoroughly search within. It is important to remember that a Higher Power is the only one in the room with us as we write our inventory. No one else sees it as we write it. We write in confidence; this is very private. Since God got us through the madness we are now writing about, what is there to fear in putting it down on paper with no one else to see it? We quickly perceive that greater freedom lies ahead as we get braver and enlarge our inventory.

We hear over and over about the importance of the Fourth Step. In the beginning, most of us had a hard time understanding how one step could be *that* much different than any of the others. Since Step Four represents our first honest attempt to reveal to our true selves the assets and liabilities in our lives, it does carry a lot of weight.

In our recovery, we begin to realize that our only real hope of staying clean is in the maintenance of a comfortable state of mind. In Step Four, we look at how we have felt about people, places and things in our lives.

In this examination, we see the results of our character defects. When we identify these liabilities or defects, we place ourselves in a position, for the first time in our lives, to step aside when trouble comes. We begin to avoid emotional and chemical turmoil.

Some addicts try to cut corners by making a simple self-examination. Some may try to talk out problems with another person, rather than writing a complete inventory. These avoidance methods may bring temporary relief from pressing problems, but these solutions are inadequate. Our experience has shown that the written inventory is the only means which assures self-honesty. Writing about our fears, resentments, and character defects gives us a perspective we can gain in no other way. When we write our inventory, we achieve self-honesty. We can no longer justify or rationalize our behavior when it is written on the page. If we lie on paper, we recognize it and work towards deeper honesty. These are some of the immediate advantages a written inventory can bring.

Step Four calls upon us to be searching and fearless, to look carefully at ourselves, including the deceptions we have used. We search within, as if entering a dark house with a single candle to guide us. We move ahead, despite our fear or resistance to the unknown. We need to be willing to illuminate every corner of every room of our minds as if our life depended upon it, for in fact, it does.

It makes no difference at this point in our recovery how small our problems seem to be or how often we have thought or talked about them. At this point, it is important to emphasize that being thorough is not the same as being perfect.

We have discussed the necessity for a searching and fearless moral inventory. When we are ready to begin, we sit down and start writing. It is extremely important that we work closely with a sponsor.

If your sponsor suggests using a specific guide or reference, by all means follow it and stick to it. There are many methods of writing inventories, and no one way is right for everyone. Any method we use will be effective if we are searching and fearless.

The outline below provides a structure for examining ourselves. It contains the basic elements which comprise our self-appraisal.

I. REVIEW YOUR FIRST STEPS: If you have written out your first three steps, you have already made a good beginning. In looking at your behavior both before and after active addiction, patterns begin to emerge. The first three steps provide the necessary preparation and foundation for making a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

A. LOOK AT EACH SITUATION TO SEE HOW IT AFFECTED YOU. This is where we identify and examine our feelings. We refer to the Basic Text and jot down words which trigger an awareness of our feelings.

B. IN EACH SITUATION, TRY TO SEE WHERE YOU WERE WRONG OR WHAT YOU COULD HAVE DONE INSTEAD. Keep in mind that this may include character assets as well as liabilities. In looking at our actions, it is important to see how we behave differently in the future. Now that we are clean in Narcotics Anonymous, we discover some assets. Willingness to take the steps, faith in a Higher Power, gratitude, and open-mindedness are all assets we develop by staying clean. If we are searching, we will surely uncover some good points about ourselves. It is important to consider our assets because as human beings, we are composed of both assets and liabilities.

II. WRITE ABOUT YOUR RESENTMENTS. Our resentments caused us discomfort, so we formed still more resentments. We were angry about what happened and kept a mental grudge list. We regretted the clever things we had not said and planned retaliation which may or may not have taken place. We were obsessed with the past and future, and therefore cheated ourselves of the present. We need to write about these resentments now to see the part we played in forming them.

A. LIST THE PEOPLE, PRINCIPLES, AND INSTITUTIONS YOU RESENT. Most of us started with our childhood, but any order will work *as long as it is complete*. We included all the people (parents, mates, friends, enemies, etc.),

the organizations (jails, police, hospitals, schools, etc.), and the concepts (religions, politics, prejudice, social groups, etc.) at whom we were angry.

B. LIST THE CAUSE(S) OF EACH RESENTMENT. We explained the reasons for our anger: Was our self-respect or pride hurt? Was our safety threatened in any way? Was our livelihood attacked? Was a personal or sexual relationship hurt or threatened? We listed whomever or whatever we resented, the cause of the resentment, and how it affected us.

C. WITH EACH RESENTMENT, TRY TO SEE WHERE YOU WERE WRONG AND WHAT YOU COULD HAVE DONE INSTEAD. Try to forget about the other people's mistakes, and concentrate on your own. For each situation, we answered these questions: Where have I been selfish? Where have I not been completely honest? Was I thinking only of myself, manipulating toward my own ends? Was I afraid? Though I may not have been all wrong, in what way was I to blame for the situation? We write *our* personal inventory, not the other people's. We make a list of our faults, not theirs. We must do this honestly, ignoring nothing. Situations in which we are sure we are right require close observation. Where others have wronged us, we must realize that we need to stop expecting perfection from them. This allows us an opportunity to look at ourselves which is critical to our recovery.

III. WRITE ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIPS. We list the many ways each of us has been intolerant. At times, we probably refused to allow others the privilege of voicing or even having an opinion, and this attitude caused indifference or hostility. We had a need, generated by fear, to "always be right." We were unnecessarily critical of others; yet when constructive criticism was directed towards us, we were less than receptive. Every suggestion was met with either irritation or despair. Did we listen only to ourselves? When were we intolerant of others? When did we feel superior to others and correct them?

**A. LOOK AT EACH PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.** Examine the positive and negative aspects of each one, being honest about your assets and liabilities. Avoid spending time on the wrongs others have done. We focus on our mistakes, and concern ourselves with areas where self-centeredness seemed to prevail. We must look within and honestly appraise our motives. This is our inventory and if it is to succeed, we need to list our faults, not those of others. Self-pity is one of the ways we manipulated others for our benefit. Indulging in self-pity is asking others to change or to bow to our demands; it is looking for a way to avoid responsibility. We ask ourselves these questions: When did we use self-pity to get attention? Did we lie or "stretch the truth" to make ourselves look more pathetic? Did we make others feel guilty by feeling sorry for ourselves? Did we bill ourselves as victims of life and everyone around us?

Everyone feels down at times, but addicts can ill afford to feel sorry for themselves. When we didn't get what we wanted, did we choose to pout or complain? Were we so consumed with self-pity and our own suffering that we had very little perspective or understanding of others? Did we exaggerate our problems? Could we feel any sympathy for others when so consumed with self? Were others frustrated by our negativity? As addicts, our emotions often run to extremes--past the point of what is appropriate. We must now find a way to change our actions or be driven back to active addiction.

**B. WRITE ABOUT YOUR SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS.** This may include deep relationships or short affairs, spouses, lovers or others.

We all have sexual needs and desires, and part of recovery is learning to deal with these needs in a constructive rather than destructive manner. Our sexual needs are one of God's gifts and we deserve to have them met, but not at someone else's expense.

We answered these questions about each relationship: Did I manipulate and lie to others to meet my own needs? Did I care about the other person? How did I demonstrate that? Did I feel better or less than my partner? Did I sell myself short? Did I end up feeling worthless, used and abused? Did I think that only sex would make me happy and fulfilled? Did my relationships always end up in pain and unhappiness both for myself and others? Like everything else, we need to ask direction from a Power greater than ourselves. With this in mind, sexual relationships can be a fulfilling and joyful experience.

IV. WRITE ABOUT YOUR FEARS. We answered these questions about our fears: Why do I have this fear? Am I afraid because I cannot depend upon myself? Am I afraid of fear itself?

Self-sufficiency may seem to be a good lifestyle, until we meet barriers greater than ourselves. Some of us were very confident and self-assured, especially when we were drugged. But it never conquered our fears, or any other problem. At best it hid them, sometimes so deeply that we did insane things without really knowing why. We begin to see that our fear originates in us, and we are responsible for its numerous forms.

There is a better way. We are now on a completely different foundation: Instead of being self-reliant, we are God-reliant. Instead of depending on self, which is limited, we trust in a Higher Power, which is limitless. The more we attempt to follow God's will, and rely on God, the more we are given the ability to meet hardship with peace and happiness.

We need to examine ourselves in close detail in order to modify those attitudes which have not worked for us, for our peace of mind. We are trying to build a happy life in recovery, and Step Four is our first clear-cut attempt at that. A part of Step Four is looking at our fears. We list them and find them to be unreasonable. Some of our fears include: Fear of rejection, abandonment,



responsibility, commitment, growing up, success, failure, life without drugs. If we have looked closely, we have found that we are afraid of almost everything, and our fears have kept us from doing the things we want to do and becoming the people we want to be.

If we are as honest as we can be, many of our previous fears will be cast aside once and for all. Our liabilities may destroy us if we withhold any faith and trust in our Higher Power. With God's help, we are guided through a maze of confusion which often confronts us.

What are the results that come from making a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves? Our Basic Text says: "Anyone who has some time in the program and has worked this step will tell you that the Fourth Step was a turning point in their life."<sup>5</sup> The results of living the Fourth Step are freedom from the past, freedom to be ourselves, and knowledge of who and what we really are.

If we have written a thorough inventory, we end up with a large amount of information about ourselves. We have carefully examined our resentments and begin to understand how worthless and deadly they really are. We realize their power to destroy us, and now seek a better way to live. We grow toward freedom, peace of mind and balance.

Throughout these pages we read again and again that "we can't, God can." By taking the remaining steps, we begin to realize that through God and our own efforts, we can remove the various forms of self-centeredness that have kept us from spiritual awareness. If we have sincerely taken the first three steps and followed through with a searching and fearless moral inventory, we have accepted some strong realities about ourselves and are ready to move on to Step Five.

## STEP FIVE

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

When we have made a moral inventory, what are we to do with it? We have listed our resentments, fears, dishonesties and other character defects. We have brought all this material out of the private parts of our lives and put it down on paper. We now know ourselves better than we have ever known ourselves before. Although we may have mixed feelings about our inventory, it is important to be willing to take Step Five immediately.

We have gained much knowledge of ourselves and we feel alone with that knowledge. Through the process of sharing our inventory with God, ourselves and another human being, we break this isolation. We have been alone with our problems for far too long. We have a choice today to combat this isolation.

We would hardly be human if we didn't experience some anxiety about this step. We are probably not used to being honest with ourselves or anyone else, and now we are asked to be honest about ourselves with another. However, we can be anxious and willing at the same time. It is best to discuss our reservations with our sponsor, whose guidance and experience can be very helpful. Attending step meetings and studying the Basic Text also provide many useful insights. We approach Step Five willingly because we need the relief that comes from sharing our secrets.

If we do not go on with Step Five and reveal our findings to God, ourselves and another human being, the process of self-justification recurs. Our recovery is halted and our egos take over. The longer we hold on to our Fourth Step, the longer the insanity goes on.

We have completed the previous four steps to the best of our ability. With this basic foundation toward our ongoing spiritual recovery, we look forward to the relief that completion of our Fifth Step brings. The weight of our guilt,

hostility and anger will be lifted from us. Many of us were able to accept ourselves fully for the first time upon doing the Fifth Step.

The key word in Step Five is "admitted." We saw that word also in Step One. Our first admission was of powerlessness, and it enabled us to begin our recovery. Now we have discovered some new truths about ourselves which need to be admitted in order to continue with our recovery. "Admit" is a potent word which seems to carry with it a certain amount of ego-deflation. None of us likes to admit anything unpleasant about ourselves. It can be a very humbling experience. However, our experience has shown that the humility we gain through humbling ourselves before God and another human being, is exactly what is needed to counter the self-justification and rationalization we have fallen prey to for so long. We admit to God, ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs because it is the *only* way we can continue in our recovery.

An easily neglected aspect of this step is the process of making our admission both to God and to ourselves. Doing so is a crucial part of the step, not just an afterthought. As we continue in our ongoing recovery, we realize that the most important relationships we develop are first with God, secondly with ourselves, and thirdly with other human beings. It is for this reason we must be honest about who we are with each of these three.

We may ask, "Is it really necessary to admit these wrongs to God?" Some may feel that their Higher Power already recognizes their defects. However, we find that by sharing our inventory with God, we are better able to accept God's help in our lives. Leaving God out of this process would be like having a serious quarrel with a loved one: We know they love and forgive us; but until we actually unburden ourselves and our guilt to them, we deny ourselves the relief of really hearing and feeling that forgiveness. So it is crucial to actively take God into the Fifth Step room with us. When we admit our wrongs to God, we experience God's

unconditional love and acceptance, and our trust in God becomes stronger. Our Basic Text tells us that although God already knows us well, "the admission must come from our own lips to be truly effective."<sup>6</sup>

What about admitting our wrongs to ourselves? Is this really necessary? It would be easy to rationalize that we already know our defects. Didn't we, in fact, write the Fourth Step inventory? Again, by being honest about who we really are with ourselves as well as God and another human being, we begin to face our problems directly and reverse our age-old pattern of running away. We also prepare ourselves to learn the spiritual principle of forgiveness by forgiving and accepting ourselves for who we really are. The healing value of the forgiveness we receive from ourselves as well as from God, coupled with the honesty and humility we gain, make us ready for the remaining steps.

We have contemplated the spiritual benefits we stand to gain through the Fifth Step, and understand why we need to go through with it. We have developed a certain amount of willingness. Now, how do we actually go about it?

Some members begin by reading their inventories aloud with their Higher Power in mind. Others have held silent discussions with their Higher Power, admitting their faults and fears. Another method for admission to ourselves involves reading the inventory outloud before a mirror. Whether or not you utilize any or all of these methods, the most important thing is to share the inventory with another person. This assures an effective Fifth Step because when we sit down with the person we have chosen, there are only three beings present: God, ourselves, and another human.

When we are ready to take this step, we look for that "special" person with whom we are willing to share our experience without reservation. We make no requirement about this personal decision; however, it is suggested we use a sponsor in Narcotics Anonymous. Taking it with someone who has substantially more

recovery than us, helps us put our Fifth Step into perspective with the remaining seven steps. Furthermore, we often feel that only another recovering addict can fully appreciate the life-and-death nature of this step. Our sponsor already knows a lot about us and probably has experienced many of the same feelings. So even when the details of our life stories vary, another member of Narcotics Anonymous is not likely to be shocked or uncomfortable with what we've thought and done in our past. They will very likely share a piece or two from their own past, and perhaps of problems they've overcome in the program. This acceptance and lack of judgment is essential to our recovery.

It is important that we select a person whom we trust implicitly, and with whom we feel comfortable discussing all areas of our lives--even our deepest secrets. This is, of course, easier said than done. As addicts, we have spent years in building walls around ourselves. Drug abuse was only one of the devices we used to keep people out of our lives. If we allowed anyone into our lives, it was strictly on our terms. All our relationships were conditional. We could not trust people. We have had years of practice at shutting people out. We must make an enormous effort now to let someone in. We start with just one person.

We should also be careful to choose a person to whom the release of Fourth Step information would not prove harmful. Oftentimes, close friends or members of our immediate families would suffer needlessly if we discussed our Fourth Step with them, so we exercise caution here.

We carefully choose someone whom we feel will be objective and non-judgmental. This person has to be someone we trust completely. As addicts, we have found it difficult to trust anyone, including ourselves. We now have the opportunity to develop the trusting attitude which has always been missing from our lives. The trust which is strengthened by taking our Fifth Step with a person close to us is therefore reinforced in our relationship with God and with ourselves.

It marks the beginning of our ability to reach out to others, both to give and to receive. It is the beginning of a spiritual experience.

Now that we have the three of us--God, ourselves and another human being--in one room with our Fourth Step, we begin. We can start by saying a prayer together to ease the tension. This is also a good opportunity to turn our fear and anxiety over to our Higher Power. With all the honesty we can possibly muster, we begin to share our Fourth Step inventory. The material we set down in our inventory describes the exact nature of our wrongs. We disclose the inventory in its entirety, being careful not to leave anything out.

We move steadily forward, ignoring our pride, ego and fear. As we persist, we find a new definition of humility--not a groveling, embarrassing confession, but rather a deep sense of relief in unloading our past, and we feel genuine acceptance as we do so. As our pride falls aside, we find ourselves feeling new dimensions of honesty deep within.

As we begin to relate in an honest way to another person, we find that they can see a lot more about us than we tell them. This information may not necessarily relate to specific acts, but rather to our emotions. For example, they can see in our faces how we feel when we speak of certain individuals. They can also see when we are upset even when we try to conceal it. As addicts, we never before were able to admit how we were feeling; being secretive was a large part of the denial of our disease. Admitting our feelings now in Step Five is a vital part of our recovery. We were emotionally sick in our using, and we need emotional healing in our recovery. Being entirely open with another person is a big step in the right direction. Sharing our Fourth Step material with a God whom we have come to trust, with ourselves, and with a carefully chosen human being is a safe place to begin opening up.

The recipient of our Fifth Step usually expresses no judgment whatsoever and encourages us to proceed with our story. Perhaps they will share some "secret" of theirs to lighten the self-imposed pressure many of us feel.

If we leave something out of our inventory because we are afraid to tell another person about it, we are the ones who suffer. The other person is not affected by our omissions. It is easy to walk in, read the Fourth Step to someone, and walk out. However, we try to remember that we are preparing ourselves for the future. We want to break out of our isolation and move into the real world. Admitting the exact nature of our wrongs to another person lessens the overwhelming burden we have carried for so long. We must first recognize our deficiencies in order to do anything toward correcting them. We cannot wish them or will them away. We must be willing to take advice and accept direction to expect any change in our lives. When we are willing to ask for the guidance, we soon gain clear recognition of what and who we are.

Every Fifth Step is successful as long as the information in its accompanying Fourth Step is a complete disclosure of our lives, thoughts and motives up to the present. After release of these problems we've carried for so long, we can take ourselves to a meeting and share the freedom we feel with the weight lifted from us. We have carried this cargo to the depths of our despair and have no desire to drag it any further. For the first time, we have honestly admitted who we are and where we've been. We no longer have to regret or hide our past because we have faced it and admitted it. We have told the truth at last, and it has set us free.

Perhaps for the first time, we begin to understand that the pain and desperation we suffered in our active addiction was absolutely necessary to bring us to the doors of Narcotics Anonymous. If we had not found N.A., we would never have found relief from our suffering. At this point, we may actually begin

to feel gratitude for our disease because it led us to seek a better way of life. We experience a tremendous relief knowing that we are finally where we belong. If we had any doubts or reservations before, taking the Fifth Step makes clear to us the truths that we are addicts and cannot manage our own lives, and that we have a home and an opportunity to recover in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

We begin to see ourselves with compassion and experience a new feeling of self-acceptance. We begin to understand why we acted and felt the way we did, and we are hopeful of change through application of the succeeding steps. We have our list of character defects and perhaps some additional observations from the person with whom we shared. Guided by our Higher Power, we now prepare to examine Step Six. Moving continually forward on our spiritual path takes us farther from the old ways of thinking and living, and brings us closer to a peaceful recovery, beneficial to both ourselves and others.

### STEP SIX

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

In the Fourth Step, we wrote a "searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." In Step Five, "We admitted to God, ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs," and began to see ourselves as we really are. It is a relief to know that we are human, and that we have positive as well as negative traits in our personality. Our awareness of ourselves and of our problems has been heightened. But unless we find some way to rid ourselves of the fundamental defects which have caused these problems, our new awareness will only make us uncomfortable. We realize now that we need to be free of those personality traits which stand in the way of recovery.

Our new awareness has involved some painful discoveries. For relief, we look to Steps Six and Seven. We see that the awareness we gained in Step Five



prepares us for action and change in Steps Six and Seven. When we become aware of something, we need to act on it. We want to be rid of our defects of character because we don't want to go back to how we felt and lived before.

Being entirely ready to have our defects removed is more than thinking about it or intending to have them removed. It is actively preparing or demonstrating the desire for their removal. We became entirely ready because we found that we had to be completely willing in order for this step to work. Half-hearted attempts do not work for us.

Some of us do not like change of any kind--even if it is for the better. It is our nature to hold on to and nurture our defects. This is a practice which kills addicts. However, a lot of us still continue wearing this mask of self-denial. Why, if we have truly made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God, would we even question letting go of our defects? Because we are afraid, and it is a longstanding habit.

Many of us thought that we *were* our character defects. We feared that if we gave them up, there would be no person left afterward. Even though we may be very uncomfortable, our old ways are familiar. Forfeiting our old ways leads us to new and unknown ways which can be frightening. The remedy for this fear is faith. Our fear will be taken from us by our Higher Power. All we need to do is ask for the fear to be removed, and faith will see us through this step.

We have come to believe that God has a plan for each of us. However, God does not deliver it unless we choose it for ourselves. The Sixth Step suggests the attitude for us to take toward our defects of character: That we be entirely ready to have them removed. What could be more simple? Only a sick person would object to the removal of character traits that have "caused pain and misery all of our lives."<sup>7</sup>

to feel gratitude for our disease because it led us to seek a better way of life. We experience a tremendous relief knowing that we are finally where we belong. If we had any doubts or reservations before, taking the Fifth Step makes clear to us the truths that we are addicts and cannot manage our own lives, and that we have a home and an opportunity to recover in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

We begin to see ourselves with compassion and experience a new feeling of self-acceptance. We begin to understand why we acted and felt the way we did, and we are hopeful of change through application of the succeeding steps. We have our list of character defects and perhaps some additional observations from the person with whom we shared. Guided by our Higher Power, we now prepare to examine Step Six. Moving continually forward on our spiritual path takes us farther from the old ways of thinking and living, and brings us closer to a peaceful recovery, beneficial to both ourselves and others.

### STEP SIX

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

In the Fourth Step, we wrote a "searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." In Step Five, "We admitted to God, ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs," and began to see ourselves as we really are. It is a relief to know that we are human, and that we have positive as well as negative traits in our personality. Our awareness of ourselves and of our problems has been heightened. But unless we find some way to rid ourselves of the fundamental defects which have caused these problems, our new awareness will only make us uncomfortable. We realize now that we need to be free of those personality traits which stand in the way of recovery.

Our new awareness has involved some painful discoveries. For relief, we look to Steps Six and Seven. We see that the awareness we gained in Step Five

prepares us for action and change in Steps Six and Seven. When we become aware of something, we need to act on it. We want to be rid of our defects of character because we don't want to go back to how we felt and lived before.

Being entirely ready to have our defects removed is more than thinking about it or intending to have them removed. It is actively preparing or demonstrating the desire for their removal. We became entirely ready because we found that we had to be completely willing in order for this step to work. Half-hearted attempts do not work for us.

Some of us do not like change of any kind--even if it is for the better. It is our nature to hold on to and nurture our defects. This is a practice which kills addicts. However, a lot of us still continue wearing this mask of self-denial. Why, if we have truly made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God, would we even question letting go of our defects? Because we are afraid, and it is a longstanding habit.

Many of us thought that we *were* our character defects. We feared that if we gave them up, there would be no person left afterward. Even though we may be very uncomfortable, our old ways are familiar. Forfeiting our old ways leads us to new and unknown ways which can be frightening. The remedy for this fear is faith. Our fear will be taken from us by our Higher Power. All we need to do is ask for the fear to be removed, and faith will see us through this step.

We have come to believe that God has a plan for each of us. However, God does not deliver it unless we choose it for ourselves. The Sixth Step suggests the attitude for us to take toward our defects of character: That we be entirely ready to have them removed. What could be more simple? Only a sick person would object to the removal of character traits that have "caused pain and misery all of our lives."<sup>7</sup>

It is essential that we surrender completely and become entirely ready to have God remove all of our defects of character. If we persist in holding on to our old behaviors, we miss the point (and the benefits) of Step Six.

We hear some people in the program say, "We are not yet ready to give up everything." We advise them to go back and take a good look at their basic surrenders in the first three steps to see if a sincere surrender is there. If it isn't, we suggest that they go back and strengthen their surrender before even looking at this step.

Reviewing the principles of Step Two furthers our readiness to have God remove all our defects of character. We remind ourselves that we have come "to believe that a Power greater than ourselves" can restore us to sanity. We reaffirm our positive, new relationship with that Power. We remind ourselves that restoration to sanity is achieved as our character defects are removed. Strengthening this spiritual connection makes it much easier for us to reaffirm our surrender of the first three steps. Such spiritual reorganization makes experienced sponsors all the more important because by taking us through the first five steps, they know our readiness and willingness for Step Six. Some of us have justified and lied about our character defects for so long that we have begun to confuse the lies with reality. This behavior is typical of our disease. When we are afraid to let go of the lies, we need faith in a Higher Power to sustain us in this difficult transition. The change we desire will not happen all at once, but we must be willing to begin the process.

"Entirely ready" means becoming totally willing. When we become willing, we grow spiritually. Willingness to try is an important foundation of our recovery and the spiritual principle of Step Six.

How do we become willing? Some of us become entirely willing when we hurt badly enough. We do not have to hurt to become willing; we have a choice

today. We can simply pray for the willingness we need and then proceed confidently, knowing that God has granted our request. We can also surround ourselves with other recovering addicts, who provide a supportive and positive atmosphere which sparks our incentive for recovery. Acknowledging that we are easily influenced by changes in our lives, we can utilize the strength of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship to help us change in the right direction. Whatever means we employ, we must keep moving forward in our recovery, lest we drift backwards toward our addiction.

Until we let go of all our defects, we will not experience the full freedom from self that Step Six offers. We all have character defects. It is important that we know what they are before we proceed. When pondering our character defects, the first one we usually think of is our addiction. Our disease has reared its ugly head in so many instances in our lives that we realize it will take an act of God to change us. When using drugs, our addiction was primarily apparent in our usage. There were also other bizarre behaviors which were manifestations of our disease, but the drug usage was the most obvious symptom. The expression "take away the drugs from a drug-crazed maniac, and you still have a maniac" has some meaning for us. We do not label ourselves maniacs; however, we saw in our Fifth Step that destructive behavior accompanied our addiction.

Our defects manifested themselves in a variety of ways. Our attempts to control events in our lives contributed to our sickness. We were so driven by our impulses that we considered little else. We see that our most overriding flaw is in serving our own selfish desires. We are propelled by our desires. It was our exaggerated impulses and desires which led some of us to the avenues we explored during active addiction--the jails, emergency rooms, lousy hotels or boarding houses, et cetera.

We review every facet of our personality, uncovering the defects. We must be willing to have God remove all of them--the glaring ones as well as those less serious. It is natural to want to be rid of those defects which humiliate us, cause us pain or isolate us from the rest of society. But what about those defects which are considered more socially acceptable? At this point, we search our hearts and take an honest look at *all* of our character defects. Even those we may consider "minor" present obstacles to ongoing recovery. Anything taken to an extreme is a defect of character.

We may be reluctant to give up some of our defects. But becoming entirely ready to have God remove *all* our defects of character is the ideal toward which we strive. We realize that all of them won't be removed at once, but we are willing.

To help us realize the implications of Step Six, we consider this question: Who can or will remove our defects of character? The answer, of course, is the God of our own understanding. We have admitted our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives. It is apparent that we cannot remove our own defects of character. How many times have we tried to change the way we felt? How often has it worked? Just as we failed to solve our own drug problem, we failed to remove our own defects. Step Six does not say, "We were entirely ready to work very hard to remove our defects of character." In the Third Step, we made a decision to turn over our wills and lives to God's care, knowing that it is by taking the remaining steps that we actually surrender control. Step Six deepens our surrender to a Higher Power. It reminds us that we are not powerful enough to remove our own defects of character. If we were, there would be no need for this step. We wouldn't need to ask God to do something we could do ourselves. The truth is, however, that we cannot do it ourselves. Alone, we are powerless over our own defects of character. We need the help of a Higher Power.

The realization was a long time in coming for many of us. We may have skipped over this step, or missed its full significance. We have probably tried again and again to fix ourselves, to apply willpower to our addictive personalities and to combat obsessions with people, places and things. After experiencing complete emotional defeat, frequently more painful than anything we had experienced in our addiction, we became willing to turn to our Higher Power for help. When we feel we are ready, we ask ourselves: "Do I know what my defects are? Do I have enough faith in God to reaffirm my Third Step decision? Am I tired of the pain and isolation enforced by my addiction and character defects? Am I really willing to let God change me?"

If we still are not able to clearly identify our character defects, we return to our Fifth Step and see how our fear, self-centeredness, guilt and dishonesty were at the root of most of our problems. We recall reading in the Fifth Step that we can be both anxious and willing at the same time. Once again, we see that it is the pain of our disease and the hope for a better life that seems to make us willing.

When we are able to answer all of the above questions positively, we know that we are entirely ready and have taken Step Six. Even though we may be anxious, we are ready and willing to have God remove our defects of character. As a result of Step Six, we feel more comfortable with ourselves and closer to God.

Step Six tells us that God can remove our defects of character, while in Step Seven we humbly approach God, asking that our defects be removed. This leaves us with a new peace and serenity while restoration of spiritual health continues. We are starting to enjoy freedom in our new way of life. If we stop here, we will return to our former isolation, and be only a little better off than before. We want to continue with the steps in order to achieve growth in our recovery. With this thought, we move to Step Seven.

## STEP SEVEN

*"We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."*

Spiritual growth and a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves is the foundation and purpose of all the Twelve Steps. In Step Seven, we strive to move toward a closer, stronger relationship with our Higher Power. In Step Five, we uncovered the basic defects of our character. In Step Six, we became entirely willing to have God remove them all so that we could experience continued spiritual growth and recovery. Now, in Step Seven, we humbly ask our Higher Power to remove these defects, or shortcomings.

"Humbly" is a key word in approaching Step Seven. Understanding this concept may present an obstacle, since humility is not one of the typical characteristics of addicts. We may not know what the word means, or perhaps associate it with being lowly, groveling, meek or subservient. In Step Seven, we see that if we are going to live a drug-free life and learn to walk a spiritual path, we must gain an understanding of humility. Humility means, among other things, a realistic evaluation of ourselves. Humility is not a denial of good qualities, for in truth it is the admission of all qualities--both good and bad. We admit our faults and work to remedy them; we admit our abilities and accept and use them as a gift from our Higher Power.

If we are absolutely truthful in the estimation of ourselves, we are humble. Humility is self-honesty and the absence of false pride. Humility is the root of faith, hope and tolerance. We find that all spiritual principles are fortified and reinforced through humility.

Humility is recognizing that we are not perfect. It is something for which we strive, but never fully achieve. Humility is being able to accept things as they are, and when we cannot change them, seeking God's help in changing the things we can.



Becoming humble is the result of a gradual change in attitude. We learned through our painful experience that we could not live on our own power, and became willing to ask for help. In becoming humble, we let go of our false pride and self-importance. We turn away from a life of self-centeredness and self-gratification, toward a life of spiritual growth and progress.

In this step, we ask God humbly. We are in need of what only God can supply. Alone, we cannot remove our character defects, which are the same as our shortcomings. We need to be freed of these shortcomings so we can develop spiritually. We ask God for what we need--the freedom that only God can provide.

Why is it important to *ask* God to remove our shortcomings? The word "ask" is surely different from "tell" or "demand." If we *tell* God to remove our defects, we are trying to maintain control. In taking Step Seven, it is not for us to decide how we "ought" to be. Our experience has shown that the results are usually disastrous when we tell a Power greater than ourselves what to do. If we persist in these directives, we are apt to discover another character defect--dishonesty. False virtue can be a subtle trap when we pretend to be what we are not. Although it may seem that we degrade ourselves by admitting our weakness, the truth is that we are letting go of painful and destructive behavior patterns, and opening new doors. The doors reveal a new freedom--the freedom we need in order to change.

When we ask God to remove our shortcomings, we ask for freedom from any shortcomings which limit our recovery. We ask our Higher Power to help us be better persons and to help us continue to live free from the obsession to use. We ask for help because we found that we could not do it alone. Some of us make the mistake of asking God to remove our shortcomings and then setting out to remove them ourselves. But we are reminded of the message, "I can't; God can." We tried and failed, and it hurts to admit defeat. The more we can apply the spiritual principles of surrender, the faster the healing will take place.

and failed, and it hurts to admit defeat. The more we can apply the spiritual principles of surrender, the faster the healing will take place.

Of course, our shortcomings are human failings. We are only human. But we must be willing to live a spiritual program in order to move toward our goal of recovery. We either move forward or retreat. We cannot stand still. As we change our attitudes, we begin to apply the principles of Step Seven. We accept ourselves as we are, and try to develop spiritually. This means we accept ideals which we may never meet. We recognize our human failings, or shortcomings, and realize that we will never finish the process of spiritual growth. There will always be areas where we fall short, but we keep reaching toward our ideal. Only a well-grounded, realistic view of ourselves and others will enable us to accept this world and its creatures. That is true humility.

There is something which at first glance seems to be paradoxical in this step: We are asked to be humble. Our first impression of that word is probably self-negating. But then we remember what was discussed earlier in this chapter--that humility truly is as much an admission of our assets as it is of our defects. No longer can we confuse humility with false pride, that self-centered trait in which we attract attention by belittling our own good points. "Oh, it was really nothing," is not a true statement when applied to a job well done. It is not appropriate to degrade ourselves and deny our true abilities. Using and strengthening our God-given attributes is part of being restored to sanity, and is "really something." To deny our strengths is to deny the power of God in our lives today. We therefore should not be falsely proud as we approach Step Seven. Instead, we muster as much humility as we can, and become willing to work this step. We are on a spiritual path with the reconciliation of opposites, such as false pride and humility, as our goal. Knowing that God is with us, we do our best. We honestly acknowledge that this is an ongoing task, and humbly, gratefully thank

God for the opportunity to improve our attributes and start weeding out defects from our lives.

We have discussed the necessity of cultivating humility, and understand why we need to ask God to remove our shortcomings. Now to actually do it, "Some will want to get on their knees for this step. Some will be very quiet, and others will put forth a great emotional effort or show intense willingness."<sup>8</sup> Most of us said a prayer, similar to this:

"God, I am ready for You to take me as I truly am, and do with me as you will. If it is your will, I ask that you take away all the shortcomings that prevent me from being of use to You and others. Please give me the power to follow the path that You set for me. Please guide my steps."

Our experience has shown that applying the spiritual principles of Step Seven is necessary living clean. In order to stay clean, we require a change in character, which can only be accomplished through practicing Step Seven on a daily basis. We humbly ask our Higher Power to keep our defects as they are taken from us. Once in a while, we may panic and grab the wheel; but when we do, our shortcomings shift into automatic pilot, ready to put us back in the ditch.

Losing faith can be a danger. We may grow impatient with our growth and progress. Old defects seem to leave us slowly, and we see new ones far too often. If a shortcoming isn't removed, it simply means we have more work to do. We have not asked God *humbly*, or we aren't really willing to let it go. We aren't being punished; it just means that we have to work a little harder on one or more of the previous steps. We change slowly, day by day--not all at once and not without help from the God of our understanding, and from our friends in the Fellowship. We

will never be perfect, but we do recover. We do the best we can, always remembering who we are and where we came from.

We have asked our God to remove our defects by acting differently than our addiction would have us act. This active demonstration is a most powerful prayer. We believe we can become new people and act differently, but only a Power greater than us can change our nature. As we realize we can change only our actions, we become humble. A Higher Power can remove our defects and shortcomings, if we humbly ask through our actions and prayers.

Step Seven gives us the tools to artfully dislodge the wreckage of our past. In Step Eight, we blueprint a massive remodeling of our former faulty relationships, laying a firm foundation for our new clean way of life.

### STEP EIGHT

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

Step Eight begins the process of freeing ourselves from our past. When we made a searching and fearless moral inventory in Step Four, we were able to see and admit our faults. We also received the benefit of seeing where we had caused harm to other people. It was through this process that we began to become willing to start amending the harm we have done to people. We develop willingness as we realize we cannot live clean lives while carrying the guilt and fear of our past.

As we look at all the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual damage we have caused throughout our addiction, we see a need to rid ourselves of the pain, remorse and twisted relationships. We also see that our list must be rigorously thorough in order to receive the spiritual healing we need. Lack of thoroughness simply breeds more of the same. If we are haphazard, our lives again become so confused and entangled with half-measures that the oblivion of drugs seems the only way out. Along with this comes the harm which results from not being honest

with ourselves: Denial of an uncomfortable fact is soon compounded by other denials, until we find that we are denying the disease of addiction.

Denial is the most subtle symptom of our disease, and it can be arrested only through honesty and thoroughness. To avoid Step Eight because of our fear of embarrassment or false pride is to slip our necks willingly into the noose of addiction. The N.A. Basic Text says that, "Although we are not responsible for our disease, we are responsible for our recovery."<sup>9</sup> Step Eight is an important part of how we are responsible for our recovery. We cannot change what we did when we were using. But now that we are clean, we have the ability to take responsibility for our behavior which has harmed ourselves or others.

Some of us were so fearful when we reached this step that at first, we were unwilling to write a list. We were reminded, however, that taking the steps leads away from using drugs, and that ignoring the steps returns us to the painful addiction which brought us to N.A. In trusting our lives to the care of our Higher Power, we proceed as fearlessly as we are able.

We can draw from our previous experience in practicing the steps. Remember our first difficulty in Step Three--making a decision to turn our will and our lives over to a Higher Power? We soon discovered how to ask our Higher Power for the needed strength to carry us through this confusing period. We utilize the tools we learned in the previous steps and ask God to guide us in doing the Eighth Step.

Before we proceed, it is important that we understand the terms used in Step Eight. The words "harm" and "amend" are key words in this step. The N.A. Basic Text defines "harm" as follows:

"One definition of harm is physical or mental damage. Another definition of harm is inflicting pain, suffering or loss. The damage may be caused by something that is said, done or left undone, and the harm resulting from these

will never be perfect, but we do recover. We do the best we can, always remembering who we are and where we came from.

We have asked our God to remove our defects by acting differently than our addiction would have us act. This active demonstration is a most powerful prayer. We believe we can become new people and act differently, but only a Power greater than us can change our nature. As we realize we can change only our actions, we become humble. A Higher Power can remove our defects and shortcomings, if we humbly ask through our actions and prayers.

Step Seven gives us the tools to artfully dislodge the wreckage of our past. In Step Eight, we blueprint a massive remodeling of our former faulty relationships, laying a firm foundation for our new clean way of life.

### STEP EIGHT

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

Step Eight begins the process of freeing ourselves from our past. When we made a searching and fearless moral inventory in Step Four, we were able to see and admit our faults. We also received the benefit of seeing where we had caused harm to other people. It was through this process that we began to become willing to start amending the harm we have done to people. We develop willingness as we realize we cannot live clean lives while carrying the guilt and fear of our past.

As we look at all the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual damage we have caused throughout our addiction, we see a need to rid ourselves of the pain, remorse and twisted relationships. We also see that our list must be rigorously thorough in order to receive the spiritual healing we need. Lack of thoroughness simply breeds more of the same. If we are haphazard, our lives again become so confused and entangled with half-measures that the oblivion of drugs seems the only way out. Along with this comes the harm which results from not being honest

with ourselves: Denial of an uncomfortable fact is soon compounded by other denials, until we find that we are denying the disease of addiction.

Denial is the most subtle symptom of our disease, and it can be arrested only through honesty and thoroughness. To avoid Step Eight because of our fear of embarrassment or false pride is to slip our necks willingly into the noose of addiction. The N.A. Basic Text says that, "Although we are not responsible for our disease, we are responsible for our recovery."<sup>9</sup> Step Eight is an important part of how we are responsible for our recovery. We cannot change what we did when we were using. But now that we are clean, we have the ability to take responsibility for our behavior which has harmed ourselves or others.

Some of us were so fearful when we reached this step that at first, we were unwilling to write a list. We were reminded, however, that taking the steps leads away from using drugs, and that ignoring the steps returns us to the painful addiction which brought us to N.A. In trusting our lives to the care of our Higher Power, we proceed as fearlessly as we are able.

We can draw from our previous experience in practicing the steps. Remember our first difficulty in Step Three--making a decision to turn our will and our lives over to a Higher Power? We soon discovered how to ask our Higher Power for the needed strength to carry us through this confusing period. We utilize the tools we learned in the previous steps and ask God to guide us in doing the Eighth Step.

Before we proceed, it is important that we understand the terms used in Step Eight. The words "harm" and "amend" are key words in this step. The N.A. Basic Text defines "harm" as follows:

"One definition of harm is physical or mental damage. Another definition of harm is inflicting pain, suffering or loss. The damage may be caused by something that is said, done or left undone, and the harm resulting from these

words or actions may be either intentional or unintentional. The degree of harm can range from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to inflicting bodily injury or even death."<sup>10</sup>

Another important word is "amend." In Step Eight, we are not merely listing people to whom we will say, "I'm sorry," in Step Nine. The word "amend" does not mean "to apologize." Webster's Dictionary defines the word "amend" thusly: "...to put right...to change or modify for the better: IMPROVE...to reform oneself..."<sup>11</sup> How many times during our active addiction did we wallow aloud in remorse after glimpsing the results of one of our destructive runs? How hollow were those words, "Man, I'm sorry. I really screwed up." None of those old apologies ever provided the change in attitude necessary to alter our sick behavior. By the next day, week or month, we were repeating the very same actions--frequently, to the same people, victims of our continuing insanity.

Step Eight means that we prepare to take the fundamental changes which have begun to happen within us in Steps One through Seven, and bring those alterations to the people from our past. We get ready to share with the victims of our old lifestyle our joyful release from addiction--addiction not only to drugs, but to abusive behavior. Our recovery is becoming evident not only in our bodies, but in our new way of living.

In Step Eight, we put down the names of all the persons we have harmed. Thinking about it doesn't get the list written: We need to sit down and *write it*. We may refer to our Fourth Step inventory, adding additional people we've harmed. We consider our friends, neighbors, family, and employers, especially people who were close to us. It is important that we see clearly when, where and how we have harmed these people. It is also important to see how we have caused harm to ourselves. In our Basic Text we read that "We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves."<sup>12</sup>



Some of us had difficulty seeing how we had harmed anyone other than ourselves in our addiction. But when we honestly look at our behavior, we begin to acknowledge the harm we did to others. Have we been, for instance, exploitive, distant or judgmental? Have we taken advantage of others or abused the trust which they placed in us? Have we deceived others or withheld affection? Have we turned our backs on those who were close to us? Were we partially or totally responsible for broken relationships with these people? We need to ask ourselves these questions in order to see that we can no longer blame situations for our behavior. It is true that our addictive personalities probably played a part in initiating our wrongdoings, but now that we are recovering, it is imperative that we make restitution for any harm we caused. By doing this, we are able to stop inflicting harm and begin to enjoy improved relationships with others.

In some cases, we are unable to determine if amends are due. Whenever we are unsure, we ask ourselves this question: "Have I wronged this person *in any way*?" If we are still unclear, we examine our feelings to see if fear or pride are clouding our judgment. When we have doubt about the necessity of an amend, it is wise to discuss the matter with our sponsor or another more experienced member of the Fellowship. The object of Step Eight is to continue clearing away the ruins of our addiction so that we can experience peace within. If we harbor doubts, we will not have peace. On our list, we are careful to include each person's name and indicate exactly what we did to cause them harm.

Once we have made our list of the persons we have harmed, we begin the process of becoming willing to make amends to them all. If we look at ourselves, we see that by just making the list, we are becoming willing to face these people. Just as the Second Step worked in our gradually coming to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, so too do we eventually become willing to make amends to those we have harmed.

Looking at the list each day helps us to become willing to make amends. Through experience, we have learned that we can bury our list in a drawer, but we cannot bury the guilt and remorse we feel. As we grow in honesty, we become more aware of the harm we have caused and develop the willingness to make amends.

Many of us pray for the willingness to continue. By the time we have come this far, we have made a deep commitment to recovery; this commitment includes continuing on with the remaining steps. We probably are unable to produce this willingness from our own resources, but we have established a relationship with a Higher Power who can provide the resources we lack. In praying to the God of our understanding, we reaffirm our decision to place our wills and lives into God's care. When we contemplate the wonderful miracle of our recovery and the infinite love of our Higher Power, we find that we need not be fearful. We can stand firm on our faith and look ahead to freedom. Willingness offers immediate benefits. Becoming willing to make amends to everyone we harmed is sometimes an end in itself. In some cases, if a person is dead or inaccessible, the very willingness to make the amend frees us from the guilt we carry. Knowing that we would make a situation right if we could, allows us to put the past in perspective. Even though we may not feel totally ready for Step Nine, we find our willingness grows until we can trust our Higher Power enough to go on.

#### STEP NINE

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

With the willingness we have gained through the Eighth Step, we are now ready to take action and make direct amends. In taking Step Nine, we approach those we have harmed and attempt to repair the damage we have caused. We find that we have to be as direct and thorough as possible; being vague or brushing over

unpleasant issues won't help us. In our addiction, we often denied and ignored the consequences of our actions. Now, in recovery, we take Step Nine so that we never have to fear our past again. With God's help, using the principle of this step, we can now begin to clear away the wreckage that has cluttered our lives and the lives of others.

As we begin our amends, we will need to have faith in the guidance of our Higher Power. Some of us sought guidance from our sponsors or other experienced N.A. members. It is recommended that we exercise prudent judgment in approaching all persons we have harmed. We proceed carefully, realizing that not everyone understands that addiction is an arrestible disease. Some people will be skeptical about our recovery, and be displeased about hearing from us once again. Others will notice a welcome change in us immediately. However, to a greater or lesser degree, all will probably have difficulty understanding the havoc we created. Whatever their initial response, we need to face these people and be willing to accept their reaction. We remember that we created our problems, and then wildly imposed them on the people we now approach. We must proceed quietly, faithfully and steadily ahead. Although we realize that some wrongs can never be fully corrected, we begin to take responsible action towards the well-being of ourselves and of others.

When approaching those we have hurt, we proceed on a spiritual basis. This does not mean that we thrust our newfound spirituality in the faces of these people. We do not use God as a scapegoat, assuming an attitude of piety which will somehow wipe away all past wrongs. Rather, we utilize the guidance and strength of our Higher Power in doing what we avoided for so long--standing face to face with the very people whom we had hoped to never see again. We explain our situation: That we are practicing certain principles to escape from addiction, and that to do so, we must make restitution for harm done. We are honest about

Looking at the list each day helps us to become willing to make amends. Through experience, we have learned that we can bury our list in a drawer, but we cannot bury the guilt and remorse we feel. As we grow in honesty, we become more aware of the harm we have caused and develop the willingness to make amends.

Many of us pray for the willingness to continue. By the time we have come this far, we have made a deep commitment to recovery; this commitment includes continuing on with the remaining steps. We probably are unable to produce this willingness from our own resources, but we have established a relationship with a Higher Power who can provide the resources we lack. In praying to the God of our understanding, we reaffirm our decision to place our wills and lives into God's care. When we contemplate the wonderful miracle of our recovery and the infinite love of our Higher Power, we find that we need not be fearful. We can stand firm on our faith and look ahead to freedom. Willingness offers immediate benefits. Becoming willing to make amends to everyone we harmed is sometimes an end in itself. In some cases, if a person is dead or inaccessible, the very willingness to make the amend frees us from the guilt we carry. Knowing that we would make a situation right if we could, allows us to put the past in perspective. Even though we may not feel totally ready for Step Nine, we find our willingness grows until we can trust our Higher Power enough to go on.

#### STEP NINE

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

With the willingness we have gained through the Eighth Step, we are now ready to take action and make direct amends. In taking Step Nine, we approach those we have harmed and attempt to repair the damage we have caused. We find that we have to be as direct and thorough as possible; being vague or brushing over

unpleasant issues won't help us. In our addiction, we often denied and ignored the consequences of our actions. Now, in recovery, we take Step Nine so that we never have to fear our past again. With God's help, using the principle of this step, we can now begin to clear away the wreckage that has cluttered our lives and the lives of others.

As we begin our amends, we will need to have faith in the guidance of our Higher Power. Some of us sought guidance from our sponsors or other experienced N.A. members. It is recommended that we exercise prudent judgment in approaching all persons we have harmed. We proceed carefully, realizing that not everyone understands that addiction is an arrestible disease. Some people will be skeptical about our recovery, and be displeased about hearing from us once again. Others will notice a welcome change in us immediately. However, to a greater or lesser degree, all will probably have difficulty understanding the havoc we created. Whatever their initial response, we need to face these people and be willing to accept their reaction. We remember that we created our problems, and then wildly imposed them on the people we now approach. We must proceed quietly, faithfully and steadily ahead. Although we realize that some wrongs can never be fully corrected, we begin to take responsible action towards the well-being of ourselves and of others.

When approaching those we have hurt, we proceed on a spiritual basis. This does not mean that we thrust our newfound spirituality in the faces of these people. We do not use God as a scapegoat, assuming an attitude of piety which will somehow wipe away all past wrongs. Rather, we utilize the guidance and strength of our Higher Power in doing what we avoided for so long--standing face to face with the very people whom we had hoped to never see again. We explain our situation: That we are practicing certain principles to escape from addiction, and that to do so, we must make restitution for harm done. We are honest about

our regrets, and explain that we are willing to do whatever is necessary in order to make the situation right.

Our amends may involve anything from an honest discussion to a bit of hard labor to paying back money owed. Whatever amends are necessary, we make ourselves available and ready to complete them. Let's consider some of the types of amends we will probably need to make.

Our families and loved ones usually top the list. It helps to remember that just by staying clean, we are making some amends to them. We should also consider that being too direct may hurt them more. This is why Step Nine states, "except when to do so would injure them or others." With our newfound honesty, it is still not our intention to bring up events and statements that would hurt, injure, or harm others. In some instances, making these people aware of situations they knew nothing about would cause unnecessary pain. We cannot inflict more harm on others simply to relieve our own guilt. We must be considerate of other people's feelings and lives, and avoid creating new harm or unnecessary pain in their lives today. We will therefore need to exercise the utmost caution in making amends to those closest to us. Some of us felt a need to make amends to people who had already died. This problem seemed insurmountable. We found a solution by talking with others. Some of us wrote letters, others went to the cemetery and still others did community service. The point is, we were willing to make the effort in making these amends.

Our employers, businesses, and co-workers also suffered as a result of our addiction. We obviously didn't work up to par or handle our responsibilities efficiently while we were using. Some of us robbed our employers of productivity and may have wrecklessly abused expense accounts and other privileges. Clearly, we used our employers for our own selfish pursuits, with little regard for resulting profits or losses.

Financial amends are often difficult for those of us who spent money foolishly. Child support and alimony payments may head a dismal parade which we lined up by years of drug abuse. Car payments, over-run credit cards and rental arrears are even more frequent features of our financial fiascos. Relentlessly, in addiction, we ignored our responsibilities and chose to buy more drugs. We cared about little else as long as we could maintain that constant high, and found many excuses to justify our behavior. We may have lied about payments "in the mail," or refused to answer the phone without a signal or code. Unfortunately, we may have allowed these problems to progress to such a point where our creditors found it necessary to repossess our belongings. It seems that we simply had to reach such levels of humiliation and embarrassment to see how dependent we were on drugs.

Some of us owed such astronomical debts that we froze at the aspect of facing and making amends to them. At this point, we are reminded that we need to be responsible for our past actions. Our addiction precipitated our actions, but it does not excuse them. We are also reminded that in the N.A. Program, we live just for today. Just as our recovery began one step at a time, we go on and take the first steps toward repaying past debts.

In paying back money we owe, we consider the ramifications. The words, "except when to do so would injure them or others," may refer to those who are financially dependent on us. We are careful not to hurt ourselves or our families financially, but we do need to make a reasonable start. We may need to budget our money very carefully in order to commence making financial restitution for our past wrongs. By informing creditors of our intentions to make good on our debts, we can arrange a payback system which won't threaten our existence. Some of us took several years to clear our debts, but the small amount we paid each month

added up, until one morning we awoke and realized that we had completed the payments.

Our experience has demonstrated that many of our creditors are willing to work with us once we exhibit a willingness and commitment to change our old ways. As long as we correct our past deficiencies and do our best to not repeat them, matters normally work out satisfactorily. We apologize for our outstanding obligations and pay them back on a mutually agreeable schedule. When requested, we return dishonored credit cards. At times, it may be worthwhile to hire an attorney or financial advisor who can help us adjust our budgets to accommodate our creditors' requests.

The question of legal matters often arises. Many of us have committed crimes of some nature, just by the fact of our illegal addiction. Our past crimes may vary from petty theft to felony charges, and we know that we are liable for them both legally and morally. Many of us feel misgivings when pondering the question of whether or not to turn ourselves in to the authorities. It is obvious that we have done wrong and need to repair the damage; it is also clear that avoiding amends will send us back to active addiction. However, when we compared the pains of addiction to the hardships of jail or prison, the distance between the two was not very comforting.

Once again, we emphasize that we are operating through the power of the Spirit in practicing the Twelve Steps. In this and all matters, we seek guidance from a Higher Power. We pray for the strength to continue on the right course, and ask for the willingness to do whatever is necessary--regardless of the consequences. We have found this attitude to be absolutely necessary, for to turn away from the principles of N.A. is to fall once again into the grip of our addiction.



Prudence must be the better part of valor, as countless N.A.'s will attest. After seeking guidance from our Higher Power, we listen carefully to the advice of experienced N.A. members. Often, we find it necessary to seek legal counsel. Turning these problems over to a professional, who is trained in the law, can provide great relief. And it is actually more humbling than "facing off" with an old enemy, because we must admit that we are not in a good position to run our own lives.

Ninth Step amends to members of the medical profession are another area which can be troublesome. For many of us, doctors represented just one thing: A fix. Returning to face physicians and nurses requires fervent prayer. Some physicians may be so horrified to think that they could have been abused by a seemingly needy patient that they refuse to hear us out. Perhaps they simply are unable to comprehend our tale of addictive horror and subsequent relief in recovery. Others will be glad that we are doing something positive about our addiction and wish us well.

We suggest talking with our sponsors or other experienced members before embarking on our medical amends. While we never flee from those we listed in our Eighth Step, we may again have to practice some of the humility which we began to absorb in Step Seven. In this case, the more humbling amend may be learning that we do not make all our amends in lock-step regimentation. It may be that the best way to make our medical amends will be to put ourselves at the disposal of a clean addict who has to undergo surgery or other serious medical procedure. We can do this by sharing our time and clean energy with that person, offering understanding and compassion for their pain as they abstain from mind or mood-altering medication. This may be a very appropriate way to make our medical amends. Remember again, that prayer and honest sharing with other

members will bring us the necessary direction we need to continue this vital aspect of our recovery.

If we have been thorough about the Ninth Step to the best of our ability, we will gain a clear conscience as a result. It is not important that we be forgiven, only that we be willing and straightforward in rectifying past wrongdoings. In recovery, we soon learn the distinction between right and wrong, and just how important it is to "come clean" with God and with ourselves.

Whatever excuses we may have used in the past, we find now that we must get honest and stop rationalizing our behavior. Like all of the Twelve Steps, Step Nine is for us and for our benefit. By practicing this step and making amends, we sever any remaining ties that could bring us guilt or remorse over our past. Many N.A.'s report that the Ninth Step is where they find true release from the past, and a real surge forward into a spiritual mode of living. Having inventoried our defects and having placed them in God's hands, we are able to become emotionally as well as physically clean. We approach our former enemies and feared ones with a spirituality which may emanate from us more visibly than we realize.

In most cases, the people we approach will be so surprised to see us alive and clean, that the shock value will reaffirm to us the depth of the first eight steps. We are almost always met with approval in our new style of living and thinking, and frequently are wished well as we leave these appointments.

In some cases, the damage we caused will have left scars too deep to fully heal. At such times, we keep utmost in mind that our primary goal in Step Nine is to rectify our errors to the best of our ability, freeing ourselves from the shackles of our past, and preparing us to serve God and the people about us more fully.

We will finally be freed of our past--free to live in the here and now without fear or guilt. Completion of Step Nine leaves us feeling good about who we are and where we are going. With the Ninth Step completed, our affairs are

now, like us, clean and in order. How do we keep them that way? Step Ten paves the way, utilizing the principles of all the steps we have taken up to this point. We are now ready to begin practicing the "maintenance steps."

### STEP TEN

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

By taking the first nine steps, we have humbly placed our past in God's hands. Our housekeeping is complete and our affairs are in order. Now, Step Ten lays the foundation to maintain a clean slate for a clean future; it provides the means by which we can tidy up after ourselves on a daily basis. It becomes an active part of our new way of life.

In order to reap the benefits of staying clean, it is necessary to take continual inventories of ourselves. Hidden fears and needs are driving forces with the potential to throw us into relapse. Although we may not always recognize fears or anger, they still influence our lives. Addicts suffer from the problem of addiction which is deeper than the symptoms of drug abuse. Abstinence and recovery are attained only through living by spiritual principles. We therefore apply Step Ten and all the steps to every area of our lives.

There is no area the disease does not affect. In fact, fear is frequently present in every aspect of our lives. It is also important to examine areas where we grow angry or our beliefs are tested. The areas we don't want to question are usually those which most need to be examined. From our experience, we conclude that the principles of the program can and must be practiced continuously. The process of taking inventory of ourselves is essential. As addicts, we are prone to fear, anger, vanity, complacency, and doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. These character defects can drive us into a place where we fear we cannot remain clean.

now, like us, clean and in order. How do we keep them that way? Step Ten paves the way, utilizing the principles of all the steps we have taken up to this point. We are now ready to begin practicing the "maintenance steps."

### STEP TEN

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

By taking the first nine steps, we have humbly placed our past in God's hands. Our housekeeping is complete and our affairs are in order. Now, Step Ten lays the foundation to maintain a clean slate for a clean future; it provides the means by which we can tidy up after ourselves on a daily basis. It becomes an active part of our new way of life.

In order to reap the benefits of staying clean, it is necessary to take continual inventories of ourselves. Hidden fears and needs are driving forces with the potential to throw us into relapse. Although we may not always recognize fears or anger, they still influence our lives. Addicts suffer from the problem of addiction which is deeper than the symptoms of drug abuse. Abstinence and recovery are attained only through living by spiritual principles. We therefore apply Step Ten and all the steps to every area of our lives.

There is no area the disease does not affect. In fact, fear is frequently present in every aspect of our lives. It is also important to examine areas where we grow angry or our beliefs are tested. The areas we don't want to question are usually those which most need to be examined. From our experience, we conclude that the principles of the program can and must be practiced continuously. The process of taking inventory of ourselves is essential. As addicts, we are prone to fear, anger, vanity, complacency, and doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. These character defects can drive us into a place where we fear we cannot remain clean.

members will bring us the necessary direction we need to continue this vital aspect of our recovery.

If we have been thorough about the Ninth Step to the best of our ability, we will gain a clear conscience as a result. It is not important that we be forgiven, only that we be willing and straightforward in rectifying past wrongdoings. In recovery, we soon learn the distinction between right and wrong, and just how important it is to "come clean" with God and with ourselves.

Whatever excuses we may have used in the past, we find now that we must get honest and stop rationalizing our behavior. Like all of the Twelve Steps, Step Nine is for us and for our benefit. By practicing this step and making amends, we sever any remaining ties that could bring us guilt or remorse over our past. Many N.A.'s report that the Ninth Step is where they find true release from the past, and a real surge forward into a spiritual mode of living. Having inventoried our defects and having placed them in God's hands, we are able to become emotionally as well as physically clean. We approach our former enemies and feared ones with a spirituality which may emanate from us more visibly than we realize.

In most cases, the people we approach will be so surprised to see us alive and clean, that the shock value will reaffirm to us the depth of the first eight steps. We are almost always met with approval in our new style of living and thinking, and frequently are wished well as we leave these appointments.

In some cases, the damage we caused will have left scars too deep to fully heal. At such times, we keep utmost in mind that our primary goal in Step Nine is to rectify our errors to the best of our ability, freeing ourselves from the shackles of our past, and preparing us to serve God and the people about us more fully.

We will finally be freed of our past--free to live in the here and now without fear or guilt. Completion of Step Nine leaves us feeling good about who we are and where we are going. With the Ninth Step completed, our affairs are

Since we want to stay clean and recover, we do what the N.A. Program suggests. It is the only way we know for addicts such as ourselves to change. For us, we must change or die. We learn to accept others because we have learned that resentments and intolerance can kill us. Acceptance through practicing the N.A. way of life is a big change from the denial and hostility of our past. As time goes by, we grow in spiritual health. Our old ways of selfishness and fear are gradually replaced with love for ourselves and other people both in and out of the N.A. Fellowship. Again, the main event is staying clean; just for today, we don't use drugs.

Why do we continue to take personal inventory? Is it necessary to write the inventory, or can it be done verbally or mentally? How often should we do it? These are some of the questions frequently asked by members approaching Step Ten.

The necessity of the Tenth Step is in maintaining a fit spiritual condition. We know that it is only through contact with a Power greater than ourselves that we have been given recovery and a new life.

Our experience has shown that there are only four things which will lead us back to using. These are: guilt, fear, self-centeredness and resentment. All other defects are simply manifestations of these four. It is very easy for recovering addicts to slip back into the distorted thinking of addiction and fall prey to one or more of these. By practicing Step Ten regularly, we are alerted to the presence of these shortcomings, and can then take appropriate action to remove them. It is for this reason that sponsors usually recommend taking personal inventory on a daily basis. It is also recommended that, at least in the beginning, we do the inventory on paper. This is because it is easier to recognize and admit our faults when we write them. In this way, we identify and correct inappropriate attitudes and actions before they have become firmly entrenched patterns.

When we sit down to write, we carefully review the events of the day. We list the things we felt good about as well as those which distressed us. Looking at our assets is just as important as looking at the defects because it helps us see where we have made progress, and builds self-esteem.

Often, we include in our continuing inventories a "gratitude list." Someone once said that it is impossible to be unhappy and grateful at the same time. If we dwell upon resentment or upset in our lives, we begin to feel and act in disharmony with our surroundings. Recognizing blessings for which we are grateful automatically gives us a step towards spiritual fitness and freedom from guilt and self-centered fear.

The Tenth Step is similar to the Fourth Step except that it is usually shorter and we admit our wrongs right away. If we have negative feelings about the actions or attitudes of ourselves or others, we use the same process as in Step Four. We try to see where we were wrong, and consider how we can act differently should the situation occur again. We pay special attention to see if we are guilty, fearful, resentful or self-centered, for we know that emotions like these will certainly kill us.

We ask ourselves some of these questions: "Am I doing my best? Am I being honest? Am I still growing, or am I slipping back into the old fears and resentments?" It is the purpose of the Tenth Step to help us answer these and similar questions. Those defects of character which we discovered in our Fourth Step are probably deeply ingrained in us. Now, we check for the surfacing of defects by doing Step Ten regularly.

When we have identified our wrongs, we act quickly. Step Ten tells us that when we are wrong, we should "promptly admit it." Our experience with Step Nine taught us that admitting our wrongs and making amends when necessary removes the guilt we feel. It also conditions us on an emotional level to allow change to

occur. When similar situations arise in the future, we will find ourselves able to act differently than before.

Prompt admission of our wrongs, whether they have been intentional or not, has an immense value. We are freed from developing unnecessary problems. The results of continuing our personal inventory are shown as we become more patient and tolerant human beings. We become more willing to give rather than take from life, and more able to love our fellow human beings.

Frequently, in our Tenth Step, we identify fear at the root of destructive actions and thoughts. Our experience with previous steps has shown us repeatedly that the remedy to fear is faith. When we identify fear in ourselves, we treat it as we would any other character defect--we humbly ask God to remove it. By turning the fear over to our Higher Power, we demonstrate our faith and take action for the removal of fear. Secure in the knowledge of God's power in our lives, we carry on, trusting that all will be well.

Another familiar trait discovered often through personal inventory is self-centeredness. This characteristic seems to typify addicts more than any other. However, by the time we reach Step Ten, we no doubt realize how desperately we need to be rid of self-centered, self-seeking motives. Self-centeredness leaves no room for God's will and leads only to grief and active addiction. When we identify self-centered motives underlying our actions or feelings, we return to Step Seven immediately and ask humbly to have this defect removed. Once we have asked, we must proceed confidently in the direction of God's will. We are sometimes asked to do things we'd rather not do, but we quiet our self-centeredness by forging ahead, trying as best we can to act unselfishly and be of service to our Higher Power.

Resentment is another problem which prevents us from living in the present and shackles us to the past. Because we are human, we all experience anger at



times. However, when we hold onto and relish anger, it turns into resentment which seethes within us. Very soon, we find resentment affecting our present as well as our past. If we are to experience ongoing recovery through spiritual growth, we must learn to forgive and forget the wrongs others have done to us.

There are many occurrences in life which seem unfair to us. We are sometimes unjustly blamed, misunderstood or judged. We may feel disappointed that life has not offered us the opportunities we desired. In situations such as these, it is understandable to feel anger. However, we cannot afford to harbor anger and resentment within us, for it leads back to death and destruction through active addiction.

There are times, too, when we feel angry or resentful towards ourselves. Perhaps we failed at something or did not honestly try our best. We all have human failings and we sometimes feel ashamed of our shortcomings. However, we dare not let this shame turn into false pride because it will cause resentment towards ourselves. Instead, we treat ourselves with compassion, and forgiveness just as we know God does. If God forgives us for our failings, shouldn't we also follow this example and forgive ourselves? Practicing the art of forgiveness provides spiritual healing and brings us closer to a Power greater than ourselves. It also gives us greater understanding and compassion which we can apply to our dealings with other people. When we feel we have been wronged, we try to forgive the other party, knowing that we have been forgiven for our wrongs.

There is value in relating a daily inventory verbally to another person. We have found a sponsor or spiritual advisor to be of great assistance when we need guidance. Often, when sharing with this person, we continue to be reminded that we are not alone in our efforts to achieve ongoing recovery.

We have discussed the necessity of taking a continued inventory. Quick inventories, taken as needed, can also bring positive results. Inventories of this

type are targeted at daily events and situations which seem to throw us off balance. Practicing the Tenth Step, which emphasizes examining ourselves, prevents an accumulation of our shortcomings. When problems arise, we have a spotcheck process by which we can maintain balance. We have the tools we need to get through difficult times.

This highlights the preventative aspect of the Tenth Step. We can ask ourselves as we go through the day and especially when we become upset or uncomfortable, "Am I slipping into an old pattern, fear or resentment? Am I too tired or too hungry? Is my thinking getting cloudy? Am I displacing my anger toward one person, against someone else who has nothing to do with my present feelings? Am I taking myself too seriously? Am I isolating from the Fellowship?"

When these situations arise, we now have a process by which we can stay clean both emotionally and physically. We have the tools we need to get through any situation and stay clean. We review our daily necessities; getting food when hungry, resting when tired, sharing with another member or still-suffering addict, attending a meeting when we are angry, lonely or obsessed with our problems. We can call another clean N.A. member before we use drugs, and we can begin to get the kind of help we really need--the help of each other while we learn how to help ourselves with the principles of this program. The tools we have been given in N.A. give us a way of avoiding grief before we bring it on ourselves or others. The steps and other tools of N.A. are a sort of vaccination against insanity--provided that we use them on a continuing basis.

Rigorous honesty is the most important tool we have in learning how to cope with the past and live in the present. Although honesty at first seems difficult to practice, it is most rewarding. We practice honesty under all conditions because it is the antidote to our diseased thinking. When we are honest

we lose the fear of being cornered. Our lack of fear and our new-found faith serve as a firm foundation for courage in the future.

Being honest does not come naturally for addicts, and we do not expect to be totally honest overnight. It is a gradual process which weaves its way into our patterns of daily living and thinking. Daily inventories are the most effective tools for chipping away at long-term habits of dishonest thinking.

The situations that seem the hardest in maintaining our honesty have produced the most rewarding results. When we are honest in really difficult situations, the feelings of happiness and serenity are overwhelming.

Many of us have never before experienced honesty on a deep level because we covered up our feelings early in life by fantasizing or otherwise escaping, and then later by using. We must learn to get to the bottom of each emotion we have and face it, so that we can discover and become our true selves. Our lives are so much simpler when we know who we really are.

"Cash register honesty" is a good beginning in developing self-esteem. Self-esteem is based on facing and living by the truth. When we honestly evaluate what we really have, we can learn to appreciate it. We can carry the gifts of recovery with us everywhere. We honestly chalk up our achievements and put our house in order, giving ourselves room to grow. We begin to straighten out our messes, and in doing so, we gain both strength and a better knowledge of ourselves.

The effectiveness of an inventory depends on our willingness to continuously apply it. The word "continued" is a key word in Step Ten; this is an ongoing process.

We look at our actions during the day and we practice the art of looking at where we were wrong, considering what we could have done differently, and the amends we need to make. We find it helpful to admit to another human being where we were wrong.

Our continuous application of the principles of Step Ten will benefit us richly through an accumulation of serenity. The effect is a lessening of self-will, which provides more room for spiritual growth. We see it as a beginning toward becoming responsive to spiritual principles.

Continuing the inventory process in each phase of recovery helps us monitor ourselves. It gives us a way to deal with any grief we bring upon ourselves or others. It helps create stability in our lives because we learn to pay attention to the little things so they don't get blown out of proportion or built up to a relapse.

Now that we are clean, we have recognized the advantage of getting our affairs in order. We can recognize ourselves as the heart of the problem. Negativity has been our way for many years, and we are not able to change into saints. Any thought that we are going to be perfect has to be smashed. We must remain teachable if we are going to remain clean. We do not entertain the thought of ever achieving perfection. However, we must strive for stability in our lives so that we can live happily and be at peace with ourselves.

It will become more evident as we go forward that it is pointless to become angry or to get hurt by people who, like us, may be suffering from the pains of growing and life.

By practicing a personal inventory, we assure ourselves a measure of serenity and peace of mind. It is at times such as these that we know the Twelve Steps have truly worked to change us into happier and more loving individuals. We have achieved a regular rhythm of inventory. Now we are prepared to keenly hone our new awareness in on God's specific plans for us. We seek that guidance through the practice of Step Eleven.

## STEP ELEVEN

*"We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."*

In the Eleventh Step, the program of recovery that we've been practicing in order to stay away from drugs suddenly begins to come alive and to have more meaning. The whole purpose of Step Eleven is to improve our conscious contact with the God of our own understanding. There are many ways of doing this. By this time we are probably pretty familiar with prayer. Most of us began praying immediately upon beginning the N.A. Program.

The work of the preceding steps clears the way for this step. We find ourselves changing as we continue to practice our program, with new reality of ourselves constantly being disclosed. To maintain our recovery on a daily basis, we use the principle on which Step Eleven is based: The practice of prayer and meditation.

God has a wonderful plan for each of us which will bring us more happiness, fulfillment and joy than anything we can conceive. The more we improve our conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation, the more often we pause when doubtful and say, "God, I don't know what to do. Please show me which way to go." When we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, even just once in a while, and pray for guidance, really meaning it, we begin to find peace. We begin to feel a calm joy. We begin to experience an awareness and an empathy with other people that would never be possible under the influence of drugs.

The Eleventh Step has come to be an attitude of always looking for God's will for us in the circumstances of our lives. Instead of giving a lot of thought to why things happen to us, or what we could do differently, we now ask to be shown what the lesson is. In the course of our daily lives, we tend to forget to keep

things simple, and we build our problems into unmovable mountains. Patience is not one of our strong points. We want everything settled yesterday, and to our satisfaction. We are experts at making ourselves so frustrated that we lose perspective completely. Using the Eleventh Step in our daily lives gives us an inner strength to deal with the problems we face.

One way to develop our conscious contact with God is to practice accepting conditions as they are, and trust that they will improve. We strive to practice prayer and meditation several times a day, until these become a routine part of our lives. In this way, we begin to face life on life's terms, and that gives us the peace we need and want to live clean successfully.

As a result, we begin to have a continuing conscious contact with a personal God of our understanding. We enjoy an increasing assurance of God's will for us and the spiritual power necessary to effectively carry out that will.

There are many forms of prayer to seek the guidance and direction of God's will for us. We strive to accept God's power with humility, surrender, and gratitude. We recognize the selfishness and fear in our thoughts, motives, and actions, and appeal to God for help. Seeking God is a personal experience.

When should we pray? Most of us have no trouble praying when we are fearful or worried. But what about when we are content and happy? The Eleventh Step talks about improving our conscious contact with the God of our own understanding. In order to improve our relationship with God, we seek contact in good times as well as bad.

In the beginning of the day, most of us ask God, "Grant me the honesty, open-mindedness and willingness to seek and accept Your will, and the power to carry that out." As prayer and meditation are applied repeatedly, great changes begin to happen. A peace and serenity unlike any we have ever known begins to take hold.

Spontaneous prayer throughout the day is just as important as beginning and ending each day with prayer. There are many times we find ourselves praying. It feels good, because it brings us peace and restores our confidence and strength. It helps us to live a life of faith and keeps us from the despair of fear and distrust.

We can never pray too much. Praying relieves us of the need to worry over problems and control outcomes. Praying reassures us because we are acting on our belief in a Power greater than ourselves. We have found that prayer, coupled with meditation, is one of the most powerful tools we have.

We do not pretend to be able to tell anyone how, when, or where to pray. There are some members whose way of life suggests that many of their actions and even their attitudes are a form of prayer. We're referring to their ability to give of themselves and their attitude of being grateful. Many of us have sought more through prayer than we did meditation, until we have learned the practice of meditation.

Many times in asking for the power to carry out God's will, we realize we have already been given the resources--that we simply have to put them to use. If we consistently use the gifts and abilities God has given us, we will be amazed at the things we are able to accomplish. If we find ourselves blocked, we ask our Higher Power to give us the courage and strength to go on.

If we ask in earnest, and make an effort to utilize the way of life that we learn in Narcotics Anonymous, we will receive guidance in our endeavors. Whether or not we act on the guidance is up to us; but as always, once we live the program, we have a choice. We are not perfect, and can and will make errors. But by making errors, we learn to rely on our Higher Power's guidance, and work just that much more diligently to learn from our experiences, and accept ourselves more.

That may be just what we need that day to keep clean, and that is why we are here, living this way of life.

Basically what prayer and meditation means is a communication. Our experiences with meditation have been beneficial in the outcome, as we have been rescued from serious lapses in good judgment by simply asking for a second and divine opinion. The Eleventh Step is, after accepting our powerlessness and seeking and finding a Power greater than ourselves, an active utilization of that Power in our lives. The working of this step can open up lines of communication to our Higher Power in ways we didn't think possible.

How do we meditate? There are many different forms of meditation. The important thing is to find a system that works for you. The purpose of meditation is to quiet the mind and rejuvenate the spirit. When we become open and receptive to the Higher Power, or voice within, we find our conscious contact is improved. Meditation is active listening.

The quality of our meditation is in direct proportion to the amount of effort put forth. Utilizing quiet time in whatever method we choose, we learn to journey to that place inside where we can listen to the whispering of spiritual wisdom. This brings us the peace and comfort we need to go on with faith and hope. We all have the capacity for meditation; the key is to make the time and the willingness to allow it to happen.

Some members sit or lie quietly and concentrate on listening to environmental noises, or to their heartbeat. Some members focus on phrases from the N.A. literature or prayers, allowing the deepest meaning of each phrase to penetrate their consciousness.

There is no right or wrong way to meditate, and no one method is necessarily better than another. Each person must experiment and discover the method(s) which work best for him/her. We are all different in some ways and our



meditations will vary, just as our conception of a Power greater than ourselves varies.

When we utilize the process of prayer and meditation on a regular basis, we find a new relationship with our Higher Power. Oftentimes, we experience surges of faith accompanied by courage and strength to undertake whatever tasks are put before us. We feel a new sense of calmness deep within which allows us to face adversity and serenity. Although some of us may have thoughts of using, these pass through our minds quickly.

Our commitment to abstinence and the Twelve Step way of life becomes strengthened as our conscious contact improves. No longer do we concern ourselves with self-centered wants and desires, because instinctively we know that we have truly been given a new life. Step Eleven is our final preparation for carrying the message of Narcotics Anonymous to other addicts on an ongoing basis. We are ready to begin Step Twelve.

#### STEP TWELVE

*"Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."*

The steps are a path to a Higher Power. The Twelfth Step is the one that opens us up to living. The steps seem to hold many answers for us that we can use. In living these steps, we first begin to let go of character defects. With the help of a Higher Power, we begin to lose the fear of facing ourselves and of facing other people. Eventually, when we sincerely use this program of action in our daily lives, we became able to face our Higher Power, ourselves, and our loved ones. We develop a solid base from which to work. This means that we can go anywhere and do anything, with complete assurance that we can handle whatever we have at hand. With this kind of attitude, we are able to be of help to the addict who still suffers, and have a real basis for living and enjoying life.

meditations will vary, just as our conception of a Power greater than ourselves varies.

When we utilize the process of prayer and meditation on a regular basis, we find a new relationship with our Higher Power. Oftentimes, we experience surges of faith accompanied by courage and strength to undertake whatever tasks are put before us. We feel a new sense of calmness deep within which allows us to face adversity and serenity. Although some of us may have thoughts of using, these pass through our minds quickly.

Our commitment to abstinence and the Twelve Step way of life becomes strengthened as our conscious contact improves. No longer do we concern ourselves with self-centered wants and desires, because instinctively we know that we have truly been given a new life. Step Eleven is our final preparation for carrying the message of Narcotics Anonymous to other addicts on an ongoing basis. We are ready to begin Step Twelve.

#### STEP TWELVE

*"Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."*

The steps are a path to a Higher Power. The Twelfth Step is the one that opens us up to living. The steps seem to hold many answers for us that we can use. In living these steps, we first begin to let go of character defects. With the help of a Higher Power, we begin to lose the fear of facing ourselves and of facing other people. Eventually, when we sincerely use this program of action in our daily lives, we became able to face our Higher Power, ourselves, and our loved ones. We develop a solid base from which to work. This means that we can go anywhere and do anything, with complete assurance that we can handle whatever we have at hand. With this kind of attitude, we are able to be of help to the addict who still suffers, and have a real basis for living and enjoying life.

The first part of the Twelfth Step describes a process, a spiritual awakening that is the result of living the preceding eleven steps. Most of our efforts in practicing the steps has been a process. In the Second Step, we eventually came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. We who were hopeless had found hope. In time, we became willing to make amends to those we had harmed, and found freedom as a result. We went through a process and grew. Elements of our spiritual awakening include help, gratitude, faith, humility and freedom from addiction.

The discovery of a Power greater than ourselves sometimes comes quickly, sometimes slowly. Some of us have been awakened spiritually with a jolt or surge of that feeling of the presence of a Power greater than ourselves. Others have shared a slow, gentle reviving of spiritual awareness. In any case, in one way or another, we have all come to believe in a spiritual energy.

The idea of a spiritual awakening may seem like nonsense to a newcomer, but it is a most profound promise. Most of us come to the program full of resistance, defiance and an inner conviction that there is no way we can really become spiritual. We were never ones for accepting things on blind faith. However, those who preceded us developed a spiritual way of life and accompanying peace of mind that we have since found. Through this step, life takes on a new meaning, a new joy and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile. In time, we have been guided to a new life and place in the world and in our hearts.

Usually, by the time we achieve this state of mind, no one has to tell us to share our new life with the still-suffering addict; we are more than eager to help that person, giving away that which has been given to us. All we have is our experience, strength, and hope. One of the most spiritual acts we can do is to

share what only we as recovering addicts can offer the still-suffering addict: ourselves.

The most obvious way in which we carry the message is by staying clean with the help of God and the N.A. Program. Our new way of life speaks for itself. We gradually come alive as we regain our physical health and continue to recover.

There are many other ways in which we carry the N.A. message. Whenever we talk to someone about the steps of the program, we do it as one friend sharing personal experience with another. We try to avoid the arrogance of self-deception. We avoid pushing any ideas on anyone, but we do suggest strongly that addicts make an honest attempt to give themselves a break. We don't set ourselves up as God. We share our experience because that's all we have. We tell what happened and how we got clean in the Fellowship. We share that our problem was not stopping, but staying stopped. We found that in N.A. just for today, we never have to use again. At this point, we take our newcomers to a meeting. We are simply an instrument of God's will in action.

We can all start returning gifts to our Fellowship by volunteering to empty ashtrays and clean up after meetings. Some of us feel so good yet so guilty about being accepted from the very start that we take great joy in helping out in even such basic, but necessary ways. After a period of clean time, many people enjoy taking on other group service commitments.

Doing the Twelfth Step is putting love and commitment into action. There is no drug that can give us the tremendous feeling of watching someone choose the path of freedom from addiction.

Before we share with someone, we may say, "God, please help me." To insure our own recovery, we should never go on a Twelve Step call by ourselves. Active addiction is something we should never face alone. Whenever possible, a clean N.A. member with experience working the steps should be included.

Although any addict can help another addict, the true message of N.A. recovery can be carried only by those who have completed the first eleven steps. Both people gain from a Twelfth Step experience.

Someone said once that he had never made an unsuccessful Twelve Step call. This sounds arrogant until we consider what "success" really means. Regardless of the outcome, we have planted the seed of recovery. We bear in mind what our own limitations are and make no expectations for the other person to do or be anything. In the course of carrying the message, each of us comes to our own understanding of the Twelfth Step. If we have difficulties, we trust our groups and the principles of the program to guide us.

If there is someone in our family who we think needs help, we get a recovering addict who is not so emotionally involved as we are to talk to them. Our feelings would probably get in the way and we could appear angry, or form resentments. We let someone else talk to them. The family member, not understanding that our past is now in God's hands, is likely to think that we are still judging them for some misdeed of years gone by. Family problems helped many of us rationalize our own thinking and using in our old way of life. We must remember that a family member who appears ready for Twelve Stepping may still view us as in the past. Inviting an unrelated addict to share on such a basis is also a part of the continuing humility we get to help us keep growing close to our Higher Power. "I can't carry the message to everyone," is pride-shattering to admit. This later evolves into a statement of strength, as we learn to focus our energies on the people and Twelfth Step activities most suited to our God-given talents.

The Twelfth Step also states that we "practice these principles in all our affairs." Incorporating the principles of all the steps into a spontaneous way of living, personal to us, is a primary consideration of Step Twelve. Honesty,

responsibility, service, willingness to change and love grow in our lives on a daily basis.

We set aside our old ideas, so that we can become acquainted with the new ideas that lead to a new way of life. We believe that the old self-destruction and self-centeredness can only be replaced with spiritual principles. We must take the individual actions and spiritual tools that we have learned from the continuing study and application of the steps. Praying for guidance, making choices, and increasing acceptance of the world as it is, can incorporate the skills and growth of many different and seemingly unrelated steps. Our growth is essential to developing a new life which is workable, comfortable and serene.

The last part of the Twelfth Step means to live the steps in our everyday lives. We find that by doing this we are able to live, work, and handle all the situations in the real world outside of N.A. We have found that by doing the steps in order, we are able to apply them to our daily affairs. If we try to practice these principles on a continual basis, we never have to use drugs again. We admit our weaknesses, ask for help, survey our errors, discard our defects, make amends and ask for continued guidance in situations. At first we do this painstakingly. As we integrate these principles into our daily thoughts and actions, we find the quality of our lives enriched beyond our wildest fantasies. This is reaping what we sow. The old habit of using drugs is replaced by the new habit of not using, trusting in the God of our understanding, and helping others to get and stay clean.

As a result of our spiritual awakening, a transformation takes place within us. We find a new source of strength which we can use. Now we can realistically begin to practice spiritual principles in our daily affairs. We reach the end of isolation of self. Our fear turns into faith. God becomes a source of nurturance, and we seek our Higher Power rather than condemnation. Self-esteem supplants our poor self-image. We learn to appreciate and develop the talents which God has

given us. We're willing to admit when we are wrong. We become willing to strive for self-improvement and as a result, take responsibility for our actions. We learn how to love ourselves and others. We see ourselves more honestly and in a more realistic light, rather than wasting our time on delusions and fantasies. We learn to take better care of our health. We forgive ourselves for our imperfections, developing a more balanced view of ourselves. We become more open-minded towards other people's opinions, rather than worrying about what people think of us.

As we learn to be more truthful, others come to respect us for who we are. We can respect and love others who are close to us without obsessively seeking their approval. We learn how to follow through on commitments. We become responsible members of our communities. The more we practice these principles in our daily lives, the more positive results we will find happening each day. The most wonderful feeling we can know is that of being a part of humanity, after our many years of isolation. A surge of well-being rises within us, assuring us that we are right where we're supposed to be.

These Twelve Steps form the basis of our recovery and direct us toward a substantial change in our character structure. In the final analysis, it is this change in our personality that allows us to live as more effective people. Our purpose as recovering addicts is to grow along spiritual lines: To live in harmony with the God of our understanding, with ourselves, and with others. Steps One, Two and Three get us into the spiritual life; Steps Four and Five get us in touch with ourselves; Steps Six and Seven promote in us the desire to do away with the twisted, unhealthy parts of us; Steps Eight and Nine direct us toward rectifying what we can; Step Ten encourages us to maintain our progress with a vigilant eye on ourselves and our behavior; and Steps Eleven and Twelve draw us close to our two main outside supports: Our Higher Power and one another.

What we have today is the wonderful reality of our recovery and all that this means to us. Each day we live clean awakens us to the freedom we had all along but failed to realize. We succeed now, where we had known only failure before. Many of our dreams, forgotten and obscured by our addiction, return and help us regain the sense of wonder and excitement at the miracle of living clean. A great many things become possible for us. Since we live clean and grow, we are able to take our place in the world. "The Steps do not end here: They are a new beginning."



REFERENCE NOTES

1. From *Narcotics Anonymous* (p.18), 1984, Van Nuys, CA: World Service Office, Inc. Copyright 1982 by WSO Inc., Inc. Reprinted by permission.
2. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 18)
3. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 18)
4. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 21)
5. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 25)
6. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 28)
7. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 32)
8. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 33)
9. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 13)
10. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 34)
11. Woolf, H.B. (Ed.)(p. 36),(1977) *New Collegiate Dictionary. A Merriam Webster (R)*. Springfield, Mass: G. & C. Merriam Co.
12. *Narcotics Anonymous* (p. 11)

World Service Conference  
Literature Committee  
Unapproved Literature  
for Review and Input

ISBN 1-55776-009-8