

## **The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous®**

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. 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.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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# MEMORANDUM

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DATE: December 11, 1996  
TO: RLC's and ALC's and Conference Participants  
FROM: Jorge Blanco, WSC Literture Chairperson  
RE: Review and Input for the *Step Working Guides* 1-4

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We are please to announce the review and input drafts of the *Step Working Guides* (One through Four) are enclosed in this packet. This is a time many of us have been patiently waiting for. This work has been dervied from initial input of more than 36 regions and areas over the last nine years. Here is some additional information about the format of this guide: there will be an introduction at the beginning of the guide which will discuss working with a sponsor and that this is not the only way to work the steps. We realize that this guide will not represent all the diversity that exists within our fellowship but we hope that with your participation it will have the flavor of Narcotics Anonymous. It is exciting to know that your participation will help us complete the *Step Working Guides* to assist our members with their many journeys through the Twelve Steps. We have found that a conceptual review of the steps is more useful than a line by line review. We have provided you with questions that the WSCLC used when going through the material. Here are some points that you may find helpful in your review.

## **Narrative:**

- Review the narrative for description and "invitation" to the reader.
- Does the narrative adequately introduce the concept and prompt thought towards self examination?

## **Concepts**

- Do the drafts invite the reader to identify the concepts that are inherent in each step?
- Are these drafts missing any important concepts?

## **Questions**

- Do the questions complement the paragraph they follow?
- Do any of the questions need to be rewritten?
- Is the section missing any important questions?

## **Closing**

After reading the drafts, you might want to place yourself in the postion of a sponsor and ask "would I use these drafts with someone I sponsor?", or from the position of a sponsee "would I know what I was suppose to get from working each step?" You may find other items that will need to be addressed please mark them clearly. We have enclosed a Review and Input Form to be used for all your suggestions and comments. Please feel free to make copies of this form or use this format when typing/writing your comments. We have included line numbers only to assist you in your review please send conceptual review not a line by line input or a grammatical copy edit. Please note that the deadline for this input is February 1, 1997. Thank you for your participation in advance and we are looking forward to your input.

## Timeline for Step Working Guides

*Please remember input that doesn't make it in by the deadline may or may not be considered or included in the process.*

### **September 6-8, 1996 Core Group Meeting**

Drafting of Steps 1-4

### **Full Report to the Fellowship**

Project plan with timeline.

### **October 18, 1996 Friday Mailing**

Mailing of completed first draft of Steps 1-4 to the whole WSCLC.

### **November 15-17, 1996 WSCLC Meeting**

Review of Steps 1-4 by the whole WSCLC

Fine tune any decisions and any direction to core group and review process

### **December 13, 1996 Friday Fellowship Mailing**

Mailing of review and input drafts of Steps 1-4 to the fellowship with cover letter and instructions for review and input with February 1st deadline.

### **January 17-19, 1997 Core Group Meeting**

Drafting Steps 5-8

### **February 1, 1997 Fellowship Deadline for Review and Input**

Deadline review & input from fellowship on Steps 1-4

### **February 21, 1997 WSCLC Mailing**

Mailing of fellowship review and input of Steps 1-4 and 1st draft of 5-8

### **March 21-23, 1997 WSCLC Meeting**

Full WSCLC meeting working on first draft of Steps 5-8

Factoring input on 2nd draft of Steps 1-4

### **April 4, 1997 Fellowship Mailing**

Mailing of drafts 5-8 to the fellowship with cover letter for direction for review and input with June 1st deadline

### **May '97 Core Group Meeting**

1st draft of Steps 9-12 and the Introduction

### **June 1, 1997 Deadline Fellowship Review and Input**

Fellowship review and input on Steps 5-8

### **June 17, 1997 WSCLC Mailing**

Master packet of review and input for Steps 5-8

<b>Timeline for Step Working Guides (continued)</b>
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**July '97 WSCLC Meeting**

Full WSCLC meeting Steps 9-12 1st draft and,  
working on a 2nd draft of Steps 5-8

Finalizing Steps 1-4

**August 1, 1997 Mailing to Fellowship**

Review and input of Steps 9-12 and the Introduction with cover letter and instructions

**September 15, 1997 Deadline Fellowship Review and Input**

Fellowship review and input of Steps 9-12

**September 27, 1995 WSCLC Mailing**

Master packet of review and input for Steps 9-12

**October '97 WSCLC Meeting**

Full WSCLC meeting finalize Steps 5-8 and 9-12

Approval of final form

**December 1, 1997 CAR**

Final approval form completed for inclusion in *CAR* '97

**WSC '98 Conference Approved!!**

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR LIT REVIEW MEETINGS

Some suggestions might help:

- Set a shorter meeting time versus longer (3-4 hrs vs. 6-8 hrs) Folks will come to meetings that don't unduly intrude on their personal time off.
- Have everything ready before hand--copies of material for all participants (paper, pencils, etc.)
- Before beginning, decide upon and explain your objectives for this specific meeting, for example to read the piece in mind aloud, discuss the questions to be asked, allow everyone to speak their perspective
- Choose meeting date and times with care. Folks prefer shorter focused meetings versus free-form all day or night sessions. If in your local committee everyone goes skiing every Saturday morning, then you wouldn't want to schedule your meeting at that time, so consider times more likely to attract participation.
- Don't rely on group or area announcements. Make up interestingly worded flyers and pass out. Use your imagination, for example, the theory of relativism as it applies to NA, or I am an addict when I figure it out (IP review *Am I An Addict?*) or Bronco Busting (IP review of *Recovery & Relapse*).
- Be prepared. Have the meeting place ready, all materials needed, and start and end on time. Shorter meetings (2-3 hrs vs. 4-6 hrs) are more likely to keep folks coming back. So even if enthusiasm is high, still end on time.
- Snacks help a lot!
- Before you begin, explain the objective of the particular meeting and how you hope to accomplish it. Allow some time for questions so everyone knows what the group is doing, Take scheduled breaks--for every 45-50 minutes, stop for 7-10 minutes.
- Keep a sense of humor and unity. There really aren't right or wrong ideas. Discussion and debate are merely that. Don't let meetings get political.

## **Step One**

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

Step One is, by definition, the beginning of a process. We can't go any further until we've worked this step.

Our reasons for formally working Step One will vary from member to member. It may be that we're new to recovery, and we've just fought and lost an exhausting battle with drugs. It may be that we've been around awhile and have been abstinent from drugs, but discovered that our disease has become active in some other area of our lives and forced us to face our powerlessness and the unmanageability of our lives once again. Not every act of growth is motivated by pain; it may even be simply that it's time again to cycle through the steps, thus beginning a new journey.

Whatever the case, we're at the point where it's time to do some step work, some concrete activity that will bring about freedom from our addiction, whatever shape it is currently taking. It is our goal to internalize the principles of Step One, to deepen our surrender, to make the principles of acceptance, humility, willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness a fundamental part of who we are.

Some of us find a measure of comfort in finding out we suffer from a disease that has caused us to reach the bottom we're now at. Others don't really care what the cause has been—we just want out! There are many different ways to arrive at a point of surrender. For some of us, the road we traveled getting to the First Step was more than enough to convince us that unconditional surrender was our only option. Others may start this process, even though we're not entirely convinced that we're addicts, and find that working the First Step makes it clear that we *are* addicts and therefore must surrender.

Before we begin working the First Step, we must become abstinent—whatever it takes. If we're new in Narcotics Anonymous and our First Step is primarily about looking at the effects of drug addiction in our lives, we need to get clean. If we've been clean awhile and our First Step is about some

other behavior we've become powerless over, we need to find a way to stop the behavior so that our surrender isn't clouded by continued acting out.

The following sections contain questions and discussion that will help us work Step One. It is important to go over this with a sponsor both before and after completing this guide. Checking with a sponsor beforehand will help us focus attention on the sections/questions that are most significant at this point in our recovery. Sharing this guide with our sponsor after we complete it will help us understand what our answers mean in the context of our recovery and how to go forward from there. If you find you'd like more information about a topic before answering the questions, please refer to *It Works: How and Why*. Step study meetings are also a great resource for fellowship experience with the steps.

#### **The disease of addiction**

What makes us addicts is the disease of addiction. It isn't that we used too many drugs or went too far with some other behavior. It's that we really never had a chance to do otherwise because of our disease. There is something within us that causes us to be unable to control our use of drugs and be prone to becoming obsessive and compulsive in other areas. We can tell our disease is active when we become trapped in obsessive and compulsive routines that affect us physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

- Has my disease been active recently? In what way?
- What do I think of when I'm obsessed?
- When a thought occurs to me, do I immediately act on it without considering the consequences? In what other ways do I behave compulsively?
- How has my disease affected me physically? Mentally? Spiritually? Emotionally?

68

69           Our addiction can manifest itself in a variety of ways. When we first  
70 come to Narcotics Anonymous, our problem will, of course, be drugs. Later  
71 on, we may find our that addiction is wreaking havoc in our lives in any  
72 number of ways.

73

74     • What is the specific way in which my addiction has been manifesting  
75 itself?

76

77     • Have I been obsessed with a person, place, or thing? If so, how has that  
78 gotten in the way of my relationships with others? How else have I been  
79 affected mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally?

80

## 81 Denial

82           Denial is the part of our disease that tells us we don't have a disease.  
83 When we are in denial, we are unable to see the reality of our addiction, or  
84 we may minimize its effect. We may blame others, citing the too-high  
85 expectations of families, friends, employers. We may compare ourselves  
86 with other addicts whose addiction seems "worse" than our own. We may  
87 blame one particular drug, or if we have been abstinent from drugs for some  
88 time, compare the current manifestation of our addiction with our drug use  
89 and come to the conclusion that nothing we're doing now is as bad as *that*  
90 was! One of the easiest ways to tell that we are in denial is when we find  
91 ourselves giving plausible but untrue reasons for our behavior.

92

93     • Have I given plausible but untrue reasons for my behavior? What have  
94 they been?

95

96     • Have I compulsively acted on an obsession, and then acted as if I  
97 actually *planned* to act that way? What were those times?

98

99     • How have I blamed other people for my behavior?

100



- 101 • How have I compared my addiction with others' addiction? Is my  
102 addiction "bad enough" if I don't compare it to anyone else's?  
103
- 104 • Am I comparing a current manifestation of my addiction to the way my life  
105 was before I got clean? Am I plagued by thinking I should know better?  
106
- 107 • Have I been thinking that I have enough information about addiction and  
108 recovery to get my behavior under control before it gets out of hand?  
109
- 110 • Am I avoiding action because of feelings of shame that will come about  
111 when I face the results of my addiction? Am I avoiding action because  
112 I'm worried about what others will think?  
113

**114 Hitting bottom: despair and isolation**

115 Our addiction finally brings us to a place where we can no longer  
116 deny the nature of our problem. All the lies, all the rationalizations, all the  
117 illusions fall away as we stand face to face with what our lives have become.  
118 We realize we've been living without hope. We find we've become friendless  
119 or so completely disconnected that our relationships are a sham, a parody of  
120 love and intimacy. It may seem that all is lost when we find ourselves in this  
121 state, but it is actually necessary to reach this place before we can begin our  
122 recovery.

- 123
- 124 • What crisis brought me to recovery?  
125
- 126 • What situation led me to formally work Step One?  
127
- 128 • When did I first recognize my addiction as a problem? Did I try to correct  
129 it? If so, how? If not, why not?  
130

**131 Powerlessness**

132 We as addicts react to the word "powerless" in a variety of ways.  
133 Some of us recognize that a more accurate description of our situation simply

134 could not exist, and admit our powerlessness with a sense of relief. Others  
135 recoil at the word, connecting it with weakness or believing it to be some kind  
136 of character deficiency. Understanding powerlessness and how admitting  
137 our own is essential to our recovery will help us get over any negative  
138 feelings we may have about it. We are powerless when something is beyond  
139 our control—and our addiction certainly qualifies. We cannot moderate or  
140 control our use of drugs or other compulsive behaviors even when it's  
141 causing us to lose the things that matter most to us. We cannot stop even  
142 when it's resulting in irreparable physical damage. We find ourselves doing  
143 things that we would never do if it weren't for our addiction, things we're  
144 ashamed of if we take the time to think about them. We may even decide  
145 that we don't want to use, aren't going to use, and still find ourselves unable  
146 to stop when the opportunity presents itself. We have tried to be abstinent  
147 from drugs or other compulsive behaviors (perhaps with some success) for a  
148 period of time without a program, only to find that eventually our untreated  
149 addiction takes us right back to where we were before. In order to work the  
150 First Step, we need to prove, and accept on a deep level, our own individual  
151 powerlessness.

152

153 • What, exactly, am I powerless over?

154

155 • I've done things while acting out on my addiction that I would never do  
156 when focusing on recovery. What were they?

157

158 • What things have I done to maintain my addiction that went completely  
159 against everything I believe in?

160

161 • How does my personality change when I'm acting out on my addiction?  
162 (For example: Do I become arrogant? Self-centered? Mean-tempered?  
163 Passive to the point where I can't protect myself? Manipulative?  
164 Whiny?)

165

166 • Do I manipulate other people to maintain my addiction? How?

167

168     • Have I tried to quit using and found that I couldn't? Have I quit using on  
169       my own and found that my life was so painful without drugs that my  
170       abstinence didn't last very long? What were these times like?

171

172     • How has my addiction caused me to hurt myself or others?

173

174     **Unmanageability**

175     The First Step asks us to admit two things: one, that we are powerless over  
176     our addiction, and two, that our lives have become unmanageable. Actually,  
177     we would be hard pressed to admit one and not the other. Our  
178     unmanageability is the outward evidence of our powerlessness. There are  
179     two general types of unmanageability: the kind that can be seen by others;  
180     and inner or personal unmanageability.

181         Outward unmanageability is often identified by such things as arrests,  
182     job losses, and family problems. Some of our members have been  
183     incarcerated. Some have never been able to sustain any kind of relationship  
184     for more than a few months. Some of us have been cut off from our families,  
185     asked never again to contact them.

186         Inner or personal unmanageability is often identified by unhealthy or  
187     untrue belief systems about ourselves, the world we live in, and the people in  
188     our lives. We may believe we're worthless. We may believe that the world  
189     should revolve around us—or not just that it *should*, but that in fact it *does*.  
190     We may believe that it isn't really our job to take care of ourselves; someone  
191     else should do it. We may believe that the responsibilities the average  
192     person takes on as a matter of course are just too large a burden for us to  
193     bear. We may overreact or underreact to events in our lives. Emotional  
194     unmanageability is often one of the most obvious ways in which we can  
195     identify personal unmanageability.

196

197     • What does unmanageability mean to me?

198

- 199 • Have I ever been arrested or had legal trouble as a result of my  
200 addiction? Have I ever done anything I could have been arrested for if  
201 only I were caught? What have these things been?  
202
- 203 • Have I had trouble at work or school because of my addiction? What  
204 have these situations been like?  
205
- 206 • Have I had trouble with my family as a result of my addiction? What have  
207 these situations been like?  
208
- 209 • Have I had trouble with my friends as a result of my addiction? What  
210 have these situations been like?  
211
- 212 • Do I insist on having my own way? What effect has my insistence had on  
213 my relationships?  
214
- 215 • Do I consider the needs of others? What effect has my lack of  
216 consideration had on my relationships?  
217
- 218 • Do I accept personal responsibility? Am I able to carry out my daily  
219 responsibilities without becoming overwhelmed? How has this affected  
220 my life?  
221
- 222 • Do I fall apart the minute things don't go according to plan? What have  
223 these situations been like?  
224
- 225 • Do I treat every challenge as a personal insult? What have these  
226 situations been like?  
227
- 228 • Do I maintain a crisis-oriented mentality, responding to every situation  
229 with panic? What have these situations been like?  
230

- 231 • Do I ignore signs that something may be seriously wrong with my health  
232 or with my children, thinking things will work out somehow? What have  
233 these situations been like?  
234
- 235 • Have I ever been in real danger and just been indifferent or otherwise  
236 been unable to protect myself as a result of my addiction? What have  
237 these situations been like?  
238
- 239 • Have I ever harmed someone as a result of my addiction? What have  
240 these situations been like?  
241
- 242 • Do I have temper tantrums or react to my feelings in other ways that  
243 lower my self-respect or sense of dignity? What have these situations  
244 been like?  
245
- 246 • Did I take drugs or act out on my addiction to change or suppress my  
247 feelings? What have these situations been like?  
248

249 **Reservations**

250 Reservations are places in our program that we have *reserved* for  
251 relapse. They may be built around something like thinking we can retain a  
252 small measure of control, something like, "Okay, I accept that I can't control  
253 my using, but I can still sell drugs, can't I?" Or we may think we can remain  
254 friends with the people we used with or bought drugs from. We may think  
255 that certain parts of the program don't apply to us. We may think there's  
256 something we just can't face clean—a serious illness, the death of a loved  
257 one, etc.—and plan to use if it ever happens. We may think after we've  
258 accomplished some goal, made a certain amount of money, or been clean  
259 for a certain number of years, that *then* we'll be able to control our using.  
260 Reservations are usually tucked away in the back of our minds, not  
261 something we're fully conscious of. It is essential that we expose any  
262 reservations we may have and cancel them, right here, right now.  
263

- 264 • Have I accepted the full measure of my disease? Do I think I can still  
265 associate with the people connected with my addiction? Can I still go to  
266 the places where I used? Do I think it's wise to keep drugs or  
267 paraphernalia around, just to remind myself or test my recovery?  
268
- 269 • Is there something I think I can't get through clean, some event that might  
270 happen that will be so painful I'll have to use because of it?  
271
- 272 • Do I think that with some amount of clean time, or with different life  
273 circumstances, I'd be able to control my using?  
274

#### 275 **Surrender**

276       There's a huge difference between resignation and surrender.  
277 Resignation is what we feel when we've accepted the First Step as true in  
278 our lives, but don't consider recovery the solution to our problem. Many of us  
279 found ourselves at this point long before coming to Narcotics Anonymous.  
280 We may have thought that it was our preordained fate to be addicts, to live  
281 and die in our addiction. Surrender, on other hand, is what happens after  
282 we've accepted the First Step as true for us *and* accepted that recovery is  
283 the solution. We don't want our lives to be the way they have been. We  
284 don't want to keep feeling the way we have been feeling.

285

- 286 • What convinces me that I can't use successfully anymore?  
287
- 288 • Do I accept that I'll never regain control even after a long period of  
289 abstinence?  
290
- 291 • Can I begin my recovery without a complete surrender? What would my  
292 life be like if I surrendered?  
293

#### 294 **Spiritual principles**

295       There are probably countless ways in which spiritual principles are  
296 connected to each of NA's Twelve Steps. For the purposes of this guide, let's

297 look at how some spiritual principles are connected to each step, and explore  
298 some suggestions for how we might incorporate them into our lives. In the  
299 First Step, we will focus on honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, humility,  
300 and acceptance.

301

302 The principle of honesty in the First Step starts with admitting the truth  
303 about our addiction, and continues with the practice of honesty on a daily  
304 basis. We begin to be able to be honest with ourselves; and, consequently,  
305 with other people.

306

- 307 • If I've been thinking about using or acting out on my addiction in some  
308 other way, have I shared it with my sponsor or told anyone else?
- 309
- 310 • Have I stayed in touch with the reality of my disease no matter how long  
311 I've had freedom from active addiction?
- 312
- 313 • Have I noticed that without the necessity of covering up my addiction, a  
314 lot of reasons why I used to lie no longer exist? Do I appreciate the  
315 freedom that goes along with that? In what ways have I begun to be  
316 honest in my recovery?

317

318 Practicing the principle of open-mindedness in Step One mostly  
319 involves being ready to believe that there might be another way to live and  
320 being willing to try that way. It doesn't matter that we can't see every detail of  
321 what that way might be or that it may be totally unlike anything we've heard  
322 before; what matters is that we don't limit ourselves or our thinking.

323 Sometimes we may hear NA members saying things that sound totally crazy  
324 to us, things like "surrender to win" or suggestions to pray for someone we  
325 resent. We demonstrate open-mindedness when we don't reject these  
326 things without having tried them.

327

- 328 • What have I heard in recovery that I have trouble believing? Have I  
329 asked my sponsor or the person I heard say it to explain it to me?

330

- 331 • In what ways am I practicing open-mindedness?

332

333           The principle of willingness in the First Step can be practiced in a  
334 variety of ways. Many of us get our first experience with willingness when we  
335 first begin to think about recovery and either don't really believe it's possible  
336 for us or just don't understand how it will work, but we go ahead with the First  
337 Step anyway. Taking any action that will help our recovery is showing  
338 willingness.

339

- 340 • Am I willing to follow my sponsor's direction?

341

- 342 • Am I willing to go to meetings regularly?

343

- 344 • Am I willing to give recovery my best effort?

345

346           The principle of humility in the First Step grows out of our surrender.  
347 It is most easily identified as an acceptance of who we truly are—neither  
348 worse nor better than we believed we were when we were using, just *human*.

349

- 350 • Do I believe that I'm a monster who has poisoned the whole world with  
351 my addiction? Do I believe that my addiction is utterly inconsequential to  
352 the larger society? Or something in between?

353

- 354 • Do I have a sense of my relative importance within my circle of family and  
355 friends? In society as whole? What is that sense?

356

- 357 • How am I practicing the principle of humility in connection with this work  
358 on the First Step?

359

360           The principle of acceptance goes beyond simply admitting that we're  
361 addicts. When we accept our addiction, we feel a profound inner change  
362 that is made apparent by a rising sense of hope. We also begin to feel a



363 sense of peace. We come to terms with our addiction and recovery, and  
364 what that will mean in our lives. We don't dread a future of meeting  
365 attendance, sponsor contact, and step work, but instead begin to see  
366 recovery as a precious gift and the work connected with it as no more trouble  
367 than other routines of life.

368

369 • Have I made peace with the fact that I'm an addict?

370

371 • Have I made peace with the things I'll have to do to stay clean?

372

373 • How is acceptance of my disease necessary for my continued recovery?

374

375 **Moving on**

376 As we get ready to go on to Step Two, we'll probably find ourselves  
377 wondering if we've worked Step One well enough. Are we sure it's time to  
378 move on? Have we spent as much time as others may have spent on this  
379 step? Have we truly gained an understanding of this step? Many of us have  
380 found it helpful to write about our understanding of each step as we prepare  
381 to move on.

382 • How do I know it's time to move on?

383

384 • What is my understanding of Step One?

385

386 • How has my prior knowledge and experience affected my work on this  
387 step?

388 We've come to a place where we've seen the results of our old way of  
389 life, and accepted that a new way is called for, but we probably don't yet see  
390 how rich with possibilities recovery is. It may be enough just to have freedom  
391 from active addiction right now, but we will soon find that the void we have  
392 been filling with drugs or other obsessive/compulsive behaviors begs to be  
393 filled. Working the rest of the steps will fill that void. Next on our journey is  
394 Step Two.

## **Step Two**

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

Step Two is filled with hope. It tells us that what we found out about our addiction in Step One can be relieved in time. We don't have to live with useless pain and insanity anymore. It also provides the solution to the void we were left with as a result of Step One. As we approach Step Two, we begin to consider that maybe, just maybe, there's a Power greater than ourselves.

When we were new in the program, many of us were puzzled by this step's implication that we had been insane. We wondered at that, thinking that defining ourselves as "insane" was a large leap to make from our admission in Step One. However, after being around the program for a while, we began to understand what this step was really about. We read the Basic Text and found that our insanity was defined there as "repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results." We could certainly relate to *that*, many of us thought, while mentally reviewing the times we had tried to get away with something we had never gotten away with before. As we live the principles of this step for many years, we discover how deep our insanity actually runs, and may also find that the Basic Text definition, while brilliant, just scratches the surface.

Some of us resisted this step because we thought it required us to be religious, and many of us have a great deal of discomfort about religion when we first get clean. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the NA program that requires a member to be religious. The line in our Little White Booklet that says anyone may join us regardless of ". . . religion or lack of religion" is one of the most fiercely adhered-to tenets of our program. Our membership takes great pains to be inclusive in this regard and does not tolerate anything that compromises every member's unconditional right to develop an individual understanding of a Power greater than ourselves.

The beauty of the Second Step is revealed when we begin to think about what our Higher Power can be. We are encouraged to choose a Power that is loving and caring and, very importantly, one that is able to restore us to sanity. The Second Step does not say, "We came to believe *in* a Power greater than ourselves." It says, "We came to believe *that* a Power greater than ourselves *could restore us to sanity*." The emphasis is on what this Power can do for us. The group itself certainly qualifies as a Power greater than ourselves. So do the spiritual principles contained in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. And, of course, so does any one of our individual understandings of a Higher Power. As we stay clean and continue to work this step, we discover that no matter how long our addiction has gone on, and how far our insanity has progressed, there's no limit to the ability of a Power greater than ourselves to restore our sanity.

#### **Insanity**

If we have any doubts about the need for sanity in our lives, we're going to have trouble with this step. Now is the time to take a good look at our insanity.

- Did I believe I could control my using? What were some of my experiences with this and how were my efforts unsuccessful?
- What things did I do that I can hardly believe I did when I look back at them? Did I put myself in dangerous situations to get drugs? Did I behave in ways that I'm ashamed of now? What were these situations like?
- Did I make insane decisions as a result of my addiction? Did I quit jobs, leave friendships and other relationships, or give up on achieving other goals for no reason other than that those things interfered with my using?

- 68 • Did I ever physically injure myself or someone else in my addiction?

69

70       Insanity is a loss of perspective and sense of proportion. For  
71 example, we may think that our personal problems are more important  
72 than anyone else's; in fact, we may not even be able to consider other  
73 people. Small problems become major catastrophes. Our lives get out of  
74 balance. Some obvious examples of insane thinking are believing that we  
75 can stay clean on our own or believing that using drugs was our only  
76 problem and now that we're clean, everything is fine.

77

- 78 • How have I overreacted or underreacted to things?

79

- 80 • How has my life been out of balance?

81

- 82 • In what ways does my insanity tell me that something outside myself  
83 can fix me?

84

- 85 • Is part of my insanity believing that the symptom of my addiction (using  
86 drugs or some other manifestation) is my only problem?

87

88       If we've been clean for a while, we may find that a whole new level  
89 of denial is making it difficult to see the insanity in our lives. However, just  
90 as we did in the beginning of our recovery, we need to become familiar  
91 with the ways in which we have been insane. Many of us have found that  
92 our understanding of insanity goes further than the definition of insanity in  
93 the Basic Text. We make the same mistakes even when we're fully aware  
94 of what the results will be. Perhaps we're hurting so bad that we don't  
95 care about the consequences or figure that acting on an obsession will be  
96 worth the price.

97

- 98 • When we've acted on an obsession, even though we knew what the  
99 results would be, what were we feeling and thinking beforehand?  
100 What made us go ahead?

101

102     **Coming to believe**

103             The discussion above provided several reasons why we may have  
104 trouble with this step. There may be others. It's important for us to  
105 identify and overcome any barriers we may have that prevent us from  
106 coming to believe.

107

108     • Do I have any barriers that make it difficult for me to believe? What  
109 are they?

110

111     • What does the phrase, "We came to believe" mean to me?

112

113             As addicts, we're prone to wanting everything to happen instantly.  
114 But it's important to remember that Step Two is a process, not an event.  
115 We don't just wake up one day and know that a Power greater than  
116 ourselves can restore us to sanity. We gradually grow into a belief. Still,  
117 we don't have to just sit back and wait for our belief to grow on its own; we  
118 can help it along.

119

120     • Have I ever believed in anything that I didn't have tangible evidence  
121 of? What was that experience like?

122

123     • What experiences have I heard other recovering addicts share about  
124 coming to believe? Have I tried any of them in my life?

125

126     • How has my belief grown since I've been in recovery?

127

128     **A Power greater than ourselves**

129             Each one of us comes to recovery with a whole history of life  
130 experiences. Those things will determine to a large degree the  
131 understanding we develop of a Power greater than ourselves. We don't  
132 have to have a lot of specific ideas about what our Higher Power is in this

133 step. That understanding will come later. What's most important in this  
134 step is finding a Power that works for us and can help us.

135       Understanding how powerful our Higher Power must be is simple.  
136 All we need to do is think about our addiction as a negative power that  
137 was, without a doubt, greater than us. Our addiction led us down a path  
138 of insanity and caused us to act in ways we didn't want. We need  
139 something to combat that, something at least as powerful as our addiction.

140

141       • What are some things that are more powerful than I am?

142

143       • Can my Higher Power help me stay clean? How?

144

145       • Can my Higher Power help me recover? How?

146

147       Some of us may have a very clear idea about what our Higher  
148 Power is, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. In fact, Step  
149 Two is the point at which we begin to form ideas about a Higher Power if  
150 we haven't already. Many of us have found it helpful to identify what our  
151 Higher Power is *not* before identifying what it *is*. In addition, looking at  
152 what our Higher Power does may help us begin to discover what that  
153 Power is to us.

154

155       • How does my Higher Power work in my life?

156

157       • What characteristics does my Higher Power not have?

158

159       • What characteristics does my Higher Power have?

160

## 161 **Restoration to sanity**

162       *It Works: How and Why* describes the term "restoration" as  
163 changing "to a point where addiction and its accompanying insanity are  
164 not controlling our lives."

We find that just as our insanity was evident in a loss of perspective and sense of proportion, we can see sanity in our lives when we begin developing a perspective that allows us to make better decisions. We find that we have choices about how to act. We begin to have the maturity and wisdom to slow down and consider all aspects of a situation before acting. Naturally, our lives will change. Most of us have no trouble identifying the sanity in our lives when we compare our using with our early recovery, our early recovery with some time clean, and some time clean with long-term recovery. All of this is a process, and our needs for a restoration to sanity will change over time.

When we're new in the program, being restored to sanity probably means not having to use anymore, and perhaps some of the insanity that is directly and obviously tied to our using will stop. We'll stop going to jail for crimes we committed to get drugs. We'll stop finding ourselves in certain degrading situations.

If we've been in recovery for some time, we may find that we had no trouble believing in a Power greater than ourselves that could help us stay clean, but we may not have considered what a restoration to sanity meant to us beyond staying clean. It's very important that we expand our ideas of "sanity."

- What are some things I consider examples of sanity?
- What changes in my thinking and behavior are necessary for my restoration to sanity?
- In what areas of my life do I need sanity now?
- How is restoration a process?
- How has sanity already been restored to me in my recovery?

Some of us may have unrealistic expectations about being restored to sanity. We may think we'll never get angry again or that we'll instantly, upon beginning to work this step, behave perfectly all the time and have no more trouble with obsessions, emotional turmoil, or imbalance in our lives. This description may seem extreme, but if we find ourselves disappointed with our personal growth in recovery or the amount of time it takes to be restored to sanity, we may recognize some of our beliefs in this description.

- What unrealistic expectations do I have about being restored to sanity?

- Are my realistic expectations about how my recovery is progressing being met or not? Do I understand that recovery happens over time, not overnight?

- Finding ourselves able to act sanely, even once, in a situation that we were never able to deal with successfully before is evidence of sanity. Have I had any experiences like this in recovery? What were they?

### **Spiritual principles**

There are probably countless ways in which spiritual principles are connected to each of NA's Twelve Steps. For the purposes of this guide, let's look at how some spiritual principles are connected to each step, and explore some suggestions for how we might incorporate them into our lives. In the Second Step, we will focus on open-mindedness, willingness, faith, trust, and humility.

The principle of open-mindedness in the Second Step starts with believing that we can't recover alone, that we need some kind of help. It continues with opening our minds to believing that help is possible for us. It doesn't matter whether we have any idea of how this Power greater than ourselves is going to help, just that we believe it's possible.



230

231 • Why is having a closed mind harmful to my recovery?

232

233 • How am I demonstrating open-mindedness in my life today?

234

235 • In what ways has my life changed since I've been in recovery? Do I  
236 believe more change is possible?

237

238 Practicing the principle of willingness in the Second Step may  
239 begin simply. At first we may just go to meetings and listen to other  
240 recovering addicts share about their experiences with this step. Then we  
241 may begin applying what we hear to our own recovery. Of course, we ask  
242 our sponsor to guide us.

243

244 • What am I willing to do to be restored to sanity?

245

246 • Is there something I am now willing to do that I was previously  
247 unwilling to do? What is it?

248

249 We can't just sit back and wait to feel a sense of faith when  
250 working Step Two. We have to work at it. One of the suggestions that  
251 has worked for many of us is to "act as if" we had faith. This doesn't  
252 mean to be dishonest. We're not doing this to sound good or look good.  
253 We don't need to lie to our sponsor or anyone else about where we are  
254 with this step. Acting as if means living as though we believe what we  
255 hope for will happen. In the Second Step, this would mean living as  
256 though we expect to be restored to sanity. There are a variety of ways  
257 this may work in our individual lives.

258

259 • What action have I been taking that demonstrates my faith?

260

261 • How has my faith grown?

262

- 263 • Have I been able to make plans, having faith that my addiction isn't  
264 going to get in the way?  
265

266         Practicing the principle of trust may require overcoming a sense of  
267 fear about the process of being restored to sanity. Even if we've been  
268 clean only a short time, we've probably already experienced some  
269 emotional pain as we've grown in recovery. We may be afraid that there  
270 ~~will~~ be more pain. Actually, this is right. There will be more pain.  
271 However, none of it will be more than we can bear, and all of it will can  
272 lead to our becoming saner, better, and more serene people. If we can  
273 develop our sense of trust in the process of recovery and in a Power  
274 greater than ourselves, we can walk through the painful times in our  
275 recovery. We'll know that what's waiting on the other side will be more  
276 than just superficial happiness, but a fundamental transformation that  
277 ~~make~~s our lives more satisfying on a deep level.

278

- 279 • What fears do I have that are getting in the way of my trust?

280

- 281 • What do I need to do to let go of these fears?

282

- 283 • What action am I taking that demonstrates my trust in the process of  
284 recovery and a Power greater than myself?

285

286         The principle of humility springs from our acknowledgment that  
287 ~~there is~~ a Power greater than ourselves. It's a tremendous struggle for  
288 most of us to stop relying on our own thinking and begin to ask for help,  
289 ~~but~~ when we do, we have begun to practice the principle of humility in the  
290 Second Step.

291

- 292 • Have I sought help from a Power greater than myself today? How?

293

- 294 • Have I sought help from my sponsor, gone to meetings, and reached  
295 out to other recovering addicts? What were the results?

296

297 **Moving on**

298           As we get ready to go on to Step Three, we'll want to take a look at  
299 what we've gained by working Step Two. Writing about our understanding  
300 of each step as we prepare to move on helps us internalize the spiritual  
301 principles connected to it.

302

303     • What action can I take that will help me along in the process of coming  
304 to believe?

305

306     • What am I doing to work on overcoming any unrealistic expectations I  
307 may have about being restored to sanity?

308

309     • What is my understanding of Step Two?

310

311     • How has my prior knowledge and experience affected my work on this  
312 step?

313

314           As we move on to Step Three, we're probably feeling hope rising in  
315 our spirits. Even if we're not new in recovery, we've just reinforced our  
316 knowledge that recovery, growth, and change are not just possible but  
317 inevitable when we make the effort to work the steps. We can see the  
318 possibility of relief from whatever insanity our addiction has recently had  
319 us in the grip of. We've probably already begun to experience some  
320 freedom. We're beginning to be freed from having to blindly pursue our  
321 insanity. We've now explored our insanity and trust a Power greater than  
322 ourselves to relieve us from having to continue on the same path. We're  
323 beginning to be freed from our illusions. We're freed from having to keep  
324 our addiction a secret. We no longer have to isolate ourselves to hide our  
325 insanity. We may be tempted to take a break at this point, but these  
326 feelings won't continue unless we further our commitment to recovery.  
327 Step Three is next.

328

329 *q:\swg\wips\step2e.doc*

330

331

## STEP TWO REVIEW FORM STEP WORKING GUIDES

**(circle one)**

**Mailing Address:**\_\_\_\_\_

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**THE DEADLINE FOR INPUT IS FEBRUARY 1, 1997**

## STEP TWO REVIEW FORM STEP WORKING GUIDES

**III. Are there any concepts missing or unclear? If so what?**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

#### IV. General Comments

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**THE DEADLINE FOR INPUT IS FEBRUARY 1, 1997**

## **Step Three**

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

After having worked Steps One and Two, we're left with a strong sense of hope resulting from our surrender and willingness to try something new. Our feelings of hope must be put into action now, or they'll simply fade away and we'll end up back where we started. The action we need to take is working Step Three.

The central action in Step Three is making a decision. Doing so may terrify us, especially when we look at what we're deciding to do in this step. Making a decision, any decision, is something most of us haven't done in a long time. We've had our decisions made for us—by our addiction, by the authorities, or just by default because we didn't want the responsibility of deciding anything for ourselves. When we add to this the concept of trusting something that most of us *don't* understand at this point with our will and with our lives, we may just think this whole thing is beyond us and start looking for a shortcut or an easier way to work our programs.

Such fears and dangerous thinking can be relieved simply by breaking this step down into small portions so that we can understand what we are being asked to do. When we do this, we'll discover that the Third Step is just one more step along the path of recovery from our addiction. It's not a complete change of lifestyle all packed into one decision. We find out that fundamental changes to who we are happen gradually as we work on our recovery. All change requires our participation. We don't have to be

51     **Making a decision**

52             As described above, many of us may find ourselves unnerved by the  
53     thought of making a decision. We may feel intimidated or overwhelmed. We  
54     may fear the results or the implied commitment. We may think it's a once-  
55     and-for-all action and be afraid that we won't do it right and won't have the  
56     opportunity to do it again. However, the decision to turn our will and lives  
57     over to the care of the God of our understanding is one we can make over  
58     and over again, daily if need be. In fact, we're likely to find that we must  
59     make this decision regularly, or risk losing our recovery because of  
60     complacency.

61             It is essential that we to involve our hearts and spirits in this decision.  
62     Though the word "decision" sounds like something that takes place mostly in  
63     the mind, we need to do the work necessary to go beyond an intellectual  
64     understanding and internalize this choice.

65

- 66     •     Why is making a decision central to working this step?

67

- 68     •     Can I make this decision just for today? Do I have any fears about it?

69             What are they? I have problems trusting a  
70             higher power. Just for today. I don't know.

71             We need to realize that making a decision without following it up with  
72     action is meaningless. For example, we can decide one morning to go  
73     somewhere and then sit down and not leave our homes for the rest of that  
74     day. Doing so would render our earlier decision meaningless, no more  
75     significant than any random thought we may have.



- 100 • How has acting on self-will affected my life?

101 *It has caused me to hinder my dreams*  
*and goals, and make many mistakes*

- 102 • How has my self-will affected others?

103 *It has hurt my family, and destroyed*  
*the trust between myself and others*

104 Surrendering our self-will doesn't mean we can't pursue goals or try to

105 make changes in our lives and the world. It doesn't mean we have to

106 passively accept injustices to ourselves or to people we're responsible for.

107 We need to differentiate between destructive self-will and constructive action.

108

- 109 • Will pursuing my goals harm anyone? How?

110 *No,*

- 111 • Will I end up doing anything that adversely affects myself or others in the

112 pursuit of getting what I want? Explain.

113

- 114 • Will I have to compromise any of my principles to achieve this goal? (For

115 example: Will I have to be dishonest? Cruel? Disloyal?)

116

117 If we are new in the program and just beginning to work Step Three,

118 we will probably end up wondering what God's will for us is, concluding that

119 the step asks us to find out. Actually, we formally focus our attention on

120 seeking knowledge of our Higher Power's will for us in the Eleventh Step, but

121 we begin the process that will lead us to that point now. At this point we can

122 come to some very simple conclusions about our Higher Power's will for us

123 that will serve us well for the time being. It is our Higher Power's will for us to

148    **The God of our understanding**

149           Before we delve deeply into the process of turning our will and our  
150 lives over to the care of the God of our understanding, we should work on  
151 overcoming any negative beliefs or unproductive preconceptions we may  
152 have about the word "God."

153

- 154    • Does the word "God," or even the concept itself, make me  
155       uncomfortable? What is the source of my discomfort?

156       *all my trust in something I can't see or feel.*

- 157    • Have I ever believed that God caused horrible things to happen to me or  
158       was punishing me? What were those things?

159

160           Our Basic Text suggests that we should understand our Higher Power  
161 as loving and caring. These simple guidelines can encompass as many  
162 understandings of God as there are NA members. They don't exclude  
163 anyone. If we understand "God" to be the Power of the program, these  
164 guidelines fit. If we understand "God" to be the spiritual principles of the  
165 program, these guidelines fit. If we understand "God" to be a personal power  
166 or being that we can communicate with, these guidelines fit. It is essential  
167 that we begin exploring and developing our understanding.

168

- 169    • What is the God of my understanding like today?

170

- 171    • How is the God of my understanding working in my life?

197 the experiences we've had. We grow into an understanding that gives us  
198 peace and serenity. We trust our Higher Power and are optimistic about life.  
199 We begin to feel that our lives are touched by something beyond our  
200 comprehension, and we are glad and grateful that it is so.

201 Then something happens that challenges everything we believe about  
202 our Higher Power or makes us doubt the existence of that Power altogether.  
203 It may be a death or an injustice or a loss, and we are left feeling as though  
204 we've been kicked in the stomach. We just can't understand it.

205 Times like these are when we need our Higher Power the most,  
206 though we probably find ourselves instinctively drawing away. Our  
207 understanding of a Higher Power is about to undergo a dramatic change.  
208 We need to keep reaching out to our Higher Power, asking for acceptance if  
209 not understanding. We need to ask for strength to go on. Eventually we will  
210 reestablish our relationship with our Higher Power, although probably on  
211 different terms.

212

- 213 • Am I struggling with changing beliefs about the nature of my Higher  
214 Power? Describe. Yes. I want to believe  
215 that if I do my best, I will  
216 go to heaven.  
217 • Is my current concept of a Higher Power still working? How might it need  
218 to change?

219

219 As our understanding of a Higher Power grows and evolves, we'll find  
220 that we react differently to what goes on in our lives. We may find ourselves  
221 able to face with courage situations that used to strike fear in our hearts. We

246

- 247 • What does “to the care of” mean to me?

248

- 249 • What does it mean for me to turn my will and my life over to the care of  
250 the God of my understanding?

251

- 252 • How might my life change by my making the decision to turn it over to my  
253 Higher Power’s care?

254

- 255 • How do I allow my Higher Power to work in my life?

256

- 257 • How does my Higher Power care for my will and my life?

258

- 259 • Have there been times when I have been *unable* to let go and trust the  
260 outcome? Describe. *Yes,*

261

- 262 • Have there been times when I have been *able* to let go and trust the  
263 outcome? Describe.

264

265 Taking action to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our  
266 Higher Power is helpful. Many of us find that it works best for us to make  
267 some formal declaration on a regular basis. We may want to use the  
268 following quote from our Basic Text: “Take my will and my life. Guide me in  
269 my recovery. Show me how to live.” This seems to capture the essence of

295 unpleasant truth or gave me some direction I didn't want to follow? Did I  
296 follow that direction?)

297

298 Practicing the principle of surrender is easy for us when everything is  
299 going along as we'd like—we think. Actually, it's more likely that we are  
300 being lulled into a belief that we're in charge. Keeping the principle of  
301 surrender alive in our spirits even when things are going well is essential.

302

303 • What am I doing to reinforce my decision to allow my Higher Power to  
304 care for my will and my life?

305

306 • How does the Third Step allow me to build on the surrender I've  
307 developed in Steps One and Two?

308

309 We usually feel most willing immediately following a surrender.  
310 Willingness often comes in the wake of despair or a struggle for control. We  
311 can practice the principle of willingness, though, before it becomes  
312 necessary and possibly save ourselves some pain.

313

314 • How have I been willing in my recovery so far?

315

316 • Is there anything in my recovery that I'm fighting against? What do I think  
317 would happen if I became willing?

318

343

344 • How does my surrender in the First Step help me in the Third Step?

345

346 • What action do I plan to take to follow through on my decision? How  
347 does working the remainder of the steps fit into this?

348

349 We wind up our work on Step Three with an increase in our level of  
350 freedom. If we've been thorough with this step, we're profoundly relieved to  
351 realize that the world will go along just fine without our intervention. Running  
352 everything is a huge burden, and we're happy to lay it down. We may feel  
353 comforted that a loving God is caring for our will and our lives, letting us know  
354 in subtle ways that the path we're on is the right one. We've seen our old  
355 ideas for what they were, and we're willing to let go of them and allow  
356 change to happen in our lives. We may even find that we're willing to take  
357 some risks we never had the courage to take before, because we're secure  
358 in the knowledge of our Higher Power's caring for us.

359 People who live spiritual lives pause before making major decisions  
360 and ground themselves in their own spirituality. We look to the source of our  
361 strength, invite our Higher Power to work in our lives, and move forward once  
362 we're sure we're on the right track. Now we need to take another step along  
363 the path of recovery, a step that makes our Third Step decision real. It's time  
364 to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

365

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367

### **Step Three**

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27    afraid that this step will do something to us that we're not ready for or won't  
28    like.

29           It is significant that this step suggests we turn our will and our lives  
30    over to the *care of* the God of our understanding. These words have a great  
31    deal of meaning. We are allowing someone or something to care for us, not  
32    control us or conduct our lives for us. This step neither encourages us to  
33    become mindless robots with no ability to live our own lives nor allows those  
34    of us who find such irresponsibility attractive to indulge such an urge.  
35    Instead, we are making a simple decision to change direction, to stop  
36    rebellious at the natural and logical flow of events in our lives, to stop wearing  
37    ourselves out trying to make everything happen as if we were in charge of  
38    the world. We are accepting that a Power greater than ourselves will do a  
39    better job of caring for our will and our lives than we have. We are furthering  
40    the spiritual process of recovery by beginning to explore what we understand  
41    the word "God" to mean to us as individuals.

42           Each one of us will have to come to some understanding in this step.  
43    Our understanding doesn't have to be complex or complete. It doesn't have  
44    to be like anyone else's. We may discover that we're very sure what God  
45    *isn't* for us, but not what God *is*, and that's okay. The only thing that is  
46    essential is that we begin a search that will allow us to further our  
47    understanding as our recovery continues. Working the Third Step will help  
48    us discover what works best for us.

49

50



**51 Making a decision**

52 As described above, many of us may find ourselves unnerved by the  
53 thought of making a decision. We may feel intimidated or overwhelmed. We  
54 may fear the results or the implied commitment. We may think it's a once-  
55 and-for-all action and be afraid that we won't do it right and won't have the  
56 opportunity to do it again. However, the decision to turn our will and lives  
57 over to the care of the God of our understanding is one we can make over  
58 and over again, daily if need be. In fact, we're likely to find that we must  
59 make this decision regularly, or risk losing our recovery because of  
60 complacency.

61 It is essential that we to involve our hearts and spirits in this decision.  
62 Though the word "decision" sounds like something that takes place mostly in  
63 the mind, we need to do the work necessary to go beyond an intellectual  
64 understanding and internalize this choice.

65

- 66 • Why is making a decision central to working this step?

67

- 68 • Can I make this decision just for today? Do I have any fears about it?

69 What are they?

70

71 We need to realize that making a decision without following it up with  
72 action is meaningless. For example, we can decide one morning to go  
73 somewhere and then sit down and not leave our homes for the rest of that  
74 day. Doing so would render our earlier decision meaningless, no more  
75 significant than any random thought we may have.

76

- 77     • What action have I taken to follow through on my decision?

78

- 79     • What areas of my life are difficult for me to turn over? Why is it important  
80         that I turn them over anyway?

81

82     **Self-will**

83             Step Three is critical because we've acted on self-will for so long,  
84     abusing our ability to manage our own lives. So what exactly is self-will?  
85     Sometimes it's total withdrawal and isolation. We end up living a very lonely  
86     and self-absorbed existence. Sometimes self-will causes us to act to the  
87     exclusion of any considerations other than what we want. We ignore the  
88     needs and feelings of others. We barrel through, stampeding over anyone  
89     who questions our right to do whatever we want. We become tornadoes,  
90     whipping through the lives of family, friends, and even strangers, totally  
91     unconscious of the path of destruction we have left behind. If circumstances  
92     aren't to our liking, we change them by any means necessary to achieve our  
93     aims. We get our way at all costs. We are making so much noise in  
94     aggressively pursuing our impulses that we can't hear the quieter voices of  
95     our conscience or a Higher Power. To work this step, each one of us needs  
96     to identify how we acted on self-will.

97

- 98     • How have I acted on self-will?

99

- 100     • How has acting on self-will affected my life?

101

- 102     • How has my self-will affected others?

103

104             Surrendering our self-will doesn't mean we can't pursue goals or try to  
105     make changes in our lives and the world. It doesn't mean we have to  
106     passively accept injustices to ourselves or to people we're responsible for.  
107     We need to differentiate between destructive self-will and constructive action.

108

- 109     • Will pursuing my goals harm anyone? How?

110

- 111     • Will I end up doing anything that adversely affects myself or others in the  
112     pursuit of getting what I want? Explain.

113

- 114     • Will I have to compromise any of my principles to achieve this goal? (For  
115     example: Will I have to be dishonest? Cruel? Disloyal?)

116

117             If we are new in the program and just beginning to work Step Three,  
118     we will probably end up wondering what God's will for us is, concluding that  
119     the step asks us to find out. Actually, we formally focus our attention on  
120     seeking knowledge of our Higher Power's will for us in the Eleventh Step, but  
121     we begin the process that will lead us to that point now. At this point we can  
122     come to some very simple conclusions about our Higher Power's will for us  
123     that will serve us well for the time being. It is our Higher Power's will for us to

124 stay clean. It is our Higher Power's will for us to do things that will help us  
125 stay clean, such as going to meetings and talking to our sponsor regularly.

126

- 127 • Describe the times when my will hasn't been enough. (For example, I  
128 couldn't stay clean on my own will.)

129

- 130 • What is the difference between my will and God's will?

131

132 At some point in our recovery, we may find that somehow, so slowly  
133 and subtly that we didn't notice, we have shifted from trying to align our will  
134 with a Higher Power's to running on self-will. It seems as though we're  
135 especially vulnerable to this happening when things are going well. We  
136 cross the fine line that divides humble and honest pursuit of goals from  
137 subtle coercion and forced results. We find ourselves going just a little too  
138 far to convince someone that our way is right in a discussion. We find  
139 ourselves holding on to something just a little too long. We suddenly realize  
140 that we haven't contacted our sponsor in quite a while. We feel a quiet,  
141 almost subconscious discomfort that will alert us to this subtle shift away from  
142 recovery—if we listen.

143

- 144 • Have there been times in my recovery when I've found myself subtly  
145 taking back my will and my life? What alerted me? What have I done to  
146 recommit myself to the Third Step?

147

**148 The God of our understanding**

149 Before we delve deeply into the process of turning our will and our  
150 lives over to the care of the God of our understanding, we should work on  
151 overcoming any negative beliefs or unproductive preconceptions we may  
152 have about the word "God."

153

154 • Does the word "God," or even the concept itself, make me  
155 uncomfortable? What is the source of my discomfort?

156

157 • Have I ever believed that God caused horrible things to happen to me or  
158 was punishing me? What were those things?

159

160 Our Basic Text suggests that we should understand our Higher Power  
161 as loving and caring. These simple guidelines can encompass as many  
162 understandings of God as there are NA members. They don't exclude  
163 anyone. If we understand "God" to be the Power of the program, these  
164 guidelines fit. If we understand "God" to be the spiritual principles of the  
165 program, these guidelines fit. If we understand "God" to be a personal power  
166 or being that we can communicate with, these guidelines fit. It is essential  
167 that we begin exploring and developing our understanding.

168

169 • What is the God of my understanding like today?

170

171 • How is the God of my understanding working in my life?

172

173           Even more than trying to figure out what our Higher Power is to us, it  
174 is important that we develop a relationship with whatever we understand that  
175 Power to be. We can do this in a variety of ways. One, we need to  
176 somehow communicate with our Higher Power. This communication does  
177 not have to be formal, or even verbal. Two, we need to be open to  
178 communication from our Higher Power. This may be done by getting quiet  
179 and listening for a small voice that comes from the deepest recesses of our  
180 spirits. Or we may have a personal routine that helps us connect with a  
181 Power greater than ourselves. It may be that our Higher Power speaks to us  
182 through our fellow NA members, or helps us see the right thing to do. Three,  
183 we need to allow ourselves to have feelings about the God of our  
184 understanding. We may get angry. We may feel love. We may feel  
185 frightened. We may feel grateful. In fact, it's okay to share the entire range  
186 of human emotion with our Higher Power. This allows us to feel closer to the  
187 Power we are relying on and helps develop our trust in that Power.

188

189     • How do I communicate with my Higher Power?

190

191     • How does my Higher Power communicate with me?

192

193     • What feelings do I have about my Higher Power?

194

195           Many of us stay clean for some time and work on developing an  
196 understanding of God for ourselves. Our understanding grows and reflects

197 the experiences we've had. We grow into an understanding that gives us  
198 peace and serenity. We trust our Higher Power and are optimistic about life.  
199 We begin to feel that our lives are touched by something beyond our  
200 comprehension, and we are glad and grateful that it is so.

201 Then something happens that challenges everything we believe about  
202 our Higher Power or makes us doubt the existence of that Power altogether.  
203 It may be a death or an injustice or a loss, and we are left feeling as though  
204 we've been kicked in the stomach. We just can't understand it.

205 Times like these are when we need our Higher Power the most,  
206 though we probably find ourselves instinctively drawing away. Our  
207 understanding of a Higher Power is about to undergo a dramatic change.  
208 We need to keep reaching out to our Higher Power, asking for acceptance if  
209 not understanding. We need to ask for strength to go on. Eventually we will  
210 reestablish our relationship with our Higher Power, although probably on  
211 different terms.

212

213 • Am I struggling with changing beliefs about the nature of my Higher  
214 Power? Describe.

215

216 • Is my current concept of a Higher Power still working? How might it need  
217 to change?

218

219 As our understanding of a Higher Power grows and evolves, we'll find  
220 that we react differently to what goes on in our lives. We may find ourselves  
221 able to face with courage situations that used to strike fear in our hearts. We

222 may deal with frustrations more gracefully. We may find ourselves able to  
223 pause and think about a situation before acting. We'll probably be calmer,  
224 less compulsive, and more able to see beyond what's happening to us.

225

226 **Turning it over**

227

228       The order in which we prepare to surrender our will and our lives to  
229 the care of the God of our understanding is significant. Many of us have  
230 found that we actually follow the order in the step: first, we turn over our will;  
231 then, gradually, we turn over our lives. It seems that it's easier for us to  
232 grasp the destructive nature of our self-will and see the need to surrender  
233 that; so, consequently, it's the first to go. Harder for us to grasp is both the  
234 need to turn over our lives and how to go about doing that.

235       For us to be comfortable with allowing our Higher Power to care for  
236 our lives, we will have to develop some trust. We may have no trouble  
237 turning over our addiction, but may want to remain in control of the rest of our  
238 lives. We may trust our Higher Power to care for our work lives, but not for  
239 our relationships. We may trust our Higher Power to care for our  
240 relationships, but not for our children. We may trust our Higher Power with  
241 our safety, but not with our finances. Many of us have trouble letting go  
242 completely. We think we trust our Higher Power with certain areas of our  
243 lives, but immediately take back control the first time we get scared or things  
244 aren't going the way we think they should. It's necessary for us to examine  
245 our progress in turning it over.



246

- 247 • What does “to the care of” mean to me?

248

- 249 • What does it mean for me to turn my will and my life over to the care of  
250 the God of my understanding?

251

- 252 • How might my life change by my making the decision to turn it over to my  
253 Higher Power’s care?

254

- 255 • How do I allow my Higher Power to work in my life?

256

- 257 • How does my Higher Power care for my will and my life?

258

- 259 • Have there been times when I have been *unable* to let go and trust the  
260 outcome? Describe.

261

- 262 • Have there been times when I have been *able* to let go and trust the  
263 outcome? Describe.

264

265 Taking action to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our  
266 Higher Power is helpful. Many of us find that it works best for us to make  
267 some formal declaration on a regular basis. We may want to use the  
268 following quote from our Basic Text: “Take my will and my life. Guide me in  
269 my recovery. Show me how to live.” This seems to capture the essence of

270 the Third Step for many of us. However, we can certainly feel free to find our  
271 own words, or to find a more informal way of taking action.

272

- 273 • How do I take action to turn it over? Are there any words I say regularly?  
274 What are they?

275

### 276 **Spiritual principles**

277 There are probably countless ways in which spiritual principles are  
278 connected to each of NA's Twelve Steps. For the purposes of this guide, let's  
279 look at how some spiritual principles are connected to each step, and explore  
280 some suggestions for how we might incorporate them into our lives. In the  
281 Third Step, we will focus on commitment, surrender, willingness, and trust.

282

283 The spiritual principle of commitment is at the core of Step Three.  
284 Making this decision over and over again, even when it doesn't seem to be  
285 having any positive effect, is what this step is all about. We can practice the  
286 spiritual principle of commitment by reaffirming our decision on a regular  
287 basis and by continuing to take action that gives our decision substance and  
288 meaning.

289

- 290 • What have I done recently that demonstrates my commitment to recovery  
291 and to working a program? (For example: Have I taken a service position  
292 in NA? Have I agreed to sponsor another recovering addict? Have I  
293 continued to go to meetings no matter what I was feeling about them?  
294 Have I continued to work with my sponsor even after he or she told me an

295           unpleasant truth or gave me some direction I didn't want to follow? Did I  
296           follow that direction?)

297

298           Practicing the principle of surrender is easy for us when everything is  
299           going along as we'd like—we think. Actually, it's more likely that we are  
300           being lulled into a belief that we're in charge. Keeping the principle of  
301           surrender alive in our spirits even when things are going well is essential.

302

303       • What am I doing to reinforce my decision to allow my Higher Power to  
304           care for my will and my life?

305

306       • How does the Third Step allow me to build on the surrender I've  
307           developed in Steps One and Two?

308

309           We usually feel most willing immediately following a surrender.  
310           Willingness often comes in the wake of despair or a struggle for control. We  
311           can practice the principle of willingness, though, before it becomes  
312           necessary and possibly save ourselves some pain.

313

314       • How have I been willing in my recovery so far?

315

316       • Is there anything in my recovery that I'm fighting against? What do I think  
317           would happen if I became willing?

318

319           In Step Three, we build on the faith we developed in Step Two and  
320   increase our ability to trust. Practicing the principle of trust doesn't have to  
321   be done blindly or totally. We can take small steps toward developing our  
322   sense of trust by trying, a little at a time, some of the suggestions we hear in  
323   meetings. We can let go, gradually, of some of the things we have been  
324   controlling. It's also a good idea to take a look at how the Third Step is  
325   working in the lives of other NA members. We should find enough evidence  
326   that it works that we can trust a little more that it will also work for us.

327

- 328   • What things have I tried that demonstrate my trust?

329

- 330   • What evidence have I seen that helps me be more comfortable with  
331   trusting?

332

### 333   **Moving on**

334           As we get ready to go on to Step Four, we'll want to take a look at  
335   what we've gained by working Step Three. Writing about our understanding  
336   of each step as we prepare to move on helps us internalize the spiritual  
337   principles connected to it.

338

- 339   • Do I have any reservations about my decision?

340

- 341   • Do I feel that I am now ready to turn my will and my life over to the care of  
342   the God of my understanding?

343

- 344     • How does my surrender in the First Step help me in the Third Step?

345

- 346     • What action do I plan to take to follow through on my decision? How  
347         does working the remainder of the steps fit into this?

348

349             We wind up our work on Step Three with an increase in our level of  
350     freedom. If we've been thorough with this step, we're profoundly relieved to  
351     realize that the world will go along just fine without our intervention. Running  
352     everything is a huge burden, and we're happy to lay it down. We may feel  
353     comforted that a loving God is caring for our will and our lives, letting us know  
354     in subtle ways that the path we're on is the right one. We've seen our old  
355     ideas for what they were, and we're willing to let go of them and allow  
356     change to happen in our lives. We may even find that we're willing to take  
357     some risks we never had the courage to take before, because we're secure  
358     in the knowledge of our Higher Power's caring for us.

359             People who live spiritual lives pause before making major decisions  
360     and ground themselves in their own spirituality. We look to the source of our  
361     strength, invite our Higher Power to work in our lives, and move forward once  
362     we're sure we're on the right track. Now we need to take another step along  
363     the path of recovery, a step that makes our Third Step decision real. It's time  
364     to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

365

366     *q:\swglwips\step3e.doc*

367

## **Step Four**

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

This is it, the step that causes most of us—when we're new in recovery—to panic. Just the thought of dissecting our *entire lives* is enough to cause us to feel overwhelmed. Even if we've been around for a while and have done multiple inventories, and know without reservation that the inventory process always results in new levels of freedom and personal growth, we may still have a tendency to procrastinate on formally working this step again.

Let's face it: This step does involve a lot of work. But we can take heart from the fact that there's rarely a deadline on this step. We can do it in manageable sections, a little at a time until we are done. It's only important that we work on it consistently.

Our ability to work this step is directly tied to the work we did on the first three steps. We will be able to draw on the strength we have gained from practicing the spiritual principles contained in those steps.

The Fourth Step heralds a new era in our recovery. Steps Four through Nine can be thought of as a process within a process. We will use the information we find in working the Fourth Step to work our Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Steps. This process is meant to be done over and over again in recovery.

There is an analogy for this process that is particularly apt. We can think of ourselves as an onion. Each time we begin a Fourth Step, we are peeling away a layer of onion and getting closer to the core. Each layer of

28 the onion represents another layer of denial, the disease of addiction, our  
29 character defects, and the harm we've caused. The core represents the pure  
30 and healthy spirit that lies in the center of each one of us. It is our goal in  
31 recovery to have a spiritual awakening, and we get closer to that by  
32 beginning this process. Our spirits awaken a little more each time we go  
33 through it.

34       The Fourth Step is a method of learning about ourselves, and it is as  
35 much about finding our character assets as it is about finding the exact  
36 nature of our wrongs. The inventory process is also an avenue to freedom.  
37 We have been prohibited from being free for so long—probably all our lives.  
38 Many of us have discovered, as we worked the Fourth Step, that our  
39 problems didn't begin the first time we took drugs, but long before, when the  
40 seeds of our addiction were actually planted. We may have felt isolated and  
41 different long before we took drugs. In fact, the way we felt and the forces  
42 that drove us are completely enmeshed with our addiction; attempting to  
43 change the way we felt and to subdue those forces are exactly what led us to  
44 take our first drug. Our inventory will lay bare unresolved pain and conflicts  
45 in our past so that we are no longer at their mercy. We'll have a choice.  
46 We'll have achieved a measure of freedom.

47       This chapter of the Step Working Guides actually has two distinct  
48 sections. The first helps us prepare to work the Fourth Step by guiding us  
49 through an exploration of our motives for working this step and what this step  
50 means to us. The second part is a guide for actually taking a searching and  
51 fearless moral inventory.

52

**53 Motivation**

54           Though our motivation for working the Fourth Step is secondary to  
55 actually doing it, we may find it helpful to examine and dispel any  
56 reservations we have about this step, and think about some of the benefits  
57 we will get as a result of working this step.

58

59       • Do I have any reservations about working this step? What are they?

60

61       • What are some of the benefits that could come from making a searching  
62 and fearless moral inventory of myself?

63

64       • Why can't I afford to procrastinate about working this step?

65

**66 Searching and fearless**

67           This is the phrase that many of us are most puzzled by. We probably  
68 understand what "searching" means, but what about "fearless"? How can we  
69 get over all our fear? That might take years, we think, and we need to work  
70 on this right away.

71           Taking a fearless inventory means going ahead despite our fear. It  
72 means having the courage to take this action no matter how we feel about it.  
73 It means having the courage to be honest, even when we're cringing inside  
74 and swearing that we'll take what we're writing to the grave. It means having  
75 the determination to be thorough, even when it seems that we've written  
76 enough. It means having the faith to trust this process and trust our Higher  
77 Power to give us whatever quality we need to walk through the process.



78           There are times when our clean time can actually work against us—if  
79   we fail to acknowledge what's going on. Many of us who have worked the  
80   Fourth Step numerous times, and know it's ultimately one of the most loving  
81   things we can do for ourselves, still may find ourselves avoiding this task.  
82   We may think that since we know how good this process is, we shouldn't  
83   have any fear of it. But we need to give ourselves permission to be afraid if  
84   that's what we are.

85           We may also have fears that stem from our previous experiences with  
86   the Fourth Step. We know an inventory means change—change in our lives.  
87   We know that if our inventories reveal destructive patterns, we can't continue  
88   to practice the same behaviors without a great deal of pain. Sometimes this  
89   means having to let go of something in our lives—some behavior we think we  
90   can't survive without; a relationship; or perhaps a resentment we've nursed  
91   so carefully that it's actually become, in a sick way, a source of reassurance  
92   and comfort. The fear of letting go of something we've come to depend on,  
93   no matter how much we've begun to suspect it isn't good for us, is an  
94   absolutely valid fear. We just can't let it stop us. We have to face it and act  
95   with courage.

96           We may also have to overcome a barrier that grows from an  
97   unwillingness to reveal more of our disease. Many of our members with  
98   clean time have shared that an inventory taken in later recovery revealed that  
99   their addiction had spread its tentacles so completely through their lives that  
100   virtually no area was left untouched. This realization is often initially met with  
101   feelings of dismay and perplexity. We wonder how we could still be so sick.  
102   Hasn't all this effort in recovery resulted in more than surface healing?

103           Of course it has. We just need some time to remember that. After  
104 we've had time to accept what our inventories are revealing, we feel a sense  
105 of hope rising to replace the feelings of dismay. After all, an inventory  
106 always initiates a process of change and freedom. Why shouldn't it this time,  
107 too?

108

109     • Am I afraid of working this step? What is my fear?

110

111     • What does it mean to me to be searching and fearless?

112

113     • How is my decision to work Step Four a demonstration of courage?

114       Trust? Faith?

115

116     • Am I working with my sponsor and talking to other addicts? What other  
117 action am I taking to reassure myself that I can handle whatever is  
118 revealed in this inventory?

119

120     **A moral inventory**

121           Many of us have a multitude of unpleasant associations connected to  
122 the word "moral." It may conjure up memories of an overly rigid code of  
123 behavior we were expected to adhere to. It may make us think of people we  
124 consider "moral," and compare ourselves unfavorably with those people.  
125 Hearing this word may also awaken our tendency toward rebellion against  
126 society's morals and our resentment of authorities who were never satisfied  
127 with our morality. Whether any of this is true for us as individuals is a matter

128 to be determined by us as individuals. If any of the preceding seems to fit,  
129 we can alleviate our discomfort with the word "moral" by thinking about it in a  
130 different way.

131 In Narcotics Anonymous, in this step, the word "moral" has nothing to  
132 do with specific codes of behavior, society's norms, or the judgment of some  
133 authority figure. A moral inventory is for us to discover our own individual  
134 morality, our own values and principles. We don't have to relate them in any  
135 way to the values and principles of others.

136

137 • Am I disturbed by the word "moral"? Why?

138

139 • What values and principles are important to me?

140

#### 141 **An inventory of ourselves**

142 The Fourth Step asks us to take an inventory of ourselves, not of  
143 other people. Yet when we begin writing and looking at our resentments,  
144 fears, behavior, beliefs, and secrets, we will find that most of these are  
145 connected to another person or sometimes to an organization or institution.  
146 It's important to understand that we are free to write whatever we need to  
147 about others as long as it leads us to finding our part in the situation. In fact,  
148 most of us can't separate our part from their part at first. Our sponsor will  
149 help us with this.

150

#### 151 **The inventory**

152

153           Get a notebook or other means of recording your inventory that you  
154 and your sponsor have agreed is acceptable. Get comfortable. Remove any  
155 distractions from the place where you plan to work on your inventory. Ask for  
156 the ability to be searching, fearless, and thorough.

157

158   **Resentments**

159           We have resentments when we re-feel anger from the past, when we  
160 are unable to let go and forgive or forget about something that upset us. We  
161 list our resentments in the Fourth Step for many reasons. One, doing so will  
162 help us let go of old anger that is affecting our lives today. Two, exploring  
163 our resentments will ultimately help us identify the ways in which we set  
164 ourselves up to be disappointed in others and where our expectations of  
165 others may be too high, and will reveal patterns that kept us trapped in a  
166 cycle of anger and/or self-pity.

167

168   • What people do I resent? Explain the situations that led to the  
169       resentment.

170

171   • What institutions (school, government, religious, correctional, civic) do I  
172       resent? Explain the situations that led to the resentment.

173

174   • What was my motivation or what did I believe that led me to act as I did in  
175       these situations?

176

177 • How has my dishonesty contributed to my resentments?

178

179 • How has my inability or unwillingness to experience certain feelings led  
180 me to develop resentments?

181

182 • How has my behavior contributed to my resentments?

183

184 • Am I afraid of looking at my part in the situations that caused my  
185 resentments? Why?

186

187 • How have my resentments affected my relationship with myself, others, a  
188 Higher Power?

189

190 • What recurring themes do I notice in my resentments?

191

192 **Feelings**

193 We want to examine our feelings for much the same reason that we  
194 want to examine our resentments: It will help us discover our part in our own  
195 lives. In addition, most of us have forgotten how to feel by the time we get  
196 clean. And if we've been around awhile, we're uncovering new information  
197 about the ways we've shut down our feelings.

198

199 • What feelings do I have the most trouble allowing myself to feel?

200

- 201     • Why have I tried to shut off my feelings?

202

- 203     • What means have I used to deny how I really felt?

204

- 205     • Who or what triggered a feeling? What was the feeling? What were the  
206 situations? What was my part in each situation?

207

- 208     • What was my motivation or what belief led me to act as I did in these  
209 situations?

210

211     **Guilt, remorse, shame**

212             There are actually two types of guilt. One grows directly out of our  
213 conscience. We feel guilty because we've done something that went against  
214 our principles, or we harmed someone and feel remorse and shame over it.  
215 The other type of guilt results from any number of situations that are not our  
216 fault, situations we had no part in creating. We need to look at our guilt,  
217 shame, and remorse so that we can separate these situations. We need to  
218 own what is truly ours and let go of what is not.

219

- 220     • Who or what do I feel guilty, remorseful, or ashamed about? Explain the  
221 situations that led to these feelings.

222

- 223     • Which of these situations have caused me to feel shame, though I had  
224 no part in creating them?

225

- 226     • In the situations I did have a part in, what was my motivation or what did I  
227       believe that led me to act as I did?

228

- 229     • How has my behavior contributed to my guilt, remorse, and shame?

230

231   **Fear**

232           If we were to take a look at the disease of addiction stripped of its  
233   symptoms (drug use or other compulsive behavior), without its most obvious  
234   characteristics, we would find a morass of self-centered fear. We're afraid of  
235   being hurt or maybe just having to feel too intensely, so we live a sort of half-  
236   life, going through the motions of living but never being fully alive. We're  
237   afraid of everything that might make us feel, so we isolate and withdraw.  
238   We're afraid that people won't like us, so we use drugs to be more  
239   comfortable. We're afraid we'll get caught at something and have to pay a  
240   price, so we lie or cheat or hurt others to protect ourselves. We're afraid of  
241   being alone, so we use and exploit others to avoid feeling that way. We're  
242   afraid we won't have enough—of anything—so we selfishly pursue what we  
243   want, not caring about the harm we cause in the process. Sometimes, if  
244   we've gained things we care about in recovery, we're afraid we'll lose what  
245   we have, and so we begin compromising our principles to protect it. Self-  
246   centered, self-seeking fear—we need to uproot it so it no longer has the  
247   power to destroy.

248

249 • Who or what do I fear? Why?

250

251 • What have I done to cover my fear?

252

253 • How have I responded negatively or destructively to my fear?

254

255 • What do I most fear looking at and exposing about myself? What do I  
256 think will happen if I do?

257

258 • How have I cheated myself because of my fear?

259

## 260 **Relationships**

261       We need to write about our relationships—all of them, not just the  
262 romantic ones—in the Fourth Step so that we can find out where our choices,  
263 beliefs, and behaviors have resulted in unhealthy or destructive relationships.  
264 We need to look at our relationships with relatives, spouses or partners,  
265 friends and former friends, co-workers and former co-workers, neighbors,  
266 people from school, people from clubs and civic organizations, authority  
267 figures such as the police, and anyone else we can possibly think of. We  
268 should also examine our relationship with a Higher Power. We may be  
269 tempted to skip the relationships that didn't last long, such as one-night  
270 sexual involvements or perhaps an argument with a teacher whose class we  
271 then dropped. But these relationships are important, too. If we think of it or  
272 have feelings about it, it's inventory material.



273

274 • What conflicts in my personality make it difficult for me to maintain  
275 friendships and/or romantic relationships?

276

277 • How has my fear of being hurt affected my friendships and romantic  
278 relationships?

279

280 • How have I sacrificed platonic friendships in favor of romantic  
281 relationships?

282

283 • How did I compulsively seek relationships?

284

285 • In my relationships with family, do I sometimes feel as though we're  
286 locked into repeating the same patterns over and over without any hope  
287 of change? What are those patterns? What is my part in perpetuating  
288 them?

289

290 • How have I avoided intimacy with my friends, partners or spouses, and  
291 family?

292

293 • Have I had problems making commitments? Describe.

294

295 • Have I ever destroyed a relationship because I believed I was going to  
296 get hurt anyway so I should get out before that could happen? Describe.

297

298 • To what degree do I consider the feelings of others in my relationships?

299 Equal to my own? More important than my own? Of minor importance?

300 Not at all?

301

302 • Have I felt like a victim in any of my relationships? (Note: This question is

303 focused on uncovering how we set ourselves up to be victims or how too-

304 high expectations contributed to our being disappointed in people, *not* on

305 listing instances where we were actually abused.) Describe.

306

307 • What have my relationships with my neighbors been like? Do I notice

308 any patterns appearing that carried through no matter where I lived?

309

310 • How do I feel about the people I've worked with and for? How have my

311 thinking, beliefs, and behavior caused problems for me at work?

312

313 • How do I feel about the people I went to school with (both in childhood

314 and currently)? Did I feel less than or better than the other students? Did

315 I believe I had to compete for attention from the instructor? Did I respect

316 authority figures or rebel against them?

317

318 • Have I ever joined any clubs or membership organizations? (Hint: NA is

319 a membership organization.) How did I feel about the other people in the

320 club or organization? Have I made friends in these organizations? Have

321 I joined clubs with high expectations, only to quit in a short time? What

322 were the expectations and why weren't they fulfilled? What was my part  
323 in it?

324

325 • Have I ever been in a mental hospital or prison, or otherwise been held  
326 against my will? What effect has that had on my personality? What were  
327 my interactions with the authorities like? Did I follow the rules? Did I ever  
328 break the rules, and then resent the authorities when I got caught?

329

330 • Did early experiences with trust and intimacy result in me getting hurt and  
331 cause me to withdraw? Describe.

332

333 • Have I ever let a relationship go when the potential existed to resolve  
334 conflicts and work through problems? Why?

335

336 • Did I become a different person depending on who I was around?  
337 Describe.

338

339 • Have I discovered things about my personality (perhaps in previous  
340 inventories) that I didn't like, and then found myself overcompensating for  
341 that behavior? (For instance, we may have uncovered a pattern of  
342 immature dependence on others and then overcompensated for this by  
343 becoming overly self-sufficient.) Describe.

344

345 • What defects are most often at play in my relationships (dishonesty,  
346 selfishness, control, manipulation, etc.)?

347

348     • How can I change my behavior so that I can begin having healthy  
349       relationships?

350

351     • Have I had any kind of a relationship with a Higher Power? How has this  
352       changed in my lifetime? What kind of a relationship do I have with my  
353       Higher Power now?

354

355     **Sex**

356           This is a very uncomfortable area for most of us. In fact, we may be  
357     tempted to stop here, thinking, "Okay, this has gone far enough! There's no  
358     way I'm cataloging my sexual behavior!" But we have to get over such  
359     unwillingness quickly. Thinking about the reason why we need to do this  
360     should help. As it says in *It Works: How and Why*, "We want to be at peace  
361     with our own sexuality." That's why we need to include our sexual beliefs  
362     and behaviors in our inventories. It's important to remind ourselves at this  
363     point that our inventories are not to compare ourselves with what we think is  
364     "normal" for others, but only to determine our own values, principles, and  
365     morals.

366

367     • How was my sexual behavior based in selfishness?

368

369     • How have I used sex in an attempt to avoid loneliness or fill a spiritual  
370       void?

371

- 372     • Did I compulsively seek or avoid sex?

373

- 374     • Have any of my sexual practices left me feeling ashamed and guilty?

375         What were they? Why did I feel that way?

376

- 377     • Am I comfortable with my sexuality? If not, why not?

378

379     **Abuse**

380             We must exercise extreme caution before beginning this section. In  
381 fact, we may need to postpone this section to a later time in our recovery.  
382 We should utilize all the resources at hand to make the decision about  
383 whether to begin this section now: our own sense of whether or not we're  
384 ready to withstand the pain this work will cause us, discussion with our  
385 sponsor, and prayer. Perhaps our sponsor will be able to help us through  
386 this, or we may need to seek additional help.

387             If we do decide to go ahead with this section, we should be aware  
388 that working on this area of our Fourth Step will probably be the most painful  
389 work we'll do in recovery. Recording the times when we were neglected or  
390 hurt by the people who were supposed to love and protect us is certain to  
391 cause some of the most painful feelings we will ever have to go through. It is  
392 important to do so when we're ready, however. As long as the pain is inside  
393 us, a secret, it may be causing us to act in ways we don't want, or it can  
394 contribute to a negative self-image or other destructive beliefs. Getting it out  
395 begins a process that can lead to the pain diminishing.

396           It is also possible that we have physically or mentally abused others.  
397    Recounting these times is bound to cause us to feel a great deal of shame.  
398    We cannot afford to let that shame become despair. It is important that we  
399    face our behavior, accept responsibility for it, and work to change it. Writing  
400    about it here is the first step toward doing that. Working the rest of the steps  
401    will help us make amends.

402

403    • Have I ever been abused? By whom? What feelings did I or do I now  
404       have about it?

405

406    • Has being abused affected my relationships with others? How?

407

408    • If I have felt victimized for much of life because of being abused in  
409       childhood, what steps can I take to be restored to spiritual wholeness?  
410       Can my Higher Power help? How?

411

412    • Have I ever abused anyone? Who and how?

413

414    • What was I feeling and thinking right before I caused the harm?

415

416    • Did I blame my victim or make excuses for my behavior? Describe.

417

418    • Do I trust my Higher Power to work in my life and provide me with what I  
419       need so I don't have to harm anyone again? Am I willing to live with the  
420       painful feelings until they are changed through working the steps?

421

422 **Assets**

423           Most of the preceding questions have been directed at helping us  
424 identify the exact nature of our wrongs (information we'll need for the Fifth  
425 Step). It's also important that we take a look at things that we've done right  
426 or that have had a positive impact on us and others. We want to do this for a  
427 couple of reasons. One, we want to have a complete picture of ourselves  
428 from working the Fourth Step, not a one-sided picture. Two, we want to  
429 know what character traits and behaviors we want more of in our lives.

430

- 431 • What qualities do I have that I like? That others like? That work well for  
432 me?

433

- 434 • How have I shown concern for others?

435

- 436 • Which spiritual principles am I practicing in my life? How has doing so  
437 changed my life?

438

- 439 • How has my faith and trust in a Higher Power grown?

440

- 441 • What is my relationship with my sponsor based on? How do I see that  
442 positive experience translating into other relationships?

443

- 444 • What goals have I accomplished? Do I have others I am taking action to  
445 reach? What are they and what action am I taking?

446

- 447     • What are my values? Which ones am I committed to living by, and how?

448

- 449     • How am I showing my gratitude for my recovery?

450

451     **Secrets**

452             Before we finish this Fourth Step, we should stop and reflect. Is there  
453 anything we've missed, either intentionally or not? Is there something we  
454 think is so bad that we just can't possibly include it in our inventory? If so, we  
455 should be reassured by the fact that a multitude of NA members have  
456 worked this step and there has never yet been a situation in anyone's Fourth  
457 Step that was so unique we had to create a new term to describe it. Keeping  
458 secrets is threatening to our recovery. As long as we are keeping a secret,  
459 we are actually building a reservation in our program.

460

- 461     • Are there any secrets that I haven't written about yet? What are they?

462

463     **Moving on**

464             Finishing a Fourth Step is many things—maybe a letdown, maybe  
465 exhilarating, maybe uncomfortable. However we feel otherwise, we should  
466 definitely feel good about what we've accomplished. The work we've done in  
467 this step will provide the foundation for the work we'll do in Steps Five  
468 through Nine. Now is the time to contact our sponsor and make  
469 arrangements to work Step Five.



470

471

472 *q:\swglwips\step4d.doc*

473

## STEP FOUR REVIEW FORM STEP WORKING GUIDES

Region Area Group Individual name: \_\_\_\_\_

**(circle one)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I. Did you identify with the material in this step?**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**II. Did you find the narrative and questions helpful, encouraging and motivating to work this step?**

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## STEP FOUR REVIEW FORM STEP WORKING GUIDES

### III. Are there any concepts missing or unclear? If so what?

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#### IV. General Comments

[illegible]

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