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

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

We are pleased 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 derived 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 position 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
## Timeline for Step Working Guides (continued)

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

- What is the specific way in which my addiction has been manifesting itself?
- Have I been obsessed with a person, place, or thing? If so, how has that gotten in the way of my relationships with others? How else have I been affected mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally?

Denial

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

- Have I given plausible but untrue reasons for my behavior? What have they been?
- Have I compulsively acted on an obsession, and then acted as if I actually planned to act that way? What were those times?
- How have I blamed other people for my behavior?
- How have I compared my addiction with others’ addiction? Is my addiction “bad enough” if I don’t compare it to anyone else’s?

- Am I comparing a current manifestation of my addiction to the way my life was before I got clean? Am I plagued by thinking I should know better?

- Have I been thinking that I have enough information about addiction and recovery to get my behavior under control before it gets out of hand?

- Am I avoiding action because of feelings of shame that will come about when I face the results of my addiction? Am I avoiding action because I’m worried about what others will think?

Hitting bottom: despair and isolation

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

- What crisis brought me to recovery?

- What situation led me to formally work Step One?

- When did I first recognize my addiction as a problem? Did I try to correct it? If so, how? If not, why not?

Powerlessness

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

- What, exactly, am I powerless over?

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

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

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

- Do I manipulate other people to maintain my addiction? How?
• Have I tried to quit using and found that I couldn't? Have I quit using on my own and found that my life was so painful without drugs that my abstinence didn't last very long? What were these times like?

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

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

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

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

• What does unmanageability mean to me?
• Have I ever been arrested or had legal trouble as a result of my addiction? Have I ever done anything I could have been arrested for if only I were caught? What have these things been?

• Have I had trouble at work or school because of my addiction? What have these situations been like?

• Have I had trouble with my family as a result of my addiction? What have these situations been like?

• Have I had trouble with my friends as a result of my addiction? What have these situations been like?

• Do I insist on having my own way? What effect has my insistence had on my relationships?

• Do I consider the needs of others? What effect has my lack of consideration had on my relationships?

• Do I accept personal responsibility? Am I able to carry out my daily responsibilities without becoming overwhelmed? How has this affected my life?

• Do I fall apart the minute things don’t go according to plan? What have these situations been like?

• Do I treat every challenge as a personal insult? What have these situations been like?

• Do I maintain a crisis-oriented mentality, responding to every situation with panic? What have these situations been like?
Do I ignore signs that something may be seriously wrong with my health or with my children, thinking things will work out somehow? What have these situations been like?

Have I ever been in real danger and just been indifferent or otherwise been unable to protect myself as a result of my addiction? What have these situations been like?

Have I ever harmed someone as a result of my addiction? What have these situations been like?

Do I have temper tantrums or react to my feelings in other ways that lower my self-respect or sense of dignity? What have these situations been like?

Did I take drugs or act out on my addiction to change or suppress my feelings? What have these situations been like?

Reservations

Reservations are places in our program that we have reserved for relapse. They may be built around something like thinking we can retain a small measure of control, something like, “Okay, I accept that I can’t control my using, but I can still sell drugs, can’t I?” Or we may think we can remain friends with the people we used with or bought drugs from. We may think that certain parts of the program don’t apply to us. We may think there’s something we just can’t face clean—a serious illness, the death of a loved one, etc.—and plan to use if it ever happens. We may think after we’ve accomplished some goal, made a certain amount of money, or been clean for a certain number of years, that then we’ll be able to control our using. Reservations are usually tucked away in the back of our minds, not something we’re fully conscious of. It is essential that we expose any reservations we may have and cancel them, right here, right now.
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
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
First Step, we will focus on honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, humility,
and acceptance.

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

- If I've been thinking about using or acting out on my addiction in some
  other way, have I shared it with my sponsor or told anyone else?

- Have I stayed in touch with the reality of my disease no matter how long
  I've had freedom from active addiction?

- Have I noticed that without the necessity of covering up my addiction, a
  lot of reasons why I used to lie no longer exist? Do I appreciate the
  freedom that goes along with that? In what ways have I begun to be
  honest in my recovery?

Practicing the principle of open-mindedness in Step One mostly
involves being ready to believe that there might be another way to live and
being willing to try that way. It doesn't matter that we can't see every detail of
what that way might be or that it may be totally unlike anything we've heard
before; what matters is that we don't limit ourselves or our thinking.
Sometimes we may hear NA members saying things that sound totally crazy
to us, things like "surrender to win" or suggestions to pray for someone we
resent. We demonstrate open-mindedness when we don't reject these
things without having tried them.

- What have I heard in recovery that I have trouble believing? Have I
  asked my sponsor or the person I heard say it to explain it to me?
• In what ways am I practicing open-mindedness?

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

• Am I willing to follow my sponsor’s direction?

• Am I willing to go to meetings regularly?

• Am I willing to give recovery my best effort?

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

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

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

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

The principle of acceptance goes beyond simply admitting that we’re addicts. When we accept our addiction, we feel a profound inner change that is made apparent by a rising sense of hope. We also begin to feel a
sense of peace. We come to terms with our addiction and recovery, and what that will mean in our lives. We don't dread a future of meeting attendance, sponsor contact, and step work, but instead begin to see recovery as a precious gift and the work connected with it as no more trouble than other routines of life.

- Have I made peace with the fact that I'm an addict?
- Have I made peace with the things I'll have to do to stay clean?
- How is acceptance of my disease necessary for my continued recovery?

Moving on

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

- How do I know it's time to move on?
- What is my understanding of Step One?
- How has my prior knowledge and experience affected my work on this step?

We've come to a place where we've seen the results of our old way of life, and accepted that a new way is called for, but we probably don't yet see how rich with possibilities recovery is. It may be enough just to have freedom from active addiction right now, but we will soon find that the void we have been filling with drugs or other obsessive/compulsive behaviors begs to be filled. Working the rest of the steps will fill that void. Next on our journey is 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?
• Did I ever physically injure myself or someone else in my addiction?

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

• How have I overreacted or underreacted to things?

• How has my life been out of balance?

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

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

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

• When we've acted on an obsession, even though we knew what the results would be, what were we feeling and thinking beforehand?

What made us go ahead?
Coming to believe

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

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

- What does the phrase, “We came to believe” mean to me?

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

- Have I ever believed in anything that I didn’t have tangible evidence of? What was that experience like?

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

- How has my belief grown since I’ve been in recovery?

A Power greater than ourselves

Each one of us comes to recovery with a whole history of life experiences. Those things will determine to a large degree the understanding we develop of a Power greater than ourselves. We don’t have to have a lot of specific ideas about what our Higher Power is in this
That understanding will come later. What's most important in this step is finding a Power that works for us and can help us.

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

- What are some things that are more powerful than I am?

- Can my Higher Power help me stay clean? How?

- Can my Higher Power help me recover? How?

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

- How does my Higher Power work in my life?

- What characteristics does my Higher Power not have?

- What characteristics does my Higher Power have?

Restoration to sanity

It Works: How and Why describes the term "restoration" as changing "to a point where addiction and its accompanying insanity are 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
• Why is having a closed mind harmful to my recovery?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

261
• How has my faith grown?
Have I been able to make plans, having faith that my addiction isn't going to get in the way?

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

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

What do I need to do to let go of these fears?

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

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

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

Have I sought help from my sponsor, gone to meetings, and reached out to other recovering addicts? What were the results?
Moving on

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

- What action can I take that will help me along in the process of coming to believe?
- What am I doing to work on overcoming any unrealistic expectations I may have about being restored to sanity?
- What is my understanding of Step Two?
- How has my prior knowledge and experience affected my work on this step?

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

II. Did you find the narrative and questions helpful, encouraging and motivating to work this step?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
III. Are there any concepts missing or unclear? If so what?

IV. General Comments

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
Making a decision

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

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

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

- Can I make this decision just for today? Do I have any fears about it? What are they? I have problems trusting a higher power. Just for today. I don't know.

We need to realize that making a decision without following it up with action is meaningless. For example, we can decide one morning to go somewhere and then sit down and not leave our homes for the rest of that day. Doing so would render our earlier decision meaningless, no more significant than any random thought we may have.
• How has acting on self-will affected my life?
  It has caused me to hinder my dreams and goals, and make many mistakes.
• How has my self-will affected others?
  It has hurt my family, and destroyed the trust between myself and others.
Surrendering our self-will doesn't mean we can't pursue goals or try to make changes in our lives and the world. It doesn't mean we have to passively accept injustices to ourselves or to people we're responsible for.
We need to differentiate between destructive self-will and constructive action.

• Will pursuing my goals harm anyone? How?
  No,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- What is the God of my understanding like today?

- How is the God of my understanding working in my life?
the experiences we've had. We grow into an understanding that gives us peace and serenity. We trust our Higher Power and are optimistic about life. We begin to feel that our lives are touched by something beyond our comprehension, and we are glad and grateful that it is so.

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

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

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

As our understanding of a Higher Power grows and evolves, we'll find that we react differently to what goes on in our lives. We may find ourselves able to face with courage situations that used to strike fear in our hearts. We
• What does “to the care of” mean to me?

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

• How might my life change by my making the decision to turn it over to my Higher Power's care?

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

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

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

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

Taking action to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power is helpful. Many of us find that it works best for us to make some formal declaration on a regular basis. We may want to use the following quote from our Basic Text: “Take my will and my life. Guide me in my recovery. Show me how to live.” This seems to capture the essence of
unpleasant truth or gave me some direction I didn't want to follow? Did I
follow that direction?)

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

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

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

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

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

• Is there anything in my recovery that I'm fighting against? What do I think
would happen if I became willing?
• How does my surrender in the First Step help me in the Third Step?

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

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

People who live spiritual lives pause before making major decisions and ground themselves in their own spirituality. We look to the source of our strength, invite our Higher Power to work in our lives, and move forward once we're sure we're on the right track. Now we need to take another step along the path of recovery, a step that makes our Third Step decision real. It's time to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
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
afraid that this step will do something to us that we’re not ready for or won’t like.

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

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

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

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

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

- Can I make this decision just for today? Do I have any fears about it? What are they?

We need to realize that making a decision without following it up with action is meaningless. For example, we can decide one morning to go somewhere and then sit down and not leave our homes for the rest of that day. Doing so would render our earlier decision meaningless, no more significant than any random thought we may have.
• What action have I taken to follow through on my decision?

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

Self-will

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

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

102 • How has my self-will affected others?

104 Surrendering our self-will doesn't mean we can't pursue goals or try to make changes in our lives and the world. It doesn't mean we have to passively accept injustices to ourselves or to people we're responsible for.

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

109 • Will pursuing my goals harm anyone? How?

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

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

117 If we are new in the program and just beginning to work Step Three, we will probably end up wondering what God's will for us is, concluding that the step asks us to find out. Actually, we formally focus our attention on seeking knowledge of our Higher Power's will for us in the Eleventh Step, but we begin the process that will lead us to that point now. At this point we can come to some very simple conclusions about our Higher Power's will for us that will serve us well for the time being. It is our Higher Power's will for us to...
It is our Higher Power's will for us to do things that will help us stay clean, such as going to meetings and talking to our sponsor regularly.

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

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

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

- Have there been times in my recovery when I've found myself subtly taking back my will and my life? What alerted me? What have I done to recommit myself to the Third Step?
The God of our understanding

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

- Does the word “God,” or even the concept itself, make me uncomfortable? What is the source of my discomfort?

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

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

- What is the God of my understanding like today?

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

- How do I communicate with my Higher Power?
- How does my Higher Power communicate with me?
- What feelings do I have about my Higher Power?

Many of us stay clean for some time and work on developing an understanding of God for ourselves. Our understanding grows and reflects
the experiences we've had. We grow into an understanding that gives us peace and serenity. We trust our Higher Power and are optimistic about life. We begin to feel that our lives are touched by something beyond our comprehension, and we are glad and grateful that it is so.

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

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

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

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

As our understanding of a Higher Power grows and evolves, we'll find that we react differently to what goes on in our lives. We may find ourselves able to face with courage situations that used to strike fear in our hearts. We
may deal with frustrations more gracefully. We may find ourselves able to pause and think about a situation before acting. We'll probably be calmer, less compulsive, and more able to see beyond what's happening to us.

Turning it over

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

For us to be comfortable with allowing our Higher Power to care for our lives, we will have to develop some trust. We may have no trouble turning over our addiction, but may want to remain in control of the rest of our lives. We may trust our Higher Power to care for our work lives, but not for our relationships. We may trust our Higher Power to care for our relationships, but not for our children. We may trust our Higher Power with our safety, but not with our finances. Many of us have trouble letting go completely. We think we trust our Higher Power with certain areas of our lives, but immediately take back control the first time we get scared or things aren't going the way we think they should. It's necessary for us to examine our progress in turning it over.
246

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

248

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

250

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

253

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

255

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

257

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

259

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

261

Taking action to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our
Higher Power is helpful. Many of us find that it works best for us to make
some formal declaration on a regular basis. We may want to use the
following quote from our Basic Text: “Take my will and my life. Guide me in
my recovery. Show me how to live.” This seems to capture the essence of
the Third Step for many of us. However, we can certainly feel free to find our
own words, or to find a more informal way of taking action.

- How do I take action to turn it over? Are there any words I say regularly?
  What are 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 Third Step, we will focus on commitment, surrender, willingness, and trust.

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

- What have I done recently that demonstrates my commitment to recovery and to working a program? (For example: Have I taken a service position in NA? Have I agreed to sponsor another recovering addict? Have I continued to go to meetings no matter what I was feeling about them? Have I continued to work with my sponsor even after he or she told me an
unpleasant truth or gave me some direction I didn't want to follow? Did I follow that direction?)

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

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

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

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

- How have I been willing in my recovery so far?

- Is there anything in my recovery that I'm fighting against? What do I think would happen if I became willing?
In Step Three, we build on the faith we developed in Step Two and increase our ability to trust. Practicing the principle of trust doesn't have to be done blindly or totally. We can take small steps toward developing our sense of trust by trying, a little at a time, some of the suggestions we hear in meetings. We can let go, gradually, of some of the things we have been controlling. It's also a good idea to take a look at how the Third Step is working in the lives of other NA members. We should find enough evidence that it works that we can trust a little more that it will also work for us.

- What things have I tried that demonstrate my trust?

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

Moving on

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

- Do I have any reservations about my decision?

- Do I feel that I am now ready to turn my will and my life over to the care of the God of my understanding?
• How does my surrender in the First Step help me in the Third Step?

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

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

People who live spiritual lives pause before making major decisions and ground themselves in their own spirituality. We look to the source of our strength, invite our Higher Power to work in our lives, and move forward once we're sure we're on the right track. Now we need to take another step along the path of recovery, a step that makes our Third Step decision real. It's time to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
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
the onion represents another layer of denial, the disease of addiction, our
character defects, and the harm we've caused. The core represents the pure
and healthy spirit that lies in the center of each one of us. It is our goal in
recovery to have a spiritual awakening, and we get closer to that by
beginning this process. Our spirits awaken a little more each time we go
through it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Searching and fearless

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

Taking a fearless inventory means going ahead despite our fear. It means having the courage to take this action no matter how we feel about it. It means having the courage to be honest, even when we're cringing inside and swearing that we'll take what we're writing to the grave. It means having the determination to be thorough, even when it seems that we've written enough. It means having the faith to trust this process and trust our Higher Power to give us whatever quality we need to walk through the process.
There are times when our clean time can actually work against us—if we fail to acknowledge what's going on. Many of us who have worked the Fourth Step numerous times, and know it's ultimately one of the most loving things we can do for ourselves, still may find ourselves avoiding this task. We may think that since we know how good this process is, we shouldn't have any fear of it. But we need to give ourselves permission to be afraid if that's what we are.

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

We may also have to overcome a barrier that grows from an unwillingness to reveal more of our disease. Many of our members with clean time have shared that an inventory taken in later recovery revealed that their addiction had spread its tentacles so completely through their lives that virtually no area was left untouched. This realization is often initially met with feelings of dismay and perplexity. We wonder how we could still be so sick. Hasn't all this effort in recovery resulted in more than surface healing?
Of course it has. We just need some time to remember that. After we've had time to accept what our inventories are revealing, we feel a sense of hope rising to replace the feelings of dismay. After all, an inventory always initiates a process of change and freedom. Why shouldn't it this time, too?

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

- What does it mean to me to be searching and fearless?

- How is my decision to work Step Four a demonstration of courage? Trust? Faith?

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

A moral inventory

Many of us have a multitude of unpleasant associations connected to the word “moral.” It may conjure up memories of an overly rigid code of behavior we were expected to adhere to. It may make us think of people we consider “moral,” and compare ourselves unfavorably with those people. Hearing this word may also awaken our tendency toward rebellion against society's morals and our resentment of authorities who were never satisfied with our morality. Whether any of this is true for us as individuals is a matter
to be determined by us as individuals. If any of the preceding seems to fit,
we can alleviate our discomfort with the word "moral" by thinking about it in a
different way.

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

- Am I disturbed by the word "moral"? Why?

- What values and principles are important to me?

An inventory of ourselves

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

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

Resentments

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

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

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

• What was my motivation or what did I believe that led me to act as I did in these situations?
• How has my dishonesty contributed to my resentments?

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

• How has my behavior contributed to my resentments?

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

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

• What recurring themes do I notice in my resentments?

Feelings

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

• What feelings do I have the most trouble allowing myself to feel?
Why have I tried to shut off my feelings?

What means have I used to deny how I really felt?

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

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

Guilt, remorse, shame

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

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

Which of these situations have caused me to feel shame, though I had no part in creating them?
• In the situations I did have a part in, what was my motivation or what did I believe that led me to act as I did?

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

Fear

If we were to take a look at the disease of addiction stripped of its symptoms (drug use or other compulsive behavior), without its most obvious characteristics, we would find a morass of self-centered fear. We're afraid of being hurt or maybe just having to feel too intensely, so we live a sort of half-life, going through the motions of living but never being fully alive. We're afraid of everything that might make us feel, so we isolate and withdraw. We're afraid that people won't like us, so we use drugs to be more comfortable. We're afraid we'll get caught at something and have to pay a price, so we lie or cheat or hurt others to protect ourselves. We're afraid of being alone, so we use and exploit others to avoid feeling that way. We're afraid we won't have enough—of anything—so we selfishly pursue what we want, not caring about the harm we cause in the process. Sometimes, if we've gained things we care about in recovery, we're afraid we'll lose what we have, and so we begin compromising our principles to protect it. Self-centered, self-seeking fear—we need to uproot it so it no longer has the power to destroy.
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 think will happen if I do?
256
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 romantic ones—in the Fourth Step so that we can find out where our choices, beliefs, and behaviors have resulted in unhealthy or destructive relationships. We need to look at our relationships with relatives, spouses or partners, friends and former friends, co-workers and former co-workers, neighbors, people from school, people from clubs and civic organizations, authority figures such as the police, and anyone else we can possibly think of. We should also examine our relationship with a Higher Power. We may be tempted to skip the relationships that didn't last long, such as one-night sexual involvements or perhaps an argument with a teacher whose class we then dropped. But these relationships are important, too. If we think of it or have feelings about it, it's inventory material.
• What conflicts in my personality make it difficult for me to maintain friendships and/or romantic relationships?

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

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

• How did I compulsively seek relationships?

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

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

• Have I had problems making commitments? Describe.

• Have I ever destroyed a relationship because I believed I was going to get hurt anyway so I should get out before that could happen? Describe.
• To what degree do I consider the feelings of others in my relationships? Equal to my own? More important than my own? Of minor importance? Not at all?

• Have I felt like a victim in any of my relationships? (Note: This question is focused on uncovering how we set ourselves up to be victims or how too-high expectations contributed to our being disappointed in people, not on listing instances where we were actually abused.) Describe.

• What have my relationships with my neighbors been like? Do I notice any patterns appearing that carried through no matter where I lived?

• How do I feel about the people I've worked with and for? How have my thinking, beliefs, and behavior caused problems for me at work?

• How do I feel about the people I went to school with (both in childhood and currently)? Did I feel less than or better than the other students? Did I believe I had to compete for attention from the instructor? Did I respect authority figures or rebel against them?

• Have I ever joined any clubs or membership organizations? (Hint: NA is a membership organization.) How did I feel about the other people in the club or organization? Have I made friends in these organizations? Have I joined clubs with high expectations, only to quit in a short time? What
were the expectations and why weren't they fulfilled? What was my part in it?

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

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

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

- Did I become a different person depending on who I was around? Describe.

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

- What defects are most often at play in my relationships (dishonesty, selfishness, control, manipulation, etc.)?
• How can I change my behavior so that I can begin having healthy relationships?

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

355 Sex

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

• How was my sexual behavior based in selfishness?

• How have I used sex in an attempt to avoid loneliness or fill a spiritual void?
• Did I compulsively seek or avoid sex?

• Have any of my sexual practices left me feeling ashamed and guilty? What were they? Why did I feel that way?

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

Abuse

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

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

Recounting these times is bound to cause us to feel a great deal of shame. We cannot afford to let that shame become despair. It is important that we face our behavior, accept responsibility for it, and work to change it. Writing about it here is the first step toward doing that. Working the rest of the steps will help us make amends.

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

- Has being abused affected my relationships with others? How?

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

- Have I ever abused anyone? Who and how?

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

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

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

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

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

• How have I shown concern for others?

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

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

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

• What goals have I accomplished? Do I have others I am taking action to reach? What are they and what action am I taking?
• What are my values? Which ones am I committed to living by, and how?

• How am I showing my gratitude for my recovery?

Secrets

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

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

Moving on

Finishing a Fourth Step is many things—maybe a letdown, maybe exhilarating, maybe uncomfortable. However we feel otherwise, we should definitely feel good about what we’ve accomplished. The work we’ve done in this step will provide the foundation for the work we’ll do in Steps Five through Nine. Now is the time to contact our sponsor and make arrangements to work Step Five.
Region Area Group Individual name: ____________________________
(circle one)
Name: ____________________________
Mailing Address: ____________________________

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

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

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

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IV. General Comments

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