

How It Works
WRITINGS ON THE TWELVE STEPS OF EMOTIONS ANONYMOUS
IN LARGE PRINT
FROM THE BOOK
Emotions Anonymous
REVISED 1995

How It Works
One day at a time

No one who has diligently followed our path has ever been known to fail. "Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program."* If you are hurting and want to change, you can. Recovery depends on being completely honest, open to new ideas, and willing to take the necessary actions.

These are the Twelve Steps which we follow in our program of recovery:

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

From the very beginning, we urge you to be fearless and thorough in following these steps. While some of them may seem too difficult, others unnecessary, and some even incomprehensible, you have everything to gain by trying them. Some of us tried to hold on to our old ways of thinking and behaving, but we found we could not grow in the program until we let go entirely and began to work these steps. We discovered through this program a power greater than ourselves that helped us comprehend and begin working these steps in our daily lives. We learned we did not have to understand or work the program perfectly; we only had to do our best. By daily practice of these steps, we grew emotionally and spiritually. We discovered our true selves. We found recovery. You can too.

Step One

We admitted we were powerless over our emotions — that our lives had become unmanageable.

POWERLESS

When we first came to Emotions Anonymous and heard people say they were powerless, many of us rebelled; certainly we were not powerless. We may have refused to say powerless because we disliked the idea of powerlessness so much. We may have felt frightened or threatened by this idea.

Perhaps you too are uncertain as to whether you are really powerless over your emotions. Look at some of these descriptions of how powerlessness affected many of us and see if any apply to you.

- We were unable to start or stop an emotion.
- We felt helpless and, perhaps, hopeless.
- We could not get well by ourselves no matter how hard we tried.
- We tried analyzing, but it did not work.
- We were not able to change by using just our willpower.
- We were not self-sufficient no matter how much we wanted to be; we needed other people.
- We were powerless over our feelings, positive and negative. Do you ever become angry with someone and try to make that anger go away by using logic and reason? Do you ever feel guilty about something and try to rationalize it away? Do you ever feel lonely even with many people in your life? Have you ever felt afraid when reason said there was nothing to fear? Do you ever say or think, "Why does everything have to happen to me?" If so, you are, we believe, powerless over your emotions.

Our acceptance of powerlessness does not mean we are bad or lack responsibility in other areas of our lives. It means our emotions are causing our behaviors to be other than what we would like. When we come to realize we are powerless, we can then look for a new direction and begin to change. We can see our limitations and acknowledge the reality of our lives.

UNMANAGEABLE

Are our lives truly unmanageable? We ask ourselves if any of these statements apply to us.

- The more we try to control our behavior, the more out of control we become,
- We think the people around us make life unmanageable, but the more we try to change others the more unmanageable our lives become. We are powerless over other people and cannot change them.
- We are oversensitive and touchy about what others say. In our self-centeredness we take the everyday occurrences and actions of other people too personally and too seriously.
- We do not talk to others because we are sure they would not want to talk to us.
- We are unable to accomplish ordinary tasks.
- We have so many problems in our lives we do not know where to begin.
- We feel different and alone.

Our lives become unmanageable for a variety of reasons. Loneliness, shame, insecurity, shyness, or low self-esteem are often among them. Other factors may include fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of not belonging, fear of being different, feelings of inadequacy, rejection of self, self-centeredness, self-denial, or fear

of involvement. We may be experiencing life through a haze of hostility and resentment because of past traumas.

Many symptoms can indicate that our lives are unmanageable. Often physical and psychosomatic illnesses are symptoms. These can include ulcers; stomach pains; headaches; hypertension; skin disorders; heart and circulatory irregularities; urinary and intestinal disorders; or back, muscle, and joint complaints. Of course, all physical symptoms should be evaluated medically, but if no medical reason is found, we must suspect an emotional basis and start looking for the cause. Compulsive perfectionism can be another symptom. If we cannot do something perfectly, we consider ourselves failures. We may react by becoming passive; we sit back and accept whatever others do or say. We may not be happy doing this and probably begin to storm on the inside, but we are not capable of or we fear asserting ourselves in various situations. This can lead to aggression in areas where we feel more in control. For example, if we have difficulty with co-workers or employers, we may come home and take out our frustrations on family members. Another way of reacting to our perfectionism is by rejecting whatever others do. Nothing anyone else does or says is acceptable to us. We criticize everything and, as a result, our relationships with those around us become filled with emotional upheaval.

We may be nervous and panicky or suffer from depression or anxiety. We may be accident prone. We may fantasize about how wonderful life will be when things change. We probably worry a great deal, have trouble sleeping, withdraw from others, become irritable and perhaps even abuse those we love. We may even feel others are talking about us, watching our every move or are out to get us. Abnormal rage and temper tantrums are often symptoms that make us realize something is very wrong. We may be destructive, violent, or even homicidal. We may feel suicidal and may even attempt suicide. For many in EA, these extremes of emotion made us realize that our lives were unmanageable.

Some of us do not have clear-cut psychological problems, but we are living in a way that does not produce much happiness. We are often apathetic. We procrastinate and act phony. We often are judgmental and criticize others because it seems to make us feel better about ourselves, yet we may also let others walk all over us. We seldom say no to requests and often take on too much. We may be filled with feelings of self-pity, resentment, anger, jealousy, envy, greed, intolerance, impatience, selfishness, or any of the many other feelings which are characteristic of unmanageable lives.

Some of us try to rationalize our feelings away. We also may try various ways to escape from our feelings. Some escapes are pills, alcohol, food, unhealthy sexual activity, gambling, shopping, or work. We may focus on needing to rescue others from their problems. Even talking, silence, sleep, reading, exercise, travel, or going to school may become an escape when used to excess. We may be a television or movie addict who lets the rest of the world go by. Anything used to excess can interfere with having a balanced life and prevent us from facing and dealing with our pain.

When our particular escape does not work, we look elsewhere for the help we so desperately need. In turning to EA and the Twelve Steps as a possible answer, we are admitting we have hit our emotional bottom. This is different for each person. For some it means life is uncomfortable and we are looking for a way to be happy. Some of us reach the depths of despair and may need treatment by a mental health professional, medication, or hospitalization. Still others come to Emotions Anonymous in an effort to help another person, but once there, realize we also need help. One thing we all have in common is that this emotional bottom is where we decide we want to do something today to change our life. We are sick and tired of our old ways; we are tired of being the way we are. We realize our life will remain unmanageable if we do not change.

ADMITTING

Admitting we cannot manage our lives is not easy. It is not easy to admit our self-centeredness, self-pity, and resentments. It is difficult to stop blaming others for the way we are and the way we behave. We say, "If my spouse were different," or "If it weren't for my children, my parents, my in-laws, my boss, my job, my neighbors, my house, my car, the climate — anything or anybody — I wouldn't be like this."

Through Step One we begin to learn to accept our emotions as they are and not allow them to control our behavior. As we learn to accept our emotions, we are better able to manage our lives. We can make conscious choices in response to our emotions rather than just reacting and having our emotions manage us. We begin to take responsibility for our lives, regardless of who or what may have influenced us in the past.

This first step is one of honesty and humility. Admitting our human limitations frees us from hiding our imperfections from ourselves and others, thus allowing us to face the reality of our situation. At first, Step One may seem a step of despair, but we learn there is hope. We find we are not alone; there is help. In Step Two we find the strength to restore our health as we begin to rely on spiritual guidance, and our hope grows.

Step Two

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

This is a step of hope. Since we do not have the power to make ourselves well, we need to develop a belief, and then faith, in a power which is greater than ourselves — a Higher Power.

POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES

When we came to EA, some of us had no concept of a Higher Power. Others were very confused about the nature of God. Some viewed God only as something to be feared or someone capable of punishment. Others believed they had a good relationship with their Higher Power, yet were baffled that this did not seem to solve their emotional problems. Some were searching for something in which to believe. Still others had decided there was no God.

In Step two it is our responsibility to formulate our own belief system. We need not follow anyone else's path. Those who have a religious faith which is comfortable to them use that belief. Those who are unclear about what to believe in need only to start exploring the possibilities. This step will work for each of us long before we have a complete idea of our belief system.

Developing this powerful relationship is not always easy and requires us to look honestly at our feelings and beliefs about spiritual matters. It does not matter how this greater power is defined; we simply must develop a working concept of a Higher Power. It does not matter in what or whom we believe. What matters is that we do believe there is something or someone with greater power than we have and will use that power to help us recover. This can be any idea of God, the EA group (the power of many people working together for recovery is greater than one person's power), nature (a force certainly greater than we are), the idea of universal principles, or anything we can accept as being greater than our individual selves.

No longer able to manage our lives, to live at peace with ourselves and others, we are forced to turn to a Higher Power out of desperation. Everything — our growth in EA, serenity, happiness, and well being — depends upon faith in a power greater than our own limited resources. Faith is belief and reliance in a power greater than ourselves. We do not have to make drastic changes to be eligible for our Higher Power's help. This power is available to us right where we are. If we have difficulty developing this relationship, we can begin by trusting another human being, perhaps a sponsor or someone else from our EA group. Step Two requires us to admit the existence of a power greater than ourselves. Once we realize we are not all powerful, we can stop trying to be God and let God be God.

Many of us find through working the Twelve Steps that our concept of a Higher Power develops into a deep personal relationship with a spiritual being, a relationship not possible before the program. A paradox of the program is that being powerless, we find a power to help us.

CAME TO BELIEVE

First we came to a meeting where we saw others in recovery. We began to believe that help was available. Some of us became aware of our poor self-worth. We did not feel worthy of help, whether from the group or from a Higher Power. Then we came to realize we were all equal and as important and valuable as everyone else. Yes, we too were worthy of help. At first, we were very skeptical about this step, but knowing we had little to lose, we took the risk to believe. In time, we came to believe a Higher Power could restore us to sanity, given willingness and open-mindedness on our part.

As we examined our spiritual lives, many of us saw how we were defying God perhaps because God had not delivered what we had prayed for in the past. Perhaps we had met with some great sorrow or disappointment and thought God had deserted us. We may have experienced illness and asked God to make us well, but nothing seemed to happen. Some of us had been abused by our parents or other authority figures, and we have great difficulty with the idea of God as a loving parent. We may be defiant about spiritual matters because we are afraid to give up our control.

In EA we found a Higher Power who was helpful and supportive. We learned to let go of old beliefs which were destructive to us and to seek our own understanding of spiritual matters. We discovered that by attending meetings and working the program we could recognize and accept new principles discarding those which were false or harmful to us.

Some of us thought we were full of faith when we came into the program. We prayed, attended church regularly, and did what we thought were the right things to do. We were convinced that since we tried to be good members of our particular religion, our lives should not be so troubled. We found that quality must be sought in regard to faith, not quantity. We learned belief does not automatically turn into faith. We can believe in God, yet not trust that God will help us. We recognized our own practice of faith needed to be more vital. We opened our minds to a new and more relevant relationship to our Higher Power.

Others of us looked with envy at those who believed. Weren't they lucky? Perhaps by coming to the meetings we would come to believe also. But we learn that believing does not just happen; we must work at it. We need to be willing to invest time and open-minded investigation into developing a concept of a Higher Power that will work for us. With belief comes faith and a willingness to trust in something previously unknown, to trust in a Higher Power to restore us to that sanity we so desperately want.

Believing in a power greater than our selves is different from having faith in a Higher Power. We do not simply wish for more faith. To develop our faith we must use it. We show little faith if we continue to hold onto our fears and anxieties. When we recognize these are making our lives unmanageable and that we are powerless, we turn them over to our Higher Power. We believe our Higher Power will take care of us. Faith comes as we see the miracles our Higher Power works in our lives and in the lives of others. Miracles are not just big, grand events. We gain faith as we look at what is going on around us and begin to see each gift or simple intervention which is a miracle produced by our Higher Power. As we begin to recognize these and give the credit to our Higher Power, our understanding, belief, and faith grows.

Our lives may improve without believing in a Higher Power, but we cannot reach the ultimate serenity without true belief in a power greater than ourselves.

RESTORE US TO SANITY

Restore means we will be brought back to health and strength. How wonderful! Some of us remember having had emotional well being. Some cannot recall a time when we did not feel at odds with life. We find comfort in the idea that at some time in the past we had been healthy and can be so once again. Our lost sense of well being can be restored to us. This is the sense of hope provided by Step Two.

The word sanity in Step Two is difficult to accept for some of us. Sanity is sane thinking, common sense. The dictionary defines sanity as reasonable behavior. We need only look at our past behavior — temper tantrums, uncontrolled anger, compulsive behaviors, silence, excessive sleep, or excessive anything — to know our behavior was certainly not sane or rational. We hear others refer to insanity not as dementia or outright craziness, but as repeating the same actions or behaviors over and over again and expecting different results. After giving the matter some thought we had to admit the word sanity is appropriate.

The more fully we admit we need to be restored to sanity, the more we will seek help from our Higher Power as a solution to our problems and difficulties. The more fully we believe our Higher Power can restore us

to sanity, the more we will seek that help, and the more willing we will be to make our third-step decision, to turn our will and lives over to our Higher Power.

Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as -we understood Him.

In Step Three we are asked to demonstrate our faith. We no longer merely accept the idea of a Higher Power which can help us, but we allow this spiritual power to direct our lives. We stop fighting and resisting. We let go and let God.

Now we have an opportunity to build a new life. We have faced our dilemma and know the more we deny or fight our feelings, the more the depression, anxieties, and fears close in. We had to stop trying to be self-sufficient if we want to get well. Looking at our lives we realized on our own we had not done such a great job. Since emotions are not tangible things, we must admit we cannot change ourselves by willpower alone.

The first three steps are pivotal. The acceptance of ourselves, of others, and of our Situations is the basis of these three steps. It is through them that we set the foundation for working the rest of the program. Therefore, we come back to them time and time again.

Acceptance is not apathy. Acceptance is: "This is who I am; this is the best I can do today. Stop fighting." However, acceptance does not mean we resign ourselves to an unkind fate. It simply means we can live today without fighting things which we cannot change. Apathy says, "I give up. It isn't worth it. I don't care; I don't want to try." Apathy demonstrates how little regard we have for ourselves. It is giving in to the distorted view that there is no hope for us. Acceptance frees us to change. Apathy keeps us locked into our emotional and spiritual illness.

We can begin to practice this step at times of indecision or emotional distress by saying the Serenity Prayer:

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

MADE A DECISION

In spite of all the hope we feel for our possible recovery, many find this third-step decision difficult. Some of us want ironclad guarantees before we decide to turn things over to our Higher Power. Others are fearful of making such a commitment. We are not even sure we can live up to this commitment. What if we make this decision and things do not turn out the way we want? After being in the program awhile, we realize that if we want to progress we have to make this decision. We see how the lives of others improve as they take this step. We can choose to take it also.

When we first make the decision to turn our lives over to a Higher Power, we feel good about it. We may perhaps be uneasy or frightened that we will not be acceptable to our Higher Power. We soon learn, however, that when we surrender ourselves totally just as we are — symptoms, feelings, imperfections — the way opens for our Higher Power to supply us with what we need.

TURN OVER OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES

We find we cannot live by self-will alone; many of us have tried and failed. Willpower is never as successful as we hope. After all, other people have willpower too, and we often find ourselves in conflict with them when we pit our will against theirs. In our efforts to control situations we may show generosity, self-

sacrifice, consideration, or kindness, but more often we are driven by fears, resentments, self-pity, or self-delusion and we end up stepping on the toes of others. They may retaliate and hurt us. We find our words and actions have often placed us in a position which allows us to be hurt. We have to admit that basically our troubles in such instances are of our own making. They arise out of our misdirected self-will though we often have not recognized this. In fact, in reacting blindly to our emotions, our self-will has run rampant, causing us to behave poorly. It is essential that we rid ourselves of this self-centeredness, but we are unable to do so by wishing it away or using our own willpower. We have to have the help of our Higher Power.

Before we can turn our will over to a Higher Power, we have to give up the idea that we must be entirely self-sufficient. Making this decision demonstrates a commitment to use the program. We are willing to try something new. However, we cannot just fold our hands and say, "God, do everything." As God supplies the power, we are the ones who have to take the actions and make the changes needed to achieve a healthier life. It does no good to analyze God's will. We do not always know what is God's will for us, nor does it even matter if we do. As we develop a partnership with our Higher Power and begin to know ourselves, we begin to recognize the direction that seems spiritually right for us.

The key to working this step is our willingness to turn over our will and our lives to the care of the God of our understanding. We may be reluctant to do this until we have some level of trust that our Higher Power will actually take care of us. Developing caring, trusting relationships with other people paves the way for many of us to trust our Higher Power. At first, we may decide to relinquish only those parts of our lives which are causing us the most pain. From this beginning we can build our confidence as we see positive changes take place in our lives.

GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM

For those of us who have negative feelings about religion and God, this step is a potential stumbling block. We can accept many of the ideas of Step Two, but some of us feel this specific definition of a Higher Power is going too far. If we are offended by, or unable to use, the words "God" or "Him," we can choose other words that work better for us in describing our Higher Power. We need to remember we are all free to define our Higher Power in any way we wish.

Many of us have believed since childhood in a God of fear and punishment. We think that for God to accept us we must be obedient and strive for perfection. Since God is watching us and keeping track of our wrongdoings, we will surely never measure up when the final tally is taken. We feel we are doomed. With this concept of God, it can be very difficult to look at this step and think about turning our will: and our lives over to God. We need an image of a caring Higher Power who can restore us to sanity and give us the strength to change. If we do not have a concept of a loving God, we ask our Higher Power to help us develop one. We become willing to examine our spiritual beliefs and learn to trust a power greater than ourselves.

THE CARE OF GOD

When we let go, many remarkable things follow. Being caring and all-powerful, God provides what we need as we let go. We find courage where we had none before. As we become more secure in this powerful relationship, we lose our self-centeredness and become less focused on petty matters. We are freed from the agony of trying to be God ourselves. We release to God the responsibility of managing our lives and the lives of those around us. We feel less resentful and defensive. We become interested in contributing to life around us. As we experience this new power in our lives, we begin to enjoy peace of mind. As we discover we can more

easily face life, we become more conscious of our Higher Power working in our lives. We begin to lose our fear of the past, the present, and the future. We begin to live one day at a time.

We can now put ourselves in God's care by making this humble request:

"God, I offer myself to you, to build and to do with me as you wish. Help me let go of my self-centeredness, so I can better recognize your will for me. Help me overcome my difficulties so others can see how your love, wisdom, and strength allows me to change. Thank you for being with me. May I do your will always."*

We found a loving God. At last we can abandon ourselves entirely to the care of our Higher Power. Now we are ready for the vigorous action of Step Four.

Step Four

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Our faith in a Higher Power, along with our decision to allow this Power to guide us, provides the courage we need to do a personal inventory. This inventory is an honest look at ourselves, perhaps for the first time. It is a very necessary look. We try to be as objective as possible because we need this information for our recovery.

We may want clear-cut directions on how to do the inventory, however, there are many ways to proceed. We find talking to others who have done theirs or reviewing the many guides which are available can help us gather ideas. Each person does a personal inventory in the way that seems best to him or her. However, we do not let perfectionism get in the way of this step. There is no perfect way to do our inventory. Sometimes we add more of this inventory later since our self-honesty increases as we recover. The important thing is to begin. A thorough and healthy inventory usually includes a balance of assets and defects. In doing our personal inventory we write down both positive and negative character traits. It is necessary to get a true picture of ourselves, so we seek out our strengths as well as our weaknesses.

It is important to write down this inventory in order to achieve an honest appraisal. It is less likely for us to rationalize or forget what is written down, and, therefore, we can deal with the issues more objectively.

SEARCHING

We search honestly and thoroughly covering all aspects of our lives. We list experiences and behaviors from the past which bother us. We do not knowingly exclude anything. While it sometimes appears that the feelings we list are defects of character, they are not. Feelings are neither good nor bad. We discover that the way we have reacted to our emotions has shaped our character and the manner in which we conduct ourselves in the world. We need to look honestly at the beliefs and attitudes on which our character is based. We search out the reasons which cause us to feel we have failed.

Self-honesty brings self-acceptance and a realistic understanding of where and how we can change. We have no defects which are unique; we are all human. Anything we allow ourselves to become aware of can be changed. It is necessary for us to look within.

FEARLESS

Fearlessness is the attitude we need to go ahead and take our inventory. To be fearless means accepting the challenge to be open and honest in looking within, regardless of our reluctance or apprehensions. Our Higher Power gives us the courage to do this. As we proceed with our inventory, uncomfortable and uneasy feelings sometimes arise. Looking at ourselves and past behaviors can cause buried feelings to surface. It helps to remember that our source of support and guidance in completing this inventory is our Higher Power. We may need to stop for a while, talk to someone, or go back to Step Three.

The more unrealistic self-image we have, the more difficult it is to uncover our defects. There is pain in every healing process and the only way out of our pain is to move through it. As we grow and face our pain in Step Four, the way is opened to the serenity we seek.

MORAL INVENTORY

Morality is our sense of right and wrong, and it is an outward reflection of our inner self. Our prejudices, intolerance, criticisms, fears, and guilt are all part of our morality, as are selfishness, egotism, and resentment.

Morality comes from belief; and attitudes which, starting in childhood, we accepted as truths. Some of these beliefs may be erroneous. Our attitudes may be unrealistic or based on conditions that no longer exist in our lives. We may be living according to someone else's morality rather than our own. As we discover what we truly believe, we are able to act more in accordance with those beliefs. The purpose of this inventory is to uncover the ineffective behaviors we have developed and to look at the ways we have been controlled by them. Among the important things we deal with in our inventory are resentments. These feelings of ill will toward other people or institutions destroy peace of mind. When we resent someone or something, we unknowingly allow that person or thing to control us. It hurts us, though it may not hurt the person we resent. They probably are not even aware of it. Harboring deep resentments leads only to a life of frustration and unhappiness. Because of this, we list in our inventory resentments we have had toward people, institutions, or principles. We ask ourselves why we are still angry toward them. We then describe how these resentments have affected the way we think, feel, or behave. Is it our pride, self-esteem, ambition, personal relationships, or financial security that is hurt or threatened? If we can identify the emotion which results, we write this down.

The following are examples we might list.

- I Resent my boss because he never gives positive feedback, is critical, promoted someone else instead of me. This affects my financial security, self-esteem, pride, relationships with co-workers. I feel I am a failure at my job; fear of failure.
- I Resent my parents because they treat me like a child, don't respect my abilities, complain that I never write or call. This affects my pride, family relations, self-esteem, affection toward them. I feel I am not acceptable as I am, that I must be who they want me to be; fear of rejection.
- I Resent my car because it is a lemon, always breaking down. I can't afford a new one. This affects my pride, sense of security, independence. I feel I was stupid to buy it, that I seem foolish to others; fear of making decisions. Looking at the above examples, we see the word fear in every one. In many situations fear is the first emotion to take over. Fear is the result of threats to our self-esteem, pride, and well being. When we look at our resentments, we find they are usually a reaction to being afraid. We do not like to be afraid so we cover it up with resentments which give us a false sense of being in control.

In our inventory we list our fears. We review our past conduct to see how these fears have influenced our thinking, controlled our behavior, and affected relationships with others. Had fear caused us to be selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom have we hurt? Do we feel guilty? Do we unjustifiably feel jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness? We write all this down.

As we grew up we may have acquired guilt, shame, or embarrassment for our sexual thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Doing our inventory helps us bring these tormenting ghosts out into the open and be honest about our sexual experiences. We had to stop judging others or ourselves. Hiding this guilt and shame only keeps us from becoming well. We will continue to reject ourselves and others until we accept our human limitations.

Continuing our inventory, we list all other aspects of ourselves at which we need to look. If we hold deep secrets, we write them down. Anything, when acknowledged, can be worked through without it becoming a continual attitude or behavior problem. These negative attitudes or behaviors are defects of character and are the driving force behind the wrongs we have done. For example, to deny our feeling of self-pity encourages our attitude of "Poor me, I've got it so tough." Understanding; his, we realize we are human and not bad because we

feel this way. We can accept; hat this characteristic is part of us for the present. A defect of character will become. less of a problem as we are willing to work on it in Steps Five, Six, and Seven.

OF OURSELVES

While writing our inventory we concentrate only on ourselves. This is our inventory, not another person's. We consider only our own involvement in situations even when something may have not been entirely our fault. In doing so we become aware of how self-centered we are and how our ego keeps us in this self-centeredness. We see where we have contributed to our own difficulties by being selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened.

If we are thorough about our personal inventory, we write down a lot. We deal ^with our resentments and fears and begin to see their terrible destructiveness. As we list things on paper, we are better able to see our faults and admit our wrongs. We list people we have hurt by our behavior and use this list later in our eighth step. We begin to learn tolerance and patience toward ourselves and others.

Through this honest personal inventory, we become more aware of our human-ness. We begin to see the character defects that make us uncomfortable, that cause us difficulty with ourselves and others. We also look for our assets because our goal is to build a healthy, realistic image of who we are. We list our good qualities, in spite of how difficult it may be at first to admit them, and are surprised how many there are.

With this tangible evidence of our willingness to look at ourselves honestly, we are ready to move forward to Step Five.

Step Five

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

All of EA's Twelve Steps ask us to go against our normal inclinations. They all deflate our egos, and this step is perhaps the greatest ego deflator of them all. Here we are asked to admit exactly what we have done wrong, not just to God, and ourselves but to someone else as well. It was not enough to write things down in our fourth-step inventory. We need to talk about these things — out loud and in person. As unsettling as this may sound to us, this process will prove to be of great benefit in our recovery. Step Five is absolutely necessary in producing an enduring serenity and peace of mind. Thinking about this step will do us no good; we gather our courage once again and go into action.

ADMITTING

We already admitted our wrongs by writing our inventory, but solitary self-appraisal is not enough. For instance, too much guilt can cause us to exaggerate our shortcomings and anxiety or pride can cause us to minimize our defects. Sometimes our self-centeredness keeps us thinking other people are at fault for our behavior, or we are under constant fear and tension which makes us want to escape from reality. Admitting who we really are to another person is the only way to get a true picture of ourselves.

If we were honest in writing our inventory, we may have included certain distressing and humiliating memories which we hoped would remain our secret. We are certain no one would ever understand or accept us if they knew what we had done or what had happened to us, so we worry about sharing our inventory as this step asks us to do. We may feel lonely or isolated which is further reason why we need to admit these things to another person.

Admitting the truth about ourselves permits us to enter into new relationships with ourselves and with our world. Admitting means acknowledging those areas which we need to change.

EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS

It is necessary to share the specific examples we wrote down in Step Four, not simply to say we feel resentful, fearful, and guilty. We have to deal with the exact nature of our wrongs by revealing them to someone else. The easiest and surest way to be specific is to read aloud to another person what we have written. This way, we are certain to leave nothing out.

When doing our fifth step, we go over everything in our inventory. It is necessary to share all of our inventory, for if we knowingly omit something, that will likely prolong our misery. If we are determined to get well, we will be honest. By holding back nothing, we are on the road to recovery.

TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING

It is important to admit our inventory to God, to ourselves, and to another person. If we leave out one of these three, our fifth step will not provide the strong foundation we need for the rest of the program. Just as a chair or table cannot stand with one of its legs missing, so our recovery will not be steady unless we have revealed our inventory to another person, to our Higher Power, and to ourselves.

We developed a partnership with our Higher Power in Steps Two and Three, so it seems less embarrassing to share our secrets and negative character traits with our Higher Power than facing another

person. After all, God knows everything we have done, yet still loves and accepts us. When actually doing the fifth step, many chose to begin with a prayer, perhaps the Serenity Prayer, as a way of inviting our Higher Power to be a part of this step.

It is in the telling to someone else and, consequently, listening to ourselves that we begin to get a true understanding of who we actually are. Here we no longer try to maintain that public image which often does not fit with our private selves. By being honest with another person we confirm that we are being honest with ourselves and with God.

The fifth step is best taken with a person who has a working knowledge of the twelve-step program because it is very important that this person understand what we are trying to accomplish. We do not want him or her to excuse our behavior or try to fix us, but simply to be the witness to our honest inventory. Our fifth-step person may be a member of a twelve-step program or a counselor, clergy, doctor, or similar professional person. While this person may give insight, encouragement, or suggestions, he or she is primarily a listener. For this to be a positive and successful experience, it is important that this person be trustworthy and understanding, someone who will not betray our confidence and with whom we feel comfortable. This person must also be accepting and non-judgmental.

We gain a great deal by completing Step Five. We will usually rid ourselves of our sense of isolation and loneliness. We gain the feeling of belonging, a sense of kinship with other people, and a closeness to our Higher Power. Some of us experience an immediate feeling of relief as our fear and pain subsides, and a healing tranquility comes over us. Others feel vibrant and alive, as if "walking on cloud nine." Because we were led to an understanding, accepting fifth-step person, we realize God really does love us. Many who take this step actually feel the presence of a personal Higher Power for the first time. Even those who already have faith become conscious of God as never before.

With others the relief comes more gradually, and there is not a sudden feeling of release. Generally over the next several days, we become aware that things are not bothering us as much and we feel better about ourselves. The terrible burden of shame is lifted and a pervading sense of peace takes over.

As we experience support and compassion from the person to whom we share our inventory, we feel forgiven. At the same time, honestly sharing what we have discovered about ourselves helps us to forgive ourselves and others.

Immediately following the fifth step, many of us find a quiet place to review carefully what has transpired. We thank our Higher Power for the strength and courage given to us. We feel gratitude for the new level of trust our relationship with the God of our understanding has attained. Now that we have gained much self-awareness and have shared this awareness, we are ready for the remaining steps of the program.

Step Six

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

By doing our inventory in Step Four and sharing it in Step Five, we learned a great deal about ourselves. Behind our resentments, fears, and wrongs we discovered some defects of character. These defects of character are our negative habits of thinking and acting, our automatic reactions to life, our ineffective behaviors. Now, in Step Six we strive to further identify these defects of character and become willing to have them removed.

WERE ENTIRELY READY

This sounds so simple, for wouldn't anyone be ready to get rid of characteristics which cause life to be unmanageable? Of course we are ready! However, the nature of our illness is such that readiness is not as easy to acquire as we might hope. We expect it to be easy to change now that we really understand ourselves, but often we are surprised to find how difficult it actually is to change our thought patterns, attitudes, and behaviors. We are so comfortable with some of our defects that we do not even want to think about getting rid of them. They have been a part of our lives for such a long time that we depend on them. We depend on some defects for our sense of identity or to maintain the illusion that we are in control of our lives. Occasionally we rationalize that some of them are insignificant and not really causing much difficulty. However, Step Six is very clear: that we must be ready for all defects to be removed. We cannot cling to any of them and think we will never give them up. In order to make further progress in our spiritual and emotional growth, we have to become ready to let go of all ineffective behaviors and let God help us to change.

As we focus on Step Six, we become aware of how deeply ingrained most of our character defects are. The process of taking inventory revealed how many of our defects developed as defenses against harm or trauma we experienced in the past. Because of the deep roots of our defects, it is clear that at this stage we may not be able to face all of our defects at once. However, we have to strive for the objective of being entirely ready to have all defects removed, often by preparing to have a few defects removed at a time. To do this, we need patience and persistence, since this transformation of character is a lifelong process. We also have to accept the fact that we probably will never achieve perfection in practicing this step. Accepting this is the beginning of becoming ready to let go of one of our biggest character defects, the need to be perfect. It sometimes seems that no matter how much willpower we exert, negative behaviors, attitudes, and thoughts continue to plague us. To move past them we have to move from just wanting to be willing to actually being willing to live differently. The key for us is willingness; until we are willing to make some attempt to be ready to have our defects removed, there is no way they would disappear by themselves. To do this, we pray for the willingness to have them removed.

HAVE GOD REMOVE ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

We make a beginning by picking out the defect which causes us the most pain. To reduce our dependence on it we deliberately replace it, as much as possible, with the opposite character asset. For example, if procrastination is a problem, we would try to do things in a timely manner. We act as if this character defect were already removed. By making conscious, healthy choices in our thoughts and actions we demonstrate to our Higher Power and to ourselves that we are, in fact, ready and willing for the defect to be removed. Here we have another opportunity to give up self-will. If we hold onto our character defects, we do our will; if we let go, we do God's will.

Most of us want to be well yesterday. However, we did not become emotionally sick overnight, and we cannot expect to get well in a short time. Because as human beings we are limited in the power we possess, we must go on to Step Seven and humbly ask the God of our understanding for help in removing our deeply rooted behaviors and attitudes.

Step Seven

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

In Step Six we became ready to have the God of our understanding remove our character defects. We did this by becoming acutely aware of our defects and developing the willingness to let go of them. We tried to bring our personal will into alignment with the will of our Higher Power. In Step Seven we continue this process by asking God to remove our shortcomings. Shortcomings are the actions caused by our character defects. These behaviors demonstrate where we have come up short of reaching our potential. We need to be rid of our defects in order to correct our behavior and to live happy, serene, and manageable lives. As defects are removed, assets replace them. All of this will be done by our Higher Power as we demonstrate our readiness and ask that it be done. The efforts are ours, but the results come from God.

HUMBLY ASKED HIM

Humility is the key to working Step Seven. When we first come into the program many of us misunderstand the meaning of humility. Some think humility means feeling inferior to other people. Others have been taught not to act too self-confident or to talk about the good in themselves because that appears conceited and, therefore, not humble. Some confuse humility with humiliation. Mistakenly we think we must be doormats for other people, that we must be meek and non-assertive. Our character defects cause us to feel hopeless, worthless, depressed, and anxious — in other words, humiliated, but this was not humility. As we progress in the program we learn what humility is. The origin of the word humble is humus, meaning soil or ground. Humility is having our feet planted firmly on the ground, having good basic values and standing on them. It is having a clear view of reality, seeing the truth about ourselves. It is a realistic sense of one's position in relation to God and to other people. It involves knowing we are no better or worse than any other person. When we are humble, we do not compare ourselves to others because comparing only causes us to feel superior or inferior. This may cause us to focus on others and avoid looking at our own character defects. To be humble is to be willing to learn to be open minded to a new way of life. Deciding to ask for help and using the twelve-step program to transform our lives are steps toward humility. Humility encompasses the qualities of honesty, acceptance, looking for the good, and trust.

Our work on the previous six steps has brought us some humility, and we have become aware of our dependency on the God of our understanding. We try to set aside our own willful desires and to seek out God's will in our lives. We have also become aware that we may have an unhealthy dependency on one or more people. We feel we cannot survive without them, that we need them in order to be whole or safe. Of course we need people, but not in unhealthy dependent ways. We realize a large part of our growth depends on sharing with others and building meaningful, interdependent relationships.

What can we gain by being humble? Humility helps us transform failure and misery into the assets of success and happiness. Humility allows us freely to share the details of our personal history to help others who are suffering with emotional problems.

REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS

We had to turn away from proud resistance and ask a power greater than ourselves to remove our shortcomings. When ready, we humbly ask,

"Higher Power, I am now willing to totally give myself to you, the good and bad. I ask that you now remove from me every single defect of character which prevents me from being useful to you and to others. Grant me strength, as I go out to do your will."*

If we are entirely ready to have our shortcomings removed and believe that our Higher Power will remove them, then character assets which we need will replace them. Changes occur though not always according to our time frame or exactly as we have planned. If something is not immediately removed, we realized that we need to be patient, and we probably have more work to do. Perhaps we are not yet entirely ready to let go of this particular defect. We may still need a defect because there is some lesson yet to be learned from it. We may have made demands instead of humbly asking God for help.

As we grow in humility, we acquire a new understanding of our relationship with God. Now, in Steps Eight and Nine, we work toward improving our relationships with other people.

Step Eight

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

The previous seven steps have been a process of changing our self-centered attitudes and actions by looking within ourselves. It is now time to repair damage done in the past by making the necessary amends. Step Eight helps us restore personal relationships and lifts us out of our isolation. With it we can accept responsibility for our past in order to let go of the old pain. Releasing the past brings healing and allows us to live in harmony with ourselves and others.

MADE A LIST OF PERSONS WE HAD HARMED

When we did Steps Four and Five we revealed some of the wrongs we had done to others. In Step Eight we examine our fourth-step inventory to see where we need to improve relations with the people in our lives. From our inventory we begin to list the people we have harmed. Looking back over our lives we see where we have been at fault. We review our lives as far back as we can remember, focusing on whom we have hurt and in what ways we have hurt them. We list them on paper to show that we are serious about completing this step. Our list might include family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, public contacts, and business associates. We might also list places of employment, stores, businesses, or other institutions where we have stolen something or caused damage.

Fear and pride often cause us to resist this step and hinder our making a complete list. If this is the case, we work on these character defects through Steps Six and Seven. We do the best we can for now, realizing that as our awareness and honesty grow we will be able to add other names to our list who have not occurred to us yet.

If our list includes almost everyone we know, we have to take another look at it. Some of us may indeed have been very domineering, aggressive, or sarcastic and, therefore, may have hurt many people. On the other hand, our self-centeredness and tendency to believe the world revolves around us sometimes causes us to include unnecessary names because we exaggerate the importance of our smallest word or deed. In reality, some people we list probably will not even know what we are talking about if we try to apologize. However, we do not use this as an excuse for leaving out a name. When in doubt we put down the names of all we think we have harmed and re-evaluate our list with the help of an objective person when the time comes to actually make amends.

Many of us realize the person hurt the most has been ourselves, and we have to include our own name on this list. We may have hurt ourselves by blaming ourselves for things that were beyond our control or by judging ourselves too harshly. We must accept and forgive ourselves if we are to accept and forgive others.

BECAME WILLING

Many of us react with disbelief, anger, or fear when we first become aware that we might owe amends to others for what we have done. Fear causes us to not want to reopen old wounds and remind others of our transgressions if there is a chance they have forgotten about them. Our egos may insist we are blameless. We rationalize that if we have harmed others, it was their fault. We avoid this kind of thinking in order not to turn this step around. Step Eight is about whom we have harmed, not who has harmed us. If instead of looking at our past wrongs, we obsess about who has harmed us, we will not recover. We do not blame others but instead take responsibility for our own lives and actions. Similarly, we do not rationalize that our past wrongs should be

excused because we were sick. Only by taking responsibility and making amends will we be able to put the past behind us.

Through calm, thoughtful reflection on all of our personal relationships, we gain insight about ourselves and awareness of our character defects. We can then see how we need to change. As our understanding grows, we see how the process of making amends is not so much for their sake as it is for ours. We cannot effectively change our behavior until we look at our past and consider making restitution where needed. If we are to transform our lives and become healthy, we have to be willing to clear away as much wreckage from the past as we can. We want loving, healthy relationships, so we have to start practicing the skills that are likely to foster them.

Once we have our list, we look it over to see if we are willing to make amends to everyone on it. Often, we are not. If there are some on the list to whom we feel we can make sincere amends, we do not delay and go on to Step Nine. For those whom we are not yet ready to face, we continue to strive for willingness by asking for help from our Higher Power, discussing our feelings about the situation with others, and continuing to work the program.

For this step to be successful, we need to become willing to change our behavior. True amends are made by changing the way we behave toward others. If we do not accept and forgive others as they are, we will not make amends with dignity, self-respect, and humility. In Step Nine we are going to others to make our amends; therefore, in this step we first need to forgive them. Our willingness grows as we realize not everyone needs to agree with our views. As we become more tolerant and accepting and, therefore, less rigid and judgmental, our willingness to make amends increases.

In the process of thinking about needed amends we may reopen emotional wounds. This is good, for if these feelings remain deeply buried in our minds they will inhibit our recovery. It is important for us to let go of these painful memories and the circumstances surrounding them. By taking responsibility, we will no longer continue to blame or punish ourselves. By making amends, we regain our integrity and self-worth. We face the truth about our behavior in Step Eight. Our willingness to right our wrongs increases as we are convinced that our growth and serenity depend on our forgiveness of others and the release of old pain. We can now move on to Step Nine and begin to make amends.

Step Nine

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

In Step Nine we continue to take responsibility for our past actions. We must go to the people we have harmed and attempt to right our wrongs. There is a good reason why this step does not come sooner in the program. Since our purpose is not to cause further harm, but to improve our relationships, we must have changed sufficiently to make successful amends. This step is not meant to humiliate us, but it is necessary to free us from guilt. Through it we also forgive ourselves for our past so we can live a better life today.

MADE AMENDS

To make amends means to change or improve something or to correct an error. Making amends is not simply saying we are sorry, although an apology might be a part of an amend. We make amends by changing our behavior. We begin to act differently toward those in our lives. In making amends we try to be humble, polite, tactful, and sensible; in this way we do not become a doormat. Sometimes it requires time or money, not just words, to make amends.

If our own name is on our eighth-step list, we may have to make amends to ourselves before we go further. We have already made a beginning by coming to the program, but we make further amends to ourselves by choosing healthy patterns of living. As we work the steps, we grow in self-respect and self-esteem. We begin to accept ourselves and develop the right attitude for making amends to others.

We do not put off our amends. When we have worked Steps One through Eight we know we are ready and it is then time for action. If there is any doubt in our mind as to whether making amends to someone might cause harm to them or others, we consult a person who can give an objective opinion, perhaps a sponsor or a fifth-step person. We do not procrastinate unless there is a valid reason for delay.

We do not have to make amends for thoughts or feelings we have toward others. These really have hurt no one but ourselves, unless we have acted on them, and in that case we may owe amends. On the other hand, we do not hesitate to make amends for things which we think might seem insignificant to others. If we feel the need to make amends and are certain it will cause no harm to anyone, it has to be done for our own peace of mind.

We do not take this step in a hurry. It has to be given proper thought and planning. It does not matter where we begin. We can make the difficult amends first or the easier ones first. We need to plan where and when we will meet to avoid interruption and what we will say so as not to blame them. It is best to keep our amends simple: avoiding a great deal of explanation beyond stating what we have done that harmed them and how we intend to repair it. It is often helpful to allow some time for prayer and meditation before making amends to insure the correct outcome for everyone.

We make amends without expecting the same in return from the other person. We have to take the risk that our amends might not be accepted. Even when that does happen, we still benefit from our attempt. We know we have done what we could and so have no more need to feel guilty. We realize this amends process is more about forgiving ourselves than about receiving forgiveness from others. In most cases: however, our amends are well received and relationships are improved as people see we are consistent in our new behaviors.

We do not apologize for having gossiped about a person if there is a chance he or she is not aware of the gossip. To do so would only cause more hurt. But we can make amends by admitting to the people with whom we have shared the gossip that we were wrong to have done so. We can also strive to stop our tendency to

gossip or to listen to gossip. This constitutes making indirect amends to the person we had gossiped about and direct amends to ourselves as we practice honesty and humility,

For some wrongs we may never be fully able to make amends. If we honestly know we would correct them if we could, then we can consider them taken care of. Sometimes people cannot be contacted in person because they live too far away. In that case we make our amend by sending them an honest letter of apology or making a telephone call. If people on our list are no longer living or if contacting them in person would add more damage to what was already done, we can make these amends through a fifth-step person. We can also visit the grave of the deceased and make our amends there, or write a letter as if they were still alive. Alternately, we can treat other people in the way we would have treated them if we had the opportunity to make the amends.

As we thoroughly and honestly work the program through Step Nine, we start to notice new attitudes and feelings in ourselves.

1. We realize a new freedom and happiness.
2. We do not regret the past or wish to shut the door on it.
3. We comprehend the word serenity, and we know peace of mind.
4. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we see how our experience can benefit others.
5. The feelings of uselessness and self-pity lessen.
6. We have less concern about self and gain interest in others.
7. Self-seeking slips away.
8. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life changes.
9. Our relationships with other people improve.
10. We intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
11. We acquire a feeling of security within ourselves.
12. We realize that God is doing for us what we could not do ourselves.*

These statements form the Twelve Promises of Emotions Anonymous. They may seem idealistic, exaggerated, or extravagant at first, but they really are possible. At our meetings we see them coming true in those around us. Some of these promises may be realized quickly, others slowly, but they will all develop naturally as a result of honestly working the EA program.

Realizing the many benefits of practicing this program, we want to maintain our growth. To do this we go on to Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve.

Step Ten

Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Our lives are being transformed as we grow in self-awareness. Daily practice of the remaining steps will help us reinforce this new way of life. Although we have grown in many ways by this point, our progress toward acquiring lasting maturity and serenity will require our continued practice of the twelve-step principles. Steps One through Nine may never be completely done, and we return to them as often as necessary to continue to apply them in our daily lives. We find emotional and spiritual growth to be a lifelong process.

In doing the fourth-step inventory we dealt honestly with our past so that we could free ourselves from it. This tenth-step inventory helps us deal with the present as we cope with daily living. Now that we are aware of our human imperfections, we realize we can easily fall back into our old ways of thinking and behaving. With this inventory we review our day, correct our errors, accept ourselves and others, and plan ways to try to do better tomorrow. We need to be patient and persistent in doing this because our goal is progress, not perfection.

Each of us decides the best way to do our inventory. Some take their inventory in the morning and review the previous day; some take it in the evening and review that day. Some take a spot check inventory during the day when their feelings tell them it is necessary to do so. If we are hurting, we need to determine what is causing our pain. When we see conflict in our lives, we look for the character defect which is causing the problem. We then have a choice of continuing to hang onto that character defect or hurt feeling or replacing it with the opposite character asset in order to resolve the conflict.

When taking our inventory we look to see if we are setting realistic goals for ourselves. Do we acknowledge our human limitations and abilities? Are we satisfied with where we are, what we are, or what we have? Do we allow other people to be human too? Do we expect too much from others? Do we continue to rationalize our thoughts and feelings as an excuse not to accept reality? Do we utilize what we have learned in the program? Have we learned to make plans without planning the results? Do we insist on being in control? In reviewing our day, we look for the positive things we have done and the successes we have achieved. We take stock of what our Higher Power has provided 26

For us and take the opportunity to be grateful for it. We accept ourselves each day, whether we have done well or have slipped back into old habits. We try not to be discouraged if we fall short of our ideals. These disciplines are part of our new way of life, and we cannot expect to do them perfectly every time. We gain confidence in our new way of life by continual practice.

We continue to watch for the self-centeredness or egotism which causes our character defects. When this is evident, we ask our Higher Power to help us be willing to have it removed. We avoid holding onto negative feelings. We cannot afford to hold on to anger, resentment, or self-pity. We avoid sulking or long silences which can result from pride or vengeance. Any of these behaviors can keep us off balance and propel us into emotional binges. We find it is pointless to be angry or resentful with people who are also suffering from the pains of being human. We are happier when we accept responsibility daily for our actions and do not fall back into the pattern of blaming others.

When we feel we have failed, we promptly admit it to ourselves and, if necessary, to others. We forgive ourselves and others. If we try and fail, at least we have tried. It is often through our failures that we learn more about ourselves. We learn not to take ourselves too seriously. We benefit by gaining a sense of humor. We find that we can laugh at ourselves.

Sometimes we find it necessary to take a more detailed inventory once or twice a year. Viewing a longer period of time allows us to see recurring situations which need our attention and to recognize our progress as we

identify positive changes we have made. We can also do an inventory about a specific person or area of our lives which is causing us difficulty. This might be a family member, our job, or financial situation. By focusing only on this one area, we can often see changes we need to make, what amends are needed, and a new course of action which will bring better results for all involved.

When doing our inventory we may need to discuss things with someone to gain a clearer understanding of the situation. If we feel the need, we do this as soon as we can. When we recognize old behaviors and thinking, we attempt to stop ourselves and ask our Higher Power for help in removing them. If we feel we have harmed anyone, we make amends quickly and sincerely. An emotional slip can result if we procrastinate with any aspect of our inventory.

Through this process of continual self-appraisal we maintain our honesty and humility, we focus on living one day at a time, and we continue our progress in recovery. We realize that any measure of serenity has come to us by the grace of God. We further develop our reliance on our Higher Power in Step Eleven.

Step Eleven

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.

The Twelve Steps help us develop a partnership with the God of our understanding, no matter what image or concept we choose. In the previous steps we explored our spiritual side and established contact with a power greater than ourselves. We developed a personal understanding of this power as we surrendered our will and allowed ourselves to be guided and strengthened by our Higher Power. Step Eleven addresses our need to maintain and deepen this relationship through the use of prayer and meditation.

PRAYER

Some of us are comfortable with the idea of prayer, while others are not. Some of us pray mechanically because of fear, in times of emergency, or out of a sense of duty, while some of us doubt that God takes much interest in helping us. Others are angry with God and blame God for our illness and for the chaos in our lives. At times we try to bargain with God. We use prayer in order to get something we want from God. Sometimes our prayers are filled with bitterness and misery, as if this would gain us God's pity and favor. Step Eleven suggests we change our old ways of praying and, instead, pray for guidance and for the power to carry that out.

Prayer is talking to our Higher Power. It is being honest about the way we really feel and asking for help. We talk things over with our Higher Power as we would with a friend, and we find love and acceptance. As we establish the daily habit of prayer, we come to understand that a benefit of prayer is getting more in touch with ourselves as well as with our Higher Power. Rather than changing God, prayer changes us. It opens us to humility, patience, and the courage to face life even when life is uncertain or painful.

Many find it useful to ask their Higher Power for direction at the start of each day and to express gratitude for help received at the end of the day. In this way it becomes clearer to us who is in charge of our lives and what we need to be doing. If we sincerely seek our Higher Power's will in our lives and try to carry it out to the best of our ability, we are on the right track. If we feel unable to carry it out, the God of our understanding is a ready source of support and guidance whenever needed. All we need to do is ask.

MEDITATION

Initially, many of us have no idea what meditation is. In many ways, our past experience of focusing on pain and negativity was akin to meditation. Many of us spent days or weeks intensely concentrating on everything that was wrong with us, with our circumstances, or with other people. All we have to do now is learn to focus our attention just as fervently on the positive aspects of our lives.

Some of us are familiar with meditation but have never practiced it. Some have no idea how to go about it. Bookstores and libraries have many books about meditation which can be helpful. Some take classes on meditation techniques or go to a minister, priest, rabbi, or other spiritual advisor to learn about the traditions of meditation in particular religious faiths. In meetings we can learn as others share their methods and experiences with meditation.

Meditation can be as simple as letting our mind wander into a favorite place. It can be focusing on nature, breathing fresh air, and feeling a sense of well being. It is letting go of our problems and negative thinking and being at peace with ourselves.

Meditation involves quieting our overactive thoughts and listening for the guidance we need. It is focused concentration. Meditation can be practiced in several ways. It can be a process of clearing our minds of all distractions so we can contemplate a spiritual truth such as love, the beauty of nature, gratitude, the unity of the universe, God, or anything positive. Many use positive statements or affirmations as the focus of meditation. The slogans and Just For Todays listed in Part III of this book can also serve this purpose. Some of us use our imagination in a positive way by incorporating specific healing images into our meditation, helping to release pain and envision new ways of being in the world today. Some use meditation as a way to relax the tension in our bodies, thereby reducing emotional and mental stress. We become refreshed mentally and physically. Whichever method we choose, the result will be improved physical, emotional, and spiritual health which allows us to cope better with daily responsibilities.

We can combine meditation and prayer into one exercise. In a quiet place we become relaxed as we contemplate a meaningful prayer or poem as the focus of our meditation. Some of us use prayers from our religious tradition or other spiritual poetry and find these to be effective for meditation. Many of us use the

Serenity Prayer which very simply sums up the aim of the twelve-step program.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

As we practice Step Eleven, our ability to pray and meditate grows. As we set aside time for prayer and meditation each day, we achieve closer contact with our Higher Power. The rewards of prayer and meditation are emotional balance and a sense of belonging.

GOD'S WILL

Some of us are afraid God is going to lead us where we do not want to go. We are hesitant to surrender our destiny to an unseen Someone or Something. We fear we might lose all that we value if we give up control. We find, however, God's will does not necessarily dictate a radical change in our lives. God's will usually involves taking care of the ordinary responsibilities that are a part of everyday life so we can experience well being. We still have free will and can choose our course of action. Experience shows us that we have more serenity if we do our best to align our will with the will of our Higher Power.

As we ask our Higher Power for guidance, we begin making better choices. If we suspect we are rationalizing or interpreting our wishful thinking as divine guidance, we consult someone with more experience and understanding in these matters. We gain confidence in our decisions as we receive added support from working this program and from other EA members.

We discover that just saying a prayer or meditating about what we cannot control brings calmness and opens us to new ways of looking at a problem. Once we see something that seems right to do and appears to be God's will for us, we take action. If there seems to be no constructive action to take, we accept that, turn the situation over to our Higher Power, and patiently await the outcome.

We may experience setbacks and crises and become doubtful about God's will for us. Sometimes it is difficult to pray or meditate, even though it is our habit to do so. We realize we have lost our spiritual connection because we have removed ourselves from our Higher Power. We can slip back into self-sufficiency as our pride and ego again struggle for control. During these difficult times, we may gain comfort and hope by

asking a friend to pray with us or for us. If we persist in regular practice of prayer and meditation and accept ourselves as we are, in time the ability to pray and meditate comes back.

POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

As we improve our conscious contact with the God of our understanding, we are better able to see God's will for us. We will be given the power we need to carry it out. We find that prayer and meditation makes it easier for us to handle difficult situations. We allow our will to be redirected, and, in so doing, we experience the courage and power to act according to this new direction, which is God's will. Our partnership with God becomes a sturdy foundation which supports our daily lives. The spiritual practices we develop in this step give us direction in our new way of life. With the knowledge and tools gained in our spiritual growth, we are now ready to act in more positive ways and begin to help others in Step Twelve.

Step Twelve

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

If we have earnestly applied these steps, we have experienced profound changes. Through this program we have evolved into new and better people. By being willing to risk self-examination, being open and honest with others, and surrendering to our Higher Power, we have grown personally and achieved a level of recovery. We no longer feel alone. We are connected to a spiritual source of strength and serenity. Through this spiritual awakening we are being restored to sanity.

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A spiritual awakening is the gift we receive after working the first eleven steps. It happens as we become aware of and develop our spiritual nature. We each experience it in different ways since our individual journeys through the steps have been different from anyone else's. Some people experience a sudden, dramatic spiritual awakening. They are inspired with a deep certainty that God exists, and they feel profound gratitude for their newly found faith. For most, personal enlightenment is a more subtle process as the steps are applied and changes are realized. A spiritual awakening can be awareness and acceptance of how little power we really have, while at the same time we can feel a greater sense of well being, self-respect, and self-esteem. It can be the realization that no matter how poorly we have behaved in the past, we are worthwhile people. It can be recognition that people are available, not to threaten us, but to support us. It can be the reassurance that we have a Higher Power who will help us. It can include a feeling of being connected to life, of being whole rather than disjointed and alienated. It can be the realization that the promises of the program are coming true for us or a feeling of gratitude for all we have received.

Whatever form it may take, our awakening contains a characteristic attitude change. We have become less obsessed with our problems and pain and more open to other people. If we once suffered addictive or compulsive behaviors, these are greatly diminished or gone altogether. We are willing to participate in life and want to contribute our talents wherever we can do good. We are glad to share with others what we have learned.

CARRY THIS MESSAGE

We learn that sharing our progress and encouraging others brings us more understanding and growth. A paradox of the program is that to keep what we have learned for ourselves, we must give it away. With some degree of recovery resulting from practicing these steps, we can begin to reach out to others and share what we have learned. We share our stories — what we used to be like, what happened as we worked the steps, and how we have changed. This sharing allows us to see our experiences in a new light, and, consequently, we learn more about ourselves. By sharing we can more clearly see all the changes we have made and realize other ways to apply these principles in our lives. This strengthens our commitment to use the program. We share our experience, strength, and hope with people to give them the opportunity to change their lives by this avenue of recovery.

Some of us, in our enthusiasm and excitement early in our recovery, try to get everyone we know to join EA. We know many people in our lives who we think need to change and should be in this program. They usually resist joining or are resentful of our suggestions. We then feel hurt and misunderstood. People are usually not receptive if we try to preach the program, and, as we gain experience in carrying the message of EA,

we realize how arrogant it is to think we should point out to others their need for this program. It is far better for us to share the program with those who want it than with those we think need it. Carrying the message is part of our recovery; it is not about saving other people. We only share our experiences and try not to control the outcome. With this in mind, we feel less disappointment when others do not accept our message. We need to remember that the efforts are ours, but the results come from God.

We find many ways to do twelfth-step work. One important way is by example. We demonstrate that this program works through what we do in our lives. People see how we are recovering and want to know what we are doing. Some members invest time and energy into service activities that benefit their groups and EA as a whole. Some have a talent for speaking about the program or sharing their stories, Others are less visible in their efforts, but just as valuable to the functioning of their groups. Everyone has something to contribute. Anyone can begin working this part of Step Twelve in small ways very early in the program and thus, experience the rewards of being involved in the EA community.

Some ways we can carry this message are:

1. Attending meetings and sharing with others.
2. Helping new people feel welcome before and after meetings.
3. Setting up the meeting room and cleaning up afterwards.
4. Taking time to listen to someone on the telephone.
5. Taking responsibility for collecting group donations, ordering literature, 01 paying the bills for the group.
6. Helping others discover the best ways for them to understand and work the Twelve Steps.
7. Making personal contributions to assure that our group, intergroup, and the International Service Center continue to provide needed services.
8. Starting new groups and supporting other groups that are having difficulties
9. Writing articles for The EA Message magazine.
10. Holding public information meetings, doing mailings, or distributing flyers to let others know about EA.
11. Speaking about the twelve-step program.
12. Serving on committees, in intergroup, or on the International Service Board of Trustees.

PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES

By working these steps, we are integrating many new principles into our lives some of these principles are acceptance, honesty, open-mindedness, willingness:

patience, humility, compassion, courage, selflessness, and spirituality. In reality none of us may ever master these principles perfectly, but they give us ideals to strive toward. After we have been in the program for some time, these principles become second nature to us.

Each of us creates our own daily plan for practicing the Twelve Steps. We need to continue using the whole program, not just choosing the easier steps. If we avoid the spiritual parts of the program, or if we skip over steps that still seem too fearful or difficult, we are not working the whole program. When this is the case the program will not work, and we are not likely to continue our recovery. This twelve-step program only works for us when we choose to work it.

If we become complacent about using the program, we often find that our old thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors return. It seems our illness, like alcoholism, is only arrested, not cured. We experience emotional slips if we do not use what we have learned. We have to use the principles of the program diligently for as long as emotions anonymous. we want recovery. When we experience a slip, and many of us do, we take action to bring our program into focus again. We look for the part of the program that we have stopped doing or that we have

stopped doing well. We use the tools of the program — meetings, phone calls, slogans, Just for Today's, EA literature, the steps, inventories, prayer, and meditation — to return to practicing the principles. We once again participate in our recovery. Our emotional and spiritual fitness allow us to meet the challenges of life in appropriate ways. We are able to turn challenges into opportunities as we demonstrate our faith — faith in our Higher Power and faith in this twelve-step program.

IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

This is a program about living a new way of life. We do not just talk about it once a week at meetings. It is a program for living well twenty-four hours a day wherever we are. Because we are changing as a result of these steps, we find ourselves beginning to use these program principles in all aspects of our lives. We are more caring, honest, and accepting with all the people in our lives, not just with EA people. As we recover our emotional health and are restored to sanity, the dysfunction in our homes and families is often reduced. We apply our new principles in our social lives and enjoy improved relationships. We discover that acting from the foundation of the twelve-step program in our business or professional lives makes us better employees or employers. In our financial matters we are more balanced. neither miserly nor reckless. EA principles become our guidelines for thinking, so our mental health is improved. We take better care of our physical and emotional needs. We now feel the security of knowing we have available to us the spiritual resources of a personal Higher Power, and we have a concept of God that works for us.

Many of us choose to continue attending meetings, even though we now have lives so much better than our old ones. Long-term membership helps us maintain what we have learned and helps us continue to grow. We remember where we were and what we were like before the program. We have received a great gift by the grace of God. We continue to serve others in EA as an expression of gratitude for what we have received. We remember that someone was here to support us when we first came to EA, and we want to insure the program will be available to anyone who wants it.

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