

Narcotics Anonymous®

It Works: How and Why

Part One
The Steps
Review-Form Material
Steps Seven — Twelve

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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.

Volume One

It Works: How and Why
The Steps

Review Form, 1992

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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TO: The Fellowship

FROM: Mary Jensen, Chairperson
WSC Literature Committee

DATE: April 1, 1992

RE: Review form of the Steps portion of *It Works: How and Why*

The WSC Literature Committee is pleased to submit Steps Seven through Twelve for your review and input. We hope that literature committees and individuals who review this work will find that we have been able to communicate the spiritual essence of our steps and provide encouragement to addicts as they practice our recovery program.

There are surely many ways to workshop these steps. We suggest that you read the drafts out loud to see how they flow orally, since these chapters may be read in that way in step meetings. As you can tell from the questions on the review form, we are seeking primarily conceptual review of the material. If we have missed the mark somewhere, we need to know that. Also, if any of the ideas presented lack clarity or seem "wrong," please let us know about it.*

During the 1989-1990 conference year, we set the foundation for working on this book. We elected to use a new process--the staff team approach. This is the same process used by the WSB Traditions Ad Hoc Committee, and we believe that it will provide for some consistency between the two parts of the book. The staff team is guided by an ad hoc group which provides the content of the book and revision of drafts generated. The WSCLC then recommends further revisions based on its review of the drafts.

As with the first six chapters we released in December 1991, we felt that including some background information regarding decisions we've made that guided this work would enhance the fellowship's understanding of the process used to develop this project. Information concerning deadlines for input, and some of our future plans for completing the steps portion of *It Works: How and Why* are also included.

* Please don't focus on structural or grammatical issues within these drafts. The approval form will reflect a thorough copy edit.

Purpose:

The purpose of this book is to invite members to engage in a journey of recovery and to serve as a resource in gaining a personal understanding of the spiritual principles in the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. This book will explore the spiritual principles in each step and how we experience them in our lives. The steps will be presented in a manner that will encompass the diversity of our fellowship. We believe that this purpose is reflective of the spiritual awakening described in our Twelfth Step.

Readability:

Eighth to ninth grade level (the current drafts are written at an eighth grade reading level). Other readability factors taken into consideration included comprehensibility (use of familiar wording, concrete images, and experiences to which most readers can relate), clarity (showing preference for the active voice, sharing of experiences rather than intellectualizing), and conciseness (favoring shorter sentences, avoiding cliches and redundancies).

Audience:

Our audience is the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. This encompasses the diversity of our membership from the newcomer to those with lengthy clean time. We believe that when we write a quality piece of literature, our message will be clear to other readers as well. We will strive to use language that will communicate to English speaking members yet remain translatable.

Style:

To summarize our decisions related to style, a list of a few of our most prevailing features follows: experiential exploration of the steps rather than descriptive or "how to" language; preference for the use of present tense; non-repetitive; fluent, yet using many short, concise sentences; preference for active voice; non-judgemental, friendly, respectful, informal tone; use of an easily followed organizational structure; and capable of standing the test of time.

The organization of each chapter is similar in structure. An introduction is followed by an identification section. In this section, we have attempted to link the addict reading this step for the first time with our collective experience--what brought us to this step, the fears we felt toward taking it, the realizations that brought us over the edge and allowed us to experience the step. The identification section also provides the motivation for working that particular step. Next, spiritual principles from previous steps are woven into the material. New spiritual principles are then brought in and experience shared about working the step. We have included material in each step that will speak to members regardless of the length of their clean time. Each step closes with a transition to the following chapter.

We have been particularly clear among ourselves from the very beginning that this is not a "how to" book. We don't believe that it's possible to represent all the ways in which a particular step may be worked. Rather, we have sought to represent our collective experiences with the steps and concepts we hold in common. At times, we offer suggestions to the reader, but our intention has been to do so with the clear message that these are only some of the ways in which we may approach this avenue of our program.

Now you can tell us if we followed the guidelines we set for ourselves. We hope that we have been able to transmit an invitational tone and that the content of the chapters focuses on the spiritual nature of the recovery process in Narcotics Anonymous.

We invite you to share with us the joys of working on this book. We trust that the review of this material will provide your committees with strong shared experiences, as it has for us. This review form is available through the WSO to any individual member, group, or committee that wishes to review it.

The input for this phase of the project is due August 30, 1992. Please make every attempt to meet this deadline as we will begin factoring in fellowship input in September. With your help, we are hoping to be able to complete the approval version of this work in time for conference action in April 1993. We plan to release the approval form of Steps One through Six by the middle of September, 1992. The approval form of the second half of the book should be ready for release by the middle of November, 1992.

We look forward to receiving your input.

**WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE
LITERATURE COMMITTEE**

**STEPS SEVEN - TWELVE
REVIEW-FORM**

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1

STEP SEVEN

2

"We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

3 In Step Four, we uncovered the basic defects of our character. In Step Five,
4 we admitted their existence. In Step Six, we became entirely ready to have God
5 remove them all so that we could experience continued spiritual growth and
6 recovery. Now, in Step Seven, we humbly ask our Higher Power to remove our
7 shortcomings. When we ask our Higher Power to remove these shortcomings, we
8 ask for freedom from anything which limits our recovery or prevents us from
9 experiencing God's love and understanding. We ask for help because we cannot
10 do it alone.

11 Through working the previous steps, we see that attaining humility is
12 necessary if we are going to live a clean life and walk a spiritual path. An attitude
13 of humility is not the same as humiliation, nor is it a denial of our good qualities.
14 On the contrary, an attitude of humility means that we have a realistic view of
15 ourselves and our place in the world. In the Seventh Step, humility means
16 understanding our role in our own recovery, appreciating our limitations and
17 having faith in the God we've come to understand. To work the Seventh Step, we
18 must get out of the way so that God can do God's work. Humbly asking for the
19 removal of our shortcomings means we are giving complete license to that loving
20 Power to work in our lives, believing God's wisdom far exceeds our own.

21 Even though we now possess some measure of humility, many of us may be
22 somewhat confused by the word "humbly." We may have taken it for granted that
23 God would remove our shortcomings immediately upon request. Those of us
24 with this attitude may have been surprised when our Higher Power didn't comply
25 with our request. On the other hand, some of us tried begging God to remove
26 our shortcomings, guessing that would be a demonstration of humility.

27 We tried so hard to get it right. We were tired of our shortcomings. We were
28 worn out from trying to manage and control them, and we wanted some relief.

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29 Oddly enough, this is precisely the attitude we hope to demonstrate in Step
30 Seven, the attitude of humility. We admit defeat, recognize our limitations, and
31 ask for help from a loving God.

32 Asking God to remove our shortcomings requires a surrender of a more
33 pronounced nature than our initial surrender. That surrender, born of sheer
34 despair over our powerlessness and inability to manage our lives, moves into an
35 entirely new realm in the Seventh Step. In this new level of surrender, we accept
36 not only our addiction, we also accept the shortcomings related to our addiction.
37 Accepting our addiction was the first move in the direction of accepting
38 ourselves. We know something about ourselves because of our work in the
39 previous steps, and our illusions of uniqueness have been overcome in the
40 process. We know that we are neither more nor less important than anyone else.
41 Understanding that we are not unique is a good indication of humility.

42 Patience is an essential ingredient of working this step. We may have
43 difficulty with the notion of patience because our addiction accustomed us to
44 instant gratification. But we've already been practicing the principles that make
45 it possible for us to be patient. We simply need to expand on our Third Step
46 decision to trust God with our will and our lives. If we only trusted that Power to
47 a certain extent in Step Three, it's time to increase our trust. Because our view of
48 what we can hope for may be limited, many of us can't even begin to fathom what
49 our Higher Power has in store for us. If this is the case for us, we must rely on
50 blind faith. As in the previous steps, we simply have to believe that God's will for
51 us is good. Our faith gives us reason to hope for the best.

52 In working this step, we move away from intellectualizing the recovery
53 process. Our concern is not to determine exactly how or when God will remove
54 our shortcomings. It's not our job to analyze this step. This step is a spiritual
55 choice. To choose to bypass it would leave us with only a heightened awareness
56 of our character defects and no hope for relief from those shortcomings. The
57 resulting pain might well be unbearable.

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58 We've seen our character defects, our faulty belief systems, and our unhealthy
59 patterns of behavior. We've seen that we need to change, but may not be aware
60 that we've been changing since we first came to Narcotics Anonymous for help.
61 We walked into our first meeting with a spiritual void. Some essential ray of
62 spiritual light had been cut off. We had lost the ability to love, to laugh, and to
63 feel. For so long, people had looked into our eyes and had trouble seeing the
64 human being behind the blank gaze. From our very first meeting, we felt the love
65 and acceptance of other NA members. We began to come back to life. What we
66 are in the midst of experiencing is an awakening of the spirit--no less dramatic
67 than it sounds. This awakening has been evident to those around us for quite
68 some time, but the change is now so obvious that we can see it as well.

69 One of the changes we see is in our relationship with the God of our
70 understanding. Previously, we may have felt that God was far removed and not
71 having much to do with us on a personal level. We may have had trouble
72 grasping the fact that each one of us could have a loving Power always available
73 to us. Prayer may have felt artificial for quite a while, but we may now sense that
74 we are being listened to and loved when we pray.

75 Developing a relationship with the God of our understanding goes a long way
76 toward increasing our level of comfort when we ask to have our shortcomings
77 removed. The work we've done in the previous steps has furthered that
78 relationship. We've asked our Higher Power for honesty, open-mindedness, and
79 willingness and have been provided with those attributes that are so vital to our
80 recovery.

81 Each time we come up short in any of the qualities we are trying to attain or
82 when we have difficulty practicing spiritual principles, we turn to the God of our
83 understanding. In this step, we ask God to remove our impatience, our
84 intolerance, our dishonesty, or whatever shortcoming is currently in the way. We
85 find that our Higher Power always provides us with what we need and our faith
86 grows as a result. When we ask God to remove our shortcomings, we may see

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87 little bits of them removed, they may simply be shoved out of the way for a time
88 so we can move forward on the path of recovery, or we may attain complete
89 freedom from having to act on those shortcomings. The point is that we have
90 come to believe that only the God of our understanding has the power to remove
91 our shortcomings. We can actually ask our Higher Power to remove our
92 shortcomings in good faith, knowing that it will happen in God's time. The
93 infinite wisdom and love of God goes far beyond our own ideas of what we need
94 and think we should have.

95 Regardless of how secure we feel in our relationship with the God of our
96 understanding, we need to remember that our sponsor will guide us through
97 working the Seventh Step. Just as he or she has guided us through the previous
98 steps, our sponsor also helps us with our understanding of humility and in finding
99 a way of communicating with God that feels comfortable.

100 We need to remember that we are praying to a Power greater than ourselves.
101 We ask humbly, knowing that, of ourselves, we are powerless. Some of us will
102 recite a formal prayer that demonstrates humility when we ask God to help us.
103 Some of us will pray in a more casual manner, just as humbly but using words that
104 feel more natural and comfortable to us. Any communication with our Higher
105 Power is prayer. However we choose to communicate with God, we feel a certain
106 comfort come over us as we pray. We know that we are being taken care of.

107 With this knowledge comes freedom. Though not a cure by any means,
108 working the Seventh Step gives us the freedom to choose. We know that if we
109 live by the spiritual principles of recovery, we no longer need to wear ourselves
110 out trying to arrange situations and outcomes. We trust God with our lives. We
111 may still be fearful from time to time, but we no longer have to react to fear in
112 destructive ways. We have the freedom to choose to act constructively or, when
113 appropriate, do nothing at all. Knowing that we are being cared for is a result of
114 developing a relationship with God. We are in the process of developing a
115 conscious contact with a Higher Power which we will strive to improve

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116 throughout our lives. We are conscious of the God of our understanding and feel
117 that Power's presence.

118 This certainty, beyond all doubt, brings about a peace of mind that we never
119 dreamed possible. We are now free to dream beyond our wildest imaginings.
120 We sense that what is present throughout our search for spiritual growth is our
121 ability to feel our Higher Power's love for us. We glimpse a vision of complete
122 freedom from our shortcomings. It doesn't matter that we will not attain a state
123 of perfection or complete humility in our lifetime. The ability to contemplate this
124 grand vision and meditate upon it are rare and priceless gifts in their own right
125 and don't require fruition to be complete.

126 We are being changed. We've not only heard about the miracle of recovery,
127 we are becoming living, breathing examples of what the power of God can do.
128 The spiritual life has ceased to be a theory we hear about in meetings--it is now
129 becoming a tangible reality. We can witness a miracle simply by looking in the
130 mirror. God has taken us from spiritually unconscious, hopeless addicts to
131 spiritually aware, recovering addicts eager to live. Although we've reached this
132 point, the damage we've done by living out our shortcomings needs to be
133 addressed. Desiring continued recovery and freedom, we go on to Step Eight and
134 begin the process of repairing the path of destruction we have left behind us.

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Step Seven Input Form

- | | Yes | No |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step? | [] | [] |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [] | [] |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear? | [] | [] |

If so, what? _____

4. General comments: _____

This form was completed by :

region _____ area _____ group _____ individual _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

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1

STEP EIGHT

2

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

3

4

In the previous steps, we began to make peace with God and with ourselves.

5

In the Eighth Step, we begin the process of making peace with others.

6

By acting on our character defects, we inflicted harm on ourselves and those around us. In the Seventh Step, we asked our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings. However, in order to gain true freedom from our defects, we need to accept responsibility for them. We need to do whatever we can to make up for our mistakes. Steps Eight and Nine--the "amends steps"--give us a chance to rectify our wrongs. We begin to accept responsibility for our actions by listing all the people we have harmed and by becoming willing to make amends to them all.

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While our efforts to make amends may make a difference in the lives of those we have harmed, this process has its greatest impact in our own lives. Our objective is to begin clearing away the damage we've done so that we can continue with our spiritual awakening. By the time we work our way through the process of making amends, we will surely be astounded by the level of freedom we feel.

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24

We are involved in a process designed to free us from our past so that we are able to live fully in the present. Many of us are haunted by memories of our mistreatment of others. Those memories can creep up on us without warning. Our shame and remorse over our past actions are so deep that these recollections can cause us to feel unbearable guilt. We want to be free of such guilt. We begin by making a list of the people we've harmed.

25

26

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29

Just thinking about our list may frighten us. We may be afraid that we've done so much damage that we can never repair it or we may be afraid of facing the people we've harmed. We find ourselves wondering how our amends will be received. Our most hopeful projections probably entail being absolved of any wrongdoing. Or, our most nightmarish expectations may involve someone

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30 refusing to accept our amends, preferring instead to take revenge. Most of us
31 have fairly vivid imaginations, but this is not the time to get ahead of ourselves.
32 We must avoid making projections, either negative or positive, about how it will
33 actually be to make our amends. We are on the Eighth Step, not the Ninth Step.
34 At this point, making a list and becoming willing to make amends are our only
35 concerns.

36 Working the previous steps has prepared us for the willingness we need to
37 begin the Eighth Step. We've honestly assessed the exact nature of our wrongs
38 and examined how our actions affected others. It was not easy to admit our
39 wrongs. We had to believe in a Power that would supply us with courage, and
40 love us through the pain involved in reviewing the results of our addiction. The
41 same honesty and courage we called upon as we wrote our inventory and shared
42 it are just as vital in making our amends list. We've been practicing these
43 principles all along and are quite familiar with them. The Eighth Step is simply a
44 continuation of our efforts to find freedom by applying spiritual principles.

45 Making the list and becoming willing may be difficult unless we overcome our
46 resentments. Most of us owe amends to at least one person who had also harmed
47 us. Perhaps we haven't truly forgiven that person yet and find we are very
48 reluctant to put his or her name on our list. However, we must. Why? Because
49 we are responsible for our actions. We make amends because we owe them. We
50 must let go of long-standing grudges and focus on our part in the conflicts in our
51 lives. We won't get better and be able to live the spiritual life we are seeking if
52 we are still in the grip of self-obsession. We let go of our expectations, and we let
53 go of blaming anyone for our actions. Our idea that we have been a victim must
54 go. In the Eighth Step, we are not concerned with what others have done to us.
55 We are concerned only with accepting responsibility for what we've done to
56 others.

57 If we still bear anger toward some of the people in our past, we will need to
58 practice the spiritual principle of forgiveness. Our ability to forgive comes from

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59 our ability to accept and be compassionate with ourselves. However, if we have
60 difficulty, we can ask our Higher Power for help. We pray for whatever it takes
61 to become willing to forgive. We've begun to accept ourselves as we are. Now,
62 we begin to accept others as they are.

63 We review our Fourth Step and list all the people, places, and institutions to
64 whom we owe amends. If we've done a thorough Fourth Step, it should clearly
65 outline our part in the conflicts in our lives and show how we harmed others by
66 acting on our faults. We find the people we wounded with our dishonesty, the
67 people we stole from or cheated, the people who were on the receiving end of
68 our wrongs. We also take note of how we harmed society as a whole and add that
69 to our list. We drained community resources, exhibited offensive behavior in
70 public, refused to contribute to the general welfare. Although we may find the
71 majority of our amends list from reviewing our Fourth Step, Step Eight isn't
72 simply a reiteration of our inventory. We are now looking for the people, places,
73 and institutions we harmed, not just the types of harm we inflicted. We didn't just
74 lie; we lied to *someone*. We didn't just steal; we stole from various *people*.

75 The writing we did on our Fourth Step is not the only source of help we will
76 be given in compiling our amends list. Our sponsor will also help us. When we
77 shared our inventory, our sponsor helped us see the exact nature of our wrongs.
78 Our sponsor's insight showed us how we had wounded people by acting on our
79 character defects, and will now help us determine who actually belongs on our
80 amends list. Many of us have gone to extremes in matters of accepting
81 responsibility for ourselves. Some of us have had a tendency to deny any
82 responsibility, while others have shouldered total blame for every disagreement.
83 Many of us also had trouble seeing how we had harmed ourselves, and may have
84 been surprised when our sponsor suggested that we add our own name to the list.
85 Our flawed perceptions begin to fall away as we talk with our sponsor, and we
86 find the clarity we need to take the Eighth Step. With the help of our sponsor, we

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87 have started to develop a realistic view of where our responsibility truly began
88 and ended.

89 Before we proceed in making a list, it is important that we understand what
90 the word "harm" means in the context of the Eighth Step. We may be inclined to
91 think of harm only in terms of physical suffering. However, there are many
92 different forms of harm: causing mental anguish, property damage or loss,
93 inflicting long-lasting emotional scars, betraying trust, and so forth. Though we
94 may exclaim, "but I never meant to hurt anyone!," this is beside the point. We are
95 responsible for the harm we caused no matter what our intentions were. Any
96 time that people were hurt, in any way, because of something we did, they were
97 harmed. To gain a better understanding of how we may have harmed people, we
98 may want to "put ourselves in their shoes." If we can imagine what it felt like to
99 be the victim of our reckless disregard for those around us, we shouldn't have any
100 trouble adding those names to our list.

101 In addition to understanding what harm means, we also need to understand
102 what "make amends" means. This step does not say that we become willing to say
103 we're sorry, although that may be a part of our amends. Most of the people we've
104 hurt have probably heard us say "I'm sorry" enough to last a lifetime. In truth, we
105 are becoming willing to do anything possible to set right the wrongs we've done,
106 including changing our behavior.

107 There may be instances in which we inflicted harm so severe that the situation
108 simply can't be set right. This may be readily apparent as we look at our
109 relationships with those who have been in our lives for quite some time. Over the
110 years, we have given our families, partners, and long-term friends one painful
111 situation after another. Even though we can't undo the past, our experience has
112 shown that we still need to look at what we've done, acknowledge the damage
113 we've caused, and become willing to make reparations, despite the impossibility
114 of changing what happened.

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115 Accepting the harm we caused, being truly sorry, and becoming willing to go
116 to any lengths to change is a painful process. But we need not fear our growing
117 pains, for our acknowledgment of these truths helps us continue our spiritual
118 awakening. Simply accepting the harm we caused increases our humility. Being
119 truly sorry is a clear indication that our self-centeredness has diminished and that
120 we are availing ourselves of our Higher Power's love. Willing to go to any lengths
121 to change, we are newly inspired.

122 Some of our willingness will come about simply by writing our list. We will
123 have the opportunity to face the harm we've done. Some of us, after writing the
124 name of a person to whom we owe amends and what we did to harm that person,
125 have added plans for how we intend to make amends. Planning how we are going
126 to make amends may help increase our willingness as we see that we do have the
127 potential to correct our past mistakes.

128 We want to become willing to make the amends we owe, and we do whatever
129 it takes to bring that willingness about. If we find ourselves engaging in debates
130 with ourselves, or getting caught up in assessing the exact level of willingness we
131 need, we can lay these non-productive thoughts aside by making a conscious
132 decision to pray for willingness. We may still be slightly hesitant, but we do the
133 best we can. Our recovery is at stake. If we want to continue with our recovery,
134 we must make amends.

135 We ask a loving God to help us find the willingness to make our amends.
136 Praying for willingness takes our relationship with God a step further. In the
137 Seventh Step, we furthered our personal relationship with our Higher Power by
138 asking for freedom from our shortcomings. Now, we trust that Power to provide
139 us with whatever we need to work the Eighth Step. Our commitment to recovery
140 includes becoming ready to go as far as we must.

141 A Higher Power is working in our lives, preparing us to be of service to
142 others. The changes brought about by that Power are evidenced by our changing
143 attitudes and actions. We are developing the ability to choose spiritual principles

144 over character defects, and recovery over addiction. We have a fresh outlook on
145 life, and we know that we are responsible for what we do. We no longer feel
146 constant regret over the harm we've caused in the past. Simply understanding
147 how badly we've hurt people, being truly sorry for the pain we've caused, and
148 becoming willing to let them know of our desire to make things right are the keys
149 to freedom from our past. Though we have yet to make peace with others, we've
150 come a long way toward making peace with ourselves. With our new perspective,
151 our trust in God, and our willingness, we go on to Step Nine.

152

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Step Eight Input Form

- | | Yes | No |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step? | [] | [] |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [] | [] |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear? | [] | [] |

If so, what? _____

4. General comments: _____

This form was completed by :

region _____ area _____ group _____ individual _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

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STEP NINE

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

Now that we are willing to make amends to all the people we've harmed, we put our willingness into action by working the Ninth Step. We're involved in a process that takes us from awareness of our wrongs and the conflicts they've caused to a growing freedom from those conflicts and toward the serenity we've sought. This process has called on us to examine our lives, identify our character defects, and become aware of how we harmed others when we acted on those defects. Now, we must do everything we can to repair the harm we've caused.

We have our Eighth Step list, and we know what we have to do; however, knowing and doing are two different things. We may have a perfectly good plan for making our amends but, when the moment arrives, find ourselves overwhelmed by fear and feel unable to go on. We may be afraid of how our amends will be received. We may be worried that someone will retaliate. On the other hand, we may be harboring a secret hope that we will be excused from our responsibilities. We cannot base our willingness on the expectation that we won't actually have to make restitution. For each of our amends, every possibility exists, from being held fully accountable to being completely excused. We must be willing to follow through, regardless of the potential outcome. Once again, with the help of our Higher Power, we simply have to walk through our fear and go on.

We must be courageous when we work this step. Though the prospect of making amends may frighten us, we turn to God for strength, just as we always have. Our Higher Power is with us as we make each of our amends. We rely on the presence of that Power, no matter how scared we are about approaching the people we have harmed.

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29 We may hesitate, fearing other people won't accept us as readily as our fellow
30 NA members have. However, we have found that recovering addicts don't hold a
31 monopoly on kindness or forgiveness. Other people are capable of accepting us
32 as we are and understanding our problems. But whether they are willing to
33 accept us or not, we must go on with making our amends to them. The risk we
34 take is sure to be rewarded with increased personal freedom.

35 The spiritual principles of honesty and humility that we've learned in earlier
36 steps are invaluable to us in the Ninth Step. We would never be able to approach
37 the people to whom we owe amends in the spirit of humility if we hadn't been
38 practicing these principles before now. The honest examination we used to write
39 our inventory and make our admissions, the ego-deflation brought about by our
40 work in the Sixth and Seventh Steps, and the realistic look at how we harmed
41 others have all worked together to increase our humility and provide us with the
42 impetus needed to work the Ninth Step. Our path has led us to humbly accept
43 who we have been and who we are becoming, resulting in a sincere desire to
44 make amends to all those we have harmed.

45 This desire to make amends should be the primary motive for working the
46 Ninth Step. Making amends isn't something we do simply because our program
47 of recovery suggests it, nor can we make amends for self-serving reasons. To be
48 certain our motives are based in spiritual principles, we find it helpful to reaffirm
49 our decision to turn our will over to the care of God before making each of our
50 amends. A Power greater than ourselves will provide us with the guidance we
51 need.

52 We should not expect a "pat on the back" or praise for living in accordance
53 with the principles of recovery. People may respond to our amends in many
54 different ways. They may or may not appreciate our amends. The relationships
55 we have with those people may get better, or they may not. We may be thanked,
56 or we may be told "It's about time you did this." We must let go of any
57 expectations we have on how our amends will turn out and leave the results to

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58 the God of our understanding. It is very important that we do our absolute best
59 to make amends. Once we have done that, however, our part is finished. We
60 can't expect our amends to magically heal the hurt feelings of someone we have
61 harmed. We may humbly ask for forgiveness, but if we don't receive it we let that
62 expectation go, knowing we have done our best. As we are making amends, we
63 ask ourselves if we are doing this because we are truly sorry and have a genuine
64 desire to make reparations for what we've done. If we answer "yes" to this
65 question, we can be assured we are approaching our amends in the true spirit of
66 humility and love.

67 Handling difficult amends requires the assistance of our sponsor. Wherever
68 possible, we should ask for guidance on *all* of our amends, discussing each one of
69 them with our sponsor *before* we set out to make them. We tell our sponsor what
70 we are making amends for, what we are planning to say, and what we intend to
71 offer to set the situation right. What we intend to offer as amends should be
72 appropriate to the harm we caused. For instance, if we borrowed money from
73 someone and never paid it back, we don't merely apologize; we pay the money
74 back. We talk directly to the person we harmed and amend exactly what we did
75 wrong.

76 When we make amends to those we have held a resentment against in the
77 past, an attitude of forgiveness is imperative. We don't want to go to someone,
78 intent on making amends, and end up in a shouting match over who was injured
79 more severely. Even though we are sure to have amends to make to people who
80 have also harmed us, we must set our hurt feelings aside. Our responsibility is to
81 make amends for what *we* have done wrong, not to force others to admit how
82 they have wronged us--*we* need to forgive.

83 In our experience, making amends is a two-stage process. Not only do we
84 make amends to the person we've harmed, we follow up on those amends with a
85 serious change in our behavior. First, we mend our fences; then, we mend our
86 ways. For example, some of us may have destroyed someone's property while we

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87 were angry. When we make our amends, we not only apologize to the person and
88 replace or repair the property, we follow that up by repairing our attitudes. We
89 amend our behavior, making a daily effort not to express our anger by damaging
90 property anymore.

91 Changing the way we live is a lifetime process, and is perhaps the most
92 significant amends we can make. Some of the people we've harmed, like our
93 families or others we've been close to for a long time, have suffered for years.
94 Amends of this nature can't be made in a five-minute apology, no matter how
95 heartfelt. Although an admission of wrong and an apology may be the starting
96 point, we need to go on by making a concerted daily effort to stop hurting our
97 loved ones. If we have neglected our families, we start spending time with them.
98 If we have been thoughtless, always forgetting birthdays and anniversaries, we
99 begin to be thoughtful instead, remembering those important events. If we have
100 been inconsiderate, always wrapped up in what we wanted and needed, we now
101 begin to be sensitive to the needs of others.

102 Of course, we may not have an ongoing relationship with some of the people
103 we have harmed. For instance, if we are divorced from a spouse with whom we
104 had children, we may owe child-support payments. Making such amends does
105 not require that we rekindle an emotional relationship with our ex-partner. We
106 can simply work out a mutually acceptable plan to fulfill our obligations to our
107 children, remembering that our obligations are not just financial.

108 Because the action we take in this step can have a profound impact on other
109 people, we don't want to just blithely step out and start making our amends
110 without first discussing them in detail with our sponsor. Some of us have felt
111 compelled to make our amends on an impulse, just to ease our own conscience;
112 however, we usually ended up doing more harm than good. Suppose that, in our
113 Fourth Step, we wrote about people we had secretly resented for years.
114 Unbeknownst to those people, we had ridiculed them, judged and condemned
115 them, or otherwise defamed their character to others. Because all that character

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116 assassination was taking place behind those people's backs, do we now go to them
117 and confess? Certainly not! The Ninth Step is not designed to clear our
118 conscience at the expense of someone else. Our sponsor will help us find a way
119 to make our amends without causing additional harm.

120 Though it seems obvious that we wouldn't make direct amends in a situation
121 where we would injure someone, we may find that we have questions about how
122 to make "direct" amends when the person to whom we owe them is deceased,
123 impossible to find, or lives thousands of miles away. There are many ways to
124 make effective "direct" amends without doing it in person. If someone to whom
125 we owe amends is deceased, we may find it very effective to write a letter saying
126 everything we would say if the person were still alive. Then, perhaps, we may
127 read that letter to our sponsor. It may be a noble desire to want to make amends
128 in person to someone who lives thousands of miles away, but most of us lack the
129 means to travel great distances solely for that purpose. In situations such as
130 these, a telephone call or a letter could serve the same purpose as an amends
131 made in person. The people on our list who we can't find should remain on our
132 list. An opportunity to make amends may present itself later on, even years later.
133 In the meantime, we must remain willing to make amends should we ever have
134 the opportunity. Of course, we should never avoid making amends in person only
135 because we are afraid of facing the person we have harmed. We make every
136 effort to find the people we have harmed and make the best amends we can
137 make.

138 Choosing the best way to make amends requires careful consideration and
139 time spent searching our conscience for what is right. Some of us have to face
140 situations that can't be corrected. Our actions may have left permanent physical
141 or emotional scars, even caused someone's death. We must somehow learn to
142 live with such things. We live with indescribable remorse over acts such as these
143 and wonder what we could possibly do to make amends. This is where we have
144 no choice but to rely on our Higher Power. We may have difficulty in forgiving

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145 ourselves, but we can ask for the forgiveness of a loving God. We sit down,
146 become quiet in the presence of our Higher Power, and ask for guidance in what
147 we should do. Many of us have found answers in dedicating our lives to helping
148 other addicts and other forms of service to humanity. There are no easy answers
149 for problems like these; we simply do the very best we can, relying on our sponsor
150 and the God of our understanding for guidance.

151 For many of us, the wreckage of our past includes such relatively minor things
152 as outstanding arrest warrants for traffic violations, while others have committed
153 crimes entailing very serious consequences. We may find ourselves in a quandary
154 over such issues. If we turn ourselves in to the authorities we may go to jail, but if
155 we don't we may live in fear of being caught and sent to jail anyway. With the
156 help of our sponsor and the God of our understanding, we are willing to do
157 whatever it takes to maintain our recovery. We may also have to rely on legal
158 advice before making such amends. Consulting an attorney about these problems
159 can be of great benefit.

160 Especially troublesome financial amends may also require professional
161 advice. Many of us have amassed debts at an alarming rate. We may owe
162 financial amends that are beyond our means to pay in the foreseeable future.
163 Some of us may owe medical bills that amount to more than we can conceivably
164 earn in the next several years. Some of us rarely paid our rent, utility bills, or
165 phone bills. We may have found it easier to uproot our lives and move rather
166 than meet our financial obligations.

167 Just as we do for all of our amends, we discuss our financial amends with our
168 sponsor first. Some of us have begun providing for our families since we've been
169 in recovery; they are dependent on us for their food and shelter. We usually find
170 that we have to budget our money very carefully in order to meet our current
171 living expenses while paying as much as possible on our old debts. We may
172 resolve such situations by contacting our creditors, explaining our situation, and
173 expressing our desire to settle our debts. We agree on a reasonable plan for

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174 paying off our debts, and we stick to it. This is an example of how living our
175 amends is a process rather than a "once and for all" occurrence. It takes great
176 discipline, personal sacrifice, and commitment to continue to pay a bill for years
177 and years, but we can regain our self-respect only by following through.

178 Most of us find making amends for the damage we did in intimate
179 relationships to be extremely uncomfortable. As we wrote our Fourth Step, we
180 realized that we not only robbed ourselves of the chance for meaningful
181 relationships, we also caused deep emotional wounds in our partners. Our fears
182 of intimacy or commitment may have led us to use, be unfaithful to, or abandon
183 the people who loved us. We were generally unavailable to the people who loved
184 us. While there are times when we need to approach such people with our
185 amends, there are other times when it is best to leave them alone so as not to
186 reopen old wounds. Knowing the difference requires complete honesty on our
187 part and open communication with our sponsor. Whether or not we make direct
188 amends to the people we've harmed in relationships, we definitely need to
189 change the way we behave in our relationships today. If we ran from intimacy
190 before, we need to sit down and learn to communicate with our partners. We
191 must become more considerate, sensitive, and attentive to the needs of others.

192 Sometimes, the only way we can make amends is to change the way we live.
193 As discussed in the Eighth Step, we may owe amends to our community or society
194 as whole. Though this may seem to be an abstract concept, we must make
195 concrete amends by changing our behavior. If we harmed society, we start to
196 make amends by becoming a productive member of society. We contribute. We
197 look for ways to give, not take.

198 Our recovery is also a way of making amends to ourselves. We treated
199 ourselves horribly in our active addiction. The guilt and shame we felt each time
200 we harmed another human being took quite a toll on our self-respect. Our
201 addiction humiliated us in a thousand different ways. Now, in recovery, we learn
202 to treat ourselves in ways that demonstrate our self-respect.

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203 The most important results of the Ninth Step will be found within. This step
204 teaches us a great deal about humility, love, selflessness, and forgiveness. We
205 begin to heal from our addiction and no longer live with as many regrets. We
206 grow spiritually and find that we are truly gaining a new level of freedom in our
207 lives. Our past is just that: the past. We have put it behind us so that it no longer
208 hovers on the edge of our thoughts, waiting for a chance to haunt our present.

209 One of the most wonderful gifts we derive from working the Ninth Step is the
210 knowledge that we are becoming better human beings. We realize how much we
211 have changed because we are no longer doing the things we are making amends
212 for. We may not have realized how much we had changed in our recovery until
213 now. The amends process drives home the knowledge that we are becoming truly
214 different people. The extended nightmare of our addiction is finally beginning to
215 fade in the dawning light of our recovery.

216 Our humility increases as we face the people we have harmed. The impact of
217 realizing how deeply our actions have affected other people shocks us out of our
218 self-obsession. We begin to understand that other people have real feelings and
219 that we are capable of hurting them if we are careless. We learn about being
220 considerate of other people as we work this step, and what we learn is what we
221 practice in our lives today. It becomes natural for us to think before we speak or
222 act, keeping in mind that what we say or do is going to affect our friends, our
223 families, and our fellow NA members. We approach people with love and
224 kindness, carrying within ourselves a deep and abiding respect for the feelings of
225 others.

226 Because of the humility and selflessness so necessary to making our amends,
227 we may be surprised at the way Step Nine enhances our self-esteem. One of the
228 most paradoxical aspects of our recovery is that by thinking of ourselves less, we
229 learn to love ourselves more. We may not have expected our spiritual journey to
230 lead to a fresh appreciation of ourselves, but it does. Because of the love we

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231 extend to others, we realize our own value. We learn that what we contribute
232 makes a difference, not just in NA but in the world at large.

233 As a result of working the Ninth Step, we are free to live in the present, able
234 to enjoy each moment and experience gratitude for the gift of recovery.
235 Memories of the past no longer hold us back, and new possibilities appear. We
236 are free to go in directions we never considered before. We are free to dream
237 and to pursue the fulfillment of our dreams. Our lives stretch out before us like a
238 limitless horizon. We may stumble from time to time, but the Tenth Step gives us
239 the opportunity to pick ourselves up and keep walking forward. Our Higher
240 Power has given us an invitation to live, and we accept it with gratitude.

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Step Nine Input Form

- | | Yes | No |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step? | [] | [] |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [] | [] |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear? | [] | [] |

If so, what? _____

4. General comments: _____

This form was completed by :

region _____ area _____ group _____ individual _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

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1

STEP TEN

2

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

3

4 Recovery in Narcotics Anonymous is about learning how to live.
5 Incorporating the spiritual principles we learned in the first nine steps--principles
6 such as honesty, humility, willingness, compassion, and forgiveness--into our lives
7 has made it possible to live in harmony with ourselves and others. Self-
8 examination, confronting what we find in ourselves, and owning up to our wrongs
9 are critical elements of conducting our lives on a spiritual basis. By working the
10 Tenth Step, we become more aware of our emotions, our mental state, and our
11 spiritual condition. As we do, we find ourselves constantly rewarded with fresh
12 insight.

13 Some of us look back at our Fourth Step and wonder why we have to do a
14 Tenth Step. We may think that we've corrected all our past mistakes in the
15 previous steps, and since we have no intention of making those mistakes again,
16 why should we continue with this relentless self-examination? The Tenth Step
17 seems like a tiresome chore to some of us, a painful exercise that we could just as
18 well avoid. But we must continue to grow and that's exactly what the Tenth Step
19 helps us do. Though we will return to the previous steps again and again, the
20 Tenth Step furthers our spiritual healing in a different way: by creating an
21 awareness of what's going on in our lives today.

22 The importance of keeping in touch with our thoughts, feelings, and behavior
23 cannot be overemphasized. Every day, life presents us with new challenges. Our
24 recovery depends on our willingness to meet those challenges. Our experience
25 tells us that some members relapse, even after long periods of clean time,
26 because they have become complacent in recovery, allowing their resentments to
27 build and refusing to acknowledge their wrongs. Little by little, those small hurts,
28 half-truths, and "justified" grudges turn into deep disappointments, serious self-
29 deceptions, and full-blown resentments. We can't afford to allow these threats to

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30 our recovery to go untended. We have to deal with situations such as these as
31 soon as they arise.

32 In the Tenth Step, we use all the principles and actions we learned in the
33 previous steps and apply them to our lives on a consistent basis. Beginning our
34 days by reaffirming our decision to live life according to God's will has helped
35 many of us keep spiritual ideals foremost in our minds throughout the day. Even
36 so, we are bound to make mistakes that are very familiar to us. We can attribute
37 virtually every wrongdoing to a character defect we identified in the Sixth Step.
38 Humbly asking the God of our understanding to remove our shortcomings is just
39 as necessary now as it was in the Seventh Step.

40 In the Tenth Step, we take such actions on a regular basis. Each day, we take
41 our own inventory, look for those times when we fall short of our spiritual ideals,
42 and renew our efforts to live a principle-centered life. For example, when we are
43 faced with the tendency to behave compulsively, ignoring the consequences of
44 our actions, we need to focus on spiritual principles, take prompt action, and
45 continue forward in our recovery.

46 Although forming a habit of working this step may be difficult at first, we
47 must persist. We can set aside some time during the day for focused self-
48 appraisal while gradually moving toward a goal of being able to look at ourselves
49 throughout the day. We keep going forward, striving each moment to become
50 ever more aware of ourselves. We need to develop self-discipline and the more
51 effort we put into doing so, the more we'll find that working the Tenth Step will
52 become as natural as breathing.

53 Not that we should be hard on ourselves, picking at our every motive and
54 looking for problems where none exist. We need to stay in tune with the voice of
55 our conscience and listen to what it's telling us. When we get a nagging feeling
56 that something isn't quite right, we should pay attention to it. If our feelings of
57 guilt or anger seem to go on for a long time, we can do something about them.
58 We know when something is bothering us--perhaps not immediately, but usually

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59 not too long after the fact. As soon as we become aware that we're feeling out of
60 sorts, we search out the cause and deal with it as soon as possible.

61 While we strive to maintain ongoing awareness throughout the day, it is also
62 helpful to sit down at the end of each day and quietly reflect on what has
63 happened and how we responded to it. Sometimes, our sponsor will suggest that
64 we write out our Tenth Step. In this step, we ask ourselves the same types of
65 questions we asked in the Fourth Step; the only difference is that the emphasis is
66 on *today*. We look at our current behavior and ask ourselves if we are living by
67 our newfound values. Am I being honest today? Am I maintaining personal
68 integrity in my relations with others? Am I growing, or am I slipping back into
69 old patterns? We concentrate on the overall picture of our day.

70 In order to examine our day--or our life for that matter--in its entirety, we
71 have to draw on the humility we've acquired in the previous steps. We have
72 learned quite a bit about ourselves: how we've responded to life in the past, and
73 how we want to respond to life now. It takes a great deal of awareness to humbly
74 acknowledge our part in our own lives.

75 We may have trouble knowing when we're wrong, simply because we usually
76 intend to be right. For instance, at some point in our recovery, we may attend a
77 group business meeting firmly convinced that we know what the group should do.
78 We've studied all sides of the issues. We forcefully share our views at the
79 meeting. We're so convinced of our rightness that we fail to recognize our self-
80 righteousness. We are blind to the harm we're causing others by not respecting
81 their views as much as our own.

82 Often, we act in ways that are contrary to our values, yet we expect others to
83 live up to our standards. For instance, we may find ourselves flinching when we
84 hear others gossiping about someone. Following such an occurrence, we are
85 likely to be self-righteous--until we catch ourselves doing the very same thing.
86 Another common situation that occurs when we become super-critical is a
87 tendency to expect everyone around us to be unfailingly honest; however, we

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88 have a variety of excuses at hand for why this standard doesn't apply to us! If we
89 find ourselves in the midst of such moral ambiguity, we can use the principles of
90 the Tenth Step to provide more clarity.

91 There may be other times in our lives when we find ourselves in a situation
92 that seems to require a compromise of our personal beliefs and values. For
93 instance, if we had gained employment at a company only to discover that our
94 employer expected us to indulge in questionable business practices, we could
95 reasonably expect to feel confused about the choices available to us. Deciding
96 what to do about such a difficult dilemma would be a tough decision for any one
97 of us. We may be tempted to make a snap judgment or expect our sponsor to
98 provide an easy answer; however, we have found that no one can solve such a
99 dilemma for us. While our sponsor will provide us with guidance, we must apply
100 the principles of the program for ourselves and arrive at our own decision. In the
101 end, we are the ones who must live with our conscience. In order to do so
102 comfortably, *we* must decide what is, and what is not, morally acceptable in our
103 lives.

104 It can be very confusing to determine when we were wrong, especially when
105 we're right in the middle of a conflict. When our emotions are running high, we
106 may not be able to take an honest look at ourselves. We can see only our
107 immediate wants and needs. At such times, our sponsor may suggest that we take
108 a personal inventory on a particular area of our lives so that we can see our part.
109 If our friends notice that we're acting on a character defect, they may suggest that
110 we talk to our sponsor about it. Being open-minded to the suggestions of our
111 sponsor and our NA friends, paying attention to what our conscience is telling us,
112 spending some quiet time with the God of our understanding--all these things will
113 lead us to greater clarity.

114 Once we're aware that we've been wrong--whether it's five minutes, five
115 hours, or five days after the fact--we need to admit our error as soon as possible
116 and correct any harm we've caused. As in the Ninth Step, we find that the

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117 process of admitting our mistakes and changing our behavior brings about
118 tremendous freedom.

119 Of course, we must be just as careful when amending our current behavior as
120 we were when we made amends in the Ninth Step. For instance, if we find that
121 we were wrong because we sat in a meeting silently judging someone who shared,
122 we certainly don't need to go tell that person what we were thinking. Instead, we
123 can make an effort to be more tolerant.

124 We must remember that the Tenth Step isn't a one-sided endeavor, only for
125 us to note what we do wrong. We must resist any urge to become obsessive with
126 this step, ruthlessly searching out every flaw in our character. The point of the
127 Tenth Step is for us to be willing to pay attention to our thoughts, behaviors, and
128 values, and work on what we need to change. We should acknowledge that, quite
129 often, our motives are good and we do things right. Character defects and
130 character assets are not mutually exclusive, and we are sure to find both on any
131 given day.

132 We develop recovery-oriented goals for ourselves as we work this step. When
133 we see that we've been afraid to go forward in a particular area of our lives, we
134 can resolve to take a few risks, drawing our courage from our Higher Power.
135 When we see that we've been selfish, we can strive to become more generous in
136 the future. When we realize today that we've fallen short in any area of our lives,
137 we don't have to be overwhelmed by feelings of dread and fear of failure.
138 Instead, we can be grateful for our self-awareness and begin to feel a sense of
139 hope. We know that, by applying our program of recovery to our shortcomings,
140 we will change and grow.

141 We begin to see ourselves more realistically as a result of working the Tenth
142 Step. Many of us have remarked on the freedom we experienced through freely
143 admitting our mistakes and releasing ourselves from unrealistic expectations.
144 Where before we went from one extreme to another, either feeling better than
145 everyone else or feeling worthless, we now find the middle ground where true

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self-worth can flourish. We see ourselves as we really are, accepting our good qualities along with our defects, knowing we can change with God's help. We are becoming what we were meant to be all along: whole human beings.

Although none of us is without the need of love and attention from others, we can stop depending on people to provide what we can only find within ourselves. We can stop making unreasonable demands on others and begin to give of ourselves in relationships. Our romantic relationships, our friendships, and our interactions with family members, co-workers, and casual acquaintances are undergoing an astounding change. We are free to enjoy another's companionship because we're no longer so obsessed with ourselves. We finally see that all the devices we use to keep other people away are unnecessary at best and, more often than not, are the underlying cause of the pain we suffer in our relationships.

Healthier relationships are just one indication that the quality of our lives has improved dramatically. Such indications merely reflect the intangible, but very real changes that have taken place inside us. Our entire outlook has changed. Compared to the spiritual values we hold dear today, concerns such as "looking good" or amassing material wealth pale in significance. By accepting the challenge of self-appraisal called for in the Tenth Step, we've discovered that we value our recovery and our relationship with God above all else.

As the inner chaos that we lived with for so long subsides, we begin to experience long periods of serenity. During these times, we experience the powerful presence of a loving God in our lives. We are increasingly conscious of that Power and are ready to search for ways to improve and maintain our contact with it. Seeking direction and meaning for our lives, we go on to the Eleventh Step.

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Step Ten Input Form

- | | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step? | [] | [] |
| 2. Did you find encouragement and motivation for working this step? | [] | [] |
| 3. Are there any concepts missing or unclear? | [] | [] |

If so, what? _____

4. General comments: _____

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1

STEP ELEVEN

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*"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."*

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Throughout our recovery, one of the things which stands out as a result of our working the steps is our success at building a relationship with the God of our understanding. Our initial efforts resulted in the decision we made in the Third Step. We continued by working the following steps, each one of which were designed to clear away whatever barriers might stand between our Higher Power and ourselves. As a result, we are now open to receive God's power, love, and guidance directly into our lives.

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The characteristics of our disease and the things we did in our active addiction separated us from our Higher Power. Our self-obsession made it difficult for most of us even to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, much less achieve a conscious contact with that Power. We could see no purpose or meaning in our lives. Nothing could begin to fill the emptiness we felt. It seemed as though we shared no common bond with others at all. We felt alone in a vast universe, believing nothing existed beyond what our limited view allowed us to see.

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However, once we begin to recover, we find our obsession with ourselves diminishing and our awareness of the presence of a Higher Power growing. We've begun to see that we aren't alone and never have been. Through working the previous steps, we have already achieved a conscious contact with the God of our understanding. Our separation and isolation has ended. In the Eleventh Step, we now seek to *improve* our conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation.

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Many of us had trouble understanding the meaning of "praying for power" in the Eleventh Step. At first glance, this seemed to contradict the most basic

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30 aspect of our recovery program: our admission of powerlessness. But if we take
31 another look at the First Step, we'll see that it says we are powerless over our
32 addiction, not that we won't be given the power to carry out God's will. We did
33 begin at a point of powerlessness in the First Step; we were powerless over our
34 addiction and incapable of carrying out God's will. This doesn't mean we gain
35 power over our addiction in the Eleventh Step. In the Eleventh Step, we pray for
36 a particular kind of power: the power to carry out God's will.

37 We no longer shy away from spiritual growth, because it has become so
38 essential to maintaining the peace of mind we've found. Perhaps at the beginning
39 of our recovery we worked the steps because we were in pain and afraid we
40 would relapse if we didn't. But today we are motivated less by pain and fear,
41 driven more by our longing for continued recovery.

42 This leaning toward recovery reveals that we've surrendered more completely.
43 We've reached a state where we actually believe that God's will for us is better
44 than our own. It has become second nature for us to ask ourselves what our
45 Higher Power would have us do in our lives rather than attempting to manipulate
46 situations so they happen according to our ideas of what's best. We no longer see
47 God's will for us as something we have to *survive*. On the contrary, we strive to
48 align our will with God's, believing that we'll gain more happiness and peace of
49 mind by doing so. This is what surrender is: a heartfelt belief in our own
50 fallibility as human beings and an equally heartfelt decision to rely on a Power
51 greater than our own. Surrender, the stumbling block of our addiction, has
52 become the cornerstone of our recovery.

53 However, we cannot recover on surrender alone. We must build on our
54 surrender by taking action, just as we have in the previous steps. In the Tenth
55 Step, we began to practice the discipline required to live spiritually on a daily
56 basis. We continue practicing this principle in the Eleventh Step by persisting in
57 our efforts to take action each day. We place prayer and meditation high on our
58 priority list. We resolve to make prayer and meditation as much a part of our

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59 daily routine as eating and sleeping, and then we employ the necessary self-
60 discipline to achieve our resolve.

61 To work this step, we must also increase the courage we've developed in the
62 previous steps. Though the courage we demonstrated when we honestly and
63 thoroughly examined ourselves was beyond anything we had previously
64 experienced, we now need to develop a markedly different form of courage. We
65 need the courage to live according to spiritual principles, even when we are
66 afraid of the results. Despite our fear, we do what's necessary and draw on the
67 endless well of courage we can find by tapping into a Power greater than
68 ourselves.

69 With all this discussion of God, we may again find ourselves growing
70 uncomfortable, perhaps wondering if this is where the "religious catch" we've
71 anticipated is going to be revealed. We may wonder if our sponsor is now going
72 to inform us that we must pray or meditate in a particular way. Before we get
73 carried away with such fears, we would do well to remember one of the basic
74 tenets of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous: our absolute and unconditional
75 freedom to believe in any Higher Power we choose and, of course, our right to
76 communicate with our Higher Power in whatever way conforms to our individual
77 beliefs. Although some of us practice a traditional religion, only rarely do we
78 hear specific religious beliefs discussed in our meetings. Our members respect
79 the rights of other members to form their own spiritual beliefs and tend to frown
80 on anything with the potential to dilute the spiritual message of recovery.

81 In this encouraging atmosphere, most of us find it relatively easy to discard
82 our preconceived ideas of the "right" way to pray or meditate. Finding our own
83 way is another matter. We may have only a basic understanding of what prayer
84 and meditation are, prayer being the times we talk to God and meditation the
85 times we listen. We may not be aware of the many options that are open to us.
86 Searching those options out and exploring their usefulness to us can be
87 uncomfortable and time-consuming. It is only by being open-minded, and by

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88 taking action, that we are likely to find what is right for us as individuals. We
89 may experiment with a whole assortment of practices until we find something that
90 doesn't feel foreign or contrived. If we have found that *everything* feels strange,
91 then we stick with a particular form of prayer and meditation until it no longer
92 seems unnatural. Many of us have adopted an eclectic approach, borrowing our
93 practices from a variety of sources and combining those which provide us the
94 greatest comfort and enlightenment.

95 We are on a spiritual path which will lead us to a God of our own
96 understanding. Many of us have remarked on the great joy we find along the
97 way. We are sure to get help from our fellow members, or perhaps even from
98 others who are also walking a spiritual path. Seeking out these individuals and
99 asking for their guidance can help us find our own answers; however, sharing in
100 another's experience does not excuse us from the need to seek our own. Others
101 may be able to show us the path they walked, sharing with us the joy and insight
102 they found along the way; nevertheless, we may find our spiritual paths taking a
103 different turn and have to adjust our method of travel accordingly. In the end, we
104 find what's true for us in moments of personal contact with our Higher Power.
105 The experience shared by others is just that: *experience*, not ultimate answers to
106 the mysteries of life.

107 Our understanding of God grows and changes through prayer and meditation.
108 We find that it is too limiting to define God in such a way that our understanding
109 is set in stone once and for all. An interesting parallel can be drawn if we
110 remember the times we've thoughtlessly tossed other human beings into
111 categories and forgotten about them. We deprived ourselves of an opportunity to
112 know someone else on a deeper level. Treating our Higher Power as something
113 to be defined will rob us on a grand scale, halting further spiritual growth the
114 minute we arrive at an absolute definition.

115 In addition to the open-mindedness so necessary to working the Eleventh
116 Step, it is vital that we actively pursue knowledge of God's will for us and the

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117 power to carry it out. This knowledge is what we are searching for when we pray,
118 whether our prayers are desperate pleas or calm requests for guidance.
119 Regardless of our state of mind when asking for guidance, we can be sure that
120 our consistent efforts to seek knowledge of God's will will be rewarded.

121 We should remember that Step Eleven asks us to pray *only* for the knowledge
122 of God's will and the power to carry that out. Just as we opened our minds and
123 avoided restricting our understanding of our Higher Power, we avoid placing
124 limitations on what God's will for us can be. Though the temptation to pray for a
125 particular result in a relationship or for monetary success may be great, we must
126 resist the urge to do so if we want to experience the rewards of the Eleventh Step.
127 This is not to say that we must sacrifice relationships and success if we want to
128 live according to God's will. Praying for specific solutions to specific problems
129 may not be the answer. As ideas come to us, it may seem as though we've been
130 provided with an answer to what's bothering us; we may even go to great lengths
131 to convince ourselves that our idea was divinely inspired.

132 For instance, at some time in our lives, we may feel unhappy but not know
133 exactly what is causing such unhappiness. After spending a few minutes in
134 prayer, seeking a solution to our unhappiness, we may suddenly get an idea that
135 all our problems are caused by our boring job and demanding boss. We, as
136 addicts, are subject to take such random thoughts and run with them, impulsively
137 quitting our jobs. This scenario may seem extreme, but its point is that by praying
138 only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out, we can
139 avoid our former tendency to allow fleeting whims and superstition to dictate the
140 course of our lives. Knowledge of God's will does not usually come in a
141 momentary blinding flash, but in a gradual awakening brought about by
142 continued practice of prayer and meditation.

143 Practicing the Eleventh Step involves a daily discipline of prayer and
144 meditation. This discipline reinforces our commitment to recovery, to living a
145 new way of life, and to developing further our relationship with our Higher

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146 Power. Through this daily practice, we begin to glimpse the limitless freedom we
147 can be afforded through God's love. We have found that following such a
148 discipline also results in a firm belief in our own right to happiness and peace of
149 mind.

150 We see that, regardless of the presence or absence of material success in our
151 lives, we can be content. We can be happy and fulfilled with or without money,
152 with or without a partner, with or without the approval of others. We've begun to
153 see that God's will for us is the ability to live with dignity, to love ourselves and
154 others, to laugh, and to find great joy and beauty in our surroundings. Our most
155 heartfelt longings and dreams for our lives are coming true. These priceless gifts
156 are no longer beyond our reach. They are, in fact, the very essence of God's will
157 for us.

158 In our gratitude, we go beyond merely asking for the power to live up to
159 God's plan for our own lives and begin to seek out ways to be of service, to make
160 a difference in the life of another addict, to carry the message of recovery. Our
161 spiritual awakening has opened us up to spiritual contentment, unconditional
162 love, and personal freedom. Knowing that we can only keep this precious gift by
163 sharing it with others, we go on to Step Twelve.

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Step Eleven Input Form

- | | Yes | No |
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| 1. Did you identify with the material in this step? | [] | [] |
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STEP TWELVE

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*"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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In a sense, Step Twelve encompasses *all* the steps. We must make use of what we've learned in the previous eleven as we carry the message and practice the principles of recovery in all our affairs. Individually and collectively, each step has contributed to the extraordinary transformation which we know as a spiritual awakening.

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Many of us have wondered how this spiritual awakening comes about. Does it happen all at once or does it occur slowly, over a long period of time? While there may be great variations within our experience about this awakening of the spirit, we all agree that it results from working the steps.

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Our awakening has been progressive, beginning with a spark of awareness in the First Step. Before we admitted the truth about our addiction, we knew only the darkness of denial. But when we surrendered, acknowledging that we couldn't arrest our addiction or hope for a better life on our own, a ray of light broke through the darkness, beginning our spiritual awakening.

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Though each individual's experience of a spiritual awakening varies, some experiences are so common as to be almost universal. Humility is one of these common factors. We first began to experience humility when we opened our minds to the possibility that a Power greater than ourselves existed. For some of us, this experience was so astounding that we received an almost physical jolt from the knowledge that we weren't alone in our struggle for recovery. Step Two allowed us our first glimpse of hope. That hope had an immediate and powerful effect on our despairing spirit, providing us with a reason to go on.

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Our desire for something different prompted us to a deeper level of surrender. In the Third Step, we gave up more. Not only did we admit that we couldn't control our addiction, we went on to recognize that our will and lives

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30 would be better left to the care of our Higher Power. Paradoxically, in this
31 admission we found our greatest strength. As we worked the Third Step, we
32 began to understand that we could tap the limitless resource of our Higher Power
33 for everything needed to heal us spiritually.

34 This included the courage we knew we would need to work the Fourth Step.
35 Many of us dreaded the process of self-appraisal called for in Step Four, despite
36 the gentle assurances of our fellow NA members that we would find spiritual
37 rewards in the process. Though we were afraid, we went forward, somehow
38 believing in the experience of other recovering addicts. Once our inventory was
39 completed, we no longer needed convincing. In the process, we had experienced
40 spiritual growth for ourselves. Our spirits were strengthened by our emerging
41 integrity. The shaping of values, so essential to our character, was just one of the
42 positive results we found in the Fourth Step.

43 Unlike the admission we made in the First Step, which was made in
44 desperation, the admission we made in Step Five was voluntary. This complete
45 disclosure of our innermost selves, made without reservation, resulted in a
46 breakthrough in our ability to accept ourselves and trust others. The acceptance
47 of our sponsor and the unconditional love of our Higher Power made it possible
48 for us to judge ourselves less harshly. We developed a little more humility with
49 the awareness of the exact nature of our wrongs. We began to understand that
50 humility and self-loathing are generally incompatible, unlikely to exist at the
51 same time.

52 With our awareness of the exact nature of our wrongs--our character defects--
53 and the humility inherent in that awareness, our desire to change increased
54 dramatically as we worked Step Six. Though we may have experienced some
55 trepidation about surrendering our character defects, we overcame our fears by
56 drawing on the trust and faith we had developed in a loving God. Trust and faith,
57 two important elements of a spiritual awakening, made it possible for us to
58 become entirely ready to allow God to work in our lives.

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59 Consciously asking God to help us in Step Seven was an important
60 development in the awakening of our spirit. That request was tangible evidence
61 of how much we had changed spiritually. This was the point where many of us
62 began to sense just how powerful God is and just how powerful God's love could
63 be in our lives. Because we had asked for and been granted some freedom from
64 having to act on our shortcomings, we finally began to grasp what the miracle of
65 recovery offers us.

66 Carried along by the promise of continued freedom in our lives, we
67 proceeded, in Step Eight, to make ourselves aware of what we had done to others
68 in our active addiction. Again, we saw how the spiritual preparation of the
69 previous steps made it possible for us to withstand the pain and remorse of listing
70 the people we harmed. Our willingness to make amends to them all brought us
71 further away from the grip of self-obsession. Our search for recovery was no
72 longer focused on what we could get out of it for ourselves. We saw beyond the
73 confines of our own lives and our efforts in recovery began to be more generous.
74 We developed the ability to feel empathy for others.

75 Once we had engaged in the process of making amends in the Ninth Step, we
76 could see how it contributed to our spiritual growth. Our humility was enhanced
77 by our newfound appreciation of others' feelings. Our self-esteem grew along
78 with our increased capacity to forgive both ourselves and others. We were able
79 to give of ourselves. Most of all, we gained freedom--freedom to live in the
80 present and to feel that we belonged in the world.

81 The discipline we practiced in the Tenth Step insured that we continued to
82 breathe new life into our awakening spirits. We practiced ongoing adherence to
83 our newfound values, thereby strengthening their importance in our lives. We
84 saw that, by making our spiritual development our primary focus, other aspects of
85 our lives would progress naturally as they were meant to all along.

86 Focusing our attention on our spiritual development brought us to the
87 Eleventh Step. We had already become increasingly conscious of a powerful

88 presence operating in our lives: a Power that could restore our sanity and remove
89 our shortcomings. Through recognizing the love inherent in a Power capable of
90 doing such things for us, we were able to better understand the loving nature of
91 God. The spiritual void we felt at the beginning of our recovery has been filled
92 with gratitude, unconditional love, and a desire to be of service to God and
93 others. Undeniably, we have experienced a spiritual awakening.

94 In order to cultivate this awakening, we have found it essential to express our
95 gratitude and practice the principles of recovery in every area of our lives.
96 However, this isn't something we do only to insure that our own recovery
97 continues. Narcotics Anonymous is not a selfish program. In fact, the spirit of
98 the Twelfth Step is grounded in the principle of selfless service. Upholding this
99 principle in our efforts to carry the message is of the utmost importance, both to
100 our own spiritual state and to those to whom we are trying to carry the message.

101 Step Twelve has a paradoxical aspect in that the more we help others, the
102 more we help ourselves. For instance, if we find ourselves troubled and our faith
103 wavering, there are very few actions that have such an immediate uplifting effect
104 on us as helping a newcomer will. One small act of generosity can work wonders;
105 our self-absorption diminishes and we end up with a better perspective on what
106 previously seemed like overwhelming problems. Every time we tell someone else
107 that Narcotics Anonymous works, we reinforce our belief in the program.

108 Now we must ask ourselves, just what *is* "the message" we are trying to carry?
109 Is it that we never have to use drugs again? Is it that, through recovery, we cease
110 being likely candidates for jails, institutions, and an early death? Is it the hope
111 that an addict, any addict, can recover from the disease of addiction? Well, it's
112 all of this and more. The message we carry is that, by practicing the principles
113 contained within the Twelve Steps, we have had a spiritual awakening. Whatever
114 that means for each one of us is the message we carry to those seeking recovery.

115 The ways in which we carry the message are as varied as our members. There
116 are, however, some basic guidelines that we, as a fellowship, have found to be

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117 helpful. First and foremost, we share our experience, strength, and hope. This
118 means that we share our experience, not the theories we have heard from other
119 sources. This also means that we share our *own* experience, not someone else's.
120 It is not our job to tell someone seeking recovery where to work, who to live with,
121 how to raise their children, or anything else outside the realm of our experience
122 with recovery. Someone we are trying to help may have problems in these areas;
123 we can help best not by managing that person's life, but by sharing our own
124 experience in those areas.

125 Developing a personal style for carrying the message rests on a simple
126 requirement: we must be ourselves. We each have a special, one-of-a-kind
127 personality that is sure to be an attraction to many. Some of us have a sparkling
128 sense of humor which may reach someone in despair. Some of us are especially
129 warm and compassionate, able to reach an addict who has rarely been the
130 recipient of kindness. Some of us have a remarkable talent for telling the truth,
131 in no uncertain terms, to an addict literally dying to hear it. Some of us are a
132 valuable asset on any service committee, while others do better working one-on-
133 one with a suffering addict. Whatever our own personality makeup, we can be
134 assured that when we sincerely try to carry the message, we will reach the addict
135 we are trying to help.

136 Yet there are limits to what we can do to help another addict. We cannot
137 force anyone to stop using. We cannot "give" someone the results of working the
138 steps nor can we grow for them. We cannot magically remove someone's
139 loneliness or pain. Not only are we powerless over our own addiction, we are
140 powerless over everyone else's. We can only carry the message; we cannot
141 determine who will receive it.

142 It is absolutely none of our business to decide who is ready to hear the
143 message of recovery and who is not. Many of us have formed such a judgment,
144 and have been sorely mistaken, about an addict's desire for recovery. Multiple
145 relapses do not necessarily signify a lack of interest in recovery, nor does the

"model newcomer" demonstrate, without a doubt, a certainty of "making it." On the other hand, it is our business, and our privilege, to share the message of recovery unconditionally.

The principle of unconditional love is expressed in our attitude. Anyone who reaches out for help is entitled to our compassion, our attention, and our unconditional acceptance. Any addict, regardless of clean time, should be able to pour out his or her pain in an atmosphere free of judgments. Most of us have found that we are able to feel great empathy for those who suffer from our disease precisely because it is *our* disease. Our empathy isn't abstract, nor is our understanding. Instead, it is born in shared experience. We greet each other with the recognition reserved for survivors of the same nearly fatal catastrophe. This shared experience, more than anything else, contributes to the atmosphere of unconditional love in our meetings.

Helping others is perhaps the highest aspiration of the human heart, and something we have been entrusted with as a result of God working in our lives. We would do well to remember to ask our Higher Power to continue working through us in our efforts to carry the message. Diligently practicing the principles of recovery will insure that the connection between ourselves and our Higher Power remains open and that our service to others is firmly rooted in spirituality.

Spirituality becomes a way of life for us as we live by the principles of recovery. The example of a life lived according to these principles is potentially the most powerful message we can carry. We don't need to wait until we're "on" the Second Step to practice the principle of open-mindedness. Courage and honesty have a place in our lives even when we aren't writing an inventory. Humility is always a desirable state, whether we are asking God to remove our shortcomings, conducting business with a co-worker, or talking to a friend.

To practice the principles of recovery "in all our affairs" is what we strive for. Both in and out of meetings, no matter who is involved, no matter how difficult it may seem, we make the principles of recovery the guides by which we live. Only

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175 through the practice of these principles in our daily life can we hope to achieve
176 the state of grace necessary to maintain our reprieve from the disease of
177 addiction. Though this may seem a lofty goal, we have found it attainable. Our
178 gratitude for the gift of recovery becomes the underlying force in all we do,
179 motivating our most altruistic intentions and weaving its way through our lives
180 and the lives of those around us.

181 Even in silence, the voice of our gratitude does not go unheard. It speaks
182 most clearly as we walk the path of recovery, selflessly giving to those we meet
183 along the way. We venture forth on our spiritual journey, our lives enriched, our
184 spirits filled with love, and our horizons ever-expanding. The quintessential spirit
185 that lies inside each one of us, the spark of life that was almost extinguished by
186 our disease, has been renewed through working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics
187 Anonymous. And it is on the path paved with these steps that our future journey
188 begins.

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The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous®

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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