

HOW IT WORKS

If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovery possible.

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.

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.

This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once, we didn't become addicted in one day, so remember - EASY DOES IT.

There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery, this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Although there are no musts in N.A., there are three things that seem indispensable. These are, Honesty, Openmindedness, and Willingness to try. With these we are well on our way.

We feel that our approach to the problem of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical, for one addict can best understand and help another addict. We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible and productive members of that society.

The only way to keep from getting or continuing a habit is not to take that first fix, pill or drink. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again or create a new one.

The substitution of alcohol has caused a great many addicts to form a new addiction pattern, which in its progression brings as many problems as before. We seem to forget that alcohol is one of the oldest known drugs. It would appear that we are people with addictive personalities who are strongly susceptible to alcoholic addiction.



How it works
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STEP 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Our desire to stop using was instigated by the second of two mental breakdowns, one involving drugs and one involving alcohol. We were tired of being rescued from the insanity that we called life, tired of our inability to live the lives we truly wanted, tired of trying so desperately to fill that void within ourselves. This desperation drove us to N.A., drove us to keep going to meetings, drove us to work our steps even though we didn't understand them.

When we first came into the program of Narcotics Anonymous, some of us felt resentful at the suggestions some of the members made to us. We expressed our resentments by arguing with or by cold-shouldering the person who had tried to help us. Now our program-selves simply acknowledge the fact that our drug-addict selves are having a temper tantrum over some idea we don't want to accept and we go right on with the conversation. We even ask the other person to tell us more because now we know we need to hear it! If we are serious about our recovery, we may want to fearlessly and thoroughly search our motives when we find ourselves in a position to hurt or help another. This honesty may cost us a few fantasies but it can help us a lot in reality. Many of us have come to believe that the forces of life know much more what our real needs are and will take care of us if undisturbed by self-will. This involves trust and faith in life itself. Instead of wanting our way, we are sick of it, we want another way.

An attitude of humility is one of the prime ingredients in the steps--in order to make the program work you have to be willing to do things that you might not like to do. Eventually the fun and games variety of addiction is exhausted and we are left with our misery and our despair. Most of us do not expect to ever regain any sort of normal life. As a living being we have beat ourselves into a corner by the actions we took in the grip our addiction. Clean we must leave our corner. The steps give us the strength we need to do this. First, we give up the fight; that we are not addicted and can't do drugs normally without compulsiveness. Then we learn to relate to a power greater than ourselves.

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We have frequently gotten to a point where we just can't go on any longer because of intense pain: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. We can only stand it so long and then we must go or grow. We must be ready to go to any lengths to achieve sobriety. Some goals are reached only after we let go of some crucial reservation. Sometimes, we try to sneak one past our heads and decide it would be nice to change before the pain gets severe--all that does is make us willing to consider change. Nobody expects one of us to stumble into this program brimming with love, honesty or open-minded willingness. All that is required is that we try. If we give it our best go, it will work for us as it has worked for others. It's our old familiar ways and heads that make life unbearable--not the universe. It's only when we can't stand our old ways any longer that we begin to change. Only under attack by severe and unyielding pain do the walls begin to crack.

Honesty plays a large part in how it works; for only when we are honest about our feelings, likes and dislikes, wants and needs, can other people know how they can help. Willingness is especially important in the areas of practicing tolerance, patience, humility, and honesty. We can let go of our false pride and look at our lives on a gut level--past all lies, dreams, and fantasies.

After struggling through the daily burden of the monkey on our backs, we despair. When we are beaten, we are ready. Sometimes the pain of working the 12 steps is not as great as the pain of not working them, so we work the 12 steps. The hole in our guts is filled with a new understanding of our places in the world and with love for others. As we come clean and work our steps we will release ourselves from our chains and become free people. None of these steps work by magic. You don't say the words of the steps like a stage magician pulling rabbits out of a hat. They work when they are lived.

Some of us find it a battle to go clean. This program is simple. No one ever said it was easy. Recovery is a contact process.

We read this book and attend N.A. meetings. We see for ourselves if the program might have something to offer us. It's not where we are at that counts but where we are going.

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We are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection--adequacy can be achieved, but perfection cannot. We can reach to and awaken the force for life within ourselves--it can do anything, even give us a new life. The breakdown of old ideas and old ways seems to be beyond our conscious control. It sort of seems things are going to change when they're going to change--if we can accept what's going on and relax and enjoy as much of the ride as possible then the whole thing becomes okay, sort of. Even when it's so bad that we can't stand it. The only control of the situation we seem to have is a choice of forward or self-destruct.

What areas we change in, how fast we change and in what order all seem to be predetermined by our very nature. It's true, we have to just desire something and then to follow the necessary path.

Yeah, we remember the powerlessness that we felt while using drugs. As it says, "It was calling me; to a bar, to a party, to walk down the street. You gotta get loaded." Before we went to get loaded, we had to get loaded. We never felt like human beings, never felt like we were able to make a mistake, never felt O.K. with ourselves. That last sentence tells us that it's O.K.; we have a chance to become human beings and start all over again.

There was no happiness in our lives at all. The longer we stayed in it, the worse it got. We had to get to the point where we realized that our will power wasn't going to pull us through anymore. We used our will power a lot. We had a strong will power. A lot of times, we knew when we had gotten really bad with drugs and say, "O.K., I have to get my act together now", Just by sheer will power alone we'd do it and get clean awhile. It had to be to the point where that wasn't working anymore--we just couldn't do it. Until then, it had just been our own strength that got us through; but at that point, we knew our own strength just wasn't enough. Everything we've ever tried has failed anyway--so what have we got to lose? Counselors, psychiatrists, hospitals, lovers, new towns, new jobs--we've tried everything to control our using or to stop using. None of our efforts got us anywhere in

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the long run. For a day, a week or a month perhaps; but sooner or later we take that first pill, fix, drink, or smoke and we're gone again--worse than ever. When we give up--quit struggling--surrender, completely and unconditionally--then and only then can we be helped to recover from the disease of drug addiction.

We had to take step one. We had to affirm that we are powerless and we had to go to meetings to hear people talking about it. Are we sure we want to stop using drugs? Do we understand and believe that we have no real, long term control over drugs? Do we fully accept the fact that every attempt on our part to taper off or stop using or to control our using has failed? Do we know in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something we don't want to be: liars, thieves, and schemers? Do we know in our guts that we fail to do the good things we start out to do and wind up doing the bad things we don't want to do because of the way we use drugs? Do we admit to ourselves that every time we have been in trouble; everytime we hurt someone intentionally, we were either loaded or trying to get loaded?

If we can let go of our false pride and look at our lives on a gut level--past all the lies, dreams, and fantasies--and admit that it's all true and really feel it--we have a chance. If we can cut through all the nonsense we've been telling ourselves to make ourselves feel good--and admit to ourselves that we are powerless over drugs and that we have made a mess of our lives--we have a chance. Strange as it may seem, the ~~only~~ help ^{only} comes ~~only~~ when we are able to admit complete defeat--utter failure. For us, it has to be a whole new ballgame. We start to realize that through being completely defeated, that we do have a chance. That it all of a sudden becomes kind of different; we aren't going to end up going to jail, end up back in the nut house permanently, end up dying.

When we knew we were addicts and refused to admit it, it didn't matter who or how many other people were aware of our disease; because before any progress could be made toward our recovery we had to admit and accept the fact that we are powerless over drugs.

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Step one means that we don't have to make excuses for the way we are and that is a great freedom. Surrender means not having to fight anymore. It takes a while to realize how unmanageable our lives had become for some of us, for others this is about the only thing that we can be sure of. In a way we are gamblers and we like the odds against us. This is the way we recover when we hit the bottom, it's like the slide has stopped. With the admission of complete defeat, you've stopped it right there.

To admit our powerlessness it got so bad--to a point where we couldn't take anymore pain or self-punishment. What we were promised, to us, was better than anything in the world; the pain might not get any better, it might stay that way, but it's not gonna get any worse than it's been over the last few years. We were just so torn up inside and just couldn't take anymore pain. That's the foundation we started with. The only way to go was up.

When we came into the program, we heard that step being read and talked about: for myself, it was hope, that's the hope they were talking about. We admitted to someone, finally, because we kept it all in and stuff. We admitted in fits of insanity, that we couldn't do it ourselves and that's the hope. The obsession's still there, but there's a hope that it's going to end, and that it's O.K.

We were going out of control while we were high. We were unpredictable and dangerous. Drugs destroyed our peace of mind and filled us with self-hatred, anger, remorse, self-pity and guilt...the very same things we were looking to escape. We were completely powerless over any drug, whether it be alcohol or any other drug that will alter our mood or way of thinking or outlook on life. We had to accept conditions that we were powerless over and change what we could. We could not change any one or anything but ourselves in the final analysis. We found we had to make a surrender to life on life's terms or surely be snuffed by the drugs, by our addiction, or by society.

It all begins with that first admission. From that point forward each addict is reminded that a day clean is a dry won and any failure is only a temporary setback rather than a link in an unbreakable chain. When we give up--quit struggling--surrender, completely and unconditionally--then and only then can we be helped to recover from the disease of drug addiction.

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Where is help? How did we get it? What was it? We went to a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous and took a look around. We are the kind of drug user who lives in the streets trying to find something to bang into our arms from day to day. We are inclined to be skeptical and not overly trusting. We needed proof. In that meeting was our proof. There we found people like ourselves with the same or worse patterns of drug dependency and failure and they are clean. Here is proof. We smile. Our eyes are clear. We care for each other. We will probably introduce ourselves to a newcomer and try to make them feel welcome. As our meeting progresses we hear a little bit about ourselves from our own lips. We understand and believe that we have no real control over drugs. We recognize that we don't use drugs--they used us. We accept the fact that every attempt we made to control our using has failed. We know in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something we don't want to be. We value ourselves in our own eyes. We of all people have surely had enough of self-destruction. We want first to learn, then to do the things that will help us transform into self-affirming people.

When we hit bottom we were searching for an answer--looking for a way out. Things didn't seem to be able to get any worse. We reached out and there was an answer. Until we took step one completely we were caught up in reservations. We felt different. Upon working step one we affirm our surrender to the people of N.A. and only then do we overcome the alienation of being a drug addict--from apart from we became a part

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We have an incurable, progressive, terminal disease called drug addiction. It doesn't matter whether we "just take a few pills fix eight times a day, suck on a pipe or drink bottles of cough remedy behind drug stores or have one tranquilizer with our first martini of each day--we have certain things in common no matter what kind or degree of addict we are.

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The bottom line of Narcotics Anonymous is staying clean. We realize that we cannot use drugs and live. When we admit our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives we open the doors to a power greater than ourselves.

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STEP 2: We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

If you can accept the fact that a large number of drug dependent people were, like yourself, unable to control their lives and that they have, through Narcotics Anonymous, found a way to live safe and sober, you have only to believe what you see and experience Step 2.

NA has many members. Their Power--collectively, is certainly greater than that of any individual member. What is impossible for one alone is often light work for many. So then, the many are a greater power than the one alone. You don't have to be religious to accept the idea of a power greater than yourself. Just take a look around with an open mind and you will see a positive power all around NA. Call it love, call it harmony, call it peace, call it cleanness and sobriety, call it good or call it God. It doesn't matter ~~now~~ what you call it. What matters is that you want to get well and happy, and by looking and listening as openly as you can, you find that NA seems to have the Power to get people well and happy.

Thus thinking, I have affirmed the desire to stay clean and sober in spite of the dilemma, no matter how large it may seem. Also, I have affirmed my surrender to you people of NA and only then do I overcome the alienation of being a drug addict.

You may be one of us who says, "I need help with my drug problem and I can see that NA has that alright; but that Second Step says this power greater than ourselves will "restore us to sanity" and I'm not crazy. I just can't handle drugs." Many of us started out with that attitude.

The higher power we use in NA is a lot like this. We begin by simply admitting to the possibility of a power greater than ourselves. We discover that power in our lives from the very beginning of our lives in the program. Many fortunate things will occur mysteriously, but there are no accidents.

Surely, we realize that if our car gets stuck in the mud, and we can't get it out by ourselves we get help in the form of many hands or a large machine. Many of us have come to believe that the forces of life know much more what our real needs are and will take care of us if undisturbed by self-will. This

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involves trust and faith in life itself.

Is there really any madness in the universe or are there only similar states of painful confusion springing from various disorders of body and soul?

We had no trouble admitting that addiction had become a destructive power greater than ourselves. It logically follows that there can also be a constructive power greater than ourselves. When drugs are washed from our bodies through daily abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects of the drugs, a miracle takes place. We come to understand that our recoveries are a gift from a power greater than ourselves.

Sanity is ~~like~~ having our priorities in order. We don't use drugs; we go to meetings; and using the NA program, we rely on God to provide what we need on a daily basis. We have been restored to sanity as far as the compulsion to use drugs is concerned.

Keeping a watchful eye on our daily H.A.L.T.S. maintenance, we can get some food when Hungry; call someone in NA on the phone when Angry and Lonely; get some rest when Tired; and go to an NA meeting when taking ourselves too serious.

The important thing to remember as the urge to use drugs occurs is the fact that just because the mind is asking for drugs, it doesn't mean the body is. We are so into denial and overcontrolling our emotions that the occasional thought of drugs may be the only way our mind knows to get our attention. The mind signals drugs when the body may be actually asking for vitamins, food, rest or companionship. So we ~~what~~ ^{need} our H.A.L.T.S. maintenance daily. The demand for drugs is usually short lived and passes quickly. Any reoccurring, long term thought about using drugs could indicate the need to do inventory and talk to another member of NA.

There is a spirit that ~~was~~ ^{is} guiding all living things. Call it God, Reason, the Infinite, Muhammed, Christ or whatever you like. If you choose call it nothing at all but find it and learn to benefit from its power and you will gain a new life, free from drugs and the pain ~~they~~ ^{they have} ~~use~~ ^{has} caused us.

We have begun to see ~~only~~ ^{only} recently how much ~~our~~ ^{our} Higher Power has to offer, ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~our~~ ^{our} ~~living~~ ^{living} are only the

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beginning of new life. Life without fear is a gift we receive for the price of acceptance.

We gradually began to find some order in the universe, and accepted that "somebody" was supplying us with a conscience we had never had before, and was somehow giving us the power to overcome the compulsion to use. It sure as hell wasn't what we wanted to get high so bad it was ridiculous, but knew that it could be of no use to anyone if ~~we~~^{we} did.

Belief is the beginning. Step Two begins to give us the power to overcome our compulsion. It is helpful to stop at this point and go over our thinking in this respect. We should not take the chance that our understanding of a power greater than ourselves is sufficient at this point. Your power can be the group itself. It can follow a religious tradition. The only thing we want to emphasize is that you should feel comfortable with your higher power and be able to make the statement that it cares about you.

So, we have this disease: Progressive, incurable, terminal. And the most amazing single fact about the disease is that we went out and bought it on the time plan! That is insane. Think about that. You, I, everyone we meet in NA, the junkie snatching purses on the street, the sweet ladies hitting two or three different doctors for their perfectly legal prescriptions. All of us have this one thing in common--we buy the disease that kills us and, one way or another, we usually pay for it with blood, sweat and tears and we continue to pay for it a balloon at a time or a few pills at a time or a bottle at a time until the day we die. That is at least part of the insanity of drug addiction. The price may seem worse for the junkie girl who prostitutes herself for her fix than it is for the wealthy woman who merely lies to her doctor, but ultimately, both pay with their lives. Ask yourself this question: Do I believe that it would be insane to walk up to someone and say "Would you please sell me my own death--on the time plan?" Or--"May I please have a heart attack or a fatal accident?" If you can agree that this would be an insane thing comparable to giving yourself an injection of deadly poison, only slower, you should have no trouble with the Second Step.

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The Second Step is ~~in all likelihood~~ the second most important

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thing that must happen for us to acheive any sort of ongoing recovery. The 1st Step leaves us at a place where we need to come to believe in something that can help us with our lack of power and sense of hopelessness. Belief becomes the most important thing for us to work on. We have in all probability some type of belief and unless we examine it and seek to improve it, it may be insufficient to give us recovery. Certainly our belief didn't do too much to help us with our active addiction in the past. If we want better results we should look for what's been working and what has failed us. Our belief has usually come to us at an early age from members of a family that has at least one member who has a disease with definite traits of family illness. We may or may not have a workable idea of God.

Most addicts have strong feelings about their higher power and vigorously defend their right to their own understanding. We have thought it over privately and talked it over with our trusted friends.

The strength to move into action comes from our higher power however we understand him. Asking for help in specific terms usually precedes getting that help. By opening the gates of our hearts we become ready to receive the help we need.

We need to accept this step fully to start our road to recovery. When our belief has grown to some point of comfort, we are ready to take the Third Step.

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

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All the time you've been an addict, your will, your life itself has been controlled by drugs. Your choices have always been determined by drugs. You've had to be where you could get them. You've had to be nice to whoever had them. You had to have the money to obtain them. Then, when you get your drugs and the search is over for a few hours or a few days you eat, drink, inhale or inject your drug. Then your mind, your body, your soul--your total being is dominated by that drug. For a while, it may be pleasurable, at least in the early stages of addiction but ultimately, the effect begins to wear off and the drug begins to show its other side. One of the strange facts about drugs is that the higher they get us when they come on, the lower they bring us when we're coming down. When our nerves begin jangling like a fire alarm, we have two choices. We can live through a period of discomfort or we can take more drugs. For an addict, at some point in their career, there is no longer a choice. We get more drugs. Can you see that whether you steal these drugs or buy them you are being controlled by them? Whether we are under the influence of drugs, trying to find drugs or leaving town because of something you did in your effort to stay loaded, your actions, your will and your very life are being directly controlled by drugs.

Our way did not work, so we are going to try another way. We are going to try to let God, as we understand Him care for and direct our lives. In the 3rd Step we snatch our life away from drugs and put it where it belongs.

This step requires a basis in belief and if it or any step gives you trouble, go back to the one before it. Generally, if we are fearless and through enough, we can find something that we have left out and having then completed that step we are ready to go on to the next. Obviously we can't turn our lives and will over to the care of a god we don't believe in, or a god we don't trust to restore us to sanity.

This is a giant step. But anyone can take it. You don't have to be religious. You have only to believe what you see

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with your own eyes in the transformed lives of NA members and has a desire to stay clean. That's all it takes--an open mind. The word "God" bothers you--substitute recovery or Good or Love or NA or Peace--anything positive, just so you mean it.

None of these steps work by magic. You don't say the words of the steps like a stage magician pulling rabbits out of a hat. They work when they are lived. But they are easier to live by than the law of the needle or the law of the pill or the law of the bottle. If you want to stay clean, if you are willing to do the few simple things, if you will be honest with yourself in this endeavour; it is guaranteed that you will recover.

Nobody expects one of us to stumble into this program brimming with love, honesty or open-minded willingness. All that is required is that we try. If we give it our best go, it will work for us as it has worked for others. The 3rd step does not say "We turned our will and our lives over to the the care of God", it says "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." We made a decision. Drugs did ~~not~~ make that decision. Our family, our probation officer did not make that decision. We did. This is the first action we take in this program. For the first time we made a decision for ourselves. If you understand God to be simply whatever keeps the rest of us clean and sober that's fine. Ask that power to take care of you as it cares for us--even if it makes you feel stupid. Go off by yourself and say silently, "God, I've made a mess of my life. I can't solve my problems so I'm asking you if you'll take care of me and show me how to live a happy life."

If you honestly try it, it will work. Many of us start our day with that or a similar plea: "Thy will be done." The tension of letting go and letting God help us develop what works here and now. We can adjust this tension in our personality daily by using the NA program.

In this 3rd step, we simply recognize that there is a force for good in the world and we cooperate with that force. We let good things happen to us. Every action we've ever taken in regards to drugs was taken in an effort to get comfortable. ~~It didn't~~ work. Our way did our work. So we are going to try another way.

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We are going to try to let God, as we understand Him, lead and direct our lives.

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If we have come this far in the NA program, we have already noticed some change in our lives. Of course, the change is probably not as fast nor as dramatic as we could wish. We turned to drugs in the first place because we were people who wanted instant happiness or instant comfort and the drugs seemed for a time, to provide it. We may be impatient for change. Impatience may be one of our life problems. Many of us expect that as soon as we stop taking drugs, all of our other troubles are going to disappear. If you have been around long enough to get through the first three steps, you have probably discovered this isn't so. There are still bills to be paid, people to get along with or without, fears and ills to be dealt with. In fact, now that we are facing life without a periodic anesthetic, these life problems may seem at first to be more difficult and painful than ever. They can appear to be impossible and overwhelming. That's why we have Step Four.

We suddenly have the right to discontinue our old ways and try new ways. We surrender our lives and our wills to the care of a power greater than ourselves and become a part of that higher power. We must stop fighting losing battles if we are to win the battles that we must fight.

This third step is so important to us. As we use this step, the insanity of daily living evaporates.

The reliance in God is possible because we no longer have a drug separating our consciousness from higher power consciousness.

Drugs act as a roadblock to God and consciousness, causing the hopeless and helpless feeling of inadequacy most addicts experience.

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Inadequacy leaves when we stop using because we no longer
have a drug shutting us off from the sunlight of the higher power.

With the reliance in a higher power, we become a part of the
whole design for living free. The feelings of hopelessness and
helplessness begin to disappear.

Now we have natural highs, and the occasional lows are not
as heavy as before our conscious contact with God. In NA these
highs and lows of living clean eventually even up and balance them-
selves into a casual, easy does it, live and let live, and daily
enjoyment of life. And for this clean living, we may be eternally
grateful to our higher power.

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STEP FOUR: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory
of ourselves.

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Step Four is here to help us see exactly where our problems are and to measure our strengths and weaknesses.

Let's face it. When we were using we weren't very honest with ourselves. If we were, we wouldn't have been able to live with our addiction. We are finally beginning to become honest when we admit drugs have us shipped and that we need help--but it took us a long time to get down to where we could admit we were whipped and we're probably not going to become well physically, spiritually, mentally or emotionally overnight. Step Four is going to help us toward recovery more than we can imagine. Ask anyone who has some time on the program and who has the kind of life you want for yourself. Almost without exception, they will tell you that the Fourth Step was a turning point in their lives. Most of us were surprised to find that we had some good points in our moral inventory!

Some people make the mistake of approaching the Fourth Step as if it were a confession of how horrible they are--what a bad person they have been. This is not the purpose of the Fourth Step. We are trying to free ourselves of living in old, useless patterns. We take the Fourth Step to gain the necessary strength and insight to enable us to grow in this new way of life. A binge of emotional sorrow over real and imagined wrongs will not help us. In fact, it could be quite harmful.

Our purpose is to be rid of guilt--not to wallow in it! To be done with the past, not to cling to it. We want to look it in the face and see it for what it was-- and then release it so that we can live in today. The past, for most of us, has been a

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ghost in the closet. We have been afraid to ~~open that closet for~~ **WORK IN PROGRESS**
fear of what ~~that~~ ghost may do to us.

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The way to write an inventory is to write it! Thinking about inventory, talking about it (one-on-one or at meetings), theorizing about it, will not get it written. Sit down with a notebook, pray, pick up your pen and start writing!

You don't have to do this alone. Your will and your life are now in the hands of the Source of all strength--tap into the Source! Writing a thorough and honest inventory looks impossible to most of us. This may be because it is--if we're operating on our own "power". Take a few quiet moments each time before you write and pray for "the power to carry it out."

Don't write your inventory with a particular person in mind to read it to. If you do that you may wind up "slanting" what you write in order to please them. Besides, life is unmanageable, and you can't know for sure to whom you'll read it anyway. Only time will tell, and the Fifth Step will take care of itself. You're not there yet and you don't have to worry about it. Stay here in the Now-- you're on Step Four, and that's all.

A Fourth Step takes the confusion out of our minds and puts it on paper where we can look at it. You may approach it in any number of ways. It is advisable that before you do, you go over the first three steps with your sponsor. Be comfortable with your understanding of these steps. Allow yourself the privilege of feeling good about what you are doing. Don't allow yourself to be driven as you were driven for so long by drugs. Remember that one of our mottoes is "Easy Does It". We have been ~~craving around~~ **N.A. WSC-LC** for a long time and it's gotten us nowhere. Now we're going to **WORK IN PROGRESS** take it easy and not let things frighten us.

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So, go over the first three steps and then, with pen and

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paper, begin your inventory. If you possibly can, get off by yourself, away from the daily pressures to do this. If the word moral bothers you, call it your positive/negative inventory, or your good/bad inventory. All you're trying to do is to find out which things about yourself you want to change. If you were a grocer, you would not hesitate to separate the rotten fruit from the good fruit in your store and throw the rotten fruit away. The NA program has this Fourth Step to help you see which is which.

It is important to remember where we came from if we don't want to return. We had to go through what we went through, to get where we are.

A basic rule of thumb is that you can write too little, but you can never write too much. The inventory will fit the individual. Just write and write, until your brain is empty. Those things that you think about while not sleeping are usually inventory material. As we realize how little of value we have to lose and how much we have to gain, we will plunge into this step without reservation.

We remove these thorns in our sides by listing them on paper. The drug addict sits down with paper and pen and prays for God to help him in this and to reveal the defects that are causing pain and suffering. We pray for the courage to be fearless and thorough so that this inventory may help us to get our lives in order. When we pray and take action it almost invariably goes well for us.

Write down your fears, your resentments, and your ~~guilt~~ ^{guilt}. We may examine in depth our relationships to people, places and things; and ask ourselves what we have demanded of these relationships. Often the answers will show that we are placing unreasonable demands on reality. Often we find we are demanding people not be who they are, say what they just said, or do what they are doing.

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Most of us have found that we were neither so terrible nor so wonderful as we supposed. Ultimately we are just human, with pretty much the same fears and longings and troubles and so on as everyone else. One of the greatest benefits of the NA program is discovering that we need never be alone again. Others have felt as we have felt. Others have failed where we have failed and they are here now in the strength of the fellowship, ready and eager to help us.

This Fourth Step can be a wonderful adventure, reviewing our past performance and our present behavior to see what we want to keep and what we want to be rid of. It seems that this step has the reputation of being a bugaboo. In reality it's quite simple.

It is not expected that we are going to do it perfectly right away. If we were perfect, we would not be human. The important thing is that we do our best. We use the tools available to us. Get into the action--Get started and let it flow.

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STEP FIVE: Admitted to God, ourselves, and to another person
being the exact nature of our wrongs.

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After taking the fourth step, by taking our personal inventory, we have to deal with what we have found. We have to decide first what our defects are and then what to do with them. If we choose to keep these defects inside of us, it could lead us to using again. People might tell us we look or sound good, however, we may not feel it. We might look good from the outside, as far as your appearance and sound real confident when talking, but if you don't feel good deep down inside your heart, you won't grow. So the Fifth Step allows us to release some of this frustration, hurt and anger.

For years, we've avoided seeing ourselves as we are. We were ashamed of ourselves and the rest of the world. Now, we've got this shameful past trapped on paper and we can sweep it out of our lives by admitting it. We don't want to make the mistake of writing it all down and then shoving it in a drawer somewhere.

Our Higher Power will be with us when we do this and our admissions will help free us from the old ways of fear. Before we take this step, we live in fear that if we reveal ourselves as we really are, then we'll be rejected and lose the friendships that have filled our lives. Humans have much more in common with each other than they suppose and we can consciously experience this oneness if we can come out of hiding a little bit.

In taking this step we have to learn to accept ourselves. By learning to accept ourselves we become more a part of the program.

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Often fear or pride will hold us back, but only in taking this step are we free to grow. In trying to deal with these defects alone, we may find that it is too much to handle. We will find by admitting to another person that things are not as bad as we sometimes think they are. Sometimes we feel that no one else could ever relate or even begin to understand some of the horrible things we have done, yet, we will find that we are not alone. Another person may help us understand that we can change if we really want to. Talking to a recovering addict will give us the courage we need to become a stronger person. Obtaining cleanliness is hard work but if we stick it out it will get better. It's easier to stay clean than it is to get clean.

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with whom

We must of course be careful ~~about who we take this step~~ **WORK IN PROGRESS**
 to whom we tell the truth about our pasts. Many of us have taken
 our Fifth Step with a total stranger--a priest or minister or
 counselor. Some of us have gone to another town and some take it
 with our sponsor or someone else we select near at hand. The im-
 portant thing here is that we choose someone ~~else~~ **NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION** with whom we
 can be honest and open; that we hold nothing back. To be cer-
 tain, as time goes by, we will remember things that we did not
 include in our ~~original~~ Fourth ~~an~~ Step. The point is that we
 disclose all that we do remember, all that we have written. As
 we do this, most of us feel our burden lighten. It is crucial
 that we take this step with an understanding person. Whomever,
 we select, we make certain they know what we're doing and why we're
 doing it. We will be amazed at how willing most people are to
 help. It ~~is~~ one of the great benefits of this program that we
 are able, once again, to let people into our lives as we use the
 tools of the program to "break down the walls of our own loneliness."

Once you have taken this Step, you are practically certain
 to feel lightened and refreshed. It is such a relief to be rid
 of the burden of all those "secrets". We share the load and it
 becomes immeasurably lighter.

Only by taking this step can we set ourselves in the path
 of true sobriety. It will clean our heads of all the garbage
 which we have collected in the years of our addiction. It will
 show us humility and bring us in touch with true honesty.

Beware of half-stepping, by holding onto old images, this
 will hold us back from starting a new life. Maybe we did already
~~took~~ a 5th step but we really didn't get honest and hung on to
 some things. Then we are doing the same thing we did when we were
 using, first we felt the hurt and then covered it up with drugs.
 By half stepping we run ~~the risk of repeating~~ **WORK IN PROGRESS** our old pattern
 and getting high again.

A lot of times we ~~try~~ **NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION** to look good in front of other people,
 but deep down inside we are really afraid of who we are and where
 we came from. We try to hold onto these images in order to make
 people believe that we are something other than ourselves. In

suppressing our true feelings and holding onto these false images
 it will stop us in getting in touch with true reality. People
 who have held back onto these ~~WORKS IN PROGRESS~~ after letting
 go can we find true serenity.

Once we begin and are willing to forgive ourselves we can
 also begin to forgive others and begin to let go of all resentments
 in order that we may receive inner peace.

In order to grow we must remember that we are the most
 important person to ourselves and not worry about the opinion
 of other people. To be able to start a new and true beginning
 in life we must humble ourselves and become honest.

In examining ourselves as honestly as possible and in
 discussing our past with another human being as honestly as
 possible---it is probably that we have discovered some things
 about ourselves that weren't like. Perhaps we call these things
 character defects, perhaps we call them shortcomings or moral
 blind spots. Whatever we call them, we recognize that they must
 change if we are to grow. And we recognize that we ourselves
 cannot, of ourselves, change them.

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STEP SIX: We were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character.

Let us go back to the First Step for a minute. Remember that we had to surrender completely to obtain relief. We had to admit we were whipped. This Sixth Step is the same situation. We can't do it ourselves--but we know that God as we understand Him can do it for us, if we really want Him to.

Do we really want to be rid of our resentments, our angers, our fears? All our resentments? Do we really understand that they are a deadly poison in the heart of an addict?

Letting go of character defects should be done with love. Fear and hate cannot give us new lives. We should approach old defects in patience and understanding for they have served us well in days past. They have kept us from situations we couldn't handle before we found the program and a source of power. In most cases we can be grateful that our defects are not more pronounced or of a more harmful nature. When we can see how they fit in our lives before the program and accept them, we can let go more completely and get on with our new life.

Many of us cling to our fears and doubts and self-loathing or hatred of others because there is a certain distorted security in familiar pain. It seems safer to hold onto the old pain than to let go of it for the unknown.

Here, once again, we look to those NA people who have the kind of life we want for ourselves. We ask them--"Did you let go?" And here, once again, almost without exception the answer is, "Yes, to the uttermost of my ability."

When we are taking step six it is important to remember that we are too human and should not place great expectations on ourselves. We should, however, remember that we are not kidding when we say entirely ready to have all these defects removed. This is a step of willingness and either we are willing or we are not. That is the spiritual principle of Step Six. It is as if to say that we are now willing to move along spiritual lines toward a destination we cannot imagine. Being human we will of course fall short.

We will still get mad and still feel hurt, especially if we are too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. The sixth step and

experience show us that this form of self deception only succeeds in covering our real motives which invariably are that we are trying to get what we want out of our lives.

Willingness is what we should strive for in Step Six. The tools we use to make our willingness keen are prayer and practice. How sincerely we will be able to work Step Six will ~~all~~ ~~be~~ be proportionate to our desire ~~to~~ change. We ~~will~~ often feel that we will never be ready to have all our defects removed, but we should remember that the main point is that we are on a journey, and ~~that~~ the destination isn't what matters. Willingness to serve God is what we should strive for.

Without defects life is ever sensational and deeply wonderful. We ~~can~~ learn we are growing when we make ^{new} mistakes instead of repeating old ones. Life with defects may cause perpetual frustration, relapse or tension.

We suggest that we decide where our priorities lie and that we envision life free from the defects. That we recognize our defects and surrender to the simple instructions that the program offers us.

All that is required in the Sixth Step is the honest willingness to let go of those things about yourself that you have already decided you wished to part company with--the fears and doubts of that other life.

STEP SEVEN: We humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

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Having decided we want God, as we understand Him to relieve us of the useless or destructive aspects of our personalities, we arrive at the Seventh Step.

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We have all spent much of our lives being anything but humble. We have been humiliated by many of the things that happened to us while using drugs--but most of us avoided true humility until we took NA's First Step. Then again in the Third Step we ask God to direct our will and our lives. ~~But~~ Now in the Seventh Step we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

The key of this step is an understanding of the word humility. Humility is as much a part of staying clean as food and water are to staying alive. As we struggled along in our addiction we devoted our energy towards satisfying our material needs. We always had to have a satisfaction of our basic desires such as prestige and power. We never thought of spiritual growth or asking a Higher Power for direction. Drugs were our Higher Power.

We couldn't handle the trials and tribulations of life all by ourselves. It wasn't until we made a real mess of our lives that we realized that we couldn't do it alone. By admitting that we were powerless over our addiction and reaching out for help, we achieved our first glimpse of humility.

If the defects we have discovered are real and we have a chance to be rid of them, surely we will experience a sense of high adventure at this point. Some will want to get on their knees for this step. Some will be very quiet or put forth a great mental effort to show intent willingness. The word humble applies because we approach this power greater than ourselves to ask for the most wonderful gift of the program; the freedom to live without the limitations of our past ways. However, we want to handle it, we go all the way. Think of what we have to lose! As soon as we feel ourselves willing, we go ahead and ask God to remove the shortcomings.

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When we were in our addiction our spiritual and emotional growth came to a halt. We did not mature and grow like a normal person. Now that we are clean there are many situations ~~that are~~ in our daily lives that are difficult to understand. By practicing the virtue of humility and ~~reaching out and~~ asking for help we can

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get through even the toughest times. I can't be the same. **WORK IN PROGRESS**
sign of growth.

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We have to realize that people can give us direction and that our way of thinking is not the only way. We must puncture that ego and realize we have much work to do. When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction is one of defensiveness. If we truly want to grow we will take a good look at what is pointed out. We must realize we are not perfect and there are things we must change.

The main objective of Step Seven is to get out of ourselves and strive for achieving the will of our Higher Power. Our will didn't work.

We have taken all of the hurt that we have felt and the hurt we have caused others and made it into a ball and threw it away.

We have noticed that humility plays a big part in this program and our new way of life. We take our inventory, we become ready to let God remove our defects of character, we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings. Not ~~the~~ other guy's but ^{our} own. This is our road to spiritual growth, to humbly and gradually change our own character, day by day. To gradually, carefully and simply pull ourselves out of the isolation and loneliness of hopelessness and ~~isolation~~ into this mainstream of useful fellowship. This comes not from wishing, but from action and prayer.

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The Eighth Step is not easy; it demands a new kind of honesty about our relations with other people. We had to feel better internally before we could even bear to think about whom we had harmed, how we had harmed them, and exactly what harm we had caused. One of our difficulties in our addiction was the way we perceived ourselves.

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Once again, we admit where we were at fault regardless of what the other person did to arouse our hostility--we admit that we hurt them, directly or indirectly, through some action, some lie, some broken promise, neglect or whatever it was.

It will not make me a better person to judge the faults of another. The thing that will make me a better person is to clean up my own messes--relieve myself of my own guilt. The eighth step is a mighty stride away from a life dominated by guilt and remorse.

We need some real honesty before we can make an accurate list. In preparing to make the Eighth Step list it is helpful to define harm. One definition of harm is physical or mental damage. Another definition is inflicting pain, suffering, or loss.

The damage may be caused by something that is said or done and the harm resulting from these words or actions may be either intentional or unintentional on the part of the person who is inflicting the harm. The degrees of harm can run from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to inflicting bodily injury or even death.

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We make our list, or take it from our Fourth Step and add to it anyone we can think of and then we face that list honestly and openly and examine our hearts. Are we willing to make amends? In many cases we cannot do it, it is not possible nor practical in some instances. We may not know who it was we wronged in some cases. In other instances we might run the risk of involving a third person, some companion or our days of drug abuse who does not wish to be exposed. We do not have the right nor do we need for any moral reason to endanger that person.

Just about anyone that comes into contact with an active addict risks being harmed. Many members mention their parents, spouses and children. Boyfriends, girlfriends, other addicts, casual acquaintances, co-workers, employers, teachers, landlords, and total strangers.

A problem many of us seem to have with the Eighth Step and the admission of the harm we did is the belief we were victims, not victimizers, in our addiction. Avoiding this rationalization is crucial to the Eighth Step.

We had to think of disassociating what had been done to me and what I had done. We were forced to cut away all our justifications and all this idea of being a victim.

The final difficulty in working the Eighth Step is separating it from the Ninth Step. Projecting about the Ninth Step can be a major obstacle both in making the list and in becoming willing. We do not even think about making the amends, but just concentrate on exactly what the Eighth Step says which is to make a list and to become willing.

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"We try and do this step as if there was no Ninth Step."
The Eighth Step is actually an action step. And like all the action
steps it offers immediate benefits. "The main thing this step
does for us is to build awareness that, little by little, we are
gaining new attitudes about ourselves and how we deal with other
people.

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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.

We want to get rid of our fear but we neither need ~~nor wish~~ to do so at the price of causing suffering to anyone else. It is very important that we take guidance from our sponsors or spiritual advisors in this matter. A very good approach, though certainly not the only approach to this task, is to take our list to our sponsor and let him or her help us set up a schedule or plan of amends.

We recommend turning over our legal problems to lawyers especially those who have actually helped someone in the program. Professional help is available to help us with our financial and medical problems. Part of learning to live is not to take on problems and responsibilities that we are ill equipped to handle. In some cases we need to repay a sum of money or replace some object of value. This may be beyond our means. If it is, we can only proceed with direction.

Timing is an essential part of this step. We should make amends when the opportunity presents itself, as long as to do so will not cause more harm than good. When it gets to the point that we cannot hold the hurt in any longer, amends will be made.

In some old relationships a unresolved conflict exists. We enter the old conflict and resolve it by our amends and thereby get out of any future antagonisms and ongoing resentments. These are the old tapes that would keep playing back as long as we lived. By making amends we created a lasting change in our lives. We also behold the mysterious fact that instead of feeling knocked down and drained of energy, we feel relieved and sort of excited.

This step puts positive direction in ~~our~~ lives. All the years of using put a negative attitude in others about us. It helps us with our guilt and others with their anger.

In many instances we will need to go somewhere, humbly to ask forgiveness for some old wrong. Sometimes, this will turn out to be a joyous occasion when some old friend or relative proves very willing to let bygones be bygones and welcomes us back to the land of the living. However, some people ~~are~~ so willing to let go of their bitterness, as we were once unwilling to let go of ours. We must not fall into remorse over this for we have

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made amends as best we could.

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There are some things we can make direct amends for, some we can only make partial amends for, and some we can't make direct amends for at all. Sometimes making amends would make someone aware of something they knew nothing about, causing unnecessary hurt, pain or anger.

We can make amends by our actions. They don't always have to be verbal. Staying clean is also an amend because we are no longer part of the problem, now we're part of recovery.

It is not in our power to go into the past and undo that which has been done. We can offer our amends. If they are accepted, so much the better. If they are not, we have done what we could for ourselves. If the incident disturbs us, we get to our sponsors or to a meeting and share the experience. It is advisable to pray for those who are unable to forgive.

When it came to making amends for all the things we did there was a lot found. We had to keep our amends in general. In the progress of our recovery we will be restored to sanity and part of sanity is effectively relating to others. We will less often view people as a threat to our security. Real security in our gut and in our cleanliness will replace the physical ache and mental confusion. We will want to address ourselves to these people with love and patience. Fear of relapse will make many of our most sincere well-wishers reluctant to accept our cleanliness as real. We must remember the pain they have known. In time many seeming miracles will occur. Many of us separated from their children succeed in reestablished deep emotional bonds. Estranged wives or husbands may be dangerous to our recovery if they fit the category of old playmates. They will need to get us loaded to justify their sickness. If the relationship is real, it will survive. Reacceptance into the family of our birth is eventual for most. Clean and sober speaks for itself. Patience is the great method of the program. The unconditional love we experience as members will rejuvenate our will to live and each positive move on our part will be matched by an unexpected opportunity.

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The benefit of this step is to be able to face people we have known with a clear conscience. By discovering and admitting our fault we work a miracle.

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STEP TEN: We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Are we doing our best? Are we staying honest? Are we still growing or are we slipping back into the old reaps and resentments? It is the purpose of the Tenth Step to answer these and similar questions. Those defects of character which we found in the Fourth Step are deeply ingrained in our being.

Continuing to take personal inventory means that we form a habit of looking at our selves, our attitudes, our actions, and our relationships on a regular basis. We try to come up with honest evaluations and to put out more or less energy in certain areas we are concerned with. It's very important to keep sharing with other people so that when you come up with a rationalization for seeing positive in a negative behavior we can be told about it, ~~when we can't be honest with ourselves~~. Especially in times of stress, hunger, loneliness and weariness, we are vulnerable to the old ways of thinking and reacting.

We need to deal with ourselves instead of taking others inventories. This step keeps us growing and changing. It is easy after dealing with our past to become complacent. We need to keep looking at ourselves all the time, looking for old forms of behavior.

This highlights the preventative part of the Tenth Step. You ask yourself as you go through the day, "Am I being sucked in by some old pattern of fear or resentment? Am I too tired? Too hungry? Is my thinking getting cloudy? It's sort of a vaccination against insanity on a continuing basis.

We have discussed the preventative side of the Tenth Step. The more we use it, the less we will need the corrective side. Sometimes we are going to revert a little and we are going to do things we disapprove of. When this happens the Tenth Step is there to keep us from slipping back into the shadow land of guilt. We examine ourselves on a daily basis. Did we cause someone harm? Do we need to make an amend? If we do we take care of it as soon as possible. When these things are left undone, they have a way of festering like an infection. We get to our sponsor and we learn and grow.

Many of these things which, in the beginning, seem so difficult, prove to be our greatest sources of growth and strength. We

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do not do these things because we are altruistic. We do not apologize to the one we harmed out of any great compassion or natural inclination to be kind. We do it first and foremost because it is the only way we know for addicts to change our basic characters and for us, change or die. At first we "act as if" we believe in this new life. We are tolerant of others because resentment or impatience could kill us. As time passes we grow spiritually, so that our old ways of selfishness and fear may gradually be replaced with fellowship and love.

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

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When we first come into this program we are protected and guided by a power greater than ourselves. This we have set in motion by surrendering a plea for help. The purpose of the Eleventh Step is to increase our awareness of that power and the ability to use it as a source of strength in our new lives.

Now we've been clean and sober for awhile we try and work the Steps of NA to the best of our ability and we begin noticing changes in ourselves. Many of us really begin to appreciate this fact when we get into the Eleventh Step. For in the Eleventh Step the good life we've been practicing suddenly begins to come alive. We find ourselves praying because it feels good and brings us peace and confidence. It helps us to live a life of love and stay away from that old life of fear and distrust. As we seek our God, our personal, private contact with God opens like a flower in the sun. We begin to see that God's love was there all the time, waiting for us to accept it. Life finally begins to get sweet and good even though we still face human pain.

Clean living is possible when we rely in a higher power on a daily basis to provide us spiritual progress. The 12-steps of NA are a progressive recovery process establishing in us normal living; the normal life of reliance in our higher power.

In the Third Step we tried to turn our will and our life over to God. We renew this effort daily in the Eleventh Step.

Most of us rebel against this in the beginning. The old fears cry out, "My will be done." The first time we hear someone say, "Let go and let God," it sounds idiotic. "No!", we say, "if I let go I'll disappear or get taken advantage of." What happens instead is that the more we improve our conscious contact with God via prayer and meditation, the more often we pause when doubtful and say, "God, I don't know what to do. Please teach me."

It's a fact. When we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, we begin to find a peace unmatchable to a drug induced high. We begin to experience an awareness and an empathy with other people.

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A person who has realized their powerlessness and seen the vision the HP has for them, will see why we pray only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out. Our deepest longings and recurring images of the kind of persons we'd like to be are only glimpses of God's will for us, and when we place ourselves in the care of our ultimate authority, a loving God, it is our own real dreams that come true.

Its easy to slip back into our old ways. We have to learn to maintain our new lives on a spiritually sound basis to insure our continued growth and recovery. God will not force His goodness on us but we will receive it if we ask. This is not cruelty. Enforced morality lacks the force that comes from our own choice.

The Eleventh Step helps us in the face of a problem to be aware of God. The underlying principle of this step is God consciousness. We try to avoid asking for specific things. It's hard because we're so sure that we know what's right for us. We now know if we pray to do God's will, we will receive what's best for us.

When we pray a remarkable thing happens; we find the ^{means} ~~ways~~, the ways and energies to perform tasks far beyond our capabilities. By the apparent surrender of our own power, we gain a far mightier power that will see us through every conceivable trial or trouble so long as we keep faith and renew it through daily prayer.

Our efforts have produced in us many times, a feeling of peace and serenity that we have never known before. We know that in doing God's will our lives will be fulfilled.

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4-B-12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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The idea of a spiritual awakening takes many different forms in the many different personalities we find in N.A. This awakening does have some things in common throughout the fellowship. Life takes on a new meaning, a new joy, and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile.

We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive.

Our suffering has cleaned us of some of our illusions. In our time we have been guided to a new life and place in the world and in our hearts. ~~Things work for a change.~~

This great step is to be proceeded by the working of Steps One through Eleven. There are those of us who tried to work and stay clean off Step 12 without the benefit of ~~the~~ "Having a spiritual ~~awakening~~ ~~steps~~ awakening as a result of those steps;" and they are now dead.

The ones who continue to "Practice these principles in all their affairs," tell us that this is the most wonderful thing one can know. The journey and the journeys end. A feeling of gratitude.

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Usually, by the time we achieve this state of mind, no one has to tell us to share our new life with the still suffering addict; we are more than eager to help that person because by this time we recognize that helping others--giving away that

which has been given to us--is our best possible insurance against a slip or relapse to the vague, tortured existence of a practicing drug addict. We call it "Carrying the message" and we do it in any number of ways.

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The first way in which we carry the message is by staying clean with the help of God and the N.A. program. Our new way of living speaks for itself better than our words ever could. People see us on the street and remember us as furtive, frightened loners. Then, they notice the grayness and fear leaving our faces. They see us gradually come alive. A spring comes into our step and a twinkle into our eyes. The message is meaningless unless we live it. If we do it, we give it more meaning with our lives than any words can.

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Learning the art of helping others when it is appropriate without creating resentments ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ is a marvelous benefit of the N.A. program.

Remarkably, our 12-Steps guide us from a state of humiliation and despair to a state wherein we are able to act as instruments of God's will. We receive the gift of being able to help fellow suffering addicts when no one else can. No greater change of personality is possible; it is God's love present in our lives. We see it happening among us everyday. This miraculous 180-degree change is evidence of spiritual awakening.

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We attend the N.A. meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the fellowship. We give freely and gratefully of our time, services and our experience in service to our fellows.

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We do not shirk when called upon to practice these principles, because we know that the more eagerly we wade in and work to stay clean, the higher we're going to get--in other words, the richer will be our spiritual awakening.

N.A. WSC-IC

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Helping others works. No one is putting on N.A. We do these things because they are the things that grant the new lives we are enjoying.

In the 12th Step we practice the spiritual principle of giving away the N.A. message of recovery in order to keep it. This is like reaping what we sow. An addict by trying to sow cleanliness in others may by God's grace reap cleanliness. The old habit of using drugs is replaced by the new habit of not using and helping others to get clean. Even a member with one week in the N.A. Fellowship can turn to a newcomer and say, "Easy does it."

As we climb into an automobile to help someone, we may say, "Lord make me an instrument of Thy will." We don't do it alone. And as in all else, we don't have to do it alone. It is just a matter of getting another N.A. member to go with us on the 12th Step call to carry the message to a suffering addict. We don't set ourselves up as God. That is way it is spiritual. We get to be a vehicle of God's grace in action. It's a privilege and an honor to go on such a call. The privilege of wanting to serve an N.A. group is given to only a few. Those of us who do service work are the luckiest people on God's earth. We who have been in the pits of despair, now strive to help other people find a new and better way to live.

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When we are asked to help newcomers whether they are detoxifying or just beginning to learn the principles of N.A.--we do what we can to make them aware of what the program offers and try to make them feel at home. Experience shows the best way to accomplish these ends is to listen carefully to what they want to do about their problem; share our experience, strength and hope; and accompany them to their first meetings.

The selfless service that comes from this work is the very principle ~~standing~~ of Step 12. It is clearly an awareness of God's grace working that provides so much of what the addict out there needs. Just as the grace of a loving God who we had turned our backs on was given to us, now we have the opportunity to extend that hand to others. One 12-Step call of this nature can make a life worthwhile. And there are plenty of such calls for those of us in N.A.

We have been blessed with the opportunity to carry the message to a place where there was very little hope--the addict who still suffers.

The 12th Step also suggests that we practice these principles in all of our affairs. As long as we stay clean and live these principles, we are doing 12-Step work. We are actually attracting people to us and the N.A. program by our example of cleanliness.

We no longer wish to participate in the problem. We now serve God. Humbly in this manner of service do we renew our vow to turn our will and lives over to the care of God. Even if we have no such understanding, we will acquire it through seeing others and ourselves recover. Fellow addicts show that God is loving and we will know more of a life free of drugs than we ever dreamed possible. The steps do not end here. They are just a new beginning.

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