

7 STEP WE HUMBL Y . ASKED Him <sup>(84)</sup>  
TO remove our SHORT COMINGS

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(H) we are no longer prisoners of our past bad behavior. If we are careless and fail to grasp the spiritual meaning of this step it will seem an unbearable chore impossible to complete and unlikely to do anything but stir up old troubles. Like all the steps, the point of this one is freedom.

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a misunderstanding of the origin and nature of the condition in question. Sometimes it is called a "neurosis," with the implication that one's nerves are "bad" and need treating, most logically perhaps by a physician.

Sometimes it is assumed that the difficulty lies deep in an "unconscious" part of the mind which only a psychologist or psychoanalyst knows how to "reach."

And sometimes the difficulty is interpreted as a sin against God, in which event the services of a theologian might seem indicated. Still another possibility is that the chronic state of tension and apprehension with which we are here concerned arises from a "bad conscience," i.e., from some unworthy act or acts we have committed and concealed or some obligation we have slighted and then had too little courage and too much conceit to confess and rectify.

What is most clearly needed, if the latter understanding of the situation is valid, is the determination and strength to admit, to the "significant others" in our lives, the exact nature of our wrongs---and then get about the business of correcting them. For this there is no need of an expert or specialist. And when we have recourse to one, is it not frequently with the motivation of finding an "out" which will avoid the necessity of coming to grips with the problem on its own terms?

(maintain it)  
8th step just  
make your change  
unfinished business  
with.  
an end can be  
just saying thank  
for helping me  
out.

#11B STE P 8 How it works (86)

We consult with our sponsors in this matter. Again, as in the Fourth Step, we do not want to become entangled in useless, dangerous self loathing. Our purpose is to achieve freedom from the guilt we have carried so far with so much pain so that we can look the world in the eye with neither aggressiveness nor fear.

We make our list, or take it from our Fourth Step and add to it anything 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 of 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

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to endanger that person. The point of the Eighth Step is willingness. Are we willing, if it is possible and practical, to make amends; to once, and for all, clear away the shadows of fear that our past holds for us? If the answer is yes, we commence, with the guidance of our sponsors or spiritual advisors to take the Ninth Step which, properly taken, makes it finally possible to live free of the past. We can, after taking this step, walk down the street unafraid because there will be no ghosts for us lurking in the doorways.

Making a list of the people that I have harmed wasn't all that easy because I felt that there was a reason behind it because I was also hurt but now I realize that all of my experiences, good and bad was because I made the choice to do so.

114B - STEP 8

How it works (87)

To gradually, carefully and simply pull ourselves out of the isolation and loneliness of hopeless drug addiction into this mainstream of useful fellowship. This does not happen by wishing for it, it requires action. For this reason, we have the Eighth Step.

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

This step is a good test of our new found humility. Most of us

can look back and say, "Well certainly I stole from so and so. But he did it to me first." Not good enough. 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. This eighth step is a mighty stride away from a life dominated by guilt and remorse.

The preceding Seven Steps looked pretty rough until we took the plunge and got into them. This one is no different. It seems hard now, but once we've done it we'll wonder why we didn't do it long ago.

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.

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How it works

(88)

## B-Step 8

This step is a good test of our new found humility.

We consult with our sponsors in this matter. Again, as in the Fourth Step, we do not want to become entangled in useless, dangerous self loathing. Our purpose is to achieve freedom from the guilt we have carried so far with so much pain so that we can look the world in the eye with neither aggressiveness nor fear.

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When I get a  
resentment, fear  
hostility and put it  
on paper. This puts  
me into the here &  
now. I then put a  
gratitude list down  
on paper. When the  
resentment goes

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. This eighth step is a mighty stride away from a life dominated by guilt and remorse.



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#4

B.-

Step 8

How it work (89)

If by simply working

this simple step and making a simple list of people we have harmed, we can be rid of the turmoil and struggle to maintain that we were right and they were wrong and be free to go our way seeking out those we can find and make amends and ready to meet any others, we can stop hiding and start living. This is the purpose of the ninth step. Special care must be taken before each amends to make sure that we will help and not harm. Mostly if we are quiet and sincere we can watch the person we are dealing with and can stop if our inner voice tells us to. As Bill Wilson puts it in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous puts it, the hunch and what we used to call luck is going to become a working part of our minds as we grow in our sobriety. 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. In some old relationship an unresolved conflict exists. We enter the old conflict and resolve it ~~and~~ 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 create a lasting change in our lives, and we also behold the mysterious fact that instead of feeling knocked down and drained of energy, we feel relieved and sort of excited.

7 - ( The remaining steps have to do with maintaining our

④ B Step 8

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## STEP EIGHT

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

The last five steps of Narcotics Anonymous—the Eighth through the Twelfth—are the "get out and live" steps. They are the ones that teach us how to manage life and deal with other people. So, as the First, Second, and Third Steps give us the necessary tools to begin a clean life and the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Steps complete the complicated process of self-forgiveness and the beginning of new attitudes, the Eighth Step starts the procedure of forgiving other people, being forgiven by them, and learning how to live in the world as a drug-free human being.

The Eighth Step is not easy; it demands a new kind of honesty about our relations with other people. A N.A. member named John once explained his difficulties with the step in this way: "I had a lot of trouble living with myself and I still have a lot of trouble living with other people. I had to wait until I was ready, until I was right with myself, before I could think in terms of taking the Eighth Step. I had to feel better internally before I could even bear to think about whom I had harmed, how I had harmed them, and exactly what harm I had caused. One of my difficulties in my addiction was the way I perceived myself. I either thought I was a cold



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monster, or someone who had never done anything wrong. So, my list, depending on my mood, could either have included every single person I had met in my entire life, or no one at all. I needed some real honesty before I could make a list somewhere in between."

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.

This step asks us to make a list of all persons we have harmed. Some people prefer to write this list down on paper, feeling that seeing it in black and white makes the first half of this step more concrete. Others simply make a mental note of their list. The important thing is that we try to remember each and every person we have harmed. This is not so easy. Memory of past actions returns slowly as a result of addiction. "I had that happen a couple of weeks ago," Hank said. "A girl came up to me and started rapping to me like she knew me. I fell off the chair because she was kind of good looking, but that wasn't the thing. She was telling me I was going out with her six years ago for about three or four weeks and I couldn't

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remember her face to save my ass, and I didn't. I did not know her from Adam and Eve. The only thing this did was tell me there are a lot of different things in my past that I don't have any memory of and this convinced me of that."

There are other reasons for not remembering the people we harmed. Bob said, "I was so ashamed of a lot of the things I had done that I suppressed them and they didn't really come out until later." Rip noticed that the first time he made a list the people that came to mind were the really obvious cases. Later, he became conscious of the more sophisticated ways he had hurt people.

Just about anyone that comes into contact with an active addict risks being harmed. Many people mentioned their parents, spouse, and children. Boyfriends, girlfriends, other addicts, casual acquaintances, co-workers, employers, teachers, landlords, total strangers, and the police were also discussed. Benny felt that he had harmed people he had blackballed while in a fraternity. One addict remembered that he continued to steal in prison after being sentenced for the same offense. Mark said that he listed members of the local police department. Others talked about those they had harmed through physical violence, theft, or neglect. "I think I hurt my children most through my addiction," said Sherry. Some members thought they cause a lot of misery simply by things they said to or about other people. According to Benny, much of the harm he did to other people was "character assassination."

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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, as Sherry once said at a meeting: "I know in order for me to take this step, I have to stop thinking of myself as a victim, of saying that 'he or she did this to me and that is why I reacted.'" We cannot concentrate on what others did to us, but what we did to them.

John put it this way: "I had to think of disassociating what had been done to me and what I had done. I was forced to cut away all my justifications and all this idea of being a victim. The Eighth Step told me to look at myself as victimizing other people, something I had done a lot of."

There are other obstacles to the Eighth Step. "Perhaps I complicate this step too much," Ray said. "Perhaps this is just a very general thing. I should concentrate on I hurt my mother, I hurt my neighbor; instead of getting down to I owe somebody \$2.50 or \$2.53. Perhaps I get too technical with this thing, and therefore, I can scare myself." Rip said that fear and pride were two things that he saw as obstacles to willingness. He said pride made it difficult for him to admit he was wrong and be sincere about it. "The other reason that I get reluctant to make amends is fear: fear of what is going to happen to me, fear that I might get arrested, or fear that somebody is going to turn on me and chew me out."

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. As Maggie said, "My sponsor told me not to even think about making the amends, but just to concentrate on exactly what the Eighth Step says which is to make a list and to become willing. This took away a lot of fear for me. This approach helped me to begin the Eighth Step and to work it more honestly because there were many people whom I had harmed that I was completely unwilling to make amends to when I was first confronted with this step." Ray summed it all up very simply when he said, "We should 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. Hank describes these benefits when he says, "The main thing this step does for me is it builds me to the awareness that, little by little, I am living through new attitudes about myself, about how I deal with other people. It gets my frame of mind clicking a lot differently from the addict that used to be in my head all the time, and it gets me thinking straight. It helps put down another block in the foundation of my mind. It is another step in the change in personality inside." And as Jimmy puts it more simply, "I look at it as one of the ways the program gives me to clean up my past."



8 WE MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED & BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL (95)

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.

. . The steps eight and nine free us from fighting old battles or having to face people with whom we have had a standing dispute. To enjoy our new lives we will not want to be free of these obligations to argue dead issues.

As our bodies clean themselves and the ~~old~~ old habits of fear and desperation fall into the past, old remembrances and dreams from before our using days will come back. The really important things will endure. In the time we will be given the strength and guidance to realize our dreams and take our place in the world.

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The point of the Eighth Step is willingness. Are we willing, if it is possible and practical, to make amends; to once, and for all, clear away the shadows of fear that our past holds for us?