



## Summaries of the Twelve Steps

### **1. We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsions – that our lives had become unmanageable.**

In Step One, we finally admit we are unable to control our addictions and compulsions on our own. In the past, we denied our pain and hid from it by engaging in addictions or by focusing on others. We now admit we are powerless over ourselves, as well as over people, places, and things. As a result of these misguided efforts to control the uncontrollable, our lives are falling apart. When we accept our brokenness and powerlessness, we're acknowledging that we can no longer do things the way we've been doing them.

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

In Step Two, we get hope. Hope enables us to believe that God will help us find a sane way of living that includes physical and emotional sobriety. Some of us may have misconceptions about God carried over from our childhoods, but we come to believe that God loves us and wants to give us good things—no matter what we have done. Through a relationship with Jesus Christ, we experience the love of our Heavenly Father and begin to trust Him with our lives. Insanity is often defined as “Doing the same thing over and over again in the hope of getting different results.” When God restores us to sanity, we will have a sound mind capable of making reasonable and right judgments rather than poor choices and destructive behaviors.

### **3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.**

Step Three is about surrender. In order for God to restore our lives to sanity, we have to turn them over to Him. As long as we are trying to do things on our own in our own way, we are getting in the way of God. In Step Three, we make a decision to surrender our self-will, including our hopes, plans, dreams, and efforts. We turn ourselves over to a loving and caring God who will do what is best for us. We can also turn over the people we are tempted to control or enable. We cannot force anyone to change, so we relinquish our efforts and allow God to care for them, because after all, He loves them more than us and desires the best for them and us.

### **4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

Step Four is about self-examination. We commit to facing the truth about ourselves and our past. We do this by looking at our resentments, hurts, disappointments, fears, strengths and

weaknesses. We let go of the denial, which has kept us blind to our faults, stop blaming others for our shortcomings, and take responsibility for our actions. In order to do this, we must let go of the fear that would prevent us from facing the truth about ourselves. The purpose of this inventory isn't to dwell on the past to beat ourselves up but to look at the past, understand it, and accept responsibility for it, so we can let it go and begin to change. Taking an inventory of our lives includes looking at our assets as well as our defects. In this way, we come to see that not everything about us is negative. Many of the character defects are actually coping skills we learned in the dysfunctional families we grew up.

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

Step Five is about confession. We admit the truth we have discovered about ourselves in Step Four to God, ourselves, and another person. Many of us fear admitting the truth about ourselves to others, so it is important that we find a safe person who will understand and accept us, not to excuse our wrongs but to offer grace and support, as we become willing to be accountable and honest. When we confess the truth about ourselves, we begin to heal. Many of us feel that we are the only ones who have done certain things. When we confess our faults to another person, we often discover that we are only human and that others too have failed. This gives us hope that we too can change.

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

Step Six is about repentance and becoming willing to change. Even though many of our actions had negative consequences in our lives and our loved ones' lives, it is still hard to let them go. Some of us will have to ask God for the willingness to be willing to change. Until we truly want to be different, we won't be able to cooperate with God. Behavior has a payoff; we act a certain way, because it works for us—if it didn't, we wouldn't do it. So, part of the willingness to change is to be willing to let go of the payoffs and pay the price that goes along with the new behavior. When we realize that our defects of character cause more hurt than benefit, we will want to change. This step doesn't ask us to change, only to be ready and willing to do so.

**7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**

Step Seven is about transformation, sanctification, and purification of our character. We recognized our limitations in earlier Steps. In this Step, we continue to recognize our need to rely on God by asking Him to remove our shortcomings. We have tried to change on our own and failed repeatedly. We come to God with humility, realizing our brokenness and weakness. Our best efforts have led us to the point we are now at. Realizing the true nature of our being, we know we need God's help to change. That doesn't mean we don't have to do anything. We are responsible to recognize our need to change and to do the necessary footwork. God doesn't want us to sit back and do nothing, yet paradoxically, if we try to force the change on our own in our

own way, our efforts often fail. When we ask God to remove our shortcomings, He will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves and will transform, sanctify, and purify us.

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

Step Eight is about becoming willing to take responsibility for the actions we have taken that have hurt other people. Prior to working these Steps, we may have blamed others for the things we did, but we now know that in order for us to heal, we have to take full responsibility. In Step Eight, we make a list of the people that we have injured, either now or in the past and become willing to make amends to them. It will be harder for us to make amends to some of them, especially those that we feel have also harmed us and may not be ready to acknowledge their part. Becoming willing means that we openly acknowledge our part with no strings attached. Some of us may be facing consequences as a result of speaking the truth about our actions, but even in these cases, we find that admitting our faults is essential for our growth. And, since many of the things we have done have harmed ourselves, we may even put ourselves on our amends list. We will find that making amends to ourselves means that we acknowledge the ways we have been self-destructive and become willing to live a different way.

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

Step Nine is doing what it takes to right the wrongs we have done to others with God's guidance and wisdom. "Direct amends" means to go directly to the person we have harmed when the opportunity is right and either apologize and/or make restitution. We can also make "living amends" by changing our actions today. This is often the thing that convinces others that we've changed, since many of us promised to change many times before and didn't. The only exception to this is when it would harm that individual or others. In this case, we either have to make indirect amends by acknowledging our faults to another person and God but not directly to that person. Making amends will free us from the guilt of the past. The most difficult part of amends is letting go of the reaction of the other person who may not be ready to forgive; we have to be willing to make unconditional amends, which means we admit our wrongs without expecting a specific action or reaction by the other person.

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

Step Ten begins the maintenance Steps that continues our recovery. After making amends for our past wrongs, we strive to keep our accounts with others and God up to date by examining ourselves regularly and being willing to take immediate and continual responsibility for anything we do that we regret. This helps us to maintain a clear conscience before God and others and to

keep our relationships healthy. We can do a personal inventory throughout the day or at a specific time such as the beginning or end of each day. It takes courage to regularly admit we are wrong, especially with people who do not admit their faults, but it is essential that we do so, if we want to maintain physical and emotional sobriety. It is also important to remember that we need to keep the focus on us and not on taking anyone else's inventory.

**11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**

Step Eleven is about prayer and meditation and developing a spiritual discipline in our lives. The purpose of this Step is to keep us focused on our need for God's strength and guidance and to deepen our fellowship with Him. Prayer can be any type of conversation or awareness of God. It can occur throughout the day in all our activities or in a quiet time set aside. For us as Christians, it also includes seeking God's will through reading of the Bible and through godly counsel. When we pray, we do not need to tell God what He has to do for us, but humbly seek His will for us and then His strength to do what He wants us to do.

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

Step Twelve is about ministering to others from our experience, strength, and hope. Even if we were Christians before we worked these Steps, we were spiritually blinded in many areas. As a result of practicing these Steps simply and regularly, we are spiritually alive in a way we weren't before and now truly understand our need to rely on God and trust Him for everything. We also recognize that part of our healing involves reaching out to others by sharing our struggles and victories. Working with others helps us see that God uses even the most egregious mistakes for His glory and the good of others. Practicing the principles in the Steps is the key to maintaining a healthy and healed life, so we don't only practice them in our families or to keep ourselves sober, but in every area of our lives. In this way, we continue to grow closer to God, to others, and to stay emotionally, spiritually, and physically healthy.

## THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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

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