



TAKE THE 12

takethe12.org



12-Step Study

HOW THIS STUDY & WEBSITE CAME TO BE

I created this step study and website originally for my sponsees to use as I was teaching them how to take the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (*so they could teach others to take them - effectively to "make new sponsors"*). Being a web designer, I thought it might be a quick and easy way for them to access the work we were doing. After several years of having the site up, I started paying attention to the site's analytics and noticed it was being used by a whole bunch more people than that. After realizing that people all over the world were using it (*as far away as China*), I decided in May 2020 it was time for a refresh to make it even more useful.

This site is only one drunk's experience with A.A.'s Three Legacies. It is by no means the definitive answer to them, just one man's experience that has kept him sober (*happy, joyous and free*) since 11/17/87. If you are reading this, you likely are looking for a deeper, richer, experience of our Three Legacies and I hope you find it here.

DISCLAIMER

This website contains references from various sources (*primarily A.A. conference approved literature*) but is NOT affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous in any way. The information shared on this site was compiled through one A.A. member's experience from all of the sources they've used to learn how to take the 12 Steps of A.A. Many thanks to every source that helped this member recover from a "seemingly hopeless state of mind and body."

Rick W.

"The only problem we ever really have is separation from God."



“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Step 1
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**The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step:
Alcohol Isn't My Problem**

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
HONESTY

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 30-43 / 12&12: Pgs. 21-24

Literature Reference: “Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty.” (Big Book, Page 65, How It Works)

STEP SUMMARY

When we first walked into the rooms of A.A., we thought our lives were unmanageable because when we drank, we wound up in strange places, with strange people, in strange positions (some of us – literally). How grateful we were when our sponsor, or other caring members of the Fellowship, helped us fully understand what co-founder, Bill W. meant in More About Alcoholism (top of page 35 in the Big Book – 4th Edition) when he said, “So we shall describe some of the mental states that precede a relapse into drinking, for obviously this is the crux of the problem.”

We are grateful that we were helped to understand that our mental states, or our thinking, WAS/IS the crux of our problem. Selfishness/Self-Centeredness! That, we are told, is the root of our troubles (not alcohol). Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we go to the only thing that has proven to provide us the release we seek from these “fleeting forms” – alcohol.

If we ever need proof of our powerlessness over “a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body” (which is one definition of alcoholism), all we have to do is look at the many examples of how our life was unmanageable while drinking – and how it wasn't the alcohol that made our life unmanageable.

Interesting Side Note: Step 1 is the only step that talks about alcohol. The remainder of the Steps share solutions on how to deal with what the REAL problem is – the noise that lives between my left ear and my right ear (more commonly referred to as our defects of character).

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

Powerlessness means you're weak. Admitting powerlessness is a crucial step on the path to freedom and strength. It takes honesty and courage to accept that alcohol has taken over your life.

You have to take this step over and over. Step 1 is the only step we ever take 100% and once taken, we don't have to ever take it again. Once you admit to your inner most self that your'e an alcoholic – you can't “un-admit” that. Once you get completely honest and tell the truth – that truth never changes. Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

In Your Personal Relationships: List three (3) examples of how your personal relationships have become unmanageable as a result of your behavior (prior to getting sober – or in sobriety).

Corrective Measure(s)?

At Work: List three (3) examples of how your work relationships have become unmanageable as a result of your behavior (prior to getting sober – or in sobriety).

Corrective Measure(s)?

With God and in A.A.: List three (3) examples of how your relationship with God and my participation in A.A. has become unmanageable as a result of your behavior (since getting sober).

Corrective Measure(s)?

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takethe12.org

What Can I Surrender in this Step?



- 1.) The delusion that in and of myself I have power
- 2.) The belief that alcohol is my problem



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

Step 2

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The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step: The Solution To My Problem Isn't Me

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
HOPE

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 44-60 / 12&12: Pgs. 25-33

Literature Reference: Step 2 Promise: “In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of the total failure of their human resources, they found that a new power, peace, and happiness, and sense of direction flowed in them.” (Big Book – Page 50, We Agnostics)

STEP SUMMARY

In Step 1, we learned our problem wasn't alcohol – it was/is our mental states (our thinking) that was the crux of the real problem. How perfect it is that just 10 pages later (page 45, “We Agnostics” – 4th Edition), Bill shared with us the solution to that problem: “Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. That's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.”

Check! How simple is that? This one of twelve simple suggestions is much easier than I ever imagined. I thought solving the drink problem was going to be insurmountable. When I figured out that it's not a drink problem I need to solve, but a think problem – and that simply believing there is a Power out there that is greater than I am that can help me solve it – well, that made life much easier to bear.

I then get to ask myself why I shouldn't apply to life's problems this same readiness to change my point of view. I was having problems with relationships, couldn't control my emotions, was prey to misery and depression, couldn't make a living, had a feeling of uselessness, was full of fear, was unhappy and couldn't be of help to others. I was/am “maladjusted to life, in full flight from reality and an outright mental defective” (B.B. – Doctor's Opinion – Page xxvi – 4th Edition). All of this was true until the day came I could finally believe that a Power greater than myself could run my life better than I could – and all I had to do was let it.

What Can I Surrender in this Step?



- 1.) My desire to control everything myself, and
- 2.) My belief that I am responsible for the outcome of my life

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takethe12.org

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

Your higher power has to be God. This is a big misconception in Alcoholics Anonymous. Your higher power can be anything that you believe in: the Universe, nature, Buddha, music, love, Allah, humanity or even AA itself.

Another thing to remember is that your Higher Power doesn't need to have a gender (even though in 1939, Bill W. felt it easier to use one for our basic text). AA doesn't require you to believe in anything that you don't want to; each step is a suggestion along the road to a sober life.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

In Your Personal Relationships:

- Am I obsessed with what others are not doing in my life rather than what I can contribute to the relationships I am in?
- Am I relying on an obsession with food, sugar, caffeine, or smoking rather than relying totally on a HP?
- Am I ready to believe that I can be restored to sanity in all my relationships and “appetites?”

At Work:

- Am I a workaholic? Do I have a balance in my life around work
Do I need sanity here?
- Am I obsessed with financial success? Am I ready to be restored to sanity financially and be content with giving service, knowing that the miracle of sobriety is enough?

With God and in A.A.:

- Do I trust the relationship I have with HP or am I just trying to use HP for my purposes?
- Do I ask HP for sobriety and relief from the obsession to drink or am I trying to do it by myself?
- Am I seeking the experience, strength and hope of the sponsor HP has sent me? Or, am I still trying to run the show?



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

Step 3
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**The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step:
Real Action Starts With a Decision**

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
FAITH

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 60-64 / 12&12: Pgs. 33-41

Literature Reference: “Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish.” (Big Book – Page 16, Bill’s Story)

STEP SUMMARY

Decisions are wonderful. Decision is defined as “making up one’s own mind.” Decisions resolve conflicts. For many, the conflict over drinking and not wanting to drink made a third step decision relatively simple. We were happy to turn over our drinking problem to God as we understood God. However, for many of us, we were not so willing to turn over other areas of our lives so readily.

This step helps shift our mindset from thinking directly into action. It opens the door to conforming our will to that of our Higher Power’s. Step 3 is the first step that requires real and continuous action. The first two steps focus on reflection and introspection. In Step 2, we learned to believe in a Power greater than ourselves (some call that faith). Step 3 allows us the place to solidify and act on our newfound faith in ways we never knew possible before coming to the rooms – some call that trust.

Have you ever wondered WHY (in the Third Step Prayer) we “offer ourselves to Thee?” Answer: So our Higher Power can “build with us and do with us as it will.” Have you ever wondered WHY we ask HP to “relieve us of the bondage of self?” Answer: So that “we may better do HP’s will.” Have you ever wondered WHY we ask HP to “take away our difficulties?” Answer: So that we fully understand that “victory over them may bear witness to those we would help of HP’s power, love and way of life.”

I heard someone share in a meeting once about Step 3 that it’s like when you take your car to a mechanic to have them fix or service it. You trust that they will be able to get it all tuned up and ready to give back to you. They don’t want to KEEP your car, they just want to get it in good working order so you can move on down the road. Making the decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God (trusting God) is much the same thing.

As we’ve learned in our basic text, the spiritual life is not a theory – we must live it. This means we need to begin putting in practice those things that will ultimately be the foundation to the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism (once again proving that alcohol is not now, nor has it ever been the problem). It has been said that “We thought faith said, “I’ll take away the pain and discomfort,” but what it ended up really saying was, “I’ll sit with you in it. I’m here with you and we can walk through this together.”



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

- 1.) The person I was before taking these Steps.
- 2.) My belief that I know better than God what is right for me.

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takethe12.org

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

If you depend on a higher power, you will lose your individuality.

On the contrary, turning our will over to a Higher Power leads to true independence of the spirit. As we practice being conscious of a Higher Power, it will gradually turn from a hunch or occasional inspiration to an active, working part of our mind.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

In Your Personal Relationships:

- What am I doing today to surrender my personal relationships to God with enthusiasm?

Corrective Measures?

At Work:

- What actions am I taking today to prove I’ve decided to surrender my work life and my career to God?

- What am I doing today to surrender my bank account balance to God and take action where I can on it?

Corrective Measures?

With God and in A.A.:

- What has changed in me today where I show I trust the group conscience of my home group?
- Have I decided that I don’t always have the right answer?
- What actions have I taken today that remind me I made the decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand God?

Corrective Measures?



“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Step 4
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**The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step:
It's About Causes & Conditions**

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
COURAGE

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 64-71 / 12&12: Pgs. 42-54

Literature Reference: “It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while.” (Big Book – Page 66, How It Works)

STEP SUMMARY

Page 64 in the Big Book starts by comparing a personal inventory to a business inventory. In the first full paragraph of page 64, it says, “Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret.”

The whole point of a business inventory is to identify a company’s liabilities and its assets. They identify their liabilities (those things that are no longer selling – or working for them) so they can remove them from the shelves to make room for more assets (those things that will sell – or work for them). Taking a personal inventory is no different. We searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self (not alcohol but self), manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations. We had to get down to causes and conditions.

A solid Fourth Step inventory where we take stock of the manifestations of self-will is divided into three (3) parts:

- 1.) Our Resentments (or “grudge list” as Bill calls it)
- 2.) Our Fears
- 3.) Our Sex Conduct (and harm done toward others in this area)

The Fourth Step is NOT about finding out who we ARE, it’s about finding out who we are NOT, so with God’s help, we can be rid of it and who we ARE will then shine through. That’s another reason why “self-knowledge avails us nothing.” We need to find out what GOD wants us to be.

In our Fourth Step inventories we will discover, for the most part, that our troubles were of our OWN making. We will see how we played a part in every resentment and fear we’ve ever had and how our conduct has harmed others. These are the very things that have blocked us from God, which is the ONLY Power that can remove the alcoholic obsession.



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

- 1.) Fear of looking at who I was, and
- 2.) Any desire to regret the past

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takethe12.org

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

This step is meant to tear you down.

Members who complete this step say they feel a newfound confidence once they’ve finally faced themselves. They are ready to start the next chapter of their lives as sober and better versions of themselves.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

Part 1: Grudge List

Create an inventory of the manifestations of your defects of character (4th column) being careful to stay focused on ONLY where you are wrong (putting out of my mind “their part”). While some may think that the first three columns are the most important – recognition of the 4th column is the only thing that can set us free through the actions you will take in Step 6 & 7 after completing Steps 4 & 5.

Part 2: Fears List

Fear can be defined as a distressing emotion aroused by impending pain or danger. The trigger for this emotion can be real or imaginary, and it may or may not be rational. When people feel fear, they may go into panic mode. This means that they are unable to think clearly or make good decisions. It is usual to view fear as a negative emotion, but it can also be highly beneficial, as it helps to keep humans out of danger.

Part 3: Sex Inventory

Things to remember when doing the sex inventory: We are building a moral inventory so we look at sex that has gone astray; We look at areas where selfishness kicks up; We need to be as general or as specific as we need to be; We need to remember, it’s not a “brag sheet”; We can put them in groups or whatever – the main thing is to get a good solid understanding of those things I am not comfortable with, as well as the ideals I want live up to.

To download the 4th Step Worksheet, visit: takethe12.org/s4/



“Admitted to god, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs”

Step 5
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**The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step:
Others See Us Better Than We Do**

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
INTEGRITY

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 72-75 / 12&12: Pgs. 55-62

Definition of Integrity: Adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty. The state of being whole, entire, or undiminished.

STEP SUMMARY

Have you ever noticed that the Fifth Step doesn't say that we just admit our wrongs? It says that we admit the EXACT NATURE of our wrongs, so we need to do more than just confess what we did. We also need to see WHY we did what we did so that we can ask God to help us with it.

It's obvious why we share our inventory with another person – because we are MASTERS at believing in our own justifications and half-truths. Aren't we the ones who used to say we didn't have a drinking problem? Didn't we tell ourselves over and over that we were doing fine as we were sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss of alcoholism? Since we're not good judges of character, especially our own, we must confide in someone else. Only ANOTHER person can see us as we REALLY are. That's why it says that a SOLITARY self-appraisal is insufficient.

The purpose of this Step is to help ease the anxiety, depression and irritability of hiding the worst parts of us. We are able to rid ourselves of isolation and loneliness. If we don't report to someone on our shortcomings, we become God in our own lives as we did when we drank! THIS is the exact nature of our wrongs: We thought we were God – We thought we were in charge.

“What we used to be like” is not described in a “drunkalogue” (as it's commonly referred to but listed nowhere in our first 164). It is described best in the reasons for our spiritual disobedience that led to our alcoholism (“12 & 12” p.174). It is when we lay out all of the defects of character that block us from our happiness (and from God as we understand God).

“I was fearful – and I drank...”
“I was resentful – and I drank...”
“I was selfish – and I drank...”

A really effective description of what we used to be like will not list all of the alcohol you drank, or what the consequences of your actions were when you did drink. It will list the many defects of character that had you believe the only solution to your problem WAS to drink.

Therefore we have no reason not to read our inventory to someone. My relationship with my sponsor reinforces spiritual principles in my life. Every time I read an inventory, I receive the three blessings that are promised in the Fifth Step of the “12 & 12”:

- 1.) an end to loneliness and a sense of belonging to A.A. (p. 57)
- 2.) a feeling that I could be forgiven and that I am able to forgive others (p. 58); and
- 3.) a desire for true humility: a clear recognition of what and who I really am, followed by a sincere attempt to become what I could be (p. 58).



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

- 1.) Fear of sharing my inventory with another human being.

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takeethe12.org

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

It's not necessary to share your defects with another person – it's enough that your Higher Power knows.

It's very important to reveal your inventory to another person, so you can receive feedback and experience. You'll feel a huge weight lifted once you confide in another. This will allow you to move on to Step 6 with humility.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

Note: It is recommended this inventory be written AFTER you've read your 4th Step inventory to another person.

In Your Personal Relationships:

- Am I now able to forgive others and myself?
- Am I ready for a sincere attempt to become what I can be?
- Do I get wrapped up in the affairs of the world rather than giving first place to spiritual development?

Corrective Measure(s)?

At Work:

- Am I willing to believe that my boss or coworkers are entitled to the truth about my abilities and my work?

Corrective Measure(s)?

With God and in A.A.:

- Have I omitted anything or skimmed anywhere on my work in the first five steps?
- Do I now have a sense of belonging to A.A. and a personal relationship with God?

Corrective Measure(s)?



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

Step 6

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The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step: Willingness is the Key

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
WILLINGNESS

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pg. 76 / 12&12: Pgs. 63-69

“We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable.” (Big Book, Page 76 Into Action)

STEP SUMMARY

Let us start off with a really bold statement....

“All 12 Steps are important – but Six & Seven ARE the meat and substance of our program! We must have an extremely healthy and personal relationship with them, else we are likely to drink again.”

Let me ask you a question – have you ever been driving a car and saw a light come on your dashboard, have the car start spitting and sputtering, then die, then you coast over to the side of the road, put the car in park, get out and walk around to the front of the car, open the hood – and realize you have absolutely no friggin’ idea what to do with what you see in front of you?!?!?!?!?

That was much the experience many members had when they finished their first official 5th Step and realized just exactly the mess that had been laid before them which they had built their whole entire lives upon. Up to the point that they’d walked through their 4th Step, they thought they’d lived fairly successful lives (one of the 100 forms of self-delusion). In walking through the inventory process, we uncover a plethora of shortcomings; faults and imperfections that we finally had to begin looking at that for years, had created the outline to our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and finally – our actions. What do we do with what we uncovered? Little did we know that a good hard look at, and a letting go of those things were going to eventually give us a life beyond our wildest dreams.

We were so ill-prepared and highly untrained to not only see, but understand how our pride, anger, greed, gluttony, lust, envy and sloth (our P.A.G.G.L.E.S.), all founded in fear (fear of not getting something we demand or of losing something we possess), were the components that kept leading us to the only solution that seemingly worked every time – alcohol.

The purpose of Step 6 is to become fully prepared to rid ourselves of the flaws we listed in Step 4, to become willing to let our Higher Power remove our defects, and to stop pursuing whatever our idea of perfection is. The sixth step is a call to perfection. It separates those who are working the program and those who drift through the program. “The difference between ‘the boys and the men’ is the difference between striving for a self determined objective and for the perfect objective which is of God.” (“12 & 12,” p. 68).



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

The desire to hold onto my defects of character no matter how familiar or comfortable they are.

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takeethe12.org

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

We can do this on our own.

One of the biggest misconceptions about this Step is that we have the ability to become less of these things on our own. We do not have the skill set to become less of the flaws in our character that have caused our failure. It is way above our pay grade. We strengthen our faith in a Power greater than ourselves and allow God to remove them from us.

Check out the **List of Defects/Assets** on the website

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

In Your Personal Relationships:

- Am I now able to forgive others and myself?
- Do I do or say things that will make me feel a little (or a lot) superior to someone else?
- Do my dreams of romance really cover up imaginary sex excursions (even in my mind)?
- Do I use justified resentments as an excuse to criticize others and enjoy self-righteous anger?
- Do I enjoy milder forms of gluttony that are not totally ruinous?

At Work:

- Do I use justified resentments as an excuse to criticize others and enjoy self-righteous anger?
- Do I wish for what I do not have rather than working for it?
- Am I supportive to my co-workers?
- Do I approach my work from a service perspective or is it just a paycheck?

With God and in A.A.:

- Do I use justified resentments as an excuse to criticize others and enjoy self-righteous anger?
- Do I wish for what I do not have rather than working for it?
- Am I entirely ready to have God remove all of my defects of character?



“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

Step 7
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**The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step:
Humility Heals Pain**

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
HUMILITY

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pg. 76 / 12&12: Pgs. 70-76

The basic ingredient of all humility is: a “desire to seek and do God’s will.” (12 & 12 – Page 72, Step Seven)

STEP SUMMARY

One dictionary defines humility as: “the quality or condition of being humble; modest opinion or estimate of one’s own importance, rank, etc.” While that is a perfectly good definition of it, the “Literature Reference” above highlights that Bill W. gave us HIS definition of humility in the 12&12 as: “a desire to seek and do God’s will.”

One of the first and most important things we need to learn about our defects is that we can’t be relieved of them without some level of humility. Alcoholics are victims of pride and selfishness. In the past when we felt pain and suffering (generally as a result of said pride & selfishness), we masked it with alcohol. Before coming to A.A., we used self-reliance to deal with it. Today, we can acknowledge the limits of human power in addressing these character defects. We cannot do it on our own. We cannot do it by sheer willpower. We cannot do it by our own intellect and reasoning.

Although Steps 6 & 7 are the shortest Steps in terms of wording in our Big Book and are perhaps the least discussed in meetings these days, they are probably the most potent of all twelve. As we mentioned in Step 6, they ARE the meat & substance of our program of recovery. They embody the miracle of transformation as we turn over our broken, defective personalities for God to transform them into healthy, effective instruments of God’s will.

Humility turns obstacles into opportunities for God to act through us. When questioning whether or not I am applying humility to a situation I could ask, “How would a humble person handle this situation?” When we mix self-centeredness with a situation, a problem results. When we remove it, we only have a situation to deal with, not a problem. The Seventh step is not a one-way street, though. God will remove our defects to the degree that we are willing to practice the spiritual obedience that lay behind them. Step 7 gives us the choice to pray to be free of a defect rather than obsessed with it as we were before taking it. Be patient. Be diligent. Our defects didn’t mold us overnight and we can’t change our life overnight. ed objective and for the perfect objective which is of God.” (“12 & 12,” p. 68).



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

Belief that I can become less of my character defects on my own or remove them myself.

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takethe12.org

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

Humility isn’t necessary for recovery. You can’t see your shortcomings without stripping yourself of your ego and pride. This unfiltered look into yourself allows you to develop a humble attitude and correct your moral defects.

Step 7 means we will not have any defects once God removes them. Self-centered fear will still trigger our defects. The difference is that we now have a choice to follow our lust, for example, or not. We will be given a divine nudge at the onset of our defects to pray to God to change us, and God will, whereas, before Steps 6 & 7 we had no choice over our defects and were obsessed by them.

We have the ability to remove our defects ourselves. This sort of thing is WAY above our pay grade. We simply don’t have the built-in skill sets to become less prideful, angry, greedy, gluttonous, lustful, envious, slothful or fearful on our own.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

Looking at the patterns of disobedience to spiritual principles in your life, answer these questions in all three areas for which you have been previously writing inventory:

In **1.)** My Personal Relationships, at **2.)** Work and **3.)** with God and A.A....

- ... where am I being prideful (lack of humility)?
- ... where am I being greedy (lack of generosity)?
- ... where am I being lustful (lack of purity of intention)?
- ... where am I being angry (lack of a loving attitude)?
- ... where am I being gluttonous (lack of discipline)?
- ... where am I being envious (lack of gratitude)?
- ... where am I being slothful (lack of action)?

(Provide examples for each of these in each area – this inventory MAY take longer than previous inventories written)



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

Step 8

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The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step: An apology is NOT the same thing as an amends

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
LOVE

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 76-84 / 12&12: Pgs. 77-82

“But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (Big Book, Page 77, Into Action)

STEP SUMMARY

An apology is quite different from an amends. One dictionary defines an apology as: “an admission of error or discourtesy accompanied by an expression of regret,” and it defines amends as: “reparation or compensation for a loss, damage, or injury of any kind.” I offer you an apology when I accidentally step on your toe. I offer you an amends when I have caused you hurt or harm in some way. (More on this will be discussed in Step 9)

Many of us were taught by our sponsors that if we wanted to learn how to be in healthy relationships with the world around us, we could take a deeper look at the Traditions. Woven throughout each of the Traditions are wonderful suggestions on how we can better show up to those relationships. Interestingly enough, Steps 8 & 9 do that as well. On page 77 of the 12 & 12 it states, “STEPS Eight and Nine are concerned with personal relations. First, we take a look backward and try to discover where we have been at fault; next we make a vigorous attempt to repair the damage we have done; and third, having thus cleaned away the debris of the past, we consider how, with our newfound knowledge of ourselves, we may develop the best possible relations with every human being we know.”

Important Reminder: As we continue this journey of being of maximum usefulness, when preparing to make our amends it is helpful to remember to not minimize our faults and failures by focusing on the faults of others, and to realize that we hurt others as well as ourselves with our drinking. In looking beyond our obvious defects and in doing a thorough examination of our flaws, we must avoid judgments of others. It's OUR inventory that uncovered harm done – not theirs.

Many members of A.A. think that creating a list of those we have harmed is ONLY about cleaning up the wreckage of our past with those people, places or things. While that is certainly a huge part of it, another reason Step 8 is important is because it's about continuing the process we have already started back in Step 3 of being a maximum usefulness to God and his kids. Is it possible that Steps 8 & 9 are not about getting back in the good graces of those we've harmed, but about being willing to do the footwork and, once again, leave the results up to God? Yes, it's entirely possible. Love of ourselves, love of others and love of God is the foundation to this Step.

Important Side Note: Remember, this Step is ONLY about making the list. No action other than writing the list happens in this Step, so there is no need to fear (as so many of us do when we start thinking about having to make amends). It's JUST a list my friend!

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

Your drinking hasn't harmed anyone but yourself.

People often think that if the damage isn't extreme and noticeable, then there isn't anything beneath the surface. This is a dangerous misconception and something AA calls “purposeful forgetting.” We can't get the most out of the 12 Steps if we aren't willing to be vulnerable and rigorously honest—even if what we discover about ourselves and others is painful to accept.

[Download the 8th Step Worksheet on the Website](#)

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

In My Personal Relationships:

List at least three (3) examples of our “willingness” (not including actual amends on your 8th Step list) to enhance the love and service found within and improve our personal relationships.

At Work:

List at least three (3) examples of our “willingness” (not including actual amends on your 8th Step list) to enhance the love and service found within and improve our work relationships.

With God and In A.A.:

List at least three (3) examples of our “willingness” (not including actual amends on your 8th Step list) to enhance the love and service found within and improve our relationship with God and A.A.



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

Fear of telling the truth, and...
My need to point out “their” part, and...
Fear of the outcome.

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takethe12.org



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

Step 9
take-the-12.org

**The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step:
The Action Continues**

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
DISCIPLINE

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 76-84 / 12&12: Pgs. 83-87

“Faith without works is dead.” (Big Book, Page 77, Into Action)

STEP SUMMARY

Step 9 is about taking action and making amends through...

- 1.) **identifying hurt or harm caused** and then
- 2.) **finding out how we can make it right**

...to those we've have harmed with our drinking/thinking. Remember: It's not about saying "I'm sorry." This step will provide us with peace of mind, relief and liberation from the chains of regret. "The readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step Nine." (12 & 12)

That said, it also says on the top of Page 77 in the BB (4th Edition), that the "real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us." I don't know how much clearer Bill could be on this Step.

The choice is ours... Do we want more of what brought us to AA ... "We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn't make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people..." 3rd ed. Big Book pg. 52 – OR do we want freedom from the bondage of the flaws in our character that caused our failure in the first place?

If we've been "very careful & thorough" (painstaking) about this part of our growth, we're promised that several things (13 to be exact) will happen for and to us. 1.) We are going to know a new freedom 2.) and a new happiness. 3.) We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. 4.) We will comprehend the word serenity, and 5.) we will know peace. 6.) No matter how far down the scale we have gone; we will see how our experience can benefit others. 7.) That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. 8.) We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. 9.) Self-seeking will slip away. 10.) Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. 11.) Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. (Be careful not to believe that economic insecurity itself will leave us with this promise – the FEAR OF IT will leave us) 12.) We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us, and 13.) We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit take-the-12.org

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

We have to disclose every detail of our mistakes. Full disclosure may harm the one with whom we are making amends, or quite often, other people. It won't make us feel any better to increase the burden of another.

It's about getting them to like you again. This Step is not about getting back in the good graces of those we've harmed – it's about our willingness to do the footwork, take the action, and leave the results up to God. We're not in charge of the outcome, only the work to get us there.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today ("How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?").

In your Personal Relationships, at Work and with God and A.A., provide at least one example of where each of the promises below has come true in your life as a result of the work you've done so far (choose from one of the three (3) categories above to provide each example below):

1. New freedom
2. New happiness
3. No regrets
4. Serenity & peace
5. How your experience has helped others
6. Uselessness and self-pity are gone
7. Thinking more of others and less of self
8. Attitude and outlook have changed
9. Financial fear is gone
10. Fear of others is gone
11. Your thinking has cleared up
12. You realize God has your back



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

- 1.) My hesitation to take action, and
- 2.) Fear they won't accept my amends, and
- 3.) Fear of the outcome



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

Step 10
takethe12.org

**The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step:
This is What a Sober Day Looks Like**

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
PERSEVERANCE

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 84-85 / 12&12: Pgs. 85-95

“Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear. When these crop up, we ask God, at once, to remove them.” (Big Book, Page 84, Into Action)

STEP SUMMARY

One of the biggest misconceptions in the rooms of A.A. is that when we do a 10th Step (write it or speak it to another), it involves the “when we retire at night” inventory found on page 86 of the Big Book. That particular inventory is actually found in Step 11. Step 10 very clearly lays out our need to continue to look at ourselves throughout our day being aware when we find that, in the moment, we are being selfish and self-centered once again, when we are telling little (or not so little) white lies once again, when we are harboring resentments against our fellows once again, and when we find ourselves being fearful about our lives once again.

It has been said that one of the best descriptions of “What a Sober Day Looks Like” is found in Step 10 (Page 84 – 4th Edition). Through our willingness to continue to look at ourselves throughout the day, we can use the text below to begin to embrace the basic foundations of what a sober day CAN look like for us (with a few minor alterations that support what we learned from Step 1 – that alcohol really isn’t our problem):

I’ve ceased fighting anything or anyone – even my insane thinking. For today, soundness of mind (sanity) has returned. I will seldom be interested in participating in my negative thinking (insanity), I react soundly (sanely) and normally, and I find that this has happened automatically. I see that my new attitude toward the noise that lives between my left ear and my right ear has been given me without any thought or effort on my part. It just comes! That’s the miracle of it. I’m not fighting it, neither am I avoiding temptation. I feel as though I’ve been placed in a position of neutrality-safe and protected. I’ve not even sworn off. Instead, the negative thinking (insanity) has been removed. It doesn’t exist for me. I’m neither cocky nor am I afraid. That’s my experience. That’s how I react so long as I keep in fit spiritual condition.

NOTE: The purpose of the statement above is not in the least to try and rewrite our literature. It was modified for this study so that we can begin to have a truly PERSONAL experience with it in ways that shed light on the real nature of our problem – the spiritual malady. Step 1 is the only step that talks about alcohol. Steps 2-12 talk about how we can become recovered from a hopeless state of mind and body. This Step reminds us that we have a daily reprieve (definition: “temporary suspension”) from our insanity so long as we continue our personal inventory, immediately admit our wrongs, and remember throughout our day that somewhere along the line, we TOOK Step 2 and came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to soundness of mind.

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

You constantly need to apologize to everyone. Some AA members get hung up on this step because it involves admitting when you’ve done something wrong. But it isn’t so much about apologizing to others as it is being aware of actions that harm yourself and others. It is a very personal process of constant inward reflection.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

In your Personal Relationships:

Provide at least one (1) example (more if applicable) of an action you took today to look at the condition of your personal relationships and recognized any missteps taken, harms done, and amends made.

At Work:

Provide at least one (1) example (more if applicable) of an action you took today to look at the condition of your work relationships and recognized any missteps taken, harms done, and amends made.

With God and A.A.:

Provide at least one (1) example (more if applicable) of an action you took today to look at the condition of your relationship with God and A.A. and recognized any missteps taken, harms done, and amends made.



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

My belief that I don’t need to enhance the inventory I did in Step 4 each and every day and identify “defects du jour.”

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takethe12.org



“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.”

Step 11

takethe12.org

The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step: Talking & Listening to God

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
AWARENESS

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 85-88 / 12&12: Pgs. 96-105

“Prayer and meditation are our principle means of conscious contact with God” (12 & 12, Page 96, Step 11)

STEP SUMMARY

It was suggested in Step 10 that we continue to look at ourselves and our missteps in the maintenance of our spiritual condition, all of this in an effort to become more alert to the causes and conditions that continue to cause our failure on any given day. “After making our review, we ask God’s forgiveness and inquire what corrective measure can be taken.” (Big Book, Page 86, Into Action)

This “ask” is done through prayer, and the response to our “inquiry” comes to us in meditation. It’s been said that the simple definition of prayer is “talking to God” and meditation is “listening to God.” At days end, we look at where we’ve been resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid. We determine if we owe an apology to someone and make sure that it is not just kept to ourselves. We’ve determined if we were kind and loving toward all, or if we were thinking of ourselves most of the time instead of thinking how we could be helpful to others. We take any discrepancies in our daily spiritual work to God and ask that we be forgiven for them. Then we get quiet, get still and listen for God’s direction for us on what our corrective measures should be.

Now about meditation: Many a member of A.A. believe that God is found in the stillness – in the quiet. It’s hard for us to be able to hear God’s direction for us if our minds are still running 90 miles an hour. Quietening the noise that lives between our left ear and our right ear is part of the work we do to begin to listen (in meditation) for our corrective measures. Meditation has a hard time of it for many of us. But it’s really quite simple. JUST GET STILL! We can do that anywhere. It doesn’t have to be on a mountain top with our legs crossed and our fingers in the “OHM” position. It doesn’t have to be with candles burning, soft music playing and silence all around us. It CAN be those things, but it doesn’t have to be. If perfectly aligned, it could be sitting on the NYC subway or even in the middle of Times Square. All it takes to meditate is the willingness to get still, get quiet (wherever you are) and listen.

For many, it comes in the form of a “gut instinct,” that deep inside knowing. Many an alcoholic has been led astray by following their heart and head, but have found great release when following their gut. Deep inside we know the direction God wants us to go – and when we listen to that direction – great events will come to pass for us.

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

There is a certain way to meditate.

Not so. People all over the world have found that meditation is quite simple and gets easier with time when practiced in the way that works for them.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

In your Personal Relationships:

Describe in detail what your prayer and meditation practice looks like today and how you have applied the action of it in this area of your life.

At Work:

Describe in detail what your prayer and meditation practice looks like today and how you have applied the action of it in this area of your life.

With God and A.A.:

Describe in detail what your prayer and meditation practice looks like today and how you have applied the action of it in this area of your life.



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

My belief that meditation is hard and only for those more spiritual than myself.

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takethe12.org



“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.”

Step 12

takethe12.org

The One Thing I Need To Know About This Step: Go Give It Away

Spiritual Principle of the Step:
SERVICE

Reading Assignment:
BB: Pgs. 89-103 / 12&12: Pgs. 106-125

“Here we turn outward toward our fellow alcoholics who are still in distress.” (12 & 12, Page 106, Step 12)

STEP SUMMARY

This step is divided into three (3) very separate and distinct parts. First, it's an assumption that as a result of taking Steps 1-11, we've actually had a spiritual awakening. Bill W. describes for us his definition of the spiritual awakening (or experience) on page 567 (4th Edition) of the Big Book where he states that a spiritual experience is “a personality change sufficient to recover from alcoholism.” Once we have taken the first eleven Steps, it is widely believed that the alcoholic undergoes the kind of transformation needed to be able to actually BE a different person. A spiritual awakening is nothing more than a psychic change that, among other things, eliminates our obsession to drink. It is that change that becomes the foundation to the 2nd part of Step 12.

Going out and giving away what has been so freely given to us is our last and final written direction in our basic text. It's no mistake that giving away the message that one can become recovered (not “cured”) from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body is the ultimate paradox in our program of recovery. It's in the giving that we receive. Working with others has been the bedrock so many members of A.A. have found that will not only carry them through the hard times in their own recovery, but will strengthen and inspire their willingness to continue to “trudge” (one definition: to walk with purpose) our Road of Happy Destiny.

A.A. experience has proven that NOTHING will insure immunity from drinking as much as intensive work (not just work, but INTENSIVE work) with other alcoholics, it works when other activities fail. You can help when NO ONE else can. It was the basis of Bill's conversation with Dr. Silkworth shortly after his “white light” experience. One of Bill's first thoughts (sitting on that bed) was that other people suffering from this illness could benefit from an understanding of what a personality change can look like for them too. So it was that God led Bill to Dr. Bob and what was to be a 15-minute first meeting, turned into over 5 hours.

It's here that Part 3 of Step 12 starts. I get to practice these principles in all my affairs when I realize that my experience can help you and your experience can help me in ways that nothing else can. Practicing each of our spiritual principles is truly found in teaching another alcoholic how to take (not work) the 12 Steps of A.A. (and teaching them how to teach others). This will not only provide us self-centered alcoholics with a sense of joy in giving, but will help us to continue to uncover the flaws in our own character that continue to cause our failure along our journey.

To see the **Checklist** for this Step, visit takethe12.org

MYTHS ABOUT THIS STEP

You're fully cured once you get through all 12 steps. TRUTH: There is no cure for alcoholism – for the physiological chemical imbalance in the body (the allergy) that causes an alcoholic to develop the phenomenon of craving once alcohol enters their system. One CAN become recovered however from the seemingly hopeless state of mind and body that is found in every alcoholic. Through an active taking of the 12 Steps, the alcoholic can find a life beyond their wildest dreams.

INVENTORY

Taking a step displays a willingness to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within us. Write inventory on your most serious shortcomings around the practical application of this step in your life today (“How am I applying the spiritual principle found in this Step to every moment of my life?”).

In your Personal Relationships:

What have you done today to selflessly serve your personal relationships? (Be as detailed as possible failing not to miss anything in ALL of your personal relationships)

At Work:

As we did in this inventory for Step 11, go one step deeper and describe specific actions you have not yet taken to better serve your career/job.

With God and A.A.:

Provide three (3) specific examples of how you are serving God as you understand God today. Provide three (3) specific examples of how you are serving A.A. today.

Describe how you are practicing these principles in all your affairs.



What Can I Surrender in this Step?

- 1.) Fear that I don't have anything to give
- 2.) Laziness in practicing these principles in all my affairs