

## The Twelve Steps of Marijuana Anonymous

### STEP ONE

*We admitted we were powerless over marijuana,  
that our lives had become unmanageable.*

Step One is about honesty, about giving up our delusions and coming to grips with reality. We had to look honestly at our relationship with marijuana and its effect on our lives. For some of us Step One meant honesty for the very first time in our lives.

Many of us spent years trying to control our use of marijuana. We justified our using and rationalized that we could control it. We may have vowed to use only on weekends, or to have only one joint a day. Some of us promised ourselves not to smoke until after school or work, or only when we were alone. Sometimes we tried using only other people's dope, not buying it for ourselves. We played games with our stash, gave our supply to friends, hid it in nooks and crannies that were hard to reach, or buried it away from home. All these efforts failed us. We learned that we could not control our using. Eventually, we returned to smoking just as much and just as often as ever, if not more. Some of us stopped using for a while, but we always started again.

We were living the illusion of control, thinking we could control not only our using, but also other people, places, and things. We spent a great deal of energy blaming

others for our problems. We held on to the fallacy of control. Most of us had long insisted that marijuana was not even addictive. After all, it was just a natural herb, which grew in many of our gardens. Our lives may have been a little frazzled, a bit out of kilter, but were they really unmanageable? Many of us didn't lose our jobs; our families hadn't deserted us; our lives didn't seem to be total disasters. We were living the fantasy of functionality.

Some of us hoped that people in recovery could teach us to control our using so we could enjoy it again. But we found otherwise. Some of us hung on to the delusion that someday we could use marijuana in a moderate and controlled way.

We were caught by the disease of addiction, ensnared in the insidious grip of marijuana. It was a best friend for years and then it turned on us. Gone were the days when marijuana lifted our spirits. Now it left us filled with grief. Gone were the days of insight. Now we experienced confusion, paranoia, and fear. No longer did marijuana expand our social consciousness. Some of us became delusional, living in our own private worlds. No longer did using pave the way to friendship. Many of us became withdrawn and isolated. We were too frightened, detached, and lethargic to reach out for friendship, intimacy, or love. Our need to get and stay high determined how we spent our time, and with whom. Our emotional lives had become flat or frantic. We were uncomfortable with our emotions and sometimes frightened of them.

We realized we were beaten many times, but couldn't stop. Sooner or later the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical disease overcame us, bringing us to

the depths of despair and hopelessness. In Marijuana Anonymous we discover the reality of powerlessness; surrender outweighs the illusion of control and becomes our only option for recovery. We are powerless over marijuana in all of its forms.

Until we admitted our powerlessness, denial kept us from realizing how unmanageable our lives had become. Our visions of achievement and our desires of being wise, loving, compassionate, or valued had remained mostly dreams. We rarely realized our potentials. We had settled for being merely functional.

Some of us went even further. We began to lose our mental faculties. We could not work. Our families abandoned us. Some of us were in danger of being committed to jails or mental institutions. More and more, we associated with dangerous people to ensure our marijuana supply. Some of us became victims of abuse; some of us became abusers. A few of us were derelicts. In spite of all this, we still had difficulty admitting that we could no longer manage our own lives! Powerless? We thought we were the center of the universe.

We had tried everything over the years to change reality, to no avail. In MA we at last found the courage to face the truth. We stopped practicing denial and became willing to face our disease. Having come to this moment of clarity, we could not afford any reservations about being powerless over our disease. The entire foundation of our program depends on an honest admission of our powerlessness over addiction and the unmanageability of our lives. We are, however, responsible for our own recovery.

## **Step One**

## **Life With Hope**

Step One was the first step to freedom. We admitted our lack of power and our inability to control our lives. We began to acknowledge how mentally, emotionally, and spiritually bankrupt we had become. We became honest with ourselves. It was only by admitting our powerlessness in this first Step that we became willing to take the next eleven Steps.

Recovery does not happen all at once. It is a process, not an event. The process is set in motion the day we quit using or begin attending meetings. It begins with a real desire to stop using, with a genuine change in our attitude, with a soul-transforming realization that we are finally willing to go to any lengths to change our lives. When we admitted that we were marijuana addicts, that we were really powerless over marijuana, and that our lives had truly become unmanageable, then we began to realize how futile it was to keep trying to manage the unmanageable. We began to give up our arrogance and defiance.

Our complete surrender and a new way of life were essential to our recovery. In order to have any hope of rebuilding our lives, we simply had to find a source of power greater than ourselves and greater than our addiction. For that, we turned to Step Two.

## STEP TWO

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

Step Two was our introduction to the principles of open-mindedness and hope. In Step One we confronted our addiction, admitting that we were powerless over marijuana and that our lives had become unmanageable. We were then left with two alternatives: to stay as we were and continue using marijuana until we died, or to seek spiritual help. Once we admitted our powerlessness, we had to find a power greater than ourselves by which we could live. We knew that our human will alone had never been sufficient to manage our addiction. We began to realize that only a Higher Power could help us.

When we came to meetings and listened to others, we identified with the insanity of addiction as described by the members of the fellowship. We began to grudgingly admit that we were selfish and self-centered too, just like the other addicts in the group. We were spiritually bankrupt and needed help.

We could now see that our marijuana abuse had continued long after we realized that we had a problem. We had continued using even as we became ever more resentful, isolated, paranoid, slothful, and desperate. No matter how great the need or the wish to stop, the thought of using eventually pushed aside all the reasons why we should. We always had to have a supply on hand and felt horribly guilty that we couldn't stop using. Our insanity was evident as we repeated the same behavior over and over, yet somehow expected different results. Some of

us even had bad experiences each time we smoked but managed to suppress them somehow...before we used again.

We came to realize that trying to fix our lives with marijuana hadn't worked. Marijuana had once seemed to be the most effective way to help us cope with the problem of living, at least temporarily. When we stopped using marijuana, we didn't automatically feel worthwhile and full of purpose. Our overwhelming feelings, character defects, and negative actions were still there. Sometimes they seemed even stronger than before, because we had no anesthetic to dull them. We were not problem users whose problems went away when we threw away our stash. When we stopped using, we found we had a problem with living; we were addicts.

We began to see the possibility that our beliefs about ourselves, formed while using, had been mistaken. We saw that our perceptions had been based in delusion. Some of us had withdrawn physically, with little social contact. Some of us had isolated emotionally, not allowing anyone to get close to us. And some had hidden behind a front of functionality, while in our hearts we felt trapped and incapable of controlling our using. Sometimes this front took the form of aggressive or defensive attitudes, sometimes of passive or indifferent attitudes. These were the symptoms of our disease. We had never before been able to find the power necessary to change.

At this point many of us found ourselves faced with a seemingly overwhelming dilemma. Our Higher Power had always been either ourselves or our drug. Now we were being asked to accept the existence of a new and greater power. Some of us said, "I won't believe." Some

said, "I can't believe." And some said, "I may believe in the existence of a Higher Power, but I have no real hope that it will help me."

People that will not believe in a power greater than their ego are threatened. We tell these people that MA doesn't demand anything. Those of us who did not want faith were reminded that there is no dogma in Marijuana Anonymous. It is not necessary to acquire a major God Consciousness to be able to cease using. All we need is to maintain an open mind and a hopeful heart. It is not necessary to say yes. It is, however, important to stop saying no. Observe the reality around you and the recovery taking place within MA. One only has to stop fighting.

"Higher Power" means different things to different people. To some of us, it is a God of an organized religion; to others, it is a state of being commonly called spirituality. Some of us believe in no deity; a Higher Power may be the strength gained from being a part of, and caring for, a community of others. There is room in MA for all beliefs. We do not proselytize any particular view or religion. In MA each of us discovers a spirit of humility and tolerance, and each of us finds a Higher Power that works for us.

Some of us think of the group as our Higher Power. After all, the group is more powerful than any of its individual members and, over the years, it has developed procedures and traditions, which work. Our groups have found a common solution to a common problem — something that had been impossible for each individual member to accomplish on their own. And practically everyone can easily and naturally draw strength and support from the fellowship. This minimum of belief is enough to open the door and cross the threshold. Once we are on the

other side, our belief and trust in a Higher Power broadens and deepens as we continue taking the Steps.

Although many of us came to the fellowship already believing in the existence of a Higher Power, we doubted that it would be of help since it had not helped us to stay clean before. When we were still using, we prayed each night to stop, yet awakened the next morning and used.

Some of us were just too smart for our own good. We thought we had it all figured out. We felt intellectually superior. "I can do anything I set out to do...Knowledge is power!" Yet we were faced with the paradox of our own addiction. Our best thinking brought us to our bottom. What we learned is that recovery from addiction requires resources beyond the capacities of any one individual addict.

Still others had become disgusted with religion. We could only see hypocrisy, nonsense, bigotry, or self-righteousness. But upon closer examination, we found blossoms of truth and beauty hidden among the thorns. We discovered that some of these arguments were simply devices to feed our own egos, actually making us part of the problem. They were ways of feeling superior. Ironically, we were the ones who had become self-righteous. It was time to open our minds.

Then there were those of us that came to the program still seeing ourselves as being very religious. Yet again, we too were faced with the question of why we had been unable to overcome the disease of addiction. Obviously our religion alone hadn't been the answer.

Gradually, as we listened to other recovering addicts, we became willing to do what was needed. We

came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Marijuana Anonymous gives us no definition of a power greater than ourselves. We practice spiritual principals, not religion. We have no theological doctrines. What we do have is a realization that we had never been able to stay clean on our own. We needed a Higher Power to do that. We realized that it would be arrogant to think there was no power greater than ourselves in the universe.

There is room in MA for all beliefs, or none. It doesn't matter if we are agnostic, atheist, or theist. We all have a place here. There is no conflict. For each of us, a power greater than ourselves is whatever we choose it to be. It can be any positive, powerful thing that we are comfortable with.

As we began recovering, we let go of convincing others what the Greater Power was, and instead focused on how to use that power in recovery. We had sane minutes, hours, days, and weeks. We either found the way to a new faith, or renewed our old one. We saw that a power greater than ourselves was doing for us what we could never do alone. We saw that force working in our lives and in the lives of others.

For Step Two, we had only needed to answer the questions, "Do I now believe?" or "Am I open to believing in a power greater than myself?" After that, we were ready for Step Three.

## STEP THREE

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

Step Three called us into action, for it was only by action that self-will could be removed. Our inability to surrender had always blocked the effective entry of a Higher Power into our lives. Willingness was the lever with which we moved this obstruction. When we took this step, we were practicing the principle of faith.

Step Three asked us to make a decision based upon our acceptance of our addiction and powerlessness that we had identified in Steps One and Two. Before, we alternated between being controlling or controlled. We either drove other people away with our self-centeredness, demanding that others react to our plans and schemes as we would have them react, or we resigned from the world by refusing to make decisions for ourselves. In either extreme, it was selfishness that ran our lives.

Our intoxicated way of life had made things worse. We did whatever we could to make other people, places, and things be what we wanted. When this proved to be impossible, we would be hurt and blame others for our problems. So we tried even harder to control and consequently suffered even more. We were actually quite uncaring although we usually did not consider ourselves to

be so. Why not decide to put our lives in the care of God, *as we understood God*? Our way had certainly not worked for us.

The program of recovery works both for people who do not believe in God and for people who do. It does not work for people who think *they* are God. Spiritual awakening is not possible for those who remain dishonest, close-minded, and unwilling. Intolerance, belligerence, and denial keep us from open-minded investigation. For addicts, the consequences of these attitudes are dangerous.

The Third Step does *not* say, "We turned our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood God*." It says rather, "We made a decision" to do so. We didn't turn it all over perfectly or all at once. *We* made a decision. What an accomplishment this was! We made a decision; it was not made for us by marijuana, our families, a probation officer, judge, therapist, or doctor. We made it ourselves. We made a decision to have faith and began putting our trust in a power greater than ourselves. Step Three was neither another assertion of our willpower nor another resignation from responsibility. It was a decision.

How were we going to believe that God could care for us? How could we learn to live without self-will and obsession? We were taught that a little willingness goes a long way towards building faith. Most of us resisted. We tried to understand this step before we made the decision to have faith and act upon it. We then found that simply making this decision opened us up to a spiritual connection

and was an act of faith in and of itself. What we chose to do was to let go and let a *caring* God into our lives.

Step Three was a decision not only to have faith but also to live by faith. Our lives had been centered around marijuana — getting it, and staying high. We found that by deciding to turn our will and lives over to the care of God, as we each understood God, our lives and the responsible use of our freedom to choose were returned to us.

For many of us that decision was followed with a prayer to our Higher Power similar to this one: *“Higher Power, I have tried to control the uncontrollable for far too long. I ask that you take this burden from me. I acknowledge that my life is unmanageable. I ask for your care and guidance. Grant me honesty, courage, humility, and serenity, to face that which keeps me from you and others. I give this life to you, to do with as you will.”*

If at all possible, we took this step with our sponsor, a spiritual advisor, or someone else we trusted. If we could find no one to share this with, then we prayed earnestly to our Higher Power. It was the beginning of learning how to “turn it over” and to “let go and let God” (both well known twelve-step sayings).

By starting to trust our Higher Power, we cleared the way for growth and recovery. Now we no longer have to rely on the weak force of self-will to solve our problems. Faith and acceptance are our new solutions. The power of faith gives our lives a new direction. Learning to live by

**Step Three****Life With Hope**

faith took practice; it opened the way to a new reliance on a Higher Power and the restoration of our inner wisdom. The turning point for us was the decision to relinquish control. However, no matter how sincere our efforts, we do make mistakes. Then we admit our humanity and try again.

Having made the decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power, it was time to implement the decision. We had to look at exactly what it was that we decided to turn over. We needed to discover and examine the patterns and conditions of our lives. Moreover, we needed to rediscover what in our lives made us believe in ourselves, and acknowledge gratitude for the people who had made our lives better. It was time for Step Four.

## STEP FOUR

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

After we became honest enough to take the first step, open-minded enough to take the second, and willing enough to take the third, we were ready to confront Step Four. We have observed what happens to those who resist this step. Some marijuana addicts will not follow the suggestion to do this step, or to do it promptly. Some of them stop coming to meetings and start using again. Others keep coming back, but their spiritual awareness does not grow. They recount the same experiences, express the same emotions, and suffer the same pain. Nothing changes for them; they appear to be stuck. We learned that as long as we resisted taking our inventory, we put our sobriety and our lives at risk. Just as denial once stopped us from seeking recovery, defiance, shame, and fear can hinder our spiritual growth. Once we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to a Higher Power, it was imperative that we do just that. After all, the faith we acquired by taking Step Three meant very little if we did not follow it with immediate action.

The disease of addiction impaired our ability to know ourselves and to be true to ourselves. Regardless of our way of life, our denial about our disease coupled with a lack of self-awareness kept us in an endless loop where we practiced the same destructive behaviors again and again, while always expecting different results. Step Four is a fact-finding process meant to put an end to this interminable cycle by identifying those facets of our character that

blocked us from a relationship with a Higher Power. Step Four required courage.

Some people believe that our instincts have been given to us by a Higher Power and exist for a purpose. A desire for material, emotional, and sexual security insures our survival as a species. As addicts, we allowed our healthy instincts to get out of control. These feelings drove us, dominated us, and ruled our lives. They became warped and exaggerated. The pursuit of these desires caused pain and suffering to the people in our lives. They, in turn, reacted-and we ultimately resented it.

We all had our own patterns to find. Sometimes, with the help of our sponsors, we found there were certain similar threads woven through many of our lives; we were not terminally unique. We indulged ourselves in fruitless searches for people and outside factors we could blame for the spiritual emptiness of our lives. We alternated between blaming ourselves and blaming others. We were often quite childish. Our ability to experience emotions was impaired. We held on to resentments about the past, which prohibited us from embracing the present and living our lives to the fullest. Some of us were full of remorse and could not forgive ourselves for making mistakes. That is, we would not accept our humanity.

We were full of fear. Those fears stopped us from doing what needed to be done. Some of us were delusional; we lived in a private world that no one else shared. Perhaps we considered suicide, were otherwise depressed, or found ourselves unable to interact with other people. Maybe we were desperately lonely. For many of us, our self-pity became anger at the world for mistreating us and, for some, this anger escalated into rage. Some of us lied, cheated, and

stole in a vain attempt to fulfill our desires for material, emotional, and sexual security.

Within the fellowship, we found that many of us had done the same kinds of things, had felt the same, and had experienced similar thoughts. We were compulsive, obsessive, and could not express the full range of human emotions. Full of fear and resentments, we identified with those who were still in the same place, and wanted to follow those who had found the way out.

Taking inventory is not a thinking exercise; it is a writing exercise. By getting our experiences on paper, we began the process of shedding our resentments, remorse, and fear. We discovered the patterns of behavior that had allowed us to be needlessly hurt or which we had used to harm others.

Did our anger, fear, belligerence, defiance, and denial combine with our disease and lead us to hospitals, jail cells, or gutters? Were we derelicts who were unable to support our families or ourselves? Were we functioning as marginal members of society, stuffing our feelings, and becoming furtive, neurotic bundles of unexpressed emotions? Were we quick to blame society and our fellow human beings for our woes? Were we hypocrites who justified engaging in an explicitly illegal activity? Were we full of tremendous insights, but unable to follow through with the vast projects we envisioned? Were we creatures of appetite using other drugs, alcohol, sex, food, or other people to try to wrest satisfaction out of the world? Were we talented people with fantastic potential who, even if we found success, could not savor it? Regardless of our career triumphs or artistic achievements, did we feel unfulfilled? And even though we had many social relationships, did we

feel a lacking, an emptiness? Were we egoists forever seeking approval?

When we put pen to paper, the answers to questions like these began to appear. We began to realize that the injuries and offenses against us, real or imagined, had kept us mired in fear and anger. We began to see our part in what had happened to us. We gained a new understanding about those who had harmed us. We saw that they were often spiritually sick or misguided, just like us. We found that we had had a role in some of our supposed misfortune. A rigorously honest inventory showed us that we might have stepped on the toes of others in a misguided, drugged, and self-centered quest for happiness and fulfillment. Thus, we gained insight into our relationships.

Many of us were afraid to start this process, but we finally became so uncomfortable that we had to do something. At this time, we sought guidance and direction from our sponsor. We did not have to take this journey alone. We asked our Higher Power for the willingness, strength, and courage to look at ourselves honestly, fearlessly, and thoroughly. We did this each time we sat down to write, whether it was one time or several. There are many ways to do the Fourth Step. It is not an autobiography. One suggestion follows.

First, we made a list of our resentments. We listed our resentments of people, places, things, and principles. Next to that we wrote why we had each resentment. We then wrote down how it had affected us. Did it affect our self-esteem or our personal relationships? Maybe it had affected our material or emotional security, or sex relations. Were our ambitions (social, physical security, or sexual) threatened?

After that, we had to do some real soul searching. What were our own wrongs and mistakes? Where were our faults, shortcomings, or defects? What was our part in each resentment? Were we selfish or dishonest? Had we been self-seeking or frightened? Had we been inconsiderate? Remember, this was our personal inventory. We had to disregard the other side and look only at our own part. We had to be rigorously honest with ourselves and admit our shortcomings on paper.

We did the same thing with all of our fears. We listed the fears, and then why we had each one. We wrote how each fear affected us, and our part in it.

Next, we reviewed our sexual conduct, making a list of our partners and determining in which relationships we were selfish. Whom did we harm? Whom did we use? Whom had we taken advantage of? What did we do? What could we have done instead? How did it affect us? We were thorough in all of this.

We then listed any other moral issues that did not seem to fit in the previous categories, including times we lied, cheated, stole, or harmed others. We also listed any secrets that we had not mentioned so far. Experience has taught us that we are as sick as our secrets.

After we listed and analyzed our resentments, we began to realize that they no longer had as much power over us. We began to see that the negative traits and behaviors we had practiced, and may even have once enjoyed or regarded as pleasurable, would no longer work in our lives. It became possible to face our fears with the help of our Higher Power. We knew what we were afraid of, and why. In the instant that we faced our fears, we began to overcome them. After we took stock of our

relationships (both sexual and otherwise), we began to look at these relationships differently and with less selfishness.

Once we had written down everything that we had been unwilling to deal with for so long, we were finally free to look at what was right in us. For many of us it was just as important to list our positive assets and attributes. Many of us discovered that we had low self-esteem. We learned that we are neither all bad, nor all good. We are simply human.

The Fourth Step opened windows for us. We rediscovered the many people who had helped us along the way and gained a new appreciation for our loved ones, friends, spiritual guides, and teachers. We began to transform our fears into faith and started to find a new way to love — unconditionally. Our attitude of denial and defiance began to change into an attitude of gratitude.

Some of us did not get it all the first time, so we did other inventories as more memories surfaced. There is nothing wrong with that. Taking inventory is a process we can repeat. However, once we began to look at our attitudes and behaviors with energy and honesty, we found the process to be more joyful than difficult. The pain of doing the Fourth Step was a lot less than the pain we would have held on to by not doing this step. It pays dividends beyond any that can be anticipated.

After writing our Fourth Step, we discovered both a new appreciation of our strengths and an acceptance of our weaknesses. We re-read our inventory. Sitting alone, we reviewed it carefully. We asked God to help us find any important things that we might have left out. We made certain that our admissions were thorough and honest. We were ready to take Step Five.

## STEP FIVE

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

Step Five required courage as well as rigorous honesty. We were beginning to practice the principle of integrity. We had written our moral inventory and were ready to share it. The secrets that some of us swore to take to the grave had become obstacles to further spiritual growth. We had to become willing not only to disclose the nature of our wrongs, but also to be quite specific and precise about them. We were uncovering the destructive patterns that resulted from our resentments, fears, and selfishness, and it was time to share them with a sponsor or spiritual guide in order to help us move beyond them.

When contemplating this step, the biggest obstacle that many of us faced was a shortage of trust. We did not fully trust ourselves, and trusted others even less. Some of us procrastinated by insisting that we could not find the perfect person to hear our inventory. Some said that we were using therapy and did not need to use a spiritual tool. For some, our excuse was that this step seemed to mirror the confessional of a religion we had earlier rejected. All of these excuses were manifestations of a lack of humility. We were afraid of letting someone else know who we really were. But it was time to take off the masks we'd hidden behind for years.

We finally swallowed our pride and met with a spiritual advisor, sponsor, or in some cases, even a total stranger. We read them our inventory and were careful not

to hold back any of our secrets. By admitting precisely what we had done that had caused us and the others around us the most pain, we earned a fresh start in life. Most of us immediately felt lighter. We found that admitting our wrongs to God, ourselves, and another human being helped to bring about a powerful personality transformation or spiritual experience. The inventory illuminated patterns of resentment, fear, and selfishness. We started to see their destructiveness. We realized, maybe for the first time, that these patterns were objectionable. Knowing this, we were free to act in new ways that made us happier and even brought joy to those around us. We started to grow away from being self-serving, and toward being of service to others.

The Fifth Step can give a recovering addict a strong feeling of social connectedness and spiritual oneness. It is a special exercise in humility. After all, it was heartening when we first discovered that actions, which had filled us with shame and guilt, could be understood and accepted by another person. So we were careful to resist the temptation to hold back special little secrets. We learned that quite often addicts can use guilt and shame to magnify character defects with a kind of grandiosity; we're not just bad, we think, we're "the worst of the worst." But more often than not, no matter what secret we shared, we found a sympathetic person who had done things very similar to what we had done. We were no longer cut off from help because of a belief that what we did was particularly and uniquely shameful. We got a chance to rejoin the human race.

We not only disclosed our wrong actions, but many of us also laid bare the things we regretted not doing or accomplishing. We dug deep into our inner being, made a

list of our past mistakes, saw the patterns emerge from them, and then admitted them. Putting our inventories on paper had helped us sort things out in our own minds. Speaking frankly about ourselves to our Higher Power and another human being expanded our self-knowledge, and relieved us of the burden of our past. A sense of belonging began to grow in us.

Without Step Five, our dedication to remaining clean would have remained largely theoretical. Just knowing our wrongs was not enough; we could easily retreat by justifying, minimizing, exaggerating, or denying them. This was very dangerous. Trying to live a clean and sober life while acting the same as we did when using is, at best, very painful. At worst, it can lead to relapse or suicide. Step Five opened a channel to the love that can heal us.

Step Five is more than just reading our Fourth Step inventory. With the help of God and another human being, we faced the facts of our lives. We took a stride towards wisdom. Through the Fifth Step, we gained a tool, which we could use to take an objective look at ourselves. With the help and counsel of another person, we could confirm our findings. We used our human faculties, the counsel of another human being, and our relationship with a Higher Power to be born anew. This was the beginning of the experience of self-acceptance.

Perhaps the most important aspects of the Fifth Step are the acceptance, compassion, and forgiveness we feel from our sponsor and from a Higher Power. The guilty feelings born in our past start to fall away. We begin to feel a closeness and an intimacy with all of creation. In fact, the wreckage of our past actually starts to feel like a resource of experience from which we can begin to learn and grow.

While listening to our Fifth Step, some of our sponsors helped us make a preliminary list of persons to whom we owed direct amends. Some left that for us to do. Our sponsors helped us to see who had harmed us, and whom we had harmed. We were freed from the kind of childish thinking that had allowed us to accept blame for the misbehavior of others yet not accept responsibility for our own actions and inactions.

This step helped us move towards sanity. It cut through our mental cobwebs like a sword and slew the dragons of delusion that had plagued us. We now find we no longer have to behave a certain way because of a resentment we acquired years ago. We no longer need to have the same kind of cavalier, selfish and manipulative attitude toward our sexual partners. We began the journey toward becoming a true friend, a valued worker, a loving sibling, a trusted child, and a nurturing parent. We knew what our fears were and why we had them. They came out of the shadows and were a matter of record to ourselves, our sponsors or confidants, and to God. We found a new closeness and connection to our Higher Power.

We thought Step Five would be humiliating, but after taking it, we discovered it to be empowering. We found ourselves again. We tapped into a well of honesty about our pasts that gave us strength and hope for the present. Doing our Fifth Step brought us into the heart of the fellowship of MA. We began to feel powerfully connected to our concept of a loving God and to the other addicts in our group. This led us to the willingness required to take Step Six.

## STEP SIX

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

The spiritual principle of Step Six is willingness. At first, this step seemed to be an impossible undertaking until we realized that we were talking about a lifelong process. Our newfound awareness of our defects of character, as well as the realization that the removal of them might take the rest of our lives, was, for some of us, difficult and painful. But all that was required was to become entirely ready to let go of the defects of character that were blocking our relationship with a Higher Power. What we needed was a readiness to let go, and an openness to allow our loving God to do deep and lasting work in our hearts and minds.

Character defects are, by their very nature, expressions of self-will. We realized that by practicing them it was impossible to practice spiritual principles. We could no longer afford to deny or suppress our defects with drugs or self-will. We became responsible for our recovery and for letting God work within us.

For many years, we did not recognize our defects of character as such. In fact, we often relied on them in much the same way that one relies on a crutch. They were coping mechanisms. For example, rather than dealing with issues of intimacy, we would often sabotage relationships by using our character defects to push people away. We lied, cheated, and manipulated as a way not only to get what we wanted, but also to allow us to project a false image that we had of ourselves, an image which we wanted others to perceive as well.

In reality, many of our lives were full of strife. It felt like life was a war — us against them. There was a fierce competition for power, wealth, ideas, and love. We were afraid that we would not measure up; we would be losers. We lost our self-esteem, dignity, and self-respect. We became estranged from our society, our work, our families, and our friends.

At times, some of us would not accept limits to our needs, passions, and ambitions. We lost our sense of social harmony. We paid little attention to our means, our consciences, or our faculties. We welcomed the label “outlaw.” We dared society to discipline us by ignoring its laws, norms, and customs. Then, we were outraged and surprised when society acted against us!

Alternatively, some of us took the other tack, perhaps a much more dangerous and heartbreaking one. We were fatalistic. We accepted other people’s constraints on our needs, desires, and ambitions. We believed that our lot in life was inevitable, inescapable, and miserable. Finally, we reached the point where our disease enslaved us. Our needs were unfulfilled, our passions frustrated, and our ambitions thwarted because we could see no other way to live. The sad fact was that we cruelly and piteously oppressed ourselves and usually found other people who were more than willing to help us do so.

Another source of our character defects was the degree to which we integrated into society. We chose withdrawal and were egoistic, or we chose involvement and were self-effacing. On the one hand, we became so enamored with our own projects, plans, and personalities that we lost our humanity. On the other, we were so

intensely involved in what others were doing that we lost ourselves.

When we chose to immerse ourselves in the lives of others, it was easy to believe that we were really quite heroic and had their best interests at heart. It was often very difficult to admit that our concern was control, our worry was manipulation, and our anxiety about others was an avoidance of our own needs, desires, and ambitions. We chose not to develop our personalities and we paid the price for it. To the extent that we did not allow others to grow and learn, they may have disliked and resented us. To the extent that we failed to develop our own personalities, others may have taken advantage of our weaknesses.

In the Third Step, we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a God of our own understanding. We became willing. However, at that point, we were not yet truly aware of what our will and our lives meant, specifically. After taking the Fourth and Fifth Steps we became aware, in a very real way, what our will and our life had been. We had now written down, in black and white, the exact nature of what was standing between us and a true realization of what we had set out to achieve in the Third Step. Step Six required us to let a power greater than ourselves work in our lives. But were we still willing?

By the time we got to Step Six, it was apparent that our needs were often distorted, our passions sometimes abnormal, and our ambitions warped. Many people have difficulty finding a proper way to associate with others and with society at large. Addicts have the same problem compounded by a spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical disease. Our defects of character, together with our virtues, had provided us with a way of behaving. The difference

between our defects and our virtues is their effectiveness in helping us live clean spiritual lives.

We took our moral inventories and admitted the exact nature of our wrongs. It was easy for us to see that those were action steps. It was difficult for many of us to see that Step Six was a step that required just as much, if not more, action. The action we took was becoming entirely ready to let our Higher Power remove or transform these imperfections of our character. This state of readiness applied as much to our minor faults as it did to our major shortcomings — pride, anger, greed, lust, gluttony, envy, and laziness. Our goal was to be entirely ready to let go of each of our defects of character and to practice the faith required to let God remove them.

To become entirely ready, some of us performed exercises such as writing, sharing, and praying about our defects of character. Many defects were so objectionable that we could easily relinquish them. But to let go of defects that we had become attached to, we needed to pray for willingness. Thus, we used the defects of character, identified in our Fifth Step, as a basis when writing examples of how they had played out in our lives. We wrote to discover why they no longer worked for us and how they had hurt us and the people we loved. Talking with our sponsors, or at meetings, we shared the results of what we had written as a way of increasing our readiness to let go of these defects.

Our newfound awareness was making it impossible for us to comfortably continue practicing our character defects. Going beyond our own self-interest and becoming concerned with the feelings and well being of others was new behavior. This new attitude was contrary to our prior

self-obsession, which had in fact been the root of our disease.

No one was asking us to be perfect in our application of this spiritual goal. Step One was the beginning of the process of losing our obsession with marijuana and compulsive using. By the time we reached Step Six, the compulsion to use and the obsession with the drug had been removed from us. If we had practiced that kind of willingness once, why not try the same kind of willingness with our imperfections? Our faith had cleared the path for recovery. Could we continue on by surrendering our defects of character? Yes. By practicing Step Six, we acquire the humility needed to take Step Seven.

## STEP SIX

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

The spiritual principle of Step Six is willingness. At first, this step seemed to be an impossible undertaking until we realized that we were talking about a lifelong process. Our newfound awareness of our defects of character, as well as the realization that the removal of them might take the rest of our lives, was, for some of us, difficult and painful. But all that was required was to become entirely ready to let go of the defects of character that were blocking our relationship with a Higher Power. What we needed was a readiness to let go, and an openness to allow our loving God to do deep and lasting work in our hearts and minds.

Character defects are, by their very nature, expressions of self-will. We realized that by practicing them it was impossible to practice spiritual principles. We could no longer afford to deny or suppress our defects with drugs or self-will. We became responsible for our recovery and for letting God work within us.

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## STEP SEVEN

*Humbly asked God  
to remove our shortcomings.*

In Step Seven we asked our Higher Power to work in our lives, believing that God knows what is right for us, better than we do ourselves. This required complete surrender, an action even more pronounced than our initial surrender. To take Step Seven, we needed to get out of God's way. We asked for freedom from anything that limited our recovery and inhibited our relationship with our Higher Power.

Step Seven is the point where the first six Steps come together. It is the gateway to a new way of life. It is as if in Step One, we realized we had a garden thoroughly overrun by weeds. In Step Two, we realized we needed help with it if our garden was to thrive. In Step Three, we decided to ask for help from the Master Gardener. In Step Four, we identified everything living in the garden. In Step Five, we told our neighbor and the Master Gardener exactly what we had found. In Step Six, we specifically identified the weeds and became willing to rid ourselves of them. And here, in Step Seven, we sought the aid of the Master Gardener to remove them.

Step Seven is about humility. Let us first consider what is meant by humility — the fundamental principle of the Twelve Steps. The basic ingredients of humility are unpretentiousness and a willingness to submit to a Higher Power's will. Through experience, we have found that most addicts come to the program with little or no humility. Unless we find a way to practice and develop this principle,

we stand little chance of remaining clean and sober, much less of becoming truly happy.

We live in a world where there are many warped ideas of how to attain happiness. Some people believe we should always be happy. Some believe that the fulfillment of our material needs and desires is the key to happiness. For us, that pursuit often led to drugs. Some of us thought that if we had everything, then we would be free to begin our quest for culture and character, true happiness and serenity.

Materialism seemed to tell us that we had to rely on our wits and inventiveness to provide the things necessary for happiness. We who are addicts have come to the bitter realization that our best thinking and self-will are what brought us to a state of despair and incomprehensible demoralization. Our plans and methods didn't work. We demanded more than our share of wealth, prestige, and love. When things seemed to be going our way, we got loaded to celebrate or to dream more dreams. When our plans went up in smoke, either because we had simply failed or because we had never really taken any action towards realizing our goals, we got loaded and searched for an unfeeling, uncaring oblivion.

The bottom line was a lack of humility. We could not see that good character and spiritual values had to come *first*. We had it backwards. We have found that material satisfaction and self-centered gratification of our desires are not the purpose of living.

Of course, most of us thought that good character was desirable. But many of us thought that this was something one acquired, as a result of obtaining all that one needed. Some of us thought that morality and honesty were

something to be displayed so that we would have a better chance of getting what we wanted. Few of us thought that honesty, tolerance, patience, and love of our fellow human beings and a Higher Power were values that should be the foundation of our daily lives.

As long as self-gratification and acquisition of our wants and needs was our number one priority, we could *never* gain a working faith in a Higher Power. This was impossible, even if we came to the program with the belief that God exists. As long as we relied first on our own self-will, and based our lives around the pursuit of what we were convinced our needs were, reliance and faith in a Higher Power were out of the question.

The process of gaining this new outlook on life was a painful experience for most of us. Many of us found that we had to make the same mistakes over and over again before we could really start to grasp the concept. Often we were humbled by experiences brought on by our own pride, ego, and arrogance. We learned that the more we could let go of our selfishness and try to carry out what we perceived as God's will, the more we started to experience serenity in our lives.

Our admission of powerlessness in Step One was often the first feeling of liberation and freedom we had ever experienced. This is an example of true humility, and the healing that it can bring. But this was only the beginning. We had spent our entire lives and our using careers based on self-centeredness. This attitude does not change overnight. It is a lifelong process requiring the practice of perseverance. As we are so often told, recovery is not an event; it is a process. We strive for progress, not perfection.

Humbly asking God to remove our shortcomings meant we were completely open to letting God work in our lives despite our unsubstantiated fears. Humility is a continuous relationship with our Higher Power. It is the ability to calmly ask for help. Working daily on our relationship with God, we discovered that our timetable for having our defects of character removed was not the same as God's timetable. Humility is a simple request and a letting go. We take action and leave the results of our request to our Higher Power.

At this point in our recovery, we had obtained some measure of release from the obsession to use. Considering where we came from, that in itself was a remarkable, if not miraculous, thing. We had taken a clear look at the defects of character that blocked us from a better relationship with the very power that could help us. By this time we had started to enjoy moments where we experienced true feelings of serenity and happiness. They were gifts beyond value. The rewards we had enjoyed thus far were based largely on the level of true humility we had in our lives.

We began to see that humility is the key to serenity and happiness. Our outlook started to change. In the past we had always run away from the things that had frightened us. We had numbed ourselves with the drug. We never wanted to deal with pain. But now, we began to realize that some suffering could, in fact, encourage growth and develop character.

Within the fellowship, we can see and hear at virtually every meeting how people's lives of suffering have been transformed, by humility, into lives of happiness, fulfillment, and joy. Our greatest flaws and shortcomings can become our greatest assets in helping others to recover

from this disease. Pain seems to be the price of admission, but we always seem to get many more rewards than we had hoped for or expected. As the process continues, it gets easier to fear pain less and desire humility more. This pain is the pain of building character. We no longer hide behind a cloud of smoke whenever life presents us with an opportunity for spiritual growth.

One of the joys of being clean is the return of the full range of human emotions. Early on, we often confused feelings with defects of character; as our emotions returned with a new force, they frightened and disoriented us. We had not yet learned what to do with them. Some of us even asked our Higher Power to take them from us. This was not only futile but also dangerous. We found that when we denied, blocked, or buried our feelings, we usually behaved compulsively. Compulsive behavior can lead us to other addictions. When we acknowledged and accepted our feelings, we behaved moderately. We ran less risk of relapsing or of switching addictions.

The practice of humility led to healing. Step Seven was a powerful remedy taken with joy and humor. We now take ourselves less seriously. Shortcomings are human; everyone has imperfections. In concert with God, we have grown in serenity. We have choices about how we will behave because we are no longer locked into old patterns of action by resentment and fear. Self-centered fear, that we would lose something we had or that we wouldn't get something we wanted, put us into a state of perpetual disturbance that blocked us from our true goals. It follows that no true peace could be had until we found a means of reducing these demands. We asked for faith with faith, and gained clarity about God's will for us.

**Step Seven****Life With Hope**

Whenever we are suffering, we pause and check to see if we have been at fault. If we have been at fault, we ask God to remove our defects of character. If we haven't, we ask God to give us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change. To be humble is to be genuinely accepting.

The true humility we acquired in Step Seven gave us the ability to look calmly back through our lives and see where we had done harm. It gave us a way to ask for the honesty and willingness to change our relationships. When we asked humbly, we discovered that a Higher Power could remove our imperfections and help us gain self-forgiveness for the harm that we had done. We were ready for Step Eight.

## STEP EIGHT

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

There are many spiritual principles involved in Step Eight: honesty, openness, willingness, faith, acceptance, and particularly love and forgiveness. In the first seven Steps, we worked on restoring our relationships with our Higher Power and ourselves. With this foundation in place we were now ready to begin restoring our relationships with others.

By acting on our character defects, we inflicted harm on ourselves and those around us. In the Seventh Step, we asked our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings. Step Eight reminded us that the Steps are in a particular order for a reason. Until we had taken Step Seven, we had not acquired the degree of humility necessary to make meaningful and sincere amends.

Upon coming to our first few meetings, some of us began to realize the havoc we had wrought upon our friends, families, and loved ones. Our first inclination was to rush out and make amends to those we cared about and had harmed. If we do this too early in the process, however, we run the risk of feeling rejection and failure, which can pose a threat to our recovery. Many of us used to say that we were sorry all the time, and would then continue to practice the same behavior. How could we possibly think that anyone would trust us or believe our amends until they had seen us acquire a degree of humility and observed a

real change in our behavior? This was the process we started by taking Step Seven.

To gain the true freedom that this program offers, we need to take responsibility for the actions and reactions resulting from our defects of character. It may appear at first that the focus of making amends is on others. In fact, the focus is on us — the true purpose of Step Eight is to enhance our own recovery.

Our objective was to begin clearing away the wreckage of our past so that we could facilitate our own spiritual awakening. By the time we worked our way through the process of making amends, the level of freedom we began to realize astounded us.

To start Step Eight, we wrote down whom we had harmed as a result of our character defects and precisely how we had done so. This list often included people who had passed away, or that we had little chance of ever seeing again. At this point in our recovery, however, the ability to make amends was irrelevant. We focused instead on the *willingness* to make them. The people, places, and things on our lists fell into certain categories: those for whom immediate amends were appropriate, those we would be willing to approach soon, those we would be willing to approach later, and a few that, at first, we couldn't imagine ever being willing to approach.

We examined our lists from another point of view. What kind of harm had we done? How severe had it been? How could we change that? The kind of harm we did falls into five basic categories: spiritual, social, mental, physical, and financial. To reopen old wounds that we may have felt were largely healed may seem pointless and painful, but we

found that this process was essential to our new life and our new beginning.

Spiritually, did we deny our loved ones faith? Did we force them to adhere to our belief with no respect for their own? Did we undercut their beliefs with cynicism or tear at their souls with sarcasm? Did we provide an adult example of a compassionate spiritual seeker?

Socially, did we isolate from society, denying our friends our company and support? Were we absent from our family and neglectful of their needs? Did we put marijuana, work, money, sports or entertainment before our responsibilities to our families and friends? Did we spend our days trying to control our loved ones or business associates by badgering them until they acquiesced to our demands? Did we play one friend against another? Were we cruel or unkind to the people in our lives? Did we treat them as we wanted to be treated? Did we lie by commission or omission? Did we exaggerate our importance while diminishing that of others? Did we gossip, slander, or unduly criticize friends, associates, or loved ones?

Mentally, did we live in our heads instead of in the here and now? Did we indulge in delusions, fantasies, and wishful thinking rather than using our mental faculties to good purpose for ourselves and others? Did we trick or torment our loved ones by playing mental games? Did we do wrong, then manage to make someone else look guilty?

Were we physically abusive to those around us? Did we passively stand by and let others abuse and batter us or our children? Was there anyone whom we assaulted, raped, or murdered? Did we sexually harm others by using them or cheating on them? Did we use our bodies as barter? Were we lazy; not doing our share of work?

Financially, were we miserly, depriving others of things that they needed? Or did we play the spendthrift, indulging our every whim but never putting aside a nickel for necessities? Did we cheat or steal from anyone? Were we trustworthy?

An honest look at our list gave us all pause. After we made our list we took it to our sponsor or spiritual advisor. We need counsel because, as addicts, we so often go to extremes. Some of us thought we had harmed everyone or nearly everyone we had ever met. Some of us denied that we had ever hurt anyone. Neither of these positions has merit. It is grandiose to think that we have hurt everyone. After all, we are not that influential. We are not the center of the universe, even if we thought we were. It is equally arrogant to suppose that any human being might go through life without harming anyone. We touch the lives of all those around us, sometimes in harmful ways. Our sponsors helped us sort this out.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to determine whether a person on our list has harmed us or we have harmed them. Those of us with traumatic childhood experiences often believed that the harm done to us was somehow our fault. Another good reason to share our lists with a sponsor or spiritual advisor is that an objective viewpoint can be of great help in these cases. Occasionally we had just as much trouble admitting our own responsibility in situations where we could only see what was done to us, neglecting our part.

At times, we were unwilling to make amends to someone we believed had wronged us in a particular situation. In order to become willing to make amends to these people it was important to focus on our own behavior, disregarding the actions of who or what we believed had

wronged us. We had to learn to forgive others before we made amends to them. We needed to forgive them, or we faced the possibility of never becoming willing to make an amends to them directly. We did this even though we may not have felt forgiving. The feeling of forgiveness may come some time after the act of forgiving. This is one way the principle of faith is practiced in Step Eight.

In order to find the willingness to make amends to everyone that we knew we had harmed, we sometimes had to pray for the willingness to be willing. We realized that just coming to MA is a start in making amends. We are no longer active drug addicts practicing a disease; we are recovering drug addicts practicing a healthy way of life.

An intimidating obstacle to the process of making amends was the realization that soon we would be making face-to-face contact with people who might be hostile, or who might not even be aware that we had wronged them. It was hard enough to admit these things to ourselves, to our Higher Power, and to another human being, but to actually visit or write to these people or organizations that we had wronged seemed overwhelming. These were some of the feelings that made it hard for us to honestly make our list. It was therefore necessary to take Step Eight as if there were no Step Nine.

Some of us needed to make amends to ourselves before we could make amends to others. However we approached it, we began to see that clinging to the wreckage of our past was more painful than becoming willing to change our ways.

One of the miracles of Step Eight is that it gives us permission to be true to ourselves. We stopped practicing our defects of character and eliminated the patterns of

**Step Eight****Life With Hope**

behavior that had caused harm to ourselves and others for much of our lives. We felt better about ourselves and had more confidence in our ability to be in relationships with others. We gained a new ability to trust ourselves and those around us. We discovered which of our actions were harmful and we became willing to stop them. Our feelings of guilt and shame decreased as our willingness to change increased. We began to have a desire to wipe the slate clean and face each new day without guilt. We were less attracted to drama and trauma and more attracted to sanity and serenity. We became willing to make amends to those we had harmed. Step Eight was the beginning of the end of our isolation. We were ready for Step Nine.

## STEP NINE

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

Step Nine allows us to practice all of the spiritual principles encompassed in the first eight steps, with the addition of the principle of justice. The Ninth Step is a series of actions we took in order to complete the process we began with Step Four — cleaning up the wreckage of our past. Although many of us approached the Ninth Step with hesitation, we found it to be one of the most deeply rewarding and spiritual experiences of our lives. Step Nine does not mean that we think less of ourselves; it means we think of ourselves less.

Recovery from marijuana addiction requires us to make profound changes in how we live our lives. First, we stopped using marijuana, something we once considered unthinkable! In addition, we gave up the illusion that we could manage our own lives. We committed ourselves wholeheartedly to spiritual change. We sought spiritual progress for a most practical reason: “to stay free of marijuana and to help the marijuana addict who still suffers achieve the same freedom.” We took action in order to achieve this freedom for ourselves and to show others how to achieve it. The Twelve Steps of Marijuana Anonymous are to be lived, not just discussed in meetings.

Making direct amends to those we had harmed required a frank admission to them that our conduct was wrong, a sincere apology, and, if appropriate, an offer to make reasonable restitution for the damage we had done.

With those people especially dear to us, an apology alone was hardly enough. We became willing to change our behavior and renewed our participation in their lives, if they wished it. For them, we had to demonstrate that we had changed.

The form and timing of our amends varied according to the circumstances, but our attitude in each case was the same — willingness to take responsibility for the consequences of our behavior. This willingness was especially effective when combined with actions that were different from those that had caused harm in the past. Willingness and new patterns of behavior miraculously transformed our lives and the lives of those around us.

We could not base our willingness on an expectation that we would not actually have to make restitution. With our Higher Power, we learned to walk through fear and take action. We relied upon spiritual power for the strength and courage required to make our amends. We left the results and outcome to God. Of course, many of us found that discussing our amends with our sponsor was beneficial. We talked about the amends, to whom they were to be made, and what we planned as reparation in each case. Our reparation had to be appropriate to the wrong we were trying to right.

The paradox of Step Nine was that we had to take responsibility for our past in order to turn our lives over to God in the present. We might have been on a “pink cloud,” feeling so good about today that we were tempted to turn our back on the “bad old days.” Conversely, our present circumstances might have been so trying that we didn’t feel like spending the time and energy needed to correct former mistakes. In either situation, we realized that until we made

our amends, we would continue to pay a heavy price for our past misdeeds. We would still retain resentments towards old enemies, perpetuate old lies, fear being found out, and feel the remorse and self-condemnation associated with our painful memories. For as long as we carried such burdens, we endangered our recovery and limited our capacity to serve God and help the addict who still suffers.

We were becoming people of integrity. We humbly accepted who we had been, and who we were becoming. This step required that we repair our attitudes and our actions. We began to take into consideration the effects of our actions, or neglect of them. This step required progress in communication, discipline, and commitment. We learned about self-respect. Our basic attitude while making our amends was one of love. We often experience a spiritual connection working Step Nine, where there is a feeling of forgiveness after making amends.

The purpose of Step Nine, we believe, is not to win the admiration of others, but to restore our self-esteem and further our spiritual growth. It felt wonderful to trust ourselves and, when we could, to regain the trust of others, but Step Nine could not be done with an expectation that our amends would magically heal the hurt of someone we had harmed. Often the response we got from those to whom we made amends was positive and gratifying. Old wounds were healed, damaged relationships restored, and new doors opened to us after we admitted our misconduct and tried to make things right. We were often amazed at the blessings we received in this way. Sometimes, however, our efforts at amends were spurned or ridiculed. If we had done our part, we sought forgiveness for ourselves from a Higher Power or through another, perhaps a sponsor. We took well-

considered action and turned the results of that action over to our God.

With Step Eight, we were on guard against the temptation to minimize, rationalize, or deny the damage that we had caused. In Step Nine, we were just as vigilant. We faced those we had harmed. When we had isolated ourselves, we had grown neglectful and uncommunicative. Our families, friends, and co-workers were all affected. We had to make amends for what we had not done as well as for what we had done.

We could also make amends to addicts who were still using. We did not wish to enable people to practice addiction. Yet we often owed financial amends to practicing addicts. We had options. When we repaid these debts, we did not do it in a way that put ourselves at risk of relapse or illegality by being in the vicinity of drugs. Nor did we put ourselves at risk of possible retribution by users or dealers. Sometimes the amends had to be made indirectly. Our purpose was to make it up to those we harmed, not to cure or control them. Moreover, if we explained why we were making amends and the importance of recovery in our lives, we were in fact serving as a powerful example to other addicts, sowing seeds for a future moment when they too might become willing to seek a spiritual solution.

We made amends even to those who had harmed us more than we had harmed them, regardless of whether they reciprocated. It was not our business to take their moral inventory. It was our business to clear up our side of the ledger, not to force others to admit how they had wronged us. Concern about consequences did not excuse us from

making amends unless others would be harmed in the process.

In some instances direct amends were not possible. The person we harmed may have died or was not traceable. In those cases, indirect amends were the best we could make. A sincere letter could be written, even if not mailed. Our current associates could be the beneficiaries of acts done to compensate for our mistreatment of our former associates. Contributions could be made to charities, or volunteer work done for recovery agencies or other worthy causes. There was always a way. We discussed questions concerning difficult cases with sponsors or spiritual advisors.

Our goal was a spiritual one. Our own judgment was often flawed and so through prayer and meditation we sought clarity about God's will for us and the power to carry it out. We used these tools to develop the courage, serenity, and humility that we needed to make amends.

It is not the purpose of the Ninth Step to clear our conscience at the expense of others. We were careful not to have our amends adversely affect other people. We did not implicate others who were parties to our errors. We made certain that the possible repercussions of our amends, such as loss of employment or criminal punishment, did not hinder us from meeting our duties as a parent, spouse, worker, or friend. We had no right to act without regard for the interest of others.

The temptation to procrastinate was especially strong when facing the people who were involved in our most shameful episodes. Although it was prudent to wait for the proper time, we needed to be especially mindful and consult with our sponsors to check our real motives. Once we were

certain of the proper course of action, we acted without delay. We had to remember "How It Works": "The practice of rigorous honesty, of opening our hearts and minds, and the willingness to go to any lengths to have a spiritual awakening are essential to our recovery."

The rewards we've received from taking Steps Eight and Nine are profound and sublime. These actions have enabled us to live to good purpose and empowered us to be of service to others. Miracles have become everyday reality. We do things that we could never have done alone. God has become a living force in our lives. We have grown free and joyful. Service to others has replaced selfishness. We've lost our fears and regained trust in God, ourselves, and other human beings. Petty problems have stopped bedeviling us. Our attitude has turned from denial, defiance, and belligerence to gratitude, humility, and a sincere effort to be of service. We have gained dignity as we've retaken our proper place in society. The hard work that we put into the first Nine Steps was a precious accomplishment and a valuable gift. In order to keep that gift, we turned to Step Ten.

## STEP TEN

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

Step Ten consolidates the work done in the first nine Steps and puts that experience into action on a daily basis, in good times and bad. Coupled with Steps Eleven and Twelve, this is how we maintain and build upon the spiritual advances that we have already made. It's how we practice the principles of this program "in all our affairs." Each day, we renew our commitment to spiritual progress in order to stay one step ahead of the progressive disease of addiction. We practice perseverance.

The verb "continued" is the key to this step. Daily inventories of both our assets and our liabilities keep us current. Less and less do we allow resentments, fears, and worries to fester into harm done to ourselves and others. More and more we live a balanced emotional life. We have been restored to sanity where marijuana is concerned. Our intuitive faculty makes quick work of many things that used to baffle us. We grow to know ourselves better, and we promptly admit our wrongdoings. We stay vigilant and continue to identify our obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors. Our goals are to let go of addictive patterns and to let God show us new ways to live.

This ongoing and regular process of self-evaluation is what keeps us from having to live so much of our lives with an "emotional hangover." When we were practicing our addiction, we routinely had to deal with the physical aftermath of our uncontrolled using; in recovery, we find

that we have to deal with the emotional consequences of over-indulging in self-will. With the Tenth Step we start to train ourselves to develop a habit of regular evaluation followed by prompt correction of our wrong actions.

We cannot afford to be complacent. We have learned that living one day at a time means that we only have today. We cannot allow pain to overwhelm us before we are willing to take the necessary action. Each day we must do something to enhance our spiritual program. Our recovery depends on it.

This continuing process of inventory takes many forms. Sometimes a brief reflection on why an event is bothering us is enough to shed light on our part in it. At other times, a written examination of an area of our life is required to retain emotional sobriety. Some of us go on planned retreats periodically to examine our recent pasts for problems that trouble us, admit the harm that we have done ourselves or others, find ways to make amends, and discover new spiritual tools. Sometimes in the company of a sponsor, we make a careful review of the progress we have made since our last inventory. By practicing Step Ten, we demonstrate that we are being restored to sanity.

Through the process of taking inventory, we gain insight into our actions. We learn to recognize our motives and avoid rationalizing, minimizing, or justifying our behavior. When we lose our temper, or speak rashly, we lose our ability to be fair-minded and tolerant. We've also seen the foolishness of acting like a victim. Isolation and sulking are simply subtle ways to be prideful and vengeful. We gain the ability to think before we act. We can choose whether or not to act in the same old ways because we can now use new ways of thinking to assess the probable

consequences of our behavior. We can learn to stop the old behavior before it starts. And when we hurt ourselves or others, we are much more willing and able to admit and correct our mistakes.

Of course, we still take advantage of the help that sponsors or spiritual advisors can provide and we consult them whenever necessary. We tell them about any secrets that could threaten our recovery. Often, we need the counsel of such loving friends to help clarify the part we play in issues and relationships that are troubling to us. The humility of asking for help keeps us from self-righteousness and protects us against outbreaks of either grandiosity or self-pity. With the help of others, we again recognize our character defects and humbly ask the God of our understanding to remove our shortcomings.

By making amends promptly, we develop character assets. Our mental life becomes focused more and more upon the here and now and less and less upon the past or future. Often, we can admit our mistakes as soon as we make them. This skill enables us to keep a connection with a Higher Power. It gives us the desire and the means to know God better.

Taking a regular inventory, we constantly review our recent past. Did we let fear ruin another opportunity, or did we seize the moment? Did our resentments lead us to do things we regretted? Did we allow ourselves to be overly emotional, or did we express our feelings appropriately? Were we taking care of ourselves, or withdrawing? Was our attitude loving and forgiving? Did our self-pity divorce us from those who like or love us, or were we willing to focus outward long enough to be of service to others and to have a good time? Were we honest? Were we judgmental,

prejudicial, or unfairly discriminating, or were we tolerant and open-minded? Did we have a negative attitude and inflict it upon those around us, or were we looking for a chance to bring more joy into our life? Were we so disappointed that we could not control people, places, or things that we had to gossip or practice slander? Or, were we so glad to be humble that we let go and let God, restraining our tongues and pens, and becoming willing to find reasons to sing the praises of those around us?

Questioning and evaluating our actions and ourselves helps us to stay the "right size." As we gain some time in our recovery, the quality of our lives naturally improves. As we start to reap some of the rewards of our new life style, it is easy to slip into the role of "big shot;" we run the risk of not always recognizing when we are wrong because we often think we are always right. We can keep this phenomenon at bay by remembering where we come from. We are where we are today by the grace of God. The more we grow in this program, the more we realize that we know very little.

For recovering addicts who feel others have harmed them, there is no more important priority than the development of self-restraint. This program has given us a new and positive set of tools to deal with pain: we share at meetings, we study the literature, we write, we talk with a sponsor and fellow addicts. The point of the Tenth Step is to be willing to look at our own behavior and what needs to be changed in us, not what needs to be changed in others. It is through this process that we begin to develop acceptance. And, in turn, we begin to forgive.

The Steps provide us with a new way of life that works for us. This new way is life lived one day at a time;

## Life With Hope

## Step Ten

it is a life of love and service. We learn how to handle conflict in a healthy and constructive way. This is a matter of self-preservation for us.

We no longer look to measure other people's hypocrisy; rather, we look around to discover the ways of life that work for spiritual people. Our humility lets us admit our confusion. We can stop and ask God for guidance. Our Higher Power's guidance will let us use our great human faculty-our intuition. We can live life with some wisdom and a great deal of wit. We gain more trust in God, ourselves, and other human beings. Now we may come to be the best we can be because we have a new-found sense of moral guidance. We make amends *promptly* for the harm we do to others.

The practice of Step Ten keeps us on the best terms possible with the world around us. As we move away from the chaos of our former lives, we begin to truly experience peace and serenity. We now find ourselves in a new state of mind where we can strengthen our relationship with a loving God. We improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power by exercising Step Eleven.

## STEP ELEVEN

*Sought through prayer and meditation  
to improve our conscious contact with God,  
as we understood God,  
praying only for knowledge of God's will for us  
and the power to carry that out.*

Step Eleven is about spiritual awareness. For many of us, our addiction to marijuana came as we sought a greater reality, or even a mystical experience through the drug. For some, our early “highs” were almost spiritual in nature, seeming to take us beyond ourselves and into a state of expanded consciousness. As we progressed in our addiction and turned more often to the drug as an escape from ordinary reality, it lost its ability to satisfy our needs. Instead of helping us feel better, it started to make us feel worse.

Many addicts feel an aching emptiness within — a hole deep inside ourselves — which we tried to plug by using marijuana. Some people describe this hole as “God-shaped,” since the only way we can truly fill it is to open ourselves to the presence of a Higher Power. By continuing to live the Steps and practice spiritual principles, we remove the barriers in our lives that have kept us from building a relationship with a Higher Power. We can now focus on nurturing and improving that relationship. When we regularly seek such expansion through prayer and meditation, rather than marijuana use, we find that we are increasingly fulfilled; the experience grows more powerful, more real, and more beneficial. We seek, and we find. It seems that the old

saying is true: "For each step we take towards God, God takes a thousand steps towards us."

Many of us came to Marijuana Anonymous with little or no relationship to a Higher Power, and without any idea of how to create that contact or build that relationship as the Eleventh Step suggests we do. Some of us are atheists or agnostics, alienated from God by past experiences with religion, or by those who used their beliefs in self-serving ways.

In recovery, we begin to develop a relationship with a Higher Power, or renew one that we once had. We come to believe in a God of our own individual understanding, a Higher Power that will help us in all phases of our lives. Some of us believed that dependence meant restrictiveness. However, many of us have found that dependence on a Higher Power means freedom of choice and freedom to grow as individuals. Many of us had to let go of the old ideas we had about a judgmental, punishing God. We came to believe in a loving, compassionate Presence; a kind, accepting Mother/Father/Friend; a powerful guide and teacher; a supporting strength. If we have negative associations with the terms "God" or "Higher Power," we are free to use whatever word or words are acceptable to us. Each of us is free to form our own conceptions of a Higher Power, whatever that might be.

This Step is one that we do not have to wait to work. The principles and practices of Step Eleven are helpful to use in connection with any of the other Steps. Prayer and meditation are a real source of power and strength in living our program.

Step Eleven is an "action" Step. It asks us to seek contact with God, as we understand God, through the

activities of prayer and meditation. The more we are able to do this, the more regularly we seek this help and contact, the more open we are to receive support and guidance in our lives.

The Eleventh Step suggests that we ask in prayer not to have our desires fulfilled, or our wills empowered, but to receive the sure guidance of a deeper wisdom than our own. The operative word in Step Eleven is “only.” We need to keep in mind that we pray only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry that out. We don’t go to our Higher Power with a shopping list, nor do we demand specific results. As we manage to surrender to this guidance through daily practice, we find our lives taking new and clearer direction. We take action, trusting in God’s results even though what happens to us may not be what we desired or envisioned for ourselves. We let go.

Self-will and fear had imposed the perception of limits in our lives. But a growing faith and understanding of a Higher Power opens up limitless and new possibilities. Faith provides us with the motivation to surrender to God’s will. We are, in truth, under the care of God. As we loosen our grip on the reins of our lives, we find we are being led, slowly and certainly, in the right direction — towards home.

Many of us have trouble distinguishing between God’s will and self-will. On many occasions we have unfairly attributed a situation in our lives to being God’s will, and have used this as an excuse for ceasing to take action. On the other hand, many of us have impulsively taken action to avoid facing life on life’s terms. We have learned that being in accordance with God’s will may simply entail practicing the spiritual principles of MA,

rather than our own character defects. Those defects represent our will and not God's.

There are many ways to pray and meditate. With this in mind, we must remember that all of us are free to choose a power of our own understanding, and then to interact with it in our own way. Although organized religion is rarely spoken about (and never endorsed) in meetings, many of us have returned to our religious heritage or sought out new religious experiences. We need to stay open-minded and in action, even though spiritual practices may make us uncomfortable. We need to persevere and continually search for our own personal path.

Prayer can be as simple as repeating something we have memorized; there are many prayers available to us. Saying these prayers consciously — being aware of what we are saying, staying present with the words — is a moving and powerful experience. Asking for God's help with our pain and for guidance with our difficulties is another useful and comforting form of prayer. We grow to trust God more. We believe our prayers are answered, though not necessarily in our way or in our time. They are answered in God's way and in God's time, in the way that is best for us.

When we have difficulty exercising faith, many of us find that gratitude can open the door. The practice of gratitude is perhaps the most moving and powerful way in which we can cultivate a conscious contact with a Higher Power. We pray and meditate to achieve this contact, and we regularly give thanks for those blessings that we have, both great and small — for health, sight, and hearing, if we have them; for friends, work, and sunshine; for rain, children, and flowers; for recovery itself. With gratitude,

we can share our happiness and increase our sense of joy, peace, and security. We bask in the certainty that we *are* loved. In time, prayer becomes as much a part of our daily lives as the air we breathe.

It has been said that prayer is talking to God and meditation is listening to God. There are many forms of meditation. We encourage each other to find the form that works for us. There are classes, tapes, videos, and books on the subject. Some come from learned philosophers or religions, some from the medical community. There are sitting meditations, walking meditations, singing or chanting meditations, and dancing meditations. Most forms involve techniques of focusing and quieting the mind, which can make it easier to forge a conscious contact with God. Some of us meditate by repeating, slowly and silently, a phrase such as "Let go and let God." We concentrate upon staying with the words. When our minds wander, as they invariably do, we can gently and lovingly bring them back into focus. Another method is to sit quietly and notice our breathing: in and out, in and out. When we become aware of wandering thoughts, we refocus ourselves *with kindness* upon the breath and its movement. A great reward of our meditation is that we come to respond more gently when our attention strays. We cultivate a more loving relationship with ourselves, others, and our Higher Power. We start to replace criticism with acceptance and forgiveness.

By the time we have reached this Step, we are feeling peace and serenity, which replaced pain, fear, and desperation as the motivating forces in our lives. We are seeking a conscious contact with our God. As we grow spiritually, we can't help but notice that old selfish attitudes

and character defects have undergone drastic changes. Our desires change with time and a consistent effort to live by spiritual principles. We come to learn that our “first instincts” are often bad indicators of the proper path. We find that if we give top priority to spiritual growth, it is less likely that self-will and character defects will pull us down.

Unfortunately, we almost all go through times during which we simply cannot, or will not, pray or meditate (for whatever reason). They are usually quite short in duration, and we do not criticize ourselves for such lapses when they happen. We simply resume as soon as we can. We are human; we are not perfect. We adhere to the twelve-step concept of spiritual progress, not perfection. The principle of willingness in this Step is manifested through discipline, which is needed to develop a new way of life and healthy relationships.

We often think of a Higher Power as Love, and indeed our Second Tradition refers to “a loving God.” Loneliness, isolation, and a retreat from love often characterized our lives before recovery. As we actively seek contact with our own Higher Power, we find that loneliness subsides, and that isolation gives way to a feeling of companionship. We seek the loving help that is always available to us. This step brings us the knowledge that we need never be alone, and the feeling of certainty that comes with being loved unconditionally. As a result of this step, we begin to experience contentment, serenity, and fulfillment.

Through prayer and meditation, we are brought over and over again into contact with a loving Presence. We sense the healing force of God in our lives. As a result of this contact, we begin to know that we are loved

**Life With Hope****Step Eleven**

unconditionally, and we grow in our capacity to love ourselves and others unconditionally. As we grow in love and understanding, we gain an ability to reach out beyond ourselves. Step Eleven gives us the emotional sobriety to practice the principles of our program in all aspects of our lives. We can be of help and service to our fellow humans. We are equipped for Step Twelve.

## STEP TWELVE

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

Step Twelve is about practicing the principle of service. It is also a guarantee. At this point in our recovery, the Twelve Steps are a part of our daily lives. If we have been honest and painstaking thus far, the result is a certainty — we have experienced a spiritual awakening. By this we mean that we are now able to live our lives and feel our feelings with the knowledge and faith that we are no longer depending only on our own unaided strength and resources. We are transformed from suffering addicts seeking relief from the grip of our disease into people who are able to be “happy, joyous, and free.” By the grace of a Higher Power, we are given the gift of recovery. For most of us, recovery is a process that goes from awareness to awakening. We have many spiritual experiences before we have the permanence of a spiritual awakening as a result of growth from these Steps.

We have received a gift that, in fact, amounts to a new state of being. We realize that our potential is limitless. We now have tools to help us grow. Our goals become attainable. We find ourselves in possession of new degrees of honesty, tolerance, patience, unselfishness, serenity, and love. Experience has shown us that we can all learn to live by spiritual principles.

The Twelfth Step and our spiritual awakening result in a wonderful release of energy. We are now in a position

to truly carry the message, in a powerful and joyful way, to fellow addicts who are still suffering. This is possible because we ourselves have become living proof that the program works. Perhaps the greatest satisfaction of recovery and living life by the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps comes when we “give it away.”

This Step says that we can be of service to God, ourselves, and others. Those of us that have been around long enough to take all the Steps are well aware that this kind of giving is its own reward. The more we help others, the more we help ourselves. This is one of the great truths of our program. There is no satisfaction greater than knowing that one has made an honest attempt to help another, regardless of the results.

In Step Twelve, we take action to carry the message of recovery to the marijuana addict who still suffers. There are many ways of doing Twelfth Step work. Just being at a meeting is carrying the message. Even if we don't speak, our presence gives reassurance and strength to others. When we do speak, we try to carry the message of recovery as best we can, keeping in mind the Twelve Traditions. We try to carry a message of recovery, rather than push our own agenda or wallow in self-pity. Our message is a simple one of hope: by following the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps, any addict can stop using marijuana and lose the obsession and desire to do so.

We reach out to other addicts. We approach and make ourselves accessible to newcomers before and after meetings and during breaks. It is often during these informal encounters that wary or suspicious newcomers may find the confidence to open up and start availing themselves of the nurturing power of the fellowship. When

we are having a bad day, our self-absorption diminishes when we take the time to reach out.

Service work provides the backbone of our MA; if there is no service, there is no program. Those of us who came into recovery before MA existed have experienced both the hard work it took to get this organization going and the joy of seeing it grow. We all owe a tremendous debt to the legacy of service started by other twelve-step programs. For each and every one of us, our survival depends upon a healthy and functioning fellowship. It is our responsibility to do what we can to make sure that MA continues to be there for us, for the marijuana addict who still suffers, and for the addict who is not yet born.

We act as trusted servants for our groups. We take service commitments. There are many essential jobs that must be done. We set up chairs, bring cookies, make coffee, bring literature, and become group representatives at the district level. We serve on various committees, help answer the phones, and carry the message by speaking at hospitals and institutions. We go to meetings, business meetings, conferences, and conventions. We can even carry the message by attending social events. They are as much for our recovery as our enjoyment. Sharing good times with fellow addicts lets newcomers see that it is possible to enjoy life in recovery.

Some of the greatest pleasure and privilege in service comes from sponsorship. A uniquely challenging and rewarding relationship can develop as one addict helps another to stay free of marijuana and grow along spiritual lines. This part of our recovery may be a miracle for those of us who found personal relationships very difficult while we were still using.

Some sponsors are highly directive; others regard the literature as the sponsor, and themselves merely as guides. The level of involvement of each sponsor with their sponsee depends on the individuals involved and the needs of the relationship. At minimum, a sponsor encourages their sponsee to take the Steps and guides them through the process that the sponsor has already experienced. Some sponsors only encourage their sponsees to make their own decisions and to seek their own spiritual guidance. When a sponsee has a problem in a particular area of their life, sponsors often find that they can best help by sharing their own experience in that area, rather than by telling their sponsees specifically what to do. If we, as sponsors, are simply ourselves, asking for guidance from our Higher Power and our own sponsors, we will surely develop our own personal style for carrying the message.

We must remember to take our work with newcomers in stride. We will often meet someone that we become determined to help but cannot. Sometimes even our best efforts are unsuccessful. We cannot give someone the benefits of taking the Steps, nor can we grow for them. When addicts relapse, we accept it and take consolation in the knowledge that our efforts may end up being helpful in the long run if and when the person makes another attempt at sobriety. After all, Step Twelve says we “try” to carry the message. Sponsors do what they can, but we must remember that nobody else can keep us sober, and nobody else can make us relapse. There are no saviors in MA; we are all responsible for our own sobriety and recovery.

At this point in our recovery, we turn more and more to the principles contained in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and, most importantly, to our Higher Power for

guidance in our daily lives. This is how we “practice these principles in all our affairs.” We apply these principles not only to the people and situations we encounter within the program, but also to all other aspects of our lives.

We use these spiritual principles to guide our behavior. They lead us to honesty, open-mindedness, hope, faith, and courage. We practice integrity. We strive to be willing and humble, loving and forgiving. We learn to practice justice and perseverance. We are spiritually aware. We become of service — at home, on the job, and in our fellowship of recovery. Our families benefit from our transformation. Our friends notice the change in us. They see how our asking for help can result in acceptance, courage, and wisdom. They see us face our problems and overcome them. We have the opportunity to be a tremendous force for good. We are grateful for getting our humanity back.

We can now deal constructively with the pain of loneliness, sickness, and death. We can maintain a degree of courage and serenity when forced to deal with apathy, anger, and violence. If we have been diligent, honest, and painstaking in our recovery, the tools we have acquired in this program will come to our aid when we meet life’s serious challenges: when we lose the job, when a lover leaves us, when a close friend or relative dies. It is during these times that a Higher Power, our fellows, and a spiritual state of being will keep us sane and sober. We can, in fact, learn to turn these calamities into positive sources of growth.

Of course we all fall short of these ideals at times. When we have been in recovery for a considerable period,

we run the risk of becoming indifferent. We are so happy and comfortable with our new lives that we can be lulled into thinking that we are “cured.” Why not just relax? Because inaction is the same as retrogression for us.

Continuous and thorough action is essential to our recovery. It is important to note that Step Twelve does *not* say: “as the result of *some* of these Steps.” We must take all of the Steps and practice all of their principles if we are to maintain our recovery. Addiction is a terminal disease that does not go into remission simply because we’re not using. Constant vigilance is critical if we are to keep this disease at bay.

Those of us who have rigorously and thoroughly taken all of the steps can attest to the fact that we have become stronger people. As we make spiritual progress, we begin to feel emotionally secure. Our new attitudes bring about self-esteem, inner strength, and serenity that is not easily shaken by any of life’s hard times.

Our awakening has come about as a result of a spiritual house cleaning, being aware of who we are, and cultivating a growing relationship with our Higher Power. That relationship can lessen the role of fear as the main source of motivation in our lives. We know that our needs will be met — perhaps not in the ways that we had hoped for, but in ways from which we can truly grow. We have found that freedom from fear is much more important than freedom from want. We start to accept the unpleasantness in our lives and become grateful when we are able to experience growth from it.

We learn to give without expecting rewards. We act as responsible members of society, living not in isolation but with a sense of community. We become true partners

with our friends and loved ones. With the help of a Higher Power, we respond positively to adversity. Practicing the principles we learn by taking the Twelve Steps produces rewards beyond calculation. With a deep sense of gratitude and the help of a power greater than ourselves, we can live in spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery; we live with serenity and security, one day at a time. Humbly seeking to do the will of a Higher Power, we find that we can now live useful lives. As a result, we reap benefits we had thought unattainable, even unimaginable.

As we each work the program in our own special way, we discover the spiritual principles that we all have in common. We are all unique examples of how the program works, each of us with our distinct gifts to share. We take these steps for ourselves, not by ourselves. Others have gone before; others will follow. We recover.