

Back to the Basics of Recovery

Session #3 – Steps 6, 7, 8 and 9

WELCOME to session number three of *Back to the Basics of Recovery*. Together, we're taking the Twelve Steps as described in the "Big Book." Our objective is to take the actions necessary to free us from our addictive or compulsive behaviors.

Our names are _____ and _____, and we will be your guides for this meeting. During this session we will take Steps Six, Seven, Eight and Nine.

During the past two sessions, we have taken Steps One through Four. Between sessions two and three, we shared our Fourth Step with our sharing partner. Hopefully, during this talk, we learned about our strengths and weaknesses and **"admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight."**

We will turn our shortcomings over to God, as we understand God, in steps Six and Seven. Then, we will make amends to those we've harmed, and forgive those who have harmed us, in steps Eight and Nine.

We are entering the phase of the program where more and more actions are required. These actions produce results. Many of these results are in the form of promises which, as our lives change, become an integral part of our spiritual being.

Please keep in mind that recovery offers so much more than just freedom from addictive and compulsive behaviors. We have found a new way of living far more beautiful than anything we ever could have imagined ... that's why we take the Steps, and that's why we take them again and again.

Let's proceed to the Sixth Step. It reads:

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

In this step, the "Big Book" authors have us answer a simple question. On page 76, starting with the third line in the first paragraph, they ask:

"... Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can (God) now take them all – every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing."

(pg. 76, para; 1, lines 1-7 edited)

So, according to the “Big Book” authors, it is decision time once again. We realize they want us to take our Sixth Step right after we share our Fourth Step with our sharing partner. In case this person didn't direct you to page 76 of the “Big Book,” we'll take you there now. If you have already taken the Sixth Step, we ask you to take it again now with the Group.

During the Fifth Step, we identified our shortcomings using an assets and liabilities checklist we described in the last session. In Step Six, we make the preparations necessary to turn these shortcomings over to the **“One who has all power.”**

Let's start with a moment of silence so we can ask God to remove the liabilities that we found were blocking us when we shared our inventory.

(Observe one to two minutes of silence)

Now, let's take the Sixth Step together. We ask that you answer the Sixth Step question, in unison, with a “yes” or “no” reply. This is the question:

“Are you now ready to let God remove from you all the things which you have admitted are objectionable?”

And, your answer is?

(Have participants answer the Sixth Step question)

Thank you.

According to the “Big Book” authors, those who answered “yes” to this question have taken the Sixth Step and are ready to move on to the Seventh Step, which reads:

“Humbly asked (God) to remove our shortcomings.”

This step is straightforward. It consists of a prayer in which we ask God to remove our liabilities and strengthen our assets so we can be of maximum service to all.

The prayer is found in the second paragraph on page 76. For those who are ready, let's read the Seventh Step prayer together. I will read a section and ask you to repeat it. Okay, let's begin:

“... My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. ...”

(pg. 76, para2, lines 1-7)

According to the “Big Book” authors, we have taken Step Seven.

Now, it is time to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends to those we have harmed and forgiving those who have harmed us.

Step Eight reads:

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

The “Big Book” authors state, “**made a list.**” Do we need to make this list? Actually, no! We compiled our list as a part of our Fourth and Fifth Steps. In the third paragraph on page 76, the “Big Book” authors confirm this:

“Now we need more action, without which we find that 'Faith without works is dead.' Let's look at *Steps Eight and Nine*. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. ...”

(pg. 76, para.3, lines 1-5)

That's why we hold onto our Fourth Step inventory. It contains our Eighth Step amends list. Using our assets and liabilities checklist, the amends are the names on the sheet that are circled.

Let's move on to the Ninth Step, which reads:

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

The amends process is explained in detail on pages 76 through 83 of the “Big Book”. On page 76, starting with the sixth line in the third paragraph, the authors tell us what we need to do:

“... Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. ...”

(pg. 76, para. 3, lines 6-11)

Then, on page 77 the “Big Book” authors provide us with an example of “Direct Amends.” They ask us to let our actions, rather than our words, demonstrate that we have changed. Starting with the fourth line, they write:

“... It is seldom wise to approach (individuals), who still smart from our injustice to (them), and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But (they are) sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set the right wrong. (They are) going to be more interested in a demonstration of good

will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.”

(pg. 77, lines 4-14, edited)

One of the most difficult amends to make is to someone we genuinely don't like. But whether we like the person or not, we must proceed. On page 77, starting with the ninth line in the first paragraph, we find:

“... Nevertheless, with (those) we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to (them) in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing or regret.”

(pg. 77, para 1, lines 9-14 edited)

The authors make it clear what we are to do about our debts, which is to pay them. We may not like the sacrifice required to make good on our bills, but sacrifice we must. The process forces us to rely on God for the strength and courage to make good on **“past misdeeds.”** Under God's direction, we find it much easier to make restitution than we ever thought possible. In the second paragraph on page 78, they state:

“Most (of us) owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our (past); they usually know (of our difficulties) anyway, whether we think so or not. ... Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can we let these people know we are sorry. Our (problem) has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to (relapse) if we are afraid to face them.”

(pg. 78, para 2, lines 1-4, 6-12 edited)

Keep in mind that courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is facing the fear and walking through it.

The authors suggest we ask others for help before we make some of our more difficult amends. We need direction, preferably from someone who understands the inventory and amends process. In the second paragraph on page 79 and the first paragraph on page 80, they caution us not to create further harm as we clean up our side of the street:

“Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save (themselves)... “Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink.”

(pg. 79, para. 2, lines 1-3 and pg. 80, para. 1, lines 1-5, edited)

In the first paragraph on page 83, we learn how to make a “Living Amends.”

“Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. ... So we clean house ... asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.”

(pg. 83, para 1, lines 1-3, 7-10, edited)

The “Living Amends” is straightforward. We live, to the best of our ability, as a recovered member of the Twelve-Step community.

This is one of the greatest amends we can make to our family and friends. As the “Big Book” authors write, **“Our behavior will convince them more than our words.”**

The “Amends-in-Kind” is described in the first paragraph on page 82:

“... Good generalship may decide that the problem be attacked on the flank rather than risk ... face to face combat.”

(pg. 82, para. 1, lines 8-10, edited.)

An “Amends-in-Kind” implies doing something “instead of” or “in place of.” For example, if you and your partner decide that a “Direct Amends” would only make a situation worse, you can develop an alternative plan of action, such as taking a Beginners' Meeting into a halfway house or Prison, volunteering at a homeless shelter or assisted living facility, or making a service commitment to a Twelve-Step group.

In the third paragraph on page 83, the “Big Book” authors give us directions on what to do if we can't make amends to someone face-to-face:

“There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen-we send them an honest letter.”

(pg. 83, para 3, lines 1-5)

Pertaining to amends, Step Nine states,

“except when to do so would injure them or others.”

In the first paragraph on page 80, the authors write,

“Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent.”

Unsolicited letters can cause more harm than good, not only for the recipient but also for those he or she is presently involved with. The key to letter writing is to “let it go and move on.”

In the early days, many amends letters were sent without a name, address, a return name, or a return address on the envelop. Of significance is that these letters went exactly where they needed to go in order for the sender to heal.

Today we see a variation on this theme. After the letter is written and read aloud to the sharing partner, it is burned. The outcome is the same. The letter goes where it needs to go for us to recover, without hurting anyone in the process.

So, together the sharing partners decide the type of amends to be made. They role-play the possible outcomes until it becomes clear which type of amends is most appropriate under the circumstances. Again, the types of amends are: “Direct Amends,” “Living Amends,” “Amends-in-Kind,” and Amends to those who cannot be seen.”

Dr. Bob, one of our Twelve-step pioneers, learned that he could not recover until he made his amends. He accomplished this in one day. On page 156, starting with the first paragraph, we read about Dr. Bob's Ninth Step:

“One morning he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received, and learned that many knew of his (problem). Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business. “At midnight he came home exhausted, but very happy. He has not (relapsed) since. ...”

(pg. 156. para. 1, lines 1-8; para. 2, lines 1-2 edited)

This concludes our presentation of Step Nine. At this point we would like to introduce a practice session that we have added to this workshop. **(Refer to handouts Section 3A)**

Session Three A

Let's take some time here to practice preparing and giving a **Direct** amends. The materials being used for this 3A session are taken for Amends, Apologies, and the Myths of Forgiveness, by Steven C. Choose one person from your Eighth step amends list and complete the reflection worksheet found in your handouts. Using this worksheet, you may want to follow either the BTBR guideline for making amends or the 8-step guideline provided by Steven C. Practice delivering your amends to your sharing partner. Sharing partner should

role-play the recipient of the amends and then offer suggestions and/advise back.

BTBR Amends should include

1. Here's what I have done wrong.
2. An apology for this.
3. What I propose to do to make it up.
4. An invitation for the person to add anything else they feel you did to cause harm or if they want to discuss something more.

Steven C. Amends Guide

1. This is what I did.
2. This is how I believe it was harmful to you.
3. This is how I felt about it at the time.
4. This is how I feel about it now.
5. These are the character defects that were involved.
6. This is how I would do it differently today.
7. This is how I am amending my behavior.
8. This is how I propose to make reparations/make it up to you/make it right.
(This final part may not always be possible)

The last thing I want to say is that the decision to receive whatever we have to offer in our direct amends and the form in which the offering comes must be in the hands of the person to whom we are offering it. At the very least, we owe them the respect and dignity of making this decision for themselves, regardless of our wishes. To that end you should consider preceding your amends by offering it with a letter or email which states your intentions and asks the intended recipients whether they are willing to receive them and, if so, in what form they wished that to be. Here is a generic form of the initial communication as a possible format; the format you choose should be a collaboration between you and your sponsor.

Dear _____ As you may or may not be aware, I have been involved in a program of recovery from addiction for the last _____. The work in that program includes owning up to the mistakes and wrongdoing of my past, and offering amends to persons I have harmed. I believe that you are one of the people who was harmed by my behavior in active addiction. If you are willing, I would like an opportunity to offer you amends for that

behavior. Although I would like to make these amends face-to-face, I am willing to do this in any fashion that is acceptable to you (by phone, email or letter)—or not at all if that is your preference. What's most important is owning my part in what went on between us, and hearing any response that you care to make. My address and phone number are at the bottom of this letter; my email address is _____. If I don't hear from you in two weeks, I will mail you a letter or send you an email that contains my amends to you. Thanks for taking the time to consider this, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

I've included another sample of the possible wording for a **Living** amends.

I acknowledge that what I did was wrong (or harmful, or inappropriate, or unwarranted, etc.). I accept full responsibility for my actions, I express to you my sincere remorse for my behavior, and I offer you my solemn commitment to do my best, in this moment and in all movements moving forward, to not live that way anymore; to not treat another human being the way I treated you

The materials shown below should be filled out and used to prepare your direct amends which we will ask you to complete during the next break.

Person harmed

What did I do?

How do I believe I did harm? done it differently?

How am I amending my behavior?

How did I feel about it then?

How do I feel about it now?

Character defects involved?

How would I have

Amends, reparations, and acts of accountability?

Person: Name of the person harmed

What did I do? A detailed account of the behavior(s), done with transparency and rigorous honesty.

How do I believe I did harm? The phrasing of this question is not accidental: recognize that you are doing your best to *imagine* the impact of your behavior on the other person. Do not presume to know how they actually felt or what the harm actually was—assuming we knew what other people were feeling may well have been one of our character defects.

How did I feel about it then? From the place you are today, do your best to re-experience the emotional mindset of your addictive self. This could run the gamut from positive emotions to negative. This is not self-abuse. The ability to dispassionately observe the addictive process at work is a valuable defense.

How do I feel about it now? If you are experiencing shame and/or guilt at this point, notice that and welcome it as a healthy contrast to whatever delusional state you were in when actively engaging in the behavior. If you feel yourself spinning into a shame spiral, STOP, reach out for support, and offer up a prayer for the part of you that once felt a need to behave this way. Touch into your compassion for the poor, lost being who once believed this was the only way he/she could move safely through the world. Marvel at your ability to actually feel today, and offer up your gratitude for a healthy heart that experiences honest emotions.

Character defects involved? Review the list of character defects from your Fourth Step moral inventory and/or your Sixth and Seventh Steps; which ones were activated here?

How would I have done it differently? Knowing what you know today, as the person you are today, how would you have responded to that set of circumstances in a way that reflects your healing and your higher self?

How am I amending my behavior? What steps are you taking today that reflect the changes in beliefs and attitudes you have undergone since entering recovery and that help ensure you will never treat anyone like this again.

Amends, reparations, and acts of accountability? What, if anything, can you do to make amends for the harm caused by your behavior?

During the next session, we will take Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve. But, before we end this session, we would like to lay the groundwork for the Eleventh Step. This is the step that puts us in direct contact with the “**Power greater than ourselves**” that will solve our problems.

Step Eleven reads:

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.

Many refer to “**prayer and meditation**” as a two-way prayer. When we pray, we do the talking, and when we meditate, we do the listening. We listen in order to receive guidance directly from the One “**who has all knowledge and power.**” This is what a conscious contact is all about—a “**personal relationship**” with the “**Spirit of the Universe.**”

The “Big Book” authors have been preparing us for this conscious contact by interspersing references about two-way prayer throughout the book. So, before we actually take Step Eleven next session, we are going to take time now to look at some of the “Big Book” passages that pertain to guidance.

Let's start by defining the word “guidance.” The dictionary explains that “to guide” means “to lead, direct, influence, or regulate.” Two synonyms are “to disclose” and to show.”

When we look in the “Big Book” for passages that refers to guidance, we find there are at least twenty-six of them. If something is mentioned at least twenty-six times, it must be important. Earlier this session, we read one of the passages, which is within the first paragraph on page 83.

“...So we clean house ... asking each morning in meditation that our Creator SHOW us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.”

(pg. 83, para 1, lines 7-10 edited)

In this passage, the “Big Book” authors instruct us to conduct a daily “quiet time.” It is during this period of meditation that God will **SHOW** us, in other words, God will guide us, to a new way of life based on **PATIENCE**,

TOLERANCE, KINDLINESS and LOVE.

There are many more references to guidance, starting all the way back at the First Step. We're only going to mention a few of them.

On page 13 of the “Big Book,” Bill W., one of the Twelve-Step pioneers, writes about “**prayer and meditation.**” Starting with the third line in the fourth paragraph, he states:

“... I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for DIRECTION and strength to meet my problems as (God) would have me. ...”

(pg. 13, para. 4, lines 3-5, edited)

When we ask God for **DIRECTION** and strength, we are calling upon the “**Spirit of the Universe**” to guide us “**in a way which is indeed miraculous.**”

It is essential that we “**sit quietly,**” especially during periods of stress or uncertainty, so we can clearly hear what God has to say. Meditation is based on the belief that a “**Power greater than ourselves**” speaks to those who are willing to listen. We write down the thoughts that comes from “**infinite God rather than our finite selves.**”

How do we determine the source of the messages we receive? We use the test we described last session, which is the test for self-will vs. God's will. The “Big Book” authors show us how to use this test three times. In the Fourth Step, we apply the test in connection with our assets and liabilities checklist to decide if we need to make amends. We also use this test in our Tenth and Eleventh Steps.

Let's look again at how the authors use the test for self-will vs. God's will in the Fourth Step:

(Refer to Page 16 of Handouts)

<u>Test for self-will</u>	<u>Test for God's will</u>
Resentment	Forgiveness
Fear	Faith
Selfishness	Unselfishness
Dishonesty	Honesty

We use this same test to examine what we put on paper during our “quiet time.” If what we have written is based in forgiveness, faith, unselfishness **AND** honesty, we can consider this guidance to be of the spirit. If what we have written consists of resentment, fear, selfishness **OR** dishonesty, we can assume this guidance is from self.

On page 57, starting with the third line in the second paragraph, the “Big Book” authors state that the **“Realm of Spirit” “is constantly being revealed”** to us:

“... (God) has come to all who have honestly sought (a spiritual solution to their difficulties). “When we drew near ... (God) DISCLOSED (the answers) to us!”

(pg. 57, para. 2, lines 3-4; para. 3, lines 1-2, edited)

When we seek God's guidance, we find a **“new power, peace, happiness and sense of direction.”** On page 69, starting with the sixth line in the third paragraph, we learn that God will answer our questions, if we just ask:

“... In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.”

(pg. 69, para. 3, lines 6-8)

In the second paragraph on page 70, we read about some of the things we ask for:

“... We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for GUIDANCE in each questionable situation. For sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing....”

These are just examples from the “Big Book” on **“prayer and meditation.”** Hopefully, they are sufficient to get started with step Eleven.

In the next session, the “Big Book” authors will provide us with guidelines on what to do **“on awakening,” “when we retire,”** and **“through the day.”** Here are a few things to keep in mind, **“on awakening.”**

Each morning we practice a “quiet time,” similar to the way Bill W. described his “quiet time” on page 13 of the “Big Book.” During this time alone with God, we discover the most important and practical thing we can ever learn-how to listen to the “God-Consciousness within.” All we need is the willingness to try it honestly. Every person who has done this consistently and sincerely has found that it really works.

1. Set aside time to meditate.

At first, we may have difficulty getting quiet and listening. But, with practice, we will find the “quiet time” more and more effective and productive, because the “quiet time” brings us closer and closer to the Indwelling Spirit. The “quiet time” is an essential part of our morning surrender, because when we surrender our will, we can then listen for God's will.

God has a plan for our lives and during our “quiet times” much of this plan is revealed to us. The quality of the guidance we receive is indirect proportion to the amount of time we spend alone with God.

2. Relax and take it easy.

We can enhance our spiritual connection by practicing some deep breathing exercises. There are many techniques available. They help put the mind at rest, shut down the “committee,” and alleviate obsessions and cravings.

We assume a comfortable position and enter into our “quiet time” with an expectancy that it will work. We maintain an attitude of reverence, gratitude and humility.

We let our imagination “go loose.” Thoughts, ideas and impressions will begin to come into our heart and mind. We need to be alert and receptive to all of them.

3. Write down or dictate, either during or after the period of meditations, the guidance you receive, so you won't forget it and have something to review “at night.”

Writing or otherwise recording our thoughts, feelings and images is the key to the process. We don't try to clear our mind. Rather, we just monitor it.

We don't sort out or edit what we receive until our “quiet time” is over. A thought, feeling or image comes quickly and it can escape just as quickly if we do not record it.

Be honest. Record everything.

4. Test the guidance to determine if it is based in “the realm of the material” (self-will) or “the Realm of Spirit” (God's will.)

We take a good look at what we have recorded. Not every thought, feeling or image we receive comes from God.

How do we distinguish between those that come from self-will and those that are of God's will? We test them using the first four items on the Fourth Step Assets and Liabilities Checklist. As we mentioned earlier, the liabilities are the OR side of the sheets are the AND side. **(Refer to Page 16 Handout)**

5. Check the guidance with a sharing partner or partners.

When the flow of thoughts, feelings and images slows down, we stop. We take a good look at what we have written, and we discuss our guidance with a sharing partner or partners. Since we can only see ourselves through others, we need to check our guidance with those who are also actively engaged in two-way prayer. We talk over what we have written because, “more light comes in through two windows than through one.”

6. Follow through with the guidance that passes the test of forgiveness, faith, unselfishness and honesty.

We carry out the guidance that appears to us and others to be “God's will,” but,

we cannot be completely sure of the guidance until we go through with it. “A rudder will not guide a boat until the boat is moving.” Very often the results will convince us we are on the right track. Keep in mind that God will never guide us to do anything that is not based in forgiveness, faith, unselfishness AND honesty.

Some people don't feel comfortable meditating and writing at the same time. If this is the case, we can use our fingertips to record our guidance. This is how it works:

As soon as a thought, feeling or image comes into our mind, we touch our thumb to our first finger to capture the essence of it.

As soon as another thought, feeling or image comes, we capture it by touching our thumb to our second finger.

We keep capturing our thoughts, feelings and images until the end of our meditation period.

We again touch our thumb to our finger or fingers in order to recall what we have captured.

We then write down or relay the messages that were on our fingertips.

Remember, our creator has given us free will. We are free not to listen to the God directed messages we receive. But we must be prepared to accept the consequences if we choose not to follow God's plan for our lives.

By living in “**the sunlight of the spirit,**” we are given the “**strength, inspiration and direction**” to change lives, starting with our own. Miracles are about to occur, and we look forward to hearing about them next session.

Are there any questions?