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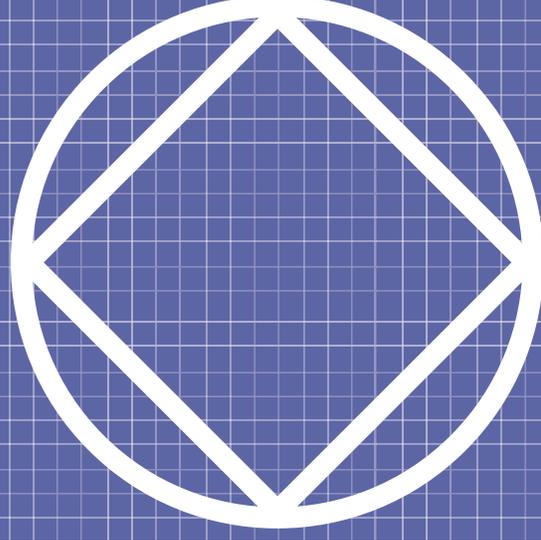
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Twelve Step Series

OVERVIEW OF THE STEPS
One Addict's Experience



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behavior. They have taught us how to maintain ourselves were we can grow in the spirit of God. The Traditions teach us how to communicate as a fellowship and communicate as a Group. They teach us how to serve, they teach us the principle of humility of working together for a common goal carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. We learn to put are ego aside for the betterment of the Group. We learn the principle of anonymity through the foundation of our traditions. This is the principle of a spiritual awakening where we become of pure spiritual being, being faceless, sexless, colorless, it is where we become of spirit. As spiritual being, we can change the world , one addict at a time , one group at a time make a reality of being of service.

God, protect us and provide for us.

**“My gratitude speaks...
When I care and
When I share with other
The N.A. way.”**

Reprint from the New/Old NA Way Magazine

defect of Character in God time, which leads to the Seventh Step were we ask God to remove are shortcomings so we stop acting out on them. It is the Step we continue cleaning up are actions of the harming others that we create by acting out on are defeat of character. We learn to listen to our hearts; we learn to be Humble and ask for God help in this area to give us awareness of are actions and the harm we cause by these actions. We start to feel the spiritual healing that God gives us through His Power. This leads us to the Eleventh Step were through these experiences we continue the healing journey through Prayer and Meditation to improve upon the Relationship we have been developing with God of our understanding. We have learned to talk to God and have learned to hear Gods voice through silencing our mind to grow in Gods Image.

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

“Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps” we have arrived at the twelfth Step each Step has led us to awakening of our spirit to have developed us into a spiritual being. From the start from step one through Step Eleven we are developing ourselves from a self-centered human being to a God Centered Spiritual Being. As a result of these accumulated spiritual awaking’s “We have had a Spiritual awakening as a result of those steps we practice these principles in all affairs and try to carry the message to the suffering addict” What are these principles? Some would say these principles are those they have been throughout the steps Other would say it is the principles within the twelve traditions. Both are right the steps taught us how to clean up are past and make up for the damage we have caused by are addiction and are self-centered

Steps 1, 2 and 3

Are the steps necessary? Yes, the steps along with the traditions are the program. I like to look at the metaphor that an addict comes into the program as a caterpillar crawling on the ground. As the steps are worked the caterpillar spins a cocoon and emerges out of the cocoon during 12th step as a butterfly flying above the ground they crawled on. Before approaching the steps there are a few things that are necessary. In our basic text in the chapter “What Can I Do?” It says “The first step to recovery is to stop using. We cannot expect the program to work for us if our minds and bodies are still clouded by drugs.” In other words, the recovery process does not start until we are totally abstinent. This brings me to a point some may not want to hear, DRT (drug replacement therapy) before I can share ESH on the steps I must touch on the history of DRT. The first drug used in drug replacement therapy was Heroin. It was given to World War 1 veterans to get them off Morphine. Prescriptions were given for heroin for a few years and a new epidemic of addiction started. Heroin was then declared illegal, but the damage was done. In the early 1960 sixties a new miracle DRT drug was developed called Methadone. Now 50 years later people are still addicted to methadone. A new DRT was developed today called, Suboxone and already on the streets of Miami it is being sold for \$25 a dose. A new addiction is now emerging on the streets of a DRT drug. The text says, “Complete surrender is the key to recovery, and total abstinence is the only thing that has worked for us.” I have heard addicts say why work the steps. The Chapter “What Can I Do” says it beautifully “Our sponsors and friends can advise us on how to work the steps. We can talk over what the steps mean. They can help prepare us for the spiritual experience of living the steps.” Of course, the key is living the steps. Yes, we work them with our sponsors and then we

must live them daily to have a program of recovery. An important thing to remember when approaching the steps is to write. Your sponsor will guide you in this process. Remember the steps are not to be done without a sponsor that has experience with them and lives them in their life. A guide is someone who has experience with the territory, so you won't get lost. A sponsor is necessary to guide you in this process. If you sponsor yourself, you have a fool for a sponsor.

1. *"We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable."*

Let's look at the first part of that step and break it down. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction. The word (WE) starts us off. It is very powerful word. Addicts are loners, by nature. Usually, they will only ask for help for survival, and even then, not always. Believing that they are all powerful and the I (ego) in their life dictate their actions. When we come in to recovery, we begin to realize that I can't, We can. The word admitted seems easy when we first look at. In our addiction some of us admitted that we had a problem. But our attitude was so what. That is because the word admitted on a deep level is a three-part process. First, we admit, then we accept what we admit, and then we surrender to what we accepted. Admitting without accepting and surrender becomes a valueless word. Powerlessness is something that an addict fights against all of their life. The need to control comes directly from the self-centeredness at the very soul of our disease. Also, powerless has been manipulated so that an addict does not need to do work for oneself. Often, you will hear a newcomer say "I can't look for a job. I am powerless". "I can't stay away from playmates, because I am powerless." That is not what the first step is saying. If you ask me

days are month to come. Clear our minds before the day closes so we can correct ourselves.

11. *"We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."*

This is the step we first hear of mediation in the Steps. It says "We have sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscience contact with God as we understand him", Now we have arrived were we have a understanding of God. In the Third Step it said we turned our will and Lives over to the care of God as we understood him, so we went to those who went before us who had an understanding of God through there 11 Step for guidance in the steps. Now that we have arrived at the 11th step you say we need to pray for a better understand God and then mediate to improve that relationship. Yes, we have been building a relationship with God since the second step, in the second step we are building a relationship with the principle trust in a power greater than ourselves. In the Third Step we are building a relationship with faith and action of that principle of trust in that Greater Power than of Ourselves defined as God in the Third Step. We turn our lives over to the Care of God in Our Third Step which allows us to be able to do a Fourth step fearless So we can welcome that journey into our makeup. With Trust, Faith and our ability to have faith to turn are will and lives over to the care of God we can admit the exact nature of our wrongs in the Fifth Step. Having built a Relationship with God and Spiritual Principles we now trust ourselves another human being and God to admit that exact nature of our wrongs without reservations. Now that we have found out are exact nature of our wrongs, we can now trust God to heal us by asking and having faith that God can and will remove our

Steps 10, 11 and 12

After finishing our ninth step we are left with the next three Steps that will maintain our recovery. These steps maintain our relationships with ourselves, other people, our relationship with God and with society as a whole. It also helps with communicating with the fellowship as we engage in carrying our message to those who suffers.

10. "We contineud to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

This is the step that we continue taking our daily inventory and how we interact with others. It says, "We continued to daily inventory and promptly admitted when we were wrong." That means we take our inventory throughout the day. We do not have to wait to have for the day to end to take our inventory, we also do not have to wait to put people on our 8th step list to admit when we have wronged them. We can do it promptly it immediately when we recognize it. It can even be in the middle of harming another person are even in a meeting when we are sharing. We can see it in the faces of others when we are harming them. We can stop and immediately correct what we have done and let the person are Group Know we have wrong them. We also can take are inventory before we comment to someone. We do not have to react to others even if when they have said things that have hurt are feeling We can take a look at ourselves and why it hurt our feelings, is there truth in what someone has said are do we feel there is a grain of truth to it? Has it bought something up from the past that has not been dealt with in are recovery? We need to talk it over with our sponsor before we react and cause harm. Before we go to bed and call it an evening go over the 10th step inventory to not let something undone that we can do in the day. Get it off our minds that it dose not repeat itself in the

to walk across the room and turned the lights on, I have the power to do that. The kind of powerless which the first step is talking about is giving up my self-centered control and that will allow me to gain power through the 12 steps. What is addiction? It is certainly not drugs, although at the beginning it may be the most obvious symptom. Addiction is a disease that will manifest itself in our lives, unless we gain power over it through the application of the 12 steps. Often, I will hear new people say 'I don't need to work the steps. I'm not using drugs and drugs were the problem then.' Yes, that's partly true however; if you do not work the steps drugs will become your problem again. The disease of addiction is centered in my thoughts, my actions and my reactions. It makes me want to run away from responsibility and self-medicate to feel that ease of life. The steps allow us to face challenges of life and get through them without using. The step further states that our lives had become unmanageable. You will notice the word had, which is in the past tense. But it goes deeper than that, it is talking about unmanageability of the past and the unmanageability brought into recovery. Once we admit, accept and surrender to that fact we can move forward to the next 11 steps, which will become our future if we choose to live them. The steps is not a do it yourself program, although you need to do the work, you also need to be guided by a sponsor, who has the experience of living the steps in their life.

2. *"We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."*

Of course, this step starts with "We" to remind us of the power of the We. The text say's "without the We, there is no me". Came to believe is referring to a process of changing our belief. Many addicts believe that there is no power greater than them when they come into the program. But

that is totally untrue. When an addict runs out of drugs or tries to quit there is overwhelming obsession to use that is a negative power greater than them. When a person uses against their will, how powerful is that power. But in recovery a power greater than you can be anything that is positive that gives you the power to stay clean. It could be a sponsor, a group, literature or something someone shares at a meeting. For this addict pain was a power greater than me. When it hurt it got my attention. And even if you don't believe in God it allows you to go through whatever process that you need to find a power greater than yourself. If you believe in God, God will not send angels down to fix you but will work through people, places and things. Restore to sanity, what's this? I am not insane. The insanity referred to here is not legal insanity or criminal insanity but the insanity of doing the same things over and over again and expect different results. This step tells us to play it forward and see the insanity in advance and to move forward to the third step and gain power over the situation.

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

What is a decision? It is making a choice. The text says "the word decision implies action. The decision is based on faith. We have only to believe that the miracle that we see working in the lives of clean addicts can happen to any addict." So, we can see that decision goes beyond choice, the action part of it implies commitment. And without that commitment, no action can be taken. So, looking at decision from that point of view means taking action or a commitment. Deciding to turn our will and our lives over, what does that mean? Well let's take a look at what the word lives and the word will mean. Lives mean our everyday life, what occurs and what's happening in our lives. The word will in this sense means our reaction to what happens in our life.

and wanted to clear his conscience and guilt. He went to her and she was devastated and felt betrayed. They soon separated and never got back together. Although he said his conscious and guilt was cleared, he would never take responsibility for the damage he created. He said she should have forgiven him. His action was total self-centered which is the core of our disease. Hopefully you will follow your sponsor advice and not injure people on your list. And what about those people that slipped in and out of our lives and we don't know who or where they are. We may not even know their names. The amends still need to be made and can be made through our Higher Power. And if our Higher Power wants direct amends to them you will find that they will show up in your life. There no co-incidents in recovery. What about the others in the step? Well your name should have been on the list. You certainly have harmed yourself and you are part of others on the list. Making amend to you is to change your behavior and actions. Going to jail is not making amend to you. The best form of rehabilitation is to change and not do the behavior again.

However, if someone is doing jail time, for your actions that is a different story. You need to take responsibility.

and those who we harmed by them just knowing us. They all must be included in the list. Many look at this from the bottom up. They want to become willing then make the list. The direction of this step is quite clear. Make the list and then become willing. It does not matter if they harmed us. It is our program not theirs. It is up to us to keep our side of the street clean. Step eight is a preparation of step nine. As we write our list get in touch with the harm we caused. It is important to feel the damage we created so that when we sit with our sponsor and our higher power that the feeling of remorse is real. You will want to make it a true amend and not just words. The word sorry comes easy to us but without true remorse it is just a word. When you truly feel the hurt you caused then meet with your sponsor. You will be directed how to make the amends in the Ninth Step.

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

By completing the eighth step we did to work to see our own limitations and wrongs. Feel the damage our disease inflicted on those we harmed and ourselves. It is time to go over the list with our sponsor and follow our sponsor direction. After all that is why we asked our sponsor to sponsor us. Our sponsor goes over the list that we wrote and determines if a direct amend would injure those on the list. We will be directed to make those amends to those that won't be injured by it. I once had a sponsee that insisted on making amends to his wife for cheating on her. She had no idea of his cheating. I advised him against making a direct amend because of the hurt and damage it would do to her. I advised him to change the behavior which is part of making the amend. Also, it was unacceptable behavior and he had to make that amend which was needed through his higher power. He chose not to follow my advice

This step tells us to take those things that are happening in our lives and our reaction to those things then, to turn over to the care of God, as we understood him. Now; why does this say God as we understood him and not God as we understand him? The reason is very important. When the steps were written originally the word understand him was the way it ended. However, that implied that the Fellowship that had written the steps had a God of its understanding. That would mean people coming into the Fellowship would have to have the same God of their understanding as the fellowship had. After a lot of controversy and going back to group conscience, they came up with what is known as a tenth strike. They changed the word to understood so that when new people came in they could then have a God of their personal understanding. For many that Higher Power was the Fellowship, group, literature or any other thing that they could have faith in. And the beauty of it is that it allows the individual to evolve and change their understanding of their God at any time. One of the beauties of the third step is that it gives us an opportunity to stop reacting. As we turn our will and our lives over to the care of God and start responding. Addicts do not respond well but react almost instantly. A relationship breaks up and the reaction is to use. You come out in the morning and your vehicle has been repossessed and your reaction is to use. But as we take the time to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God it gives us time to reflect and to respond rather than react. I think the third step prayer of Narcotics Anonymous is a beautiful summation of the third step. It says “many of us have said, Take my will and my life. Guide me in my recovery. Show me how to live.” The first three steps will keep us clean physically for a while. It is a foundation of recovery. However, it is not okay to be physically clean and spiritually dirty. A relapse will happen. We will learn how to keep spiritually clean through steps 4 through 9.

Steps 4, 5 and 6

Last issue we did the foundation steps 1, 2 and 3. This issue we are beginning the first half of the cleansing steps 4, 5 and 6. Last issue I said the first three steps will keep you clean for a while. Without moving forward through the steps, a relapsed can become a reality. Steps 4 through 9 will keep us clean emotionally, mentally and spiritually. However, as we said last issue it is not okay to be physically clean and spiritually dirty.

4. *"We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."*

We do this step to find out who we really are. Many people approach this step as if it was a confession or a history of their life. Although part of that is true however it goes much deeper than that surface stuff. Part of the fourth step is to look at our moral values in our addiction and also to look at them in our recovery today.

Before we start, we must acquire The Guide to the Fourth Step in NA which is a current NA publication It can be found at www.nahelp.org

The guide will start by telling you to rewrite the first three steps. You will go over those steps again with your sponsor at the beginning of the fourth step. After that the guide will tell you to proceed to a number of topics to write on such as relationships and resentments. As I said earlier you are not to write your history or make this a confession. On each one of the topics you are to write your moral inventory and history during your addiction to the best your memory, and then on how you felt about it at the time it was happening. Next write about the same things but how you feel about those things today. This will allow your sponsor to know where you were in your addiction and by writing

to remove the shortcomings. It does not say He removes them. So how are they removed? Is it prayer? Well prayer is asking. At this point we can learn a lesson from the 11th step. Which says "praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." The power to carry that out; which is the removal of the shortcoming. This implies action on our part. You have heard the expression God provides the shovel, but we must provide the perspiration. So, what is the shovel? The first three steps! Yes, my experience has taught me that when I own a shortcoming, I need to go from the seventh step to the first step and see how that short coming has made my life unmanageable. I can no longer deny it but I must feel the unmanageability in my life. Then I must go to the second step and see the insanity if I continue to act out on it. Once I recognize the insanity of the second step, I must move forward to the third step. Then I must make that decision to turn it "over to the care of God as I understood him" implying a commitment. Asking Him in the 3rd step for the ability to respond, rather than to, react to my emotions. Over a period of time that short-coming will disappear. But remember what the 12th step says: "to practice these principles in all our affairs." So, practice, practice, practice!!! When you begin to get your shortcomings under control it is time to move on to Step Eight.

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

The first seven steps focused on us getting right with ourselves and God. Steps Eight and Nine we bring other people into the process of our healing. People that we harmed while practicing active addiction, people harmed in our recovery and those people who entered our lives for brief periods of time who we may not even know their names. Then there are those that we didn't mean to harm

Step 7, 8 and 9

Before I start let me clarify this article is based on my experience, strength and hope. That is how all literature is written by addicts for addicts which differ from articles written by profession writers. That is how the basic text was written through the members of the literature committee and those who participated through the open participatory process. I will be writing an article on that for the August issue. Last month I wrote that steps 4 through 6 were the steps that clean us emotionally, mentally and spiritually and we do them in order. That we started by writing the 4th step using the Booklet a Guide to the 4th Step in Narcotics Anonymous. It is a writing guide. The Fourth Step is an automated springboard to go through the remainder of the cleansing steps. Perhaps the finest line between two steps is the one between Steps Six and Seven. At first glance, Step Seven may seem almost an afterthought to Step Six. However, we must understand the differences between defects and shortcomings. Although rooted in the same word there is difference. Defects are part of our character. Shortcomings are the acting out of those character defects. Last month this article ended with the completion of the 6th step. This month let us begin by looking at the 7th step.

7. *“We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”*

What does humbly mean? The dictionary says, “Humbly as an adverb means, modestly, unassumingly and respectfully.” And if I look at my shortcomings or the acting out of the defects unassumingly, I then become open-minded. Once I am open-minded, I can see my part in the acting out of the defects. With that admittance I can ask him to remove the shortcomings.

An important thing to remember the step says to ask Him

in the present it will allow your sponsor to know where you are today. It will also make you aware of your growth in recovery. This is important because many times others see our growth and we don't.

It is important that you be 100% honest in your writing. If you are not, the only person that will be hurt is yourself. If you can't be honest in the fourth step it will not benefit you.

There is no rush to complete the fourth step however you must communicate with your sponsor to determine whether you are procrastinating or just stuck. During the fourth step there may be times that you may feel uncomfortable and may even have thoughts of using, that is normal. When that happens call your support group and your sponsor immediately. They will assure you that those feelings are normal, and you don't have to use. When you're fourth step is finished call your sponsor and make an appointment to do the fifth step.

5. *“We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”*

The fifth step is the key to freedom. The first thing that must be understood is that your sponsor has probably heard everything that you are going to share before and also has probably done almost everything that you have. With that knowledge alone should take away your fear. Many addicts believe that they should just read their fourth step to their Sponsors. That is not true for several reasons. First just reading it does not get to the exact nature of the wrongs. The writing of the fourth step was to introduce you to you. The writing was for you to loosen all the baggage inside of you. Now that that baggage is loosened its time to get to the exact nature. You have your fourth step there to glance at and refer to it. For instance, let's say you are suffering from jealousy. Jealousy is not the exact nature but a symp-

tom of a deeper cause. (The Exact Nature) So how do we get to the exact nature? Simply by looking at our writings and allow ourselves to share from deep within all the feelings associated with what we have written. For instance, the jealousy may come from a deep feeling of insecurity. You may not feel worthy of anybody loving you and your fear of losing that love. That would be the exact nature of jealousy. The jealousy will not subside until you work on the insecurity under the guidance of your sponsor. You continue throughout the fifth step identifying: the exact nature of your wrongs. When your sponsor is satisfied with your fifth step your sponsor will move you on to the sixth step.

6. *"We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."*

Willingness is what we are striving for in this step. With the knowledge that you gained from doing a fifth step you are ready to begin your sixth step. Many years ago, it was customary to burn your fourth step however today many addicts believe you should keep it as a reference when doing steps six through nine. However, you should follow the guidance of your sponsor in this matter because that is the person that you have put your trust in.

Now this step does not say that God removes these defects of character but says you became entirely ready to allow the God of your understanding to do this. In other words, this is another surrender step. Is there a difference between our defects and our shortcomings? Although they are similar there is a difference. Our defects are part of us, like part of our character. Our shortcomings are the acting out of the defects. If we don't act out on the shortcoming then the defect is arrested. I like to look at the sixth step that it is like packing a suitcase and the seventh step is taking the trip. Many addicts find themselves confused between the sixth and seventh step. That is the difference. Hope this

clears it up.

Years ago, my sponsor told me that we were entirely ready when we take action. The action he told me to do was to take a sheet of paper and draw a line down the center of it. On the left side of the line he asked me to list my defects and number them in priority order. On the right side of the line list their opposites. For instance, the defect is being judgmental - open-mindedness is it opposite. By doing the list you are telling your sponsor that you are entirely ready to allow God to remove your defects of character. The sheet of paper then becomes your road map for recovery. The seventh step is where they are removed.