

A NEWCOMER'S STUDY GUIDE FOR THE TWELVE STEPS

STEP ONE

"WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL - THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE."

Alcoholism is a disease - a family disease. The alcoholic's physical allergy and mental obsession to alcohol is his/her disease. Our disease as Al-Anons is an obsession with the alcoholic and/or people, places or things. We are the "fixers" of the world. We believe we can fix the people in our lives if they would "do it our way" (mind us), and if they would obey our directions our lives would be okay. We are not okay as long as the people in our lives are not okay. Slowly we begin to realize that we have an obsession to manipulate, manage and control. Only through total defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation, strength, freedom and a quality of life few of us have ever known. We must be open-minded and willing to do whatever is necessary to lift our managing and controlling obsession; in other words, we must be willing to go to any length to break this obsession.

DENIAL: Our ability to lie to ourselves or deny the truth or reality of a situation is a symptom of the disease of alcoholism for both the alcoholic and the al-anon. Denial is a major stumbling block to recovery. We hide what we feel and know when it is too painful to deal with or accept. The pain is a result of fear and the total lack of a workable solution to the problem - "since there's no solution, we deny there's a problem." It's like being in hell, yet saying, "It's not hot and I'm not here." It's the elephant in the living room that everyone sees, walks around, but no one mentions - denial.

Once we've become **WILLING** to admit that the problem exists, we are opening the door to recovery. We are standing at Step One. The admission or surrender to our powerlessness regarding the alcohol or alcoholic (people, places or things) is our beginning and this brings several necessary principles of recovery into play.

HONESTY What is the problem? What is the reality or the truth of the situation; coming from a state of denial where we see things and hear things as we want them to be and entering a state of realization of what is really happening; no more fantasy.

HUMILITY Our willingness to stop rationalizing and justifying our actions and becoming aware that what we've been doing in reality "doesn't work." Our discontinuance of blaming others; self-pity disguised in "why me," etc. is just not helping the situation or working for us anymore and the awareness that we truly "need help."

OPEN-MINDEDNESS Being open to new ideas and suggestions; becoming flexible to doing things differently. We learn here to take action against our thinking. If we do the right actions, our thinking and feelings will follow in time.

WILLINGNESS The ability to respond instead of fighting change. Being willing also means becoming vulnerable - being open. When we combine the honesty, open-mindedness and willingness we have the **HOW** of the program.

ACCEPTANCE Our powerlessness over not only alcohol, but the alcoholic as well as people, places, situations and many times our own thoughts and feelings. We can't get people and things to "mind us" or do it our way. True acceptance is our only real source of serenity and peace of mind.

Acceptance is the essence of Step One. Acceptance is to "Live and Let Live." Acceptance is to "Let Go and Let God" give good orderly directions and solutions to the questions of our lives. Remember, we do not have to agree with something or even like it in order to accept it. Acceptance is not a seal of approval on unacceptable behavior, etc. It merely means that we understand and surrender to the fact that we cannot change the behavior of anyone except ourselves. And that we will not even try to do so. Each and every one of us is responsible ONLY for his/her own behavior, and not that of others as we have no control of others; we are powerless over them. Also acceptance is not trying to change people or force solutions on them. Acceptance is a state of being and not an action directed to others.

The Serenity Prayer is a simple and practical formula for acceptance. In it we merely ask God to give us the ability to take people, life and situations as they are, if we cannot change them. We rarely have the ability to change people. Only God is powerful enough to control people, places and things and He usually prefers to allow them freedom of choice.

Resistance to acceptance is very painful - the more we try to change others, the greater the barrier in our relationships. We must accept that we have not been given the "know best ability" by the management fairy. We rarely know what is best for ourselves, much less for others. Trying to force solutions we will be met with rebellion and resentment, while at the same time we become hurt and confused because, "after all, we were only trying to help."

Powerless means that we have NO CONTROL OF - that we are unable to produce a positive effect upon - that what we are doing just isn't working. We have not the power to get someone or something to change for us. Lack of power is our true dilemma.

"That our lives had become unmanageable" means that we have drifted away from NORMAL ways of thinking, action and reaction. Just what is NORMAL you may ask? Webster defines normal as regular, natural, well-adjusted to the outside world; a common natural condition, the usual or accepted rule. Unmanageable also refers to our feelings - we have often lost the ability to control our feelings and emotions. Emotions will control us if we cannot control them.

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SLOGAN FOR STEP ONE STUDY: "LIVE AND LET LIVE"
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

This particular slogan is very difficult for the managers and controllers of the world..."everything" is their business.

You will note that we are asked to "live" first before we "let others live." When we are living through other people this is impossible to do - since our lives depend upon what they do or don't do, we have to try to control them in order to live. However, when we begin to learn that we have a life of our own and that just trying to live it is a full time job, we are more easily able to allow others to live without our instructions or assistance.

Minding our own business isn't difficult when we come to accept that our business ends where someone else's begins. We are not here on "divine assignment" to take care of everybody else - taking care of oneself is a full-time job if it is done well.

We see, upon careful examination of our past adventures that many times we have tried to manage and control others - of course we failed, but more than that, we removed from them the ability to choose their own courses for living...we seemed to think, "we knew best." However, whenever someone tried to manage or control us, we became very frustrated and angry and many times resentful and full of self-pity - "look what they did to me." We must learn to live ourselves and not be manipulated by others, our fears, our desires, etc. As we learn to use and relish our own freedom to live, we can grant that same freedom to others. It becomes easier to let things happen without trying to direct the other people involved and control the outcome. We can genuinely accept that it is none of our business if others do things differently. And especially, we can lovingly and openly appreciate people as they are, without trying to change them. When we are all free individuals, taking responsibility for ourselves, we can live fully.

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Have you accepted alcoholism as a disease - a family disease and as such you are powerless to cause, cure, or control this disease?
2. Do you allow what others say or do or don't say or do to upset you and your serenity? What kinds of things frustrate and anger you?
3. What is the difference between "submission" and "surrender?"
4. Have you accepted the fact that you cannot control another person in any way (their actions, thoughts, behavior, feelings, drinking, etc.) and many times are powerless over even yourself and your own thinking and actions?
5. Do you understand that by trying to change people to fit your standards you are playing God?
6. Do you realize that you alone are responsible for your own actions, feelings and thoughts - that these are your choices and you cannot blame others for them?
7. Do you realize the people you try to control will resist you and many times develop deep anger, hostility and resentments toward you?
8. Can you accept that we are all individuals and as such our habit patterns, characteristics and ways of acting and reacting to daily happenings are different from each other as no two of us have lived each day of our lives exactly as someone else has?
9. Do you realize and accept that changing yourself and your attitude is the only way you can find true peace, freedom and serenity?
10. Can you accept that "life isn't fair," and that at times ALL of us can be mean, arrogant, self-seeking, dishonest, spiteful and revengeful, etc.?
11. Can you accept for today that things are exactly the way they are supposed to be and that nothing happens by mistake in God's world?
12. Many times we meditate on the negatives of our lives. What have you got to be grateful for today? A practice of gratitude can turn your attitude around. List a minimum of six things for which you are truly grateful today.

STEP ONE QUESTIONS

STEP TWO

"CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY."

Step One is the foundation for Step Two. It has prepared us to believe that we must look beyond ourselves for help in solving our difficulties. Each Step of the program prepares us for the next. (Caution: "We only work the Step we are on." Don't worry about future Steps; we'll be ready when we get to them.) We have admitted that with our own power alone we are helpless to change our actions, reactions, our lives, or ourselves. Without the power to change we tend to do the same things over and over and over with the same kinds of results. (If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten.) Yet somewhere in our minds lurks the thought, "this time it will be different." This is insanity. Nothing is different until something is different. And that something which must be different is usually "us."

Sanity means a feeling of serenity, of purpose and manageability and wholeness in our lives - with the help of a power greater than ourselves - a Higher Power. Also sanity may mean soundness of mind, being restored to reality, etc. Sanity comes from the Latin word, "santas," which means healthy.

Sanity is recognizing that this formula for trying to handle situations is not working, has never worked and will not work in the future. This type of insanity is very hard to identify for most of us as we have done it until it becomes an automatic response or habit. Surely if we were trying to bake a cake and omitted the flour resulting in a flop of a cake, we would not go right back into the kitchen and try all over again and omit the flour once more. We would have learned that without flour the cake will not make properly. Yet, over and over we try the same things which have never worked and will not work in our lives and wonder why they won't work instead of accepting defeat and trying a new formula for living.

Step Two challenges us to admit that our thinking, acting, reacting and living was not only unreasonable but insane. This is one more step in establishing humility and surrender which are the beginnings of hope and help. What seems sane and right to us while we're frantically trying to cope with an alcoholic will look very differently to us when we have acquired a new point of view and attitude. This comes to us when we acknowledge a Power greater than ourselves and begin to look outside of ourselves for answers and strength.

Life's experience has demonstrated that as humans, we are not all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing. These are the qualities of something much higher. Whatever this may be to us, we must learn to turn over our despair and unhappiness and "ask for help." A Higher Power can be anything that works for us - a God of our childhood, a sponsor, the group, etc. - anything that is more powerful than we are; remember, two heads are better than one, especially when one is in total confusion.

The words "came to believe" are a statement of movement - a going forward. The idea is progress and it doesn't demand a full-blown belief to start on the return to sanity and recovery. A journey of a million miles begins with just one step forward. If we are merely "willing to believe" with an

open mind, we will be given the tools that can change our lives. Belief in a power greater than ourselves is the solution to the frustrations and unmanageability of our lives.

Many times we fall victim to self-deception and think we can do all things for all people. This is also a tremendous form of ego at work. Caution: Ego-Eases God out. Al-Anon doesn't demand anyone believe anything - the Twelve Steps are all suggested Steps. To achieve some serenity we don't have

to take all of Step Two at once; in fact many of us "came," then we "came to," and finally we "came to believe." We need only an open mind and willingness to start. Many times seeing a Higher Power at work in the lives of those in our group can be a great help in coming to believe.

True humility and an open mind can lead us to faith and will restore our sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to that Power. When we stop arguing why this or that won't work for us (a closed mind) we will begin to see and then to feel. Contempt prior to investigation will keep us in ignorance forever. We'll never know if we don't try. Quality of faith is more important than quantity of faith. Faith becomes strong when it is exercised or used just like our muscles. A mere desire to believe or a hope it may work is good enough for a start. The Higher Power will meet us "right where we are."

Seeing is believing - as our group members share their experience, strength and hope we can see where something (A Higher Power) has done for them what they could not do for themselves. And this was accomplished by their coming to believe in that Power. Step Two has worked for millions of others; it can and will work for us - if we work it and allow it to work in our lives.

Stumbling blocks are "yes, but," "what if," and "I know." These phrases denote a mind closed to ideas other than our own - always remember our best thinking "got us here." If what we were doing was working so well, why are we in Al-Anon? We must get out of the debating society - and do the things we are asked to do whether we "think or believe" they will work. Nothing is better than results to change our minds. Little by little we will come to the realization that there is a Power other than ourselves at work in our lives and we will have begun the journey of discovery and recovery.

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SLOGAN FOR STEP TWO STUDY: "HOW IMPORTANT IS IT?"

Are you a mountain-out-of-mole-hill maker? Are you crisis oriented? Remember, there is an excitement rush in crisis that many of us are addicted to and we have a tendency to create this excitement by exaggerating the importance of little day to day happenings until we have another crisis to handle. This places lots of unnecessary stress upon ourselves and others.

When something happens we need to ask ourselves - how important is it? Is this an incident or a problem? Will this leave a lasting effect on my life? Not many things are of this magnitude. We try to put some perspective on the situation instead of "creating" a stressful situation for ourselves.

Blowing up the importance of whatever we're involved in is only being on an ego trip. How many times do we handicap ourselves by attaching undue concern to something that is really immaterial. When we decide what is important, we don't give everything the power to send us up and down on the roller coaster of life. We can ask ourselves, "fifteen years from today, will this be a big deal?" And if the answer is probably not, then we don't have to get bent out of shape over it - it's not a big deal.

REMEMBER: GOD WILL NOT PUT MORE ON US THAN WE CAN STAND - BUT WE WILL!

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Why is it necessary that the Al-Anon program be a spiritual one as opposed to a religious one?
2. Are you willing to recognize that being exposed to alcoholism with its fear, disappointments, battles, frustrations, money shortages and sexual problems has affected your thinking, actions and reactions?
3. Can you accept that with your own limited human powers, you're not able to handle everything competently and wisely and that you need a power greater than yourself?
4. Have you been a victim of self-deception (a form of insanity) living in a fantasy world of your own making as opposed to living in reality? (Hearing what you wanted to hear and seeing what you wanted to see.)
5. Do you realize that you have done the best you could at the time with the information and level of honesty you were able to attain?
6. Do you have guilt or shame for insane thoughts and behaviors? (Beating yourself for mistakes has no positive effect upon what has happened in that it will not change the past - that was then and this is now.)
7. We are sometimes referred to as suffering the "loneliness of only-ness." Have you felt that no one else is going through or has gone through what you are or have and thus you feel isolated?
8. Do you feel trapped in your situation and thus yield to self-pity, resentment, despair or even martyrdom? Remember - we are volunteers and not victims.
9. Are you consciously aware of a Higher Power at work in your life; are you beginning to come to believe?
10. Do you think that if only someone else or something else would change that you would be okay?
11. Do you realize that "no human power" (yours or anyone else's) can restore you to sanity?
12. Have you begun to come to believe in a Power Greater than yourself? Describe that Power and your relationship with it.

STEP TWO QUESTIONS

STEP THREE

"MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD, AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM."

Do we have a God of our own understanding? Perhaps our concept of a Higher Power was a punishing one who kept a list of our wrongs and "zapped" us accordingly. Or maybe we had a Santa Claus type Higher Power who determined if we had been naughty or nice and rewarded us only for good behavior. Or maybe we believed in a Higher Power who helped others but seemingly had forgotten us and our requests for help. Many times we found that we had a God of someone else's understanding...perhaps that of our parents, grandparents, friends, pastors, etc. In Step Three, however, we will begin to learn to let go and receive guidance from a Higher Power of our own understanding in the form of "Good Orderly Directions" - i.e. G.O.D.

It is one thing to believe that a Higher Power of some kind created the universe and quite another to put our lives into the care of that Power. It is like the circus high wire performer who pushes a wheelbarrow across the wire from one point to another. We believe he can do this because we've seen him do it. It's quite another thing, however, to have the faith or trust required to get into the wheelbarrow and let him push us across the wire from one point to another. So it is with a Higher Power. We may believe that one exists, but to have the faith and trust that this power can and will work for us is another matter. The Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* says that God could and would, if He were asked. So, here is the Step where we make the decision to ask for this help in our lives - the help of a Higher Power - a power that cares about each and every one of us - where we accept our status of being one of God's kids. We see this Higher Power had been there all the time, ready and waiting to give us assistance in our daily lives, but as long as we relied on our own will and resources, we couldn't see nor use this Power because self-will blinds us to God's will.

Following the will of God doesn't mean just drifting with the wind. It means a conscious, whole-hearted bending and merging of our energies with God's will. It means directing everything we do in an orderly progression instead of chaotic confusion. Order begins to become a part of our lives. It has been said that "if you want potatoes, you'd better be ready to hoe." ACTION always follows a decision and we are only being asked in this Step to make a decision.

It would be nice if we could make this decision, once and for all, but it doesn't seem to work that way. The turning over of our will and our lives (our thoughts and our actions) must be constantly reaffirmed and renewed each day until it becomes so much a part of our nature that the temptation to act impulsively gradually disappears. GOD is found in the good orderly directions and not in confusion. Be still (at peace on the inside) and know (good orderly directions for living.)

Making a decision is often very difficult. The Third Step asks us for the most important decision of all. Yet, when we can take that Step, everything else seems to fall into order. We are making a decision to allow someone or something else other than our self-will to run our lives. If self will had done such a wonderful job for us, we wouldn't be here in the first place. We usually arrive in Al-Anon because what we were doing "just wasn't working."

When we are able to make this decision in Step Three, we are actually making a decision to become God-dependent instead of self-dependent. We have recognized in Step One that "I Can't" and in Step Two, we see that "God Can," so the normal progression would be in Step Three, "I Think I'll Let Him."

This Step is a decision of OUR SELF-WILL. Our will and our lives simply means - our thoughts and our actions. We must keep our Higher Power in the center of our lives. We are like a wheel with our

Higher Power at the hub or center of the wheel. We are on the rim while the spokes represent the various areas of our lives in which we need help and guidance. When we allow God into each area, guiding us, we have balance in our lives and our pathway is smoother. However, when we take over only our own directions (self-will) can flow into the spokes from the center and our Higher Power is moved to the rim (outside) of the wheel. It no longer turns smoothly - we are out of balance. We must place God in the center (His place) and get back on the rim (our place) if our lives are to run smoothly. We merely suit up and show up - God is in charge - we follow His directions, not our own.

Some see the taking of Step Three as making a decision to accept the reality of their lives rather than continuing to impose their own ideas of what life should be - in others words they stop playing God. Human beings are not qualified for the job.

REMEMBER: "THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD AND TODAY YOU ARE NOT HIM."

Turning our will and lives over to the care of a "loving" God of our own understanding gives us the greatest freedom of all - the freedom to act with faith and depend on a faith that works. A God who loves us will take care of us. We must trust God to do what is best for us and those we love - even though at the time it doesn't appear to us to be a good thing. The longer we try to live in God's will, the more we will see and understand that many times those things which we feel and think are the worst, in reality, turn out to be the things that turn our lives into a better direction just as some of the "wonderful things" we see, in the long run turn into our greatest stumbling blocks for spiritual growth.

Willingness is a necessary ingredient in the working of this Step or any of the Steps. The more willingness the more opportunity for growth. Beware of self-will because it dies hard. To determine the effectiveness of our self-will, we need only ask ourselves this question, "Is what we're doing working?" God's will works, self-will does not.

The effectiveness of the entire Al-Anon program will rest upon how well and earnestly we have tried to come to "a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him." The more we become willing to depend upon a Higher Power, the more independent we actually become.

We must surrender with no reservations - this rules out telling God, as so many of us do, what we want Him to do for us, for others, when and how. It means we will listen for His voice and accept His guidance, whatever it may be. Things we know to be contrary to the will of God - MUST GO! If we ask ourselves before taking an action the following, it can help to distinguish our will from that of God. "Does this action break any rules of God or man?" "Will this hurt

anyone, especially me?" "Do I have to justify my actions?" The truth will stand on its own and requires no justification.

When we have turned our will and lives over to a Higher Power, we must then accept that whatever happens to us that day was God's will for us. It has a purpose for our lives. There are lessons to be learned, things to be experienced, and we oftentimes learn more from our mistakes than our successes.

REMEMBER: NOTHING HAPPENS BY ACCIDENT IN GOD'S WORLD.

It helps to develop a working partnership with God. In this partnership we do the legwork while leaving the decisions to God. God will always give us the power to do His will. When we don't have the power, it's a pretty good indication that we're into self-will. This partnership is renewable, ONE DAY AT A TIME. Symptoms of self-will are: FEAR, FRUSTRATION, FAILURE AND FORCE. When we allow

God to be the major partner in the relationship, we deny ourselves the dubious luxury of questioning, criticizing or complaining about whatever happens in our lives that day. Obviously, we are being given the opportunity to grow and experience or learn a lesson. We don't need to worry about missing our growth opportunities as God is very patient and will continue to place these events in our path until we learn the lesson He has for us.

REMEMBER: OUR RECOVERY IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON PEOPLE - IT IS DEPENDENT UPON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH A HIGHER POWER.

We need not panic if we do not know "how" to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him. This Step merely asks us to MAKE A DECISION. We don't know how to implement this - if we did we would have done so before now. It is in continuing to work the remaining nine Steps that we learn the "how." We only start here with the decision.

Gratitude for God's help is also very important. Asking God in the beginning of our day for help may be as simple as "please." Before retiring at the end of our day, we learn to say "thank you" regardless of how our day has been. Learning to have an ongoing conversation with God all day is also beneficial. When we want to know someone - a very good way to accomplish this is to spend time with that person. Spend time with your Higher Power. Experience the love, care, and warmth - it makes the trust and faith a lot easier to accomplish.

The following is a suggested prayer to re-affirm the decision made in Step Three plus an excerpt from the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 63:

"God, I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always."

"We thought well before taking this step, making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.

We found it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as our wife, best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once."

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SLOGAN FOR STEP THREE STUDY: "LET GO AND LET GOD"

This slogan contains the principles of Steps 1, 2, 3, and 11. This slogan is not a license to sit down and do nothing ourselves; we must always do our part (the part we can do) and once having done our responsibility, we then turn it over and Let Go and Let God. Trying to influence an outcome, to change something or someone who is not willing to change, holding on in the face of unbeatable odds, becomes a contest of wills. There is no disgrace in bowing graciously to the inevitable. Perhaps our solution wasn't the best one anyway. If we insist it is, it can mean our ego's involved. No matter that the other person remains adamant. We can't control another. When we are no longer passionately inflamed, defensively frightened, then other paths open up almost miraculously. The pain is not from Letting Go and Letting God - the pain is from trying to hold on and do something ourselves - trying to get our way...trying to get the outcome we think is best - in other words, "trying to play God ourselves." And we certainly don't seem to be qualified for the job.

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Are you ready to make the decision to allow a power greater than yourself have a hand in managing your thoughts and actions?
2. Are you ready to keep "hands off" situations created by others thus allowing God an opportunity to work in their lives without your help (better known as interference)?
3. Do you still try to intercept each problem and handle it yourself or are you asking a Higher Power for guidance?
4. Do you understand that you're turning "your life and your will" over to the care of God and that of no one else?
5. Are you practicing the Silver Rule (not doing for someone else what he/she can do for him/herself)?
6. How do you overcome the tendency to allow old thought and action patterns (tapes from the past or fear of the future) from bringing confusion and despair into your life?
7. Do you ask God's guidance in expressing His will in your thoughts, words and actions toward others?
8. Have you asked God to allow you to see yourself as well as others through His eyes? Has this helped?
9. What is the difference between having faith and believing?
10. Describe the God of your understanding (qualities or characteristics).
11. Give an example of your awareness of how God's working in your life today.
12. Do you practice the presence of God by inviting Him into your life each day and thanking Him each night for his help; do you have daily communication with your Higher Power?

STEP THREE QUESTIONS

STEP FOUR

"MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES."

By now we have worked on recognizing our problem, coming to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, and turning our will and our life over to that Power. We are now ready for the first real action Step. At this point, we need to begin on the clearing away of the wreckage of our past and recognizing what part we have played in the situations of our lives. We find that we are only "as sick as our secrets" we have been keeping - many times even from ourselves because they are so painful. The conscious mind often rejects that which is so painful and denial of reality (fantasy) occurs.

Step Four calls for a "searching and fearless moral (not immoral) inventory." What is a MORAL inventory? Webster defines "moral" as "related to conduct of character from the point of view of right and wrong - the good or bad of an action." Thus, our moral inventory is a listing of our character traits and patterns of conduct from the point of view of right or wrong. We will see where we compromised our own belief systems. This is a fact-finding and fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the TRUTH about ourselves; not merely the good and the bad, but who and what we really are - the reality of US. We will discover in many cases why we are the way we are, why we act and react as we do in certain situations. It's not the things we do or don't do so much as how we felt about ourselves as a result. Bad feelings about ourselves contribute to low self-esteem.

An inventory of a business is a written list of items on hand. One cannot commit an inventory to memory - it is too extensive. Therefore, this moral inventory should be a WRITTEN one so that it can be studied and reviewed. What we see on paper is more meaningful than that which runs through our minds. We can easily justify and rationalize our thoughts but when they are on paper - in black and white - it's much more difficult to do so.

Step Four is the first tangible evidence of our desire and willingness to go forward in our program of recovery. It is an identifying Step (first we name it, then we claim it). This shows us how our attitudes developed and what we need to work on to improve the quality of our lives - what assets and liabilities we possess, what we need to keep to build on and that we need to release and live without for a more productive and happy life.

CAUTION: THOROUGHNESS AND SELF-HONESTY ARE ABSOLUTE NECESSITIES IN DOING A FOURTH STEP!

We put out of our minds the wrongs others did to us; we look only for our own mistakes. This inventory is ours and no one else's. Blaming others and justifying what we did as a reaction to what they did is not allowed. We must take full responsibility for our own actions. Blaming is so futile and useless. If we are the way we are because of the actions of others, then there is NO HOPE for us because we are powerless over others (Step One). But if our reactions to others is our problem, there IS HOPE because we can change that.

When taking Step Four, use the test of right and wrong: "Is it helping?" "Is our self-pity helping us cope with our life situations?" "Is our resentment easing our tensions?" "Is our berating of others leading them to self-awareness or improving our own?" Of course not. Step Four helps us realize the futility of our actions and the negativeness of our own attitudes. It asks us to take an honest look at ourselves as we really are.

The words "searching and fearless" are vital. However, don't try to make it a psychiatric analysis in depth - take it easy. It may be difficult to get to know ourselves as we really are - even painful. But the

rewards are satisfying beyond belief. Many of us thought we had no character defects that were not a direct result of living with an alcoholic, but the inventory shows us differently. We blamed insane, irrational behavior on others or their actions. Keep in mind the Seven Deadly Sins or character defects: PRIDE, GREED, LUST, ANGER, GLUTTONY, ENVY AND SLOTH. Of course, many other defects can be traced down to one of these root causes. We must also be aware of self-centered fear and its effect on our lives.

Be sure to know that no matter what may be uncovered in the working of the Fourth Step that God can restore us to sanity about this as promised in Step Two. Nothing we find will be so horrible or devastating that God and we can't handle it together. God will reveal what we need to now as we are able to deal with it. There is nothing we will uncover that God cannot heal if we allow Him. God will not put on us more than we can stand to see about ourselves.

An honest inventory will also disclose GOOD things about us. None of us are saints. However there is good in the worst of us and bad in the best of us. If you really knew the "real you," you would like yourself better than you do. We are really harder on ourselves than others could ever be. Very often we will find that we are our own worst enemies.

When writing our inventory, we write as if no one else were ever going to hear or read it. We will develop more honesty this way. If we get bogged down on a particular question or part, we do not stop and wait; we place a mark by this question or part and go on with the remainder of the inventory. We come back to the "marked" part later when we've had more insight or prayer about it.

At the top of each page of our inventory, we write, "GOD LOVES ME." At the bottom of each page of our inventory, we write, "GOD STILL LOVES ME." There is nothing we've done that will keep God from loving us. If we are having trouble with some part, we call our sponsor and go over this troublesome spot. We don't procrastinate on doing our inventory - delay can be dangerous. We can't change the truth about ourselves, but the truth about ourselves can change us.

STEP FOUR - SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY MATERIALS

BOOK	PAGES
A DAY AT A TIME (ADAT) (ALATEEN)	22, 47, 131, 158, 225
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS (Classic Edition)	31, 58, 67, 113-114
AL-ANON 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	31-37
ALATEEN, HOPE FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS	15-16, 53
AS WE UNDERSTOOD	5-8, 52-55, 64-66
COURAGE TO BE ME (ALATEEN)	88, 121-132
COURAGE TO CHANGE	55, 65, 125, 130, 158, 181, 255, 280, 333, 345
DILEMMA OF THE ALCOHOLIC MARRIAGE	82-83
DISCOVERING CHOICES	109-110, 113, 120, 122, 125-126, 129, 169, 179, 181, 185, 188, 221

BOOK	PAGES
FROM SURVIVAL TO RECOVERY	43, 182-184, 188, 193, 200-201, 261, 288
HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING	100
HOPE FOR TODAY	62, 73, 152, 267, 239, 290, 310
HOW AL-ANON WORKS	51-52, 105, 165, 190, 245, 271-272, 274, 290, 312, 340
IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS	119, 122-125, 127-128, 135
LIVING TODAY IN ALATEEN	38, 177, 254, 295, 349
MANY VOICES, ONE JOURNEY	19, 194-195, 247, 389
ONE DAY AT A TIME IN AL-ANON (ODAT)	36, 101, 170, 171, 295
OPENING OUR HEARTS, TRANSFORMING OUR LOSSES	32, 44, 78, 94, 101, 120
PATHS TO RECOVERY	38-52
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (BIG BOOK)	25, 59, 64, 69, 70, 73, 76, 94
AA 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	42-54

SLOGAN FOR STEP FOUR STUDY: "THIS TOO SHALL PASS"

All things, except a Higher Power, change. Whatever pain we experience, whatever joy we experience, whatever feeling we have at the moment, is not a constant thing...it comes and goes. Situations, circumstances, feelings, etc., all come to pass and not to stay. Thus we realize that we are passing through and each life experience is but part of the process of living. Using this thought, we can make it through some very tough situations or periods of unhappiness, sorrow or despair - in knowing that, this too shall pass.

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Have you developed unrealistic expectations and thus set yourself up for disappointments and resentments?
2. Are you a victim of self-pity and martyrdom? Remember, a martyr is a voluntary sacrifice and to martyr is dumb.
3. Are you prone to judge, criticize and condemn yourself as well as others?
4. Do you realize your responsibility is the taking care of your own behavior, actions and feelings and not in trying to take care of others, thus crippling them by doing for them what they need to do for themselves?
5. Of what are you fearful? List your fears.
6. Do you feel superior or inferior to others or perhaps feel a bit self-righteous?
7. Do you punish and retaliate (revenge) for real or imagined hurts or are you passively aggressive (sneaky revenge)?
8. Do you use sarcasm to hurt others under the guise of "being witty?"
9. Do you give in to despair and hopelessness and frustration, maybe to the point of suicidal or homicidal thinking?
10. Do you concentrate on the faults of others while being generous with yourself regarding your own faults and shortcomings?
11. Do you take out your frustrations and anger on your children or others in misdirected anger?
12. Has any area of your own conduct left you with guilt and shame?

HAVING TAKEN STEPS ONE THROUGH THREE TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY AND HAVING ANSWERED THE PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS ABOVE AND GONE OVER SAME WITH YOUR SPONSOR, YOU ARE NOW READY FOR THE "FOURTH STEP INVENTORY GUIDE."

STEP FOUR QUESTIONS

STEP FIVE

"ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES AND ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS."

Having completed our personal inventory in Step Four, what do we do now? We have been trying to get a new attitude and a new relationship with a Power greater than ourselves and to discover the obstacles in our path. We have seen certain defects of character; we have seen in a general way what part of the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory and now we wish to be rid of these things and this requires MORE ACTION ON OUR PART. When we have completed this action, we will have admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs or our defects and our shortcomings. We are ready for Step Five.

A solitary self-appraisal will not do. Why? Because we may find ourselves tempted by a natural impulse to justify and rationalize the faults we've found which wouldn't help us at all. This could even be dangerous to us. Admitting not only to ourselves, but to God and someone else will help us to find ways to eliminate or change our faults or, at the very least, give us a sincere desire to do better. And in the telling of these to another person we gain humility. At least one person in the world knows who we really are and accepts us in spite of this information. We leave the state of isolation from our fellowman and begin to be a part of the human race. We admit to God these things for forgiveness, to ourselves for awareness and to another human being for humility.

When we admit our faults, it is much easier to forgive ourselves for the wrongs we've done. In admitting them we make an agreement with ourselves to correct them. Admitting to ourselves means we are responsible for the mess we're in and we begin to accept the right responsibility - our own.

We should be prudent in choosing the person with whom we will discuss our inventory. COMPLETE TRUST is a vital factor. We pray and ask our Higher Power to direct us to the person with whom we will share this Step. In some instances this person may be our sponsor with whom we have already developed a relationship of confidentiality and trust. However, in some instances, we may not feel comfortable with our sponsor and after prayer we may be guided to someone with whom we should take it. We always pray for guidance (as we have learned through Steps One through Four) and follow the direction of our Higher Power.

We are hard on ourselves, but considerate of others; we pocket our PRIDE and GO TO IT. There are some definite benefits of taking a Fifth Step:

- a. We can look the world in the eye.
- b. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease.
- c. Our fears fall from us.
- d. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator.
- e. We begin to have a spiritual experience.
- f. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand and hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

When we finally admit to someone else the dark corners within us, we find the listener isn't shocked at all. He/She has felt the same way, did the same kinds of things, had the same kinds of feelings, etc. WE ARE NO LONGER ALONE.

Whatever we need to receive in a Fifth Step - we'll receive. God gives each and every one of us exactly that which is needed. A few people will have instantaneous spiritual experiences; some will

experience great relief; but for the majority, a gradual awakening begins and over a period of time, an inner awareness and healing will have begun at this point.

We try not to have any expectations as to our "feelings" from a Fifth Step and this way we are not dismayed or disappointed. An awareness of oneself and what we are doing comes almost instantly; this is sometimes referred to as the "curse of Al-Anon." We can no longer do things without awareness of our motives and the nature of our wrongs. We are responsible for our actions with a heightened awareness level.

We will gain two lists as a result of the Fourth and Fifth Steps: one list will show us our positive traits (our foundation on which to build) and the second will show us our negative traits (defects and shortcomings) which we will become willing to let go of as we work Steps Six and Seven.

After having done the Fifth Step, we go home and give ourselves some quiet time, about an hour, to go back over the things we've shared. We ask ourselves if we have left anything out? Remember, we are only as sick as our secrets. If we have omitted something, we contact the person with whom we did the Step and correct this immediately as we are building an arch through which we will pass a free man/woman and we certainly don't want to skimp on our construction. Page 75 of the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* gives us instructions on this also.

Also, at the end of our Fifth Step, when incidents from the past are fresh on our minds, we will start a list of those persons in our lives that we've harmed - our sponsor or whomever we've done this Step with will help us with this. We save this initial list as the beginning of our Eighth Step.

STEP FIVE - SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY MATERIALS

BOOK	PAGES
A DAY AT A TIME (ADAT) (ALATEEN)	22, 47, 131, 158, 225
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS (Classic Edition)	24, 58, 115
AL-ANON 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	31-37
ALATEEN, HOPE FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS	16-18
AS WE UNDERSTOOD	5-8, 55, 56-57
COURAGE TO BE ME (ALATEEN)	88, 133-138
COURAGE TO CHANGE	50, 65, 125, 127, 159, 266, 311
DILEMMA OF THE ALCOHOLIC MARRIAGE	84
DISCOVERING CHOICES	113, 169, 180-181, 186, 126
FROM SURVIVAL TO RECOVERY	43, 183, 193, 261
HOPE FOR TODAY	50, 168, 326, 347
HOW AL-ANON WORKS	53-55, 98-99, 190, 291-297, 363-364
IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS	119, 128

BOOK	PAGES
LIVING TODAY IN ALATEEN	178, 240
MANY VOICES, ONE JOURNEY	247
ONE DAY AT A TIME IN AL-ANON (ODAT)	101, 171
OPENING OUR HEARTS, TRANSFORMING OUR LOSSES	44, 120-121
PATHS TO RECOVERY	53-64
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (BIG BOOK)	25, 59, 72-75, 94, 99, 156
AA 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	55-62

SLOGAN FOR STEP FIVE STUDY: "LISTEN AND LEARN"

Al-Anon experience and principles will work if we listen and absorb what we hear and then put it to use in our lives. Some of us are prone to talk, talk, talk about our problems; however, when we do so, nothing new is added. We hear nothing but the sound of our own voices. There are important gifts that can only be obtained by holding our peace and allowing others to talk and by learning how to listen.

Listening is a rare happening among human beings. We cannot listen to the word another is speaking if we are preoccupied with our appearance or with impressing the other, or are trying to decide what we are going to say when the other stops talking, or are debating about whether what is being said is true or relevant or agreeable. Such matters have their place, but only after listening to the word as the word is being uttered. Listening is a primitive act of love in which a person gives himself to another's word, making himself accessible and vulnerable to that word.

The way we speak often reveals more than what we say. Listening to what is said and how it is said helps us to live our program. Listening with an open mind is a necessity, without the "what if's," "yes, but's," and "I know's." Even when we hear negative comments, we can find these useful in learning how "not" to be. It helps us to avoid negatives such as sarcasm, judgment and criticism. We can learn by listening as others share their experience, strength and hope, the solutions they've found as well as the mistakes they've made, thus giving us an opportunity to avoid these same errors.

Listening by soul, body and heart helps us to pay attention to our own needs. When we pay attention to the messages we're being given, we have a better opportunity of detaching from people and situations when necessary for our peace of mind - this also helps us to keep the focus on ourselves and our own solutions.

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Can you see the need and importance of admitting your faults privately to God and yourself and then openly to another person?
2. Do you realize there is healing relief in the honest acknowledgment of your faults and that there is none in confessing the faults of others?
3. Are you afraid to recognize and accept responsibility for the situations of your life in which your own defects and shortcomings played a major role?
4. Can you see where you've been emotionally sick and frequently wrong?
5. Do you understand that without taking a Fifth Step you will stop your recovery process?
6. Can you believe that our program of recovery is the pathway to a new way of life and that you will be granted a new page of life to write on or another chance after taking the Fifth Step?
7. Have you a person you can trust with whom you can take a Fifth Step?
8. What is meant by "you're as sick as your secrets?"
9. Why is self-awareness necessary for growth?
10. Have you begun to forgive yourself and see the need to do so for your own recovery?
11. What good qualities or positives did you see in Step Four about yourself which will be your foundation on which to build?
12. Have you made an appointment to do your Fifth Step or is fear making you procrastinate?

STEP FIVE QUESTIONS

STEP SIX

"WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER."

Step Six is the beginning of our decision followed by our "willingness to change." The willingness to let go of our stumbling blocks and coping mechanisms and a willingness to allow God to show us another way to live - a way that works. This is actually a "get-ready" Step - a preparation Step for Step Seven. Without major changes in our thoughts and actions we will go right back to our known methods, with full awareness that they do not work yet we do not know how NOT to use them. They are automatic responses we use to protect ourselves.

This Step means we are really ready and willing to accept all that happens each day as the will of God and as an exercise for working on our character. We place everything in the hands of God. We're willing to let Him work on our character in order to rebuild it. He may put us into circumstances where someone is aggravating to us in order to teach us patience. He may give us association with someone we don't like in order to teach us charity and tolerance. He may place us in a position of inferiority to teach us humility. He may bring hard work to eliminate laziness. He may give us failure to teach us courage and faith. All disappointments, circumstances or whatever befalls us are going to be opportunities to eliminate our defects and give us spiritual growth, or in other words - growth opportunity experience.

What we're actually saying to God is this: "You arrange my life; I'll fit in. I'll suit up, show up and do what's in front of me to do. In all things, Thy will, not mine be done." It's only when we truly LET GO AND LET GOD that God can remove the defects that hamper our spiritual growth and our relationships.

This Step is a continuation of the attitude of love and trust in our Higher Power that we began to develop in Step Three. The test of love is trust. We may admit our faults and determine to correct them, but being human beings, we are tempted to cling to our old ways of thinking and acting. We are powerless to change these things within ourselves without help from a Higher Power. (Some of us tried to hold on to our old ways, but the result was nil until we let go absolutely.) We can also try with all our might and we cannot remove our defects by our own power.

Are we really READY? Do we really want to improve? Deeply ingrained habit patterns are hard to root out without God's help. Once we're wholly ready to have God remove our defects, the Sixth Step works. Results begin to show in our greater ability to accept our difficulties serenely and take wise and constructive action - doing differently for different results. Remember, nothing changes until something changes and that something must be us.

This is just the beginning of a lifetime process - we'll never achieve perfection in this life - just become teachable to a new way of living. If we had a broken radio and a Power greater than us was trying to give us a new one that worked, would we hold on to the old broken one and say, "No thanks, we'll make do with this. We're afraid the new one will hurt us. We won't know how to use a new one." Of course we wouldn't, but yet we do virtually the same thing with Step Six. We hang on persistently to our old ideas, ways, reactions, etc., instead of being willing to live a new "workable" manner of living - one that will teach us to be happy, joyous and free.

STEP SIX - SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY MATERIALS

BOOK	PAGES
A DAY AT A TIME (ADAT) (ALATEEN)	23, 71, 159, 226
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS (Classic Edition)	58-59, 115-116
AL-ANON 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	39-44
ALATEEN, HOPE FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS	18-19
AS WE UNDERSTOOD	197-198
COURAGE TO BE ME (ALATEEN)	88, 139-142
COURAGE TO CHANGE	31, 65, 160, 177, 221, 319
DILEMMA OF THE ALCOHOLIC MARRIAGE	85-86
DISCOVERING CHOICES	170, 172, 186
FROM SURVIVAL TO RECOVERY	122, 178, 200, 227, 230, 257, 261
HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING	128, 144
HOPE FOR TODAY	169, 170, 305
HOW AL-ANON WORKS	55-56, 72, 296, 304
IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS	128, 130, 132
LIVING TODAY IN ALATEEN	207, 241
ONE DAY AT A TIME IN AL-ANON (ODAT)	172
PATHS TO RECOVERY	65-71
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (BIG BOOK)	59, 76
AA 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	63-69

SLOGAN FOR STEP SIX STUDY: "THINK, THINK, THINK"

Living in alcoholism many of us lost the ability to think clearly. We thought we were reasoning and behaving rationally and handling all the problems well, but really we were being manipulated and controlled by someone else's alcoholic drinking or sick thinking. If our thinking was so good, we have to remember, "our best thinking got us to Al-Anon." We learn in recovery to stop and think before acting. It will keep us from saying something unkind, untrue, unnecessary, and it can help us to realize when we should speak out with courage or when we should keep our mouths shut. When we take time to think we are giving ourselves a time to decide how to go forward.

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. What is your best motivator for becoming ready to change?
2. Are you ready and willing to learn a new way to live by giving up your coping mechanisms and defenses?
3. Do you realize the words "entirely ready" mean complete surrender to God's will?
4. Do you understand that such surrender is not a weakness but a strength that will reinforce your courage and confidence?
5. Do you see that the removal of character defects makes room for positive traits such as love, forgiveness, patience, tolerance, etc.?
6. Do you understand that this is the beginning of a lifelong process and you will need to accept progress instead of waiting for perfection before going to the next Step?
7. Do you realize that no matter how hard you try, you cannot remove one of your character defects by self-will alone?
8. Are you afraid of being vulnerable without your coping mechanisms?
9. Are you aware that practicing the "positive opposites" of your defects is a good exercise in helping you to change?
10. Which of your defects has damaged you and your relationships the most?
11. Which of your defects are you entirely ready to have removed right now?
12. Are there any defects that you simply refuse to give up? (Remember, delay is dangerous but rebellion may be fatal.)

STEP SIX QUESTIONS

STEP SEVEN

"HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS"

This Step is where we learn to allow God to rid us of our defects and shortcomings and thus improve our actions, reactions and feelings. If our work with Steps Four, Five, and Six (the uncovering, discovering and becoming ready to discard those things which separate us from our Higher Power) has been deep and thorough, self-will has been relinquished somewhat in favor of God's will in our lives. Now we come to God in humility (on our knees), bringing Him our freely-acknowledged faults to be removed.

Humility is a greatly misunderstood quality. It is a strength and not a weakness. In humility there is total willingness to accept God's help because we've finally been convinced that without it, we cannot achieve our goals. Humility is basically a realization of our true relationship to our Higher Power. In this we accept our human limitations while we learn about the limitless benefits that come from aligning ourselves with God. Humility is being teachable. Humility is honesty - honesty with oneself and God. We realize that we do not know all things and need help from One who does - that One is God. We need an open mind to see alternative solutions to the problems of our lives - solutions that will work and these come from a Higher Power.

Asking God to remove our faults is prayer at its best. It asks, and at the same time it promises, that we are ready to accept His help in eliminating our faults. This also implies a promise to use our God-given honesty and intelligence in solving our problems. In this way we are helped to observe our faults as they may be revealed in day to day lapses, so we can correct them at once. However, we're spent years in the care of nurturing of our defects and they will require time to correct. But God will help us by doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We must acquire the attitude of love and trust and then - we act upon it.

Some people ask God to remove this or that defect and sit by expecting God to do all the work. They do no footwork or action themselves and nothing changes. The sincere person takes action to work on living without his defects and shortcomings. We suit up and show up and then do what is right in front of us to do. We are aware from the Fourth and Fifth Steps as to how and in what situations we practice our defects, and we are responsible to stay away from these "slippery" places. We have to be willing to change our playgrounds and playmates and to stop putting ourselves into a position to practice these defects and shortcomings (putting ourselves into a place to get hurt.)

Remember, God acts in His time and in His way. He lets us grow as He permits all nature to grow. He will erase our defects gradually as we are able to let them go. We cannot ask God to remove our shortcomings once and then quit - we ask Him daily. We don't ask for tomorrow, only for today - One Day At A Time. It is a life-time process for us. We should also remember that we're working on the most difficult job in life - the rebuilding of a human being - a person. This is slow work at best. It is difficult and we should never be agitated over lack of progress. If we get mad again, if we become resentful, or if all our faults pop back occasionally, do not be surprised, but be amazed you haven't done worse. Accept progress in that if you used a defect every day and then find yourself using it only once or twice a week - this is improvement or progress. As long as we're

honestly doing the footwork, hand in hand with our Creator, we know that in His time and in His way, success will be ours - a gift from God.

A good exercise is the excerpt from the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* which is commonly known as the Seventh Step Prayer:

"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. Amen."

The Third Step Prayer and the Seventh Step Prayer combined make a good prayer formula for living. Let's try them - One Day At A Time and see what happens!

STEP SEVEN - SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY MATERIALS

BOOK	PAGES
A DAY AT A TIME (ADAT) (ALATEEN)	42, 160, 197, 230, 255
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS (Classic Edition)	59, 116
AL-ANON 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	45-48
ALATEEN, HOPE FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS	19-20
AS WE UNDERSTOOD	197-198
COURAGE TO BE ME (ALATEEN)	89, 143-147
COURAGE TO CHANGE	31, 65, 73, 126, 142, 161, 249, 295
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FROM SURVIVAL TO RECOVERY	92, 201, 261
HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING	42, 70, 128, 144
HOPE FOR TODAY	62, 170, 305
HOW AL-ANON WORKS	56-57
IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS	120, 128, 131, 136
ONE DAY AT A TIME IN AL-ANON (ODAT)	173
OPENING OUR HEARTS, TRANSFORMING OUR LOSSES	50
PATHS TO RECOVERY	72-80
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (BIG BOOK)	59, 76, 87
AA 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	70-76

SLOGAN FOR STEP SEVEN STUDY: "BE GOOD TO YOURSELF"

There is a big difference between self-consciousness and consciousness of self. Before the program, self-consciousness caused us mortification, indecision and fear. We kept tripping all over ourselves trying to meet our problems. When we take the focus off the alcoholic we can find who we are and realize the one person we have to be able to live with constantly is ourselves. This doesn't mean being egotistical. Over-absorption in self isn't the answer. This isn't a ticket to Disneyland and pure self-indulgence. What we do find is that if we do what's really best for us, it's best for everybody else too. Exercising proper self-discipline in keeping our body fit, our mind flexible and our spirit alive does much more than personal selfishness to build happiness. Working too hard on our shortcomings, forgetting that "easy does it" may be one of the most common forms of unkindness to ourselves. When we feel stretched out, we are usually the ones who are doing the stretching. Our pain increases because of our involvement in things that aren't our business, assuming responsibilities that aren't ours, anticipating problems in the future and berating ourselves for our past thoughts and actions. When we over-analyze and intellectualize we get into trouble - it's better to take action instead: going for a walk, reading a book, taking a leisurely bath - start somewhere in making yourself happy.

Step Seven asks us to "humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings" and a part of being good to ourselves, is to give him our entire cooperation in this effort. When we start allowing His grace to enter our lives and expel the need for us to practice our defects and shortcomings, we are being good to ourselves in every sense of the word.

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Do you realize that God will not take any defect or shortcoming away from you without your permission and cooperation?
2. Are you teachable? (Are you receptive to new ideas?)
3. Are you hanging on to some of your favorite defects? List any and why you are reluctant to give them up.
4. Are you really ready for the adventure of change?
5. Are you ready and willing to be taught how to live a spiritual way of life - one that is God-centered and not self-centered?
6. How can this Step be an instrument of great power to change your life?
7. Do you still put yourself in places to practice your defects (putting yourself in a position to be hurt) or do you avoid these situations wherever possible?
8. Are you becoming less selfish than before? (Do you think of "self" less?)
9. Do you realize that God is now doing for you what you cannot do for yourself when you cooperate with Him?
10. Is your serenity level improving as your humility increases?
11. How can the Serenity Prayer be used as a tool for working Step Seven?
12. Have you had any defects or shortcomings removed or improved at this point in your recovery?

STEP SEVEN QUESTIONS

STEP EIGHT

"MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL."

We are asked to make a list of those we've harmed, a written list to more emphatically impress our minds and memories. It is to replace the list we've carried in our guts for years. It usually contains those people we thought were harming us. It is vital that we leave no one out - whether friend or foe - when we list all persons we've harmed. Wrongs will usually fall under one of the following three categories:

MATERIAL WRONGS:	Money, damages, injury to persons or property or any injustice of a material nature.
MORAL WRONGS:	The injuries we've done to others wherein we have been the direct or indirect cause of another's wrong doings - setting bad examples, teaching others wrong, shirking our responsibilities, browbeating, character assignments, stealing the good feelings or self-esteem from others, etc.
SPIRITUAL WRONGS:	Wrong done by neglect of our contact with a Higher Power, neglect of prayer, neglect of meditation, denial of a Higher Power in our lives, rebellion against spiritual principles, etc.

Do we have a person in our life that when we are around him/her that we wish we didn't have to be because of something from the past? Did we steal from him, lie to him, or do anything that would make us uncomfortable in the now? This person should be on our list. Is our name on this list? We find that we are usually our own worst enemies.

When we did our Fifth Step we began the initial list of persons we had harmed, and now is the time to get that list and continue adding people as God brings them into our hearts and minds.

Once again we are asked to become willing and ready to clear up the wreckage of our past. We must take time and be thorough. **EASY DOES IT, BUT DO IT!** We ask God's help in honestly preparing the list. We ask Him to reveal to us each and every person we've harmed. This list is also a list of all the times we've failed to love our neighbor as ourselves. When we think of someone and that memory gives us some form of uncomfortability (guilt, remorse, anger, etc.) we add this person to our list. We then ask God for the willingness to make these amends.

What exactly is an amends? Think of it as two words - a mend. Mending a relationship that has been torn apart; mending a tear between people. Amends are not apologies and don't confuse them as such. An "I'm sorry" rarely mends anything; it is only an admission of wrong doing - not an amends (which makes a correction or repair).

All mending or healing involves **FORGIVENESS**. We must learn to forgive life and whatever life has done to us. We must forgive "ourselves" for what we have or have not done; we must forgive others and let go of bitterness, anger and resentment if we are to have any peace that lasts.

When we don't carry the history and pain of the past in our hearts and minds, we can meet as a friend or equal, each person we've harmed. We can proceed as though the bridge between us is mended or rebuilt and we can walk forward to greet them instead of hiding on the other side of the room or street

hoping that they won't see us. Perhaps we've resented what others have done or have not done. We've felt sorry for ourselves, allowing intolerance to blind us to the good in others.

We perhaps have retaliated, punished and denounced, misled by our own self-righteousness. We may have fallen into the habit of lying. Bitterness and irritability may have aggravated our troubles. Willingness to make amends is a giant step toward making a fresh start with our lives. Remember, we make an amends because "it is the right thing to do for us" in our new way of life. Amends allow us the ability to look each person in the eye and give us self-respect.

We have surely harmed the alcoholic in our lives. We've berated him/her for drinking, bad behavior, irresponsibility, etc. Try to realize how he/she has suffered from our martyr-like attitude, our self-righteousness, our judgment and criticism, our nagging, our lack of respect for another person's humanity, etc. Sometimes anxiety made us irritable with our children. Perhaps our attitudes have estranged relatives and friends who tried to help us. Whatever the nature of the wrong, we place these persons on our list.

Perhaps we owe an "institution" an amends (stolen from a company, damaged a reputation of a business, behaved inappropriately toward personnel, was dishonest in our dealings with the institutions, etc.) We will need to add these to our list also.

It might help to divide our list into categories, something like the following:

NOW

SOMETIME

NEVER

We should go over our amends list with our sponsor. If we find ourselves unwilling to make an amends, we will pray that God will make us willing to be willing. This Step merely says to make the list and become willing. Try not to complicate this Step by trying to make an amends scenario in the mind before placing a name on the list. We are only on Step Eight at this point and we are told to "only work the Step we're on."

STEP EIGHT - SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY MATERIALS

BOOK	PAGES
A DAY AT A TIME (ADAT) (ALATEEN)	47, 161, 233
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS (Classic Edition)	59-60, 116-117
AL-ANON 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	49-55
ALATEEN, HOPE FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS	20-21
AS WE UNDERSTOOD	58-59
COURAGE TO BE ME (ALATEEN)	89, 148-152
COURAGE TO CHANGE	101, 162, 242, 263, 299, 356
DILEMMA OF THE ALCOHOLIC MARRIAGE	89-90
BOOK	PAGES

DISCOVERING CHOICES	122-123, 170, 176, 179-180, 188, 268
FROM SURVIVAL TO RECOVERY	94, 204, 207-210, 215, 262
HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING	144
HOPE FOR TODAY	49, 80, 171, 197, 296, 328
HOW AL-ANON WORKS	57-59, 67-68, 213, 297-298
IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS	186-188, 192-193, 203-205, 230-231
LIVING TODAY IN ALATEEN	306, 351
ONE DAY AT A TIME IN AL-ANON (ODAT)	174
OPENING OUR HEARTS, TRANSFORMING OUR LOSSES	122-123
PATHS TO RECOVERY	81-89
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (BIG BOOK)	59, 76, 87
AA 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	77-82

SLOGAN FOR STEP EIGHT STUDY: "KEEP IT SIMPLE"

When we keep the program simple, both in our groups and in our lives, we help preserve the fellowship and further our personal development. During the active drinking our lives had become unmanageable in the confusion and complexity of alcoholism. Many times our insanity came as a result of the cluttering of ideas and futile attempts to deal with the illogical activities of an alcoholic. Finding a Higher Power helps to clear up the confusion and complexity. Keeping a spiritual perspective in each situation, each relationship, each day, is the best way to keep our lives going along smoothly and simply. Simplicity does not narrow our lives - it cuts out whatever is wasteful of our time and energy. Keeping life simple is just a matter of doing what is right in front of us to do on any day.

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Do you have the courage, desire and willingness to make restitution for what you've done to yourself and others?
2. Can you see where you've hurt others with gossip, judgment, criticism or character assignation?
3. Have you taken things personally that cause confusion and dissension in your relationships?
4. Have you hurt others with your temper, silent scorn, rebellion, revenge, negative actions, or reactions?
5. Do you see Step Eight as a stepping stone to growth by giving you an opportunity to repair relationships and free yourself of any lingering feelings of guilt, remorse or shame?
6. Are you balking at making the amends list or hesitant of putting someone's name on the list?
7. Are you willing to learn to be tolerant and generous in your views of others and consider their feelings and weaknesses?
8. Are you able to forgive yourself of hurting yourself and others?
9. Do you blame or try to justify the injuries and harms done to others?
10. Can you forgive others for hurting you and forgive yourself for continuing to place yourself in a position to be hurt? (Being the victim)
11. How did the practice of your character defects bring out the character defects in others?
12. How can you make an amends to yourself?

STEP EIGHT QUESTIONS

STEP NINE

"MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS."

We will need good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage and prudence (discretion) to take this Step. Let us not hesitate to express regrets for what we've done. Even if rationalizing persuades us that we were not wholly at fault in a disagreement, we lose nothing by being generous in assuming the blame.

If somehow we've taken advantage of another person, let us carefully consider how to make up for it, at the same time avoiding anything that may embarrass another. The best way we can make amends with some is to change our attitude toward him/her to one of "CONSISTENT" kindness and compassion. This is especially true for the alcoholic in our lives. These are known as "living amends."

Remember, this Step does not say we "made direct apology." "I'm sorry" is usually not enough as it doesn't change or mend much of anything. We can ask the person we've harmed how we can make up the wrong done to mend the relationship and, if their request is possible and within reason, do it! If the request isn't reasonable (the punishment doesn't fit the crime), we disregard the request and let it go and make a living amends by trying our best not to repeat the behavior in the future.

The purpose of Step Nine is to face our own consciences without reviving the situations that created the difficulties. If we are sorry, why do we keep on doing the same thing over and over? Don't make new wounds in trying to correct past harms. Try to keep from repeating the mistakes. An amends which is followed by the repeated bad behavior is totally ineffective and only makes the situation worse.

In the Ninth Step we begin to practice the love of our neighbor. Direct amends (which are made eye to eye wherever possible) is true action - the sort of action that gives the practice of humility a chance for use. Step Nine gives us explicit instructions - it tells us to whom, when to, and when not to make our amends.

TO WHOM PERSONS WE'VE HARMED

WHEN TO WHEREVER POSSIBLE - NOT "WHENEVER" POSSIBLE

WHEN NOT TO EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

The business of making amends may take us a long time - even years, but it is thoroughness, not haste, that counts. We do not hurry nor do we needlessly delay. EASY DOES IT, BUT DO IT! Caution: PROCRASTINATION IS VERY DESTRUCTIVE TO HONESTY AND SINCERITY IN THE MAKING OF AMENDS.

Forgiveness of ourselves is a very important part of making the amends, also forgiveness of the other person for their part (if any) if necessary. This way if for some reason our amends is not accepted, our good feelings and forgiveness are not in someone else's hands. We have done the right thing and we must realize the amends are for us - to clean up as best we can the wreckage of our past.

Wherever possible, a talk with our sponsor prior to making the amends to be sure of our motives, actions and proper timing is always beneficial.

At this state in our work we find healing for ourselves plus some bonuses - these are referred to as "promises" and they are mentioned in the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous* as results of working the first nine Steps of the program of recovery:

"If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through.

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness; we will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

We will comprehend the work serenity and we will know peace.

No matter how far down the scale we have gone we will see how our experience can benefit others; that feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away.

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

They will ALWAYS MATERIALIZE if we WORK FOR THEM."

STEP NINE SUPPLEMENTARY STUDY READINGS

BOOK	PAGES
A DAY AT A TIME (ADAT) (ALATEEN)	47, 162, 257
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS (Classic Edition)	60, 117-118
AL-ANON 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	57-62
ALATEEN, HOPE FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS	21-23
AS WE UNDERSTOOD	58-59
COURAGE TO BE ME (ALATEEN)	89, 153-158
COURAGE TO CHANGE	163, 196, 299, 356
DILEMMA OF THE ALCOHOLIC MARRIAGE	91-92
DISCOVERING CHOICES	79, 122-123, 170, 178, 179-180, 181, 183, 185, 188, 190
FROM SURVIVAL TO RECOVERY	78, 95, 122, 127, 205-207, 216-332, 262
HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING	144
HOPE FOR TODAY	80, 172, 259, 333
HOW AL-ANON WORKS	59-61, 68, 298, 348-349
LIVING TODAY IN ALATEEN	291, 358
ONE DAY AT A TIME IN AL-ANON (ODAT)	175
OPENING OUR HEARTS, TRANSFORMING OUR LOSSES	101, 123, 135
PATHS TO RECOVERY	90-101
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (BIG BOOK)	59, 76-84
AA 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	83-87

SLOGAN FOR STEP NINE STUDY:
"EASY DOES IT, BUT DO IT!"

This particular slogan suggests an approach for working the entire program - "Easy Does It, But Do It." When we are newcomers, the release from fear and the hope we find sometimes makes us want everything at once. We are usually "if it feels good, do it until you die on the spot" kind of people - thus we have a tendency to "over" do. And we want what the longer-time members have - TODAY. We forget that it has taken them a long time to get the serenity and peace that they have now and that they, too, in the beginning were just as eager to get the program "overnight." However, the more frantically we drive ourselves toward recovery, the more difficult it is for us to have the peace that we are seeking. This is when it helps to remember, "Easy does it." No one in Al-Anon has a magic formula that will cure everything overnight...we need time to heal and time to grow. Trying too hard brings tension, strain, frustration and sets up barriers within us. If we stay open to the spirituality of the program, it will seep into us. We need to learn to "be gentle with ourselves" - or in other words - EASY DOES IT, yet we must be on constant guard against procrastination (motivated by a fear of failure or plain laziness) and, although we are practicing "Easy does it," we must also DO IT.

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Why should the first amends be made to yourself?
2. Do you realize that fear, shame and guilt will be your companions until you've cleaned up the wreckage of your past as you can't build healthy relationships of the now with burnt lumber of the past?
3. Have you forgiven the alcoholic in your life for wrongs done to you and made your amends to the alcoholic?
4. Why is making an amends one of our best deterrents against repeated bad behavior?
5. Have you received any comfort or peace of mind by working on Step Nine?
6. How does any lingering residue of resentment and self-righteousness left in you affect an amends?
7. Do you understand the reason for making an amends is because it's the right thing to do?
8. Do you realize the amends are for you and that it is not necessary that the other person accept your amends or forgive you in order for this Step to work for you?
9. Have you asked your Higher Power to allow you to see yourself and the person harmed through His eyes?
10. How does becoming happy, joyous and free relate to Step Nine?
11. Are you allowing fear of consequences or procrastination to hamper your making an amends and thus delaying your growth and recovery process?
12. Do you realize that by making an amends and being responsible for your past actions that you are becoming a mature, responsible adult?

STEP NINE QUESTIONS

STEP TEN

"CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG, PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT."

Through the practice of the Twelve Steps, we begin to transfer our focus from the alcoholics in our lives to ourselves. We begin to find ourselves feeling more comfortable with our new way of life and our new personalities. We learn we can become fully alive and enjoy self-respect and self-esteem. We do not need to put ourselves down anymore. Even though we've made progress, we will, no doubt, keep on doing things that cause problems for ourselves; after all, we are only humans and not saints. But we can inventory those characteristics that inhibit our joyful living and close contact with our Higher Power and try to correct them. When we find something that makes us uncomfortable, we can try to turn it around so it will work for us, or learn to eliminate its use in our lives. (This Step is actually the daily working of Steps Four through Nine in our lives.)

We've found it doesn't help to heap guilt or remorse on our heads or to continuously beat ourselves for wrongs because this doesn't change what has already happened. We can be objectively aware of the attitudes and actions that cause us problems so we don't repeat them as often. If we are honest we can be gentle with ourselves. Instead of being unduly harsh and critical, we can relax into positive attitudes. There is no need to beat ourselves unnecessarily; we have learned to accept our humanity. By believing in and strengthening the good that we are capable of, we will be helped to make more good happen more often. Concentrating on our negatives only makes us more prone to negative behaviors.

Step Ten can be used as a daily reminder or as a "spot check inventory." It will help to keep us on course and correct any potential trouble spots before they have time to build up. A WRITTEN Tenth Step (continued to take personal inventory - written as in Step Four) can be of immense value as it will more readily show the habit patterns that we have which cause us problems. When we do Step Ten in our heads, we will see where we owe someone an amends and when we've made it, we dismiss it from our minds. But when a written Step Ten is done each day, after a while we can look back and see that the same type of amends keeps coming up over and over - thus showing us the patterns of behavior and in what situations these behaviors have a tendency to occur (which of our defects are coming out to play.)

A continuous look at our assets and liabilities and a real desire to learn and grow by this means are necessities for Step Ten. We cannot make much of our lives until self-searching becomes a regular habit; until we are able to see, admit and accept what we find and until we patiently and persistently try to correct what is wrong with us, our recovery will be limited.

We must look at ourselves daily to see our defects and shortcomings - anger, fear, dishonesty, envy, laziness, people-pleasing, jealousy, gossip, etc. If we are to live with a measure of serenity, we will need to work on the elimination of these negatives and a good way is to become aware of when we use these things and how they operate in our lives.

A spot check inventory can be taken anytime of the day when we find ourselves getting uncomfortable or upset. We stop, pray and ask God to reveal what part we are playing in our own confusion and uneasiness.

A Day's End Inventory is a review of the happenings of the day just past and our feelings, actions, and reactions relating to these events. We need to remember also there is a spiritual axiom that states,

"EVERY TIME WE ARE DISTURBED, NO MATTER WHAT THE CAUSE, THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH US!" A Day's End Inventory is sometimes in the form of a letter to our Higher Power. With this inventory we find and correct our part in order to be comfortable and at peace. We do not blame others for our negative feelings or actions (if he or she had or hadn't done this or that). We are no longer victims; we are adults.

We will need to learn self-restraint and how to make an honest analysis of what is involved in a situation: a willingness to admit when we make mistakes and an equal willingness to forgive others when they make mistakes. We need to avoid being judgmental and critical and any form of power-driven argument. We also need to avoid pouting, sulking and silent scorn. We need always be aware of and avoid as often as possible the traps of pride, vengefulness and self-centered fear.

When we begin to see that all people, including ourselves, are to some extent emotionally ill as well as frequently wrong, then we can approach true tolerance and see what real love for our fellowman really means. Courtesy, kindness, justice and love are the principles which, if followed, will improve our relationships. Practice of the Golden and Silver Rules can change our lives as well.

When we do our Tenth Step we need to see and admit our part and think of what we could have done differently and ask God to help us do better tomorrow while we make any amends needed.

Step Ten is a life-long process of improvement. We not only look at our wrongs, but also our positives. This Step is a BALANCE SHEET where we also give ourselves credit for what we've done well, for improvements we observe and for approval we've received from others. A continuing inventory is necessary for a continuing growth and recovery process.

We try to learn how to spot, admit and correct our faults on a daily basis. The practice of gratitude for our blessings and a willingness to work on improving the quality of our lives through spiritual growth will be our objective.

STEP TEN - SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY MATERIALS

BOOK	PAGES
A DAY AT A TIME (ADAT) (ALATEEN)	152, 163, 288
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS (Classic Edition)	31, 60, 118
AL-ANON 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	63-68
ALATEEN, HOPE FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLIC	23
AS WE UNDERSTOOD	64-66, 229-231-, 237-238
COURAGE TO BE ME (ALATEEN)	89, 159-164
COURAGE TO CHANGE	144, 164, 220, 236, 388, 329
DILEMMA OF THE ALCOHOLIC MARRIAGE	93
DISCOVERING CHOICES	109-110, 178, 194

BOOK	PAGES
FROM SURVIVAL TO RECOVERY	19, 21, 42, 48, 111, 159, 224-225, 231, 237, 262, 274, 287
HOPE FOR TODAY	125, 173
HOW AL-ANON WORKS	61, 68, 72-73, 189, 207, 211-212, 218, 233, 298, 347, 374
IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS	183-184, 210, 220-221, 223
LIVING TODAY IN ALATEEN	92, 349
ONE DAY AT A TIME IN AL-ANON (ODAT)	176, 213, 336, 366
PATHS TO RECOVERY	102-109
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (BIG BOOK)	59, 84, 99
AA 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	88-95

SLOGAN FOR STEP TEN STUDY: "ONE DAY AT A TIME"

We can live our lives only one breath at a time. We can't live on the air we breathed ten minutes ago; it will be stale. We have to breathe each breath - one at a time - just as we need them right now. We also must learn to live our lives, one minute at a time. When we ruin that minute with the guilt and anger of previous minutes or the fearful anticipation of our future, we only rob ourselves of the only thing we have - our present - our right now. Trying to live one day at a time keeps us from replaying the mistakes of the past over and over in our minds and sapping ourselves of our mental and emotional energy. Trying to live one day at a time keeps us from wandering out into my future, which only God knows and chooses to let us see - one day at a time. When we are into the past or the future - we miss the here and now - our reality...we miss the beautiful sunrises, the flowers in bloom, the smile of a child, the rainbows, the sunsets, because they are happening right here and now. Living, really living, is to let go of yesterday and tomorrow and know and fully experience today - whether it's a lesson for living or a joy to be experienced.

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Have you begun the practice of a daily Tenth Step and is it a written one?
2. Are you consistent in doing your Tenth Step or is it on a "hit or miss" basis?
3. Are you able to see behavior patterns in your day to day life and learn from them?
4. Do you talk the situation over with God and your sponsor on a daily basis or do you allow things to pile up and destroy your peace of mind?
5. Are you too hard on yourself or do you find something positive each day about yourself? (It's a poor day when you haven't done anything right.)
6. Are you aware of gratitude (the blessing of your life) in your Tenth Step?
7. How soon is "promptly" and to whom do you admit the wrongs?
8. Do you stop during your day when it seems to be going downhill and do a spot-check inventory to turn yourself around, or do you continue on with your downward spiral?
9. Do you look at the happenings in your life and your reactions and actions related to them?
10. Do you realize how important self-honesty is in doing this Step as well as your recovery?
11. Are you the victim of justification and rationalization when doing your Tenth Step?
12. There is no required time to do a Tenth Step (morning, bedtime, etc.). Which time seems to work best for you?

STEP TEN QUESTIONS

STEP ELEVEN

"SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD, AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM, PRAYING ONLY FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT."

We are told to seek God's will for us. But how do we recognize God's voice? Step Eleven tells us that prayer and meditation provide our answers. If we open our minds and our hearts and truly seek God and listen, we will get an indication of what is best for us - God's will for our lives - through Good Orderly Directions.

We begin our connection with a Higher Power (God) in Steps Two and Three and as each Step progresses, our contact and our God consciousness improves; slowly but surely we begin to be more conscious of this Power which is above and beyond our human comprehension. We begin to desire His presence in our lives. We begin to realize our most important relationship is our relationship with our Higher Power. Just as in any relationship, communication and time spent together are necessary. To know God and the nature of God's will necessitates spending time together. This is done by prayer and meditation.

Note that the words are "praying only for the knowledge of His will for us." Prayer will serve us best if we abandon all thought of "asking prayers" where we tell God what we want Him to do for us and how to do it as children with a gift list for Santa; or the mechanical prayers we repeat without conscious thought (we may even be guilty of using the Third and Seventh Step Prayers, the Serenity Prayer or the Lord's Prayer in this way) where we merely say the prayers instead of sincerely "praying" them.

The purpose of prayer and meditation is to keep our minds receptive to God's guidance and to tune our inner ears to His voice. The inner listening will guide our thoughts and actions. It will bring peace to our day. When we say, "Thy will be done" we may be confident that God will make His will known to us and provide us with the power to carry His will out. A safe test as to whether something is God's will is: "Do we have the power to carry it out?" "Is it working?" If the answers are "No," we will need to spend more time in prayer and meditation since we're obviously missed the mark. Margaret D., a former editor of *The FORUM* (Al-Anon magazine) said, "How do you know God's will? All that's necessary for us to do is to do everything we do in God's name and for God. Then we can't go wrong." This is known as being "God-centered." Prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God, whereas meditation is opening the mind and heart to what is being said by our Higher Power.

Never think for a moment that our prayers go unanswered. Prayers are ALWAYS ANSWERED. The answers may be: "Yes," "No," or "Not right now" (wait a while). We sometimes lose confidence in prayer because we do not see the answers. We ask for strength and God gives us difficulties which make us strong; we pray for wisdom and God sends us problems, the solution of which develops wisdom; we plead for prosperity and God gives us brain and brawn with which to work; we plead for courage and God gives us dangers to overcome. We ask for favors and God gives us opportunities. God gives us what we need to learn the lessons which make us of optimum use to Him and our fellowman.

When we feel we've lost contact with our Higher Power, we need to remember that the moment we start to look for God, we've already found Him. It was we that changed or moved away because God never leaves us - HE IS ALWAYS CONSTANT. All God needs of us is our cooperation.

When we turn away from meditation and prayer, we deprive our minds, our emotions and our intuitions

of vitally needed support. We are in need of the light of God's reality, the nourishment of His strength and the atmosphere of His grace. We are spiritual beings and as such we need spiritual nourishment which we receive through prayer and meditation.

Meditation is often a misunderstood word. We all know how to meditate because we all know how to worry - worry is negative meditation. Positive meditation is thinking on a spiritual truth, i.e. God's love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, etc. Meditation's purpose is to still our inner selves so that we may receive our "Good Orderly Directions" - "Be still and know God's will."

All of us, without exception, pass through times when we can't pray or can pray only with the greatest exertion of will. Sometimes we are seized with a rebellion so sickening that we simply won't pray. When these things happen, we should not think too ill of ourselves. We should simply resume prayer as soon as we can, doing what we know to be good for us. We can also ask others to pray for us during these times and lean on their faith until we can redevelop or recontact our own.

One of the first benefits of meditation is that we begin to have "emotional balance." And one of the greatest rewards of prayer and mediation is the sense of belonging that comes to us. We begin to see ourselves and others as members of God's family - and realize that it is a family of equals - we are all His kids. We know that God cares for us and is watching lovingly over us - no matter what happens. Nothing happens by mistake in God's world. There is a reason for every thing that happens to us. God is very loving and has infinite patience and will tell us what we need to know or provide our opportunities to learn (growth lessons) over and over until we learn the lessons He has for us. When the student becomes ready, the teacher will appear.

The following two meditations are suggested as samples which we may use to begin our adventure in meditation. Read each one slowly, aloud, savoring each thought or passage. We will need to try to center our minds on what we are reading in order to receive the expanded ideas and thoughts from our Higher Power as we practice the art of meditation:

MEDITATION ONE

My life is but a weaving, between my God and me
I do not choose the colors, but He worketh steadily.
Ofttimes in sorrow, sometimes in foolish pride
I forget He sees the top, while I, the underside.
Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unroll the canvas and explain the reasons why
But the dark threads are as needful in a skillful weaver's hand
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern God has planned.

(The Weaver - author unknown)

MEDITATION TWO

Lord, make me a channel of Thy peace
 That where there is hatred, I may bring love
 That where this is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness
 That where there is discord, I may bring harmony
 That where there is error, I may bring truth
 That where there is doubt, I may bring faith
 That where there is despair, I may bring hope
 That where there are shadows, I may bring light
 That where there is sadness, I may bring joy
 Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted
 To understand, than to be understood
 To love, than to be loved.
 For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.
 It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.
 It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.

Amen

(Prayer of St. Francis)

STEP ELEVEN - SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY MATERIALS

BOOK	PAGES
A DAY AT A TIME (ADAT) (ALATEEN)	102, 118, 164, 203, 222, 259, 327, 353
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS (Classic Edition)	60-61, 119
AL-ANON 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	69-73
ALATEEN, HOPE FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS	23-24
AS WE UNDERSTOOD	69-71, 73-78, 87-91, 167-168, 181-184, 189-192, 196, 207-209, 218-222, 224-226, 229-231
COURAGE TO BE ME (ALATEEN)	89, 165-172
COURAGE TO CHANGE	7, 59, 69, 165, 173, 182, 206, 220, 327, 338
DILEMMA OF THE ALCOHOLIC MARRIAGE	94-95
DISCOVERING CHOICES	195, 199-205, 209, 268
FROM SURVIVAL TO RECOVERY	226, 231, 233-234, 238-239, 258, 262
HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING	46, 54, 80, 85, 128, 144
HOPE FOR TODAY	37, 93, 119, 174, 213, 287, 303, 341
HOW AL-ANON WORKS	62-63, 81, 91
IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS	108, 149-150, 210-211, 223, 225

BOOK	PAGES
LIVING TODAY IN ALATEEN	144
ONE DAY AT A TIME IN AL-ANON (ODAT)	177, 291, 318, 323
OPENING OUR HEARTS, TRANSFORMING OUR LOSSES	46, 47, 88, 106, 160
PATHS TO RECOVERY	110-118
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (BIG BOOK)	59, 68, 79, 85-87
AA 12 STEPS AND 12 TRADITIONS	96-105

SLOGAN FOR STEP ELEVEN STUDY:

"GOD CONSCIOUSNESS EQUALS GOOD ORDERLY DIRECTIONS"

When most of us come to the program of Al-Anon, we're in a state of spiritual deficiency. We've lost faith or trust in a power greater than ourselves and have tried to be that power by trying to force solutions, our solutions, on others. We have been running on our own limited power resulting in fear, frustration and resentments. In our Second and Third Steps, we have established a working relationship with a power greater than ourselves and have gotten closer to that Higher Power through the practice of Steps Four through Ten. At Step Eleven we begin the task of developing and refining the most important relationship of our lives - that of our Higher Power.

In order to get to know that power and its role in our lives, we have to spend "quality time" with that power and we do this by prayer and meditation. And, as our consciousness of our Higher Power increases, we find an increased awareness entering our lives through our thoughts and actions. This is known as Good Orderly Directions. And as we follow these directions, we begin to experience balance, peace and serenity as we've never known before. We also see that we've begun to learn that God's will is preferable to our own in that His will works every time for our highest good. We will begin to trust this power more and more to give us our daily instructions for successful living - and thus through our God Consciousness (the awareness that God is working in our lives) we receive daily instructions for successful living (Good Orderly Directions).

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. Can you give an example where you've found that prayer and meditation helped you receive answers and guidance for a situation in your life?
2. Do you pray for things, for specific working out of your problems, or simply for the knowledge that the hand of God is guiding you and giving you the power to do His will?
3. Do you use meditation to help clear your mind of doubt and confusion, thus making you more receptive to solutions that work?
4. When you don't get the results you want from prayer and meditation, do you feel that your prayers are in vain?
5. Are you developing your communication and relationship with your Higher Power?
6. Do you pray over and over, giving God your petitions on what needs to be done and how without listening for answers?
7. Do you realize that negative meditation (worry) weakens your prayers and trust level? (If you pray, why worry; if you worry, why pray?)
8. Do you realize that when praying for specific things you limit God's power instead of allowing Him to do His will. (Don't put God in a box.)
9. When praying for others, do you presume to know what's best for them by instructing God on what to do for or with them?
10. Do you ask God to approve or co-sign your wants (self-will) in a situation or ask only that His will be done?
11. Are you practicing meditation on a daily basis or are you having trouble with meditation?
12. Which of your defects keeps separating you from God's will for your life?

STEP ELEVEN QUESTIONS

STEP TWELVE

"HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS THE RESULT OF THESE STEPS, WE TRIED TO CARRY THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS."

As a result of working the preceding eleven Steps we learn that we are more than mere body and mind - there is a living spirit within us. With this awakening we realize what we see or hear need not be heavenly visions or voices. Insights and words can come to us from others, such as members at meetings as God works through people (God with skin on), or it may merely be a calm still voice we hear within our being. God will show us His will and directions in a way that we can understand - we've begun to "come awake" to spiritual solutions to the problems of our lives.

A spiritual awakening is not a great revelation for which we have to wait. When we are awakened to the spirit within us it can happen in every daily encounter. This Step confidently states that our earnest efforts to use the Steps as a way of life have brought us to a spiritual awakening - a new dimension of living. When this change takes place we find we have become channels for carrying the message of hope to others who are still fruitlessly fighting the enemies that once were ours. This is the Twelfth Step in action.

It is our spirit that responds to the principles of the program. Our spiritual sense recognizes an awareness of beauty, music, art, poetry, a Higher Power, hope, joy, love and serenity. It is with our spiritual sense that we practice honesty, simplicity, acceptance and generosity and gratitude. How strange it is and how wonderful with this heightened awareness of the intangible qualities of life, we find a very tangible strength. It works, physically, and mentally as well as spiritually. When we acknowledge our own spirit and ourselves as spiritual beings, we find we have more energy to work and play, greater ability to face the situations in our lives more realistically and an awareness of the spirit dwelling in others. We become spiritually in tune with our Creator and His creations.

We also increase our communion with other people. We are able to rise above our seeing differences and antagonisms and recognize their spirit. This lifts our communication to another plane. Instead of contention and argument, there is understanding, compassion and love. We also rise out of our narrow concerns to reach out a hand to help others who are also suffering.

Twelve Step work includes: helping the families and friends of alcoholics, giving love and encouragement to the alcoholic, going to Al-Anon meetings, working in the service areas of Al-Anon and taking every opportunity to spread the message of recovery through Al-Anon to those who are trying to learn to live with the problem of alcoholism. Whenever anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, we want the hand of Al-Anon to be there and for that, each of us is responsible to do his/her part. Sharing our experience, strength and hope to others by sponsorship and participation in all the areas of recovery is Twelve Step work at its best.

Warning: We can't transmit something that we do not have, or "you can't give what you haven't got." Our message will be distorted if we are seeking only a way to sobriety for our loved one. We must study and actually "live" the Al-Anon program for ourselves and our own recovery. We carry the message in a language the newcomer can understand - our own example. We give of ourselves, our experiences, our methods and our conclusions. We should not be afraid to carry the message, we are the experts of our own life experiences and we are responsible to share these experiences, to carry the message of recovery - but not the person. If we do not carry the message and pass it on to others we cannot keep it for ourselves as it is in the sharing that we are continually renewed in our own recovery.

The third part of this Step challenges us to "practice these principles in all our affairs." Let us define just what we are being challenged to do. We are to "practice," which means to perform often or habitually; to work repeatedly to learn by repetition, "these principles," which are fundamental truths; basic foundations on which to build and when applied to our lives, give the same basic results time after time, therefore they are dependable truths, "in all our affairs," which means that which is to be done; business of any kind, and the most important business is OUR ACTIONS.

Thus: "to practice these principles in all our affairs" literally means - TO WORK REPEATEDLY AND HABITUALLY TOWARD USING FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS IN ALL OUR ACTIONS (RIGOROUS HONESTY IN ALL OUR DEALINGS.)

Before we can practice a principle, we must have principles. The list below indicates some of the principles found within each of the Steps - both positive and negative. It is a spiritual truth that if we are not practicing a positive principle, we will be in the negative because it is impossible to be in a vacuum and also impossible to be both positive and negative at the same time.

<u>POSITIVE PRINCIPLE</u>	<u>STEP</u>	<u>NEGATIVE PRINCIPLE</u>
Acceptance, Surrender	1	Denial, Resistance
Hope, Anticipation	2	Despair, Abandonment
Faith, Trust	3	Fear, Anxiety
Honesty, Organizing	4	Confusion, Deceit
Risk-Taking, Courage	5	Cowardice, Faltering
Flexibility, Pliant	6	Inflexible, Stubborn
Humility, Transparency	7	Pride, Arrogance
Responsibility, Reliable	8	Undependable, Irresponsible
Sensible, Prudent	9	Compulsive, Foolish
Consistent, Trustworthy	10	Undisciplined, Variable
Enlightened, Serene	11	Perplexed, Anxious
Love, Wholeness, Balance	12	Discord, Resentment

STEP TWELVE - SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY MATERIALS

BOOK	PAGES
A DAY AT A TIME (ADAT) (ALATEEN)	29, 165, 261, 355
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS (Classic Edition)	36, 61, 119-121
AL-ANON 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	75-80
ALATEEN, HOPE FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS	25-26
AS WE UNDERSTOOD	111-113, 147-151, 185-188, 229-231
COURAGE TO BE ME (ALATEEN)	89, 173-182, 273-274
COURAGE TO CHANGE	26, 78, 166, 209, 220, 344, 357
DILEMMA OF THE ALCOHOLIC MARRIAGE	96-97
DISCOVERING CHOICES	243, 262, 269
FROM SURVIVAL TO RECOVERY	22, 105, 231, 241-264, 289
HOPE FOR TODAY	56, 175, 226, 273
HOW AL-ANON WORKS	37, 63-64, 102-103, 176, 178, 254-255, 341
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ONE DAY AT A TIME IN AL-ANON (ODAT)	153, 178, 195, 335, 348
OPENING OUR HEARTS, TRANSFORMING OUR LOSSES	103, 109, 154-156, 170
PATHS TO RECOVERY	119-128
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (BIG BOOK)	60, 85, 89-91, 94, 158, 160, 163
AA 12 STEPS & 12 TRADITIONS	106-125

SLOGAN FOR STEP TWELVE STUDY:

"WE CAN'T KEEP IT UNLESS WE GIVE IT AWAY"

The priceless gift of recovery has been freely given to each one of us who has worked the Twelve Steps to the best of our ability. And our continued recovery and growth depends upon our sharing of this gift with others. Our recovery is renewed and reaffirmed each time we share with someone else what we used to be like, what happened and what we are like now. Each time we share these experiences with a family member or friend of an alcoholic, we too, hear, feel and experience a spiritual revitalization which strengthens and confirms our new way of life in recovery.

One of the best ways to carry the message or "give it away" is through the service tool of "sponsorship." This is the process whereby the sharing of experience, strength and hope with the newcomer teaches us patience, tolerance, acceptance and the building of a special relationship often enhanced by unconditional love. And as we work with others we learn more and more about ourselves - thus as long as we give, we keep receiving - more and more - and this is our continuing growth as recovering Al-Anons

ASK YOURSELF HONESTLY

1. What exactly does the term "spiritual awakening" mean to you in your life experience?
2. Do you realize you are a spiritual being and that as such you have your own destiny which you alone can fulfill?
3. How did your spiritual awakening come to you - instantly or over a period of time?
4. How does Step Twelve help you to have an ongoing potential for growth?
5. Which part of Step Twelve is the most difficult for you to work?
6. In what ways do you help others in the program, especially newcomers?
7. What have you gained from carrying the message through group service work? (Chairing meetings, clean-up, workshops, skits, etc.)
8. Do you "walk the walk" or merely "talk the talk?" (Are you living your program?)
9. What are the principles for living you've discovered through working the Twelve Steps?
10. In what capacities do you serve your group and how has this furthered your personal growth?
11. What does the phrase "in all our affairs" mean to you?
12. What is the message you feel you have to carry to a newcomer and are you sponsoring yet?

STEP TWELVE QUESTIONS