

STEP TEN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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