

STEP TWELVE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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