

STEP NINE

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

Step Nine allows us to practice all of the spiritual principles encompassed in the first eight steps, with the addition of the principle of justice. The Ninth Step is a series of actions we took in order to complete the process we began with Step Four — cleaning up the wreckage of our past. Although many of us approached the Ninth Step with hesitation, we found it to be one of the most deeply rewarding and spiritual experiences of our lives. Step Nine does not mean that we think less of ourselves; it means we think of ourselves less.

Recovery from marijuana addiction requires us to make profound changes in how we live our lives. First, we stopped using marijuana, something we once considered unthinkable! In addition, we gave up the illusion that we could manage our own lives. We committed ourselves wholeheartedly to spiritual change. We sought spiritual progress for a most practical reason: “to stay free of marijuana and to help the marijuana addict who still suffers achieve the same freedom.” We took action in order to achieve this freedom for ourselves and to show others how to achieve it. The Twelve Steps of Marijuana Anonymous are to be lived, not just discussed in meetings.

Making direct amends to those we had harmed required a frank admission to them that our conduct was wrong, a sincere apology, and, if appropriate, an offer to make reasonable restitution for the damage we had done.

With those people especially dear to us, an apology alone was hardly enough. We became willing to change our behavior and renewed our participation in their lives, if they wished it. For them, we had to demonstrate that we had changed.

The form and timing of our amends varied according to the circumstances, but our attitude in each case was the same — willingness to take responsibility for the consequences of our behavior. This willingness was especially effective when combined with actions that were different from those that had caused harm in the past. Willingness and new patterns of behavior miraculously transformed our lives and the lives of those around us.

We could not base our willingness on an expectation that we would not actually have to make restitution. With our Higher Power, we learned to walk through fear and take action. We relied upon spiritual power for the strength and courage required to make our amends. We left the results and outcome to God. Of course, many of us found that discussing our amends with our sponsor was beneficial. We talked about the amends, to whom they were to be made, and what we planned as reparation in each case. Our reparation had to be appropriate to the wrong we were trying to right.

The paradox of Step Nine was that we had to take responsibility for our past in order to turn our lives over to God in the present. We might have been on a “pink cloud,” feeling so good about today that we were tempted to turn our back on the “bad old days.” Conversely, our present circumstances might have been so trying that we didn’t feel like spending the time and energy needed to correct former mistakes. In either situation, we realized that until we made

our amends, we would continue to pay a heavy price for our past misdeeds. We would still retain resentments towards old enemies, perpetuate old lies, fear being found out, and feel the remorse and self-condemnation associated with our painful memories. For as long as we carried such burdens, we endangered our recovery and limited our capacity to serve God and help the addict who still suffers.

We were becoming people of integrity. We humbly accepted who we had been, and who we were becoming. This step required that we repair our attitudes and our actions. We began to take into consideration the effects of our actions, or neglect of them. This step required progress in communication, discipline, and commitment. We learned about self-respect. Our basic attitude while making our amends was one of love. We often experience a spiritual connection working Step Nine, where there is a feeling of forgiveness after making amends.

The purpose of Step Nine, we believe, is not to win the admiration of others, but to restore our self-esteem and further our spiritual growth. It felt wonderful to trust ourselves and, when we could, to regain the trust of others, but Step Nine could not be done with an expectation that our amends would magically heal the hurt of someone we had harmed. Often the response we got from those to whom we made amends was positive and gratifying. Old wounds were healed, damaged relationships restored, and new doors opened to us after we admitted our misconduct and tried to make things right. We were often amazed at the blessings we received in this way. Sometimes, however, our efforts at amends were spurned or ridiculed. If we had done our part, we sought forgiveness for ourselves from a Higher Power or through another, perhaps a sponsor. We took well-

considered action and turned the results of that action over to our God.

With Step Eight, we were on guard against the temptation to minimize, rationalize, or deny the damage that we had caused. In Step Nine, we were just as vigilant. We faced those we had harmed. When we had isolated ourselves, we had grown neglectful and uncommunicative. Our families, friends, and co-workers were all affected. We had to make amends for what we had not done as well as for what we had done.

We could also make amends to addicts who were still using. We did not wish to enable people to practice addiction. Yet we often owed financial amends to practicing addicts. We had options. When we repaid these debts, we did not do it in a way that put ourselves at risk of relapse or illegality by being in the vicinity of drugs. Nor did we put ourselves at risk of possible retribution by users or dealers. Sometimes the amends had to be made indirectly. Our purpose was to make it up to those we harmed, not to cure or control them. Moreover, if we explained why we were making amends and the importance of recovery in our lives, we were in fact serving as a powerful example to other addicts, sowing seeds for a future moment when they too might become willing to seek a spiritual solution.

We made amends even to those who had harmed us more than we had harmed them, regardless of whether they reciprocated. It was not our business to take their moral inventory. It was our business to clear up our side of the ledger, not to force others to admit how they had wronged us. Concern about consequences did not excuse us from

making amends unless others would be harmed in the process.

In some instances direct amends were not possible. The person we harmed may have died or was not traceable. In those cases, indirect amends were the best we could make. A sincere letter could be written, even if not mailed. Our current associates could be the beneficiaries of acts done to compensate for our mistreatment of our former associates. Contributions could be made to charities, or volunteer work done for recovery agencies or other worthy causes. There was always a way. We discussed questions concerning difficult cases with sponsors or spiritual advisors.

Our goal was a spiritual one. Our own judgment was often flawed and so through prayer and meditation we sought clarity about God's will for us and the power to carry it out. We used these tools to develop the courage, serenity, and humility that we needed to make amends.

It is not the purpose of the Ninth Step to clear our conscience at the expense of others. We were careful not to have our amends adversely affect other people. We did not implicate others who were parties to our errors. We made certain that the possible repercussions of our amends, such as loss of employment or criminal punishment, did not hinder us from meeting our duties as a parent, spouse, worker, or friend. We had no right to act without regard for the interest of others.

The temptation to procrastinate was especially strong when facing the people who were involved in our most shameful episodes. Although it was prudent to wait for the proper time, we needed to be especially mindful and consult with our sponsors to check our real motives. Once we were

certain of the proper course of action, we acted without delay. We had to remember "How It Works": "The practice of rigorous honesty, of opening our hearts and minds, and the willingness to go to any lengths to have a spiritual awakening are essential to our recovery."

The rewards we've received from taking Steps Eight and Nine are profound and sublime. These actions have enabled us to live to good purpose and empowered us to be of service to others. Miracles have become everyday reality. We do things that we could never have done alone. God has become a living force in our lives. We have grown free and joyful. Service to others has replaced selfishness. We've lost our fears and regained trust in God, ourselves, and other human beings. Petty problems have stopped bedeviling us. Our attitude has turned from denial, defiance, and belligerence to gratitude, humility, and a sincere effort to be of service. We have gained dignity as we've retaken our proper place in society. The hard work that we put into the first Nine Steps was a precious accomplishment and a valuable gift. In order to keep that gift, we turned to Step Ten.