

PREPARING FOR THE NINTH STEP

STEP NINE:

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

Read the bottom paragraph on P. 76 of the “Big Book” to the middle of p. 84 (ending with “work for them”.) and read pp. 84-87 of the “12 & 12”.

The ninth step concludes the war. When we finish making amends, we have signed the peace treaty with our past.

It was then that I first experienced the “peace beyond understanding”. At last I experienced some of the Twelve Promises that had previously baffled me: “We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word ‘serenity’, and we will know peace.” (“Big Book, pp. 83-84)

Let us review the “Twelve Promises” which follow and mark any that have not yet occurred in our life. (Next time we will write inventory on them.) My step sponsor has the wonderful habit of reviewing the “Twelve Promises” on each of his A.A. birthdays and writing inventory on any that are not part of his serenity that year.

THE TWELVE PROMISES

(Big Book, pp.83-84)

1. We are going to know a new freedom.
2. and a new happiness
3. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
4. We will comprehend the word serenity, and we will know peace.
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone; we will see how our experience can benefit others.
6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
8. Self-seeking will slip away.
9. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
10. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
12. 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 slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

If you are not experiencing total peace with yourself, let us prepare for next week by searching our hearts for any unmade amends from our drinking past or from the wreckage of

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sobriety. Have I made my amends in my heart to those who might have died? Have I made my amends to God?

If I am feeling hurt, I remember these wise words of Jack Terton: “If we are deeply hurt, we cannot recover unless we make an amend.”

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

STEP 9

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

Homework: Writing Inventory on the Ninth Step
By Dennis F.

Read the bottom paragraph on p. 76 of the “Big Book” to the middle of p84 (ending with “work for them”) and read pp. 83-87 of the “12 & 12”.

The ninth step is the last step where I come to grips with my past. It signals the end of the war. It was not until I finished the last amend that I felt my fear and anxiety replaced by peace and serenity.

I tried to work this step by making an amend a day.

I reviewed my eighth step list of amends along with my one word list of personality traits that brought about the need for me to make an amend. This was important. I needed to know what it was that separated me from others. Arrogance was my recurrent personality trait.

I was now able to explain why I was making an amend. I include the reason in my amends. I say something like this: “I want to make amends to you because of the arrogant way I treated you when I was drinking.” For amends from the wreckage of sobriety, I delete the final phrase, “when I was drinking”. This required more effort since I couldn’t use alcohol as an excuse for my behavior.

I also reviewed my amend list to see if any of the amends fit into the four other amend situations described in the “12 & 12”, p. 83:

- a) those to whom we already made amends (when God places someone in our path for the purpose of making amends, we should do so even if we aren’t yet at the ninth step.)
- b) those to whom we make partial amends (some sexual amends).
- c) those amends that should be totally deferred (some sexual amends)
- d) those amends that can never be made by personal contact (the deceased and those whom we cannot locate)

Prayer and consultation with our sponsor will tell us when to make partial amends or to totally defer amends; since to do so might injure the person we owe amends or others.

In general, I use the rule that I owe an amend to someone if I express some harm through words or actions. If I thought harm, then I do not owe an amend to them, but I owe an amend to God on my knees for the way I treated a child of His in my thoughts.

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I was taught by my sponsor to make amends to those who have died by praying for them and by making these amends to a surrogate. For example, if my father has died, I make amends by going out of my way to be helpful to an elderly gentleman at meetings.

The same principle works for those whom I cannot make amends to lest the disclosure harm them or others. At meetings I treat young women with purity of intention and without manipulation in order to make my sexual amends.

In regards to those whom I cannot locate, I get on my knees and pray that they be given all the happiness I want in life for myself and more. I visualize them happy.

“Direct amends” to me means eyeball-to-eyeball amends; the next choice would be on the telephone; the last choice would be by letter, since this deprives the other person of the opportunity to react to my amends.

More than once, I simply had to pray for the right words, take a deep breath and plunge into the amend.

When making sexual amends, I found it better to make amends for my “selfishness” in the relationship rather than saying that I didn’t love the person and used them sexually.

Some of my greatest humiliations, which then led to my greatest growth, came behind my sexual and financial amends. Disastrous sexual and financial relationships in our lives reflect our need to be healed by this step.

It is important to make financial amends to all persons and institutions. It is equally important to guard against our “perfectionism” in making these amends. My “ego” told me that since I couldn’t pay the full amount of some of my debts, I shouldn’t make amends until I could.

This was the voice of my alcoholism speaking to me. If I had listened, I would stop working my ninth step. My alcoholism is “cunning” in knowing the only way I can go back to drinking now is if I stop working the steps, traditions, and concepts. I had to avoid the price of a large check.

I did not feel relief from this step until I contact everyone I owed money and told them that I was sorry for the irresponsible way I acted with their loans or credit in the past, and that I would pay back all I owed, plus interest, no matter how long it took. I told them that my earnings were not great, and I would send a weekly or monthly check and would increase its amount whenever I could. I then enclosed a check with my letter.

Even though the amounts I sent were small, I knew that it was important that I acknowledge my irresponsibility and that I be “regular” in my payments, even if I could only send \$5 a month.

I found that my creditors responded with encouragement and gratitude. I was learning that I had to be responsible in order to earn back people's trust.

Serious financial amends involving the IRS or like institutions have to be faced even though prison sentences might be deserved and possible. I consulted my accountant and received valuable advice that helped me make my financial amends with the IRS without further financial penalties or imprisonment.

When working with someone who has undergone bankruptcy, I recommend that the amends are not due unless the person intentionally defrauded a company. The law has forgiven these debts and so should we. I suggest though, that we pray for everyone we owed money in our past and ask God that they be blessed financially and spiritually in a greater degree than we want these same blessings for ourselves.

My financial amends led me to a new view of how I could have successful financial relationships in the future. I cannot buy on credit items that I cannot pay for if I want to live in peace in my life. It is a form of dishonesty and irresponsibility to do so and led to many ruined relationships in my past.

I had some amends to make to institutions that did not involve money but were over my arrogance. Among these were the airlines for my drunken behavior when flying. I wrote a letter of amends to the supervisor of stewardesses at each airline I flew and asked them to post it on the bulletin board where the stewardesses met. I received encouraging letters back from the airlines.

Other non-person amends to think about are hospitals, police, the courts, companies, etc. Amends for prejudice against other races, religions or classes of people also need to be considered and handled in prayer and by acting the opposite in the future.

I found that as time passed, I had to make repeated amends to the same people for the same defects. I finally understood that I not only had to make and amend, but I had to pray to God for the willingness to let Him change my behavior. I was using the ninth step to buy my "own peace of mind at the expense of others". ("12 & 12", Ninth Step, p.84)

I also had to remember that I was cleaning my side of the street. If the other person reacted poorly to me, I had to learn that it takes time to earn trust back and that I could still work a good ninth step regardless of how my amends were accepted or rejected. Fortunately, most of my amend experiences brought me closer to those to whom I made the amend.

There are some amend questions where I need the advice of a sponsor. I do not want to be in such a rush to complete the amends that I do not discuss sensitive amend questions with my sponsor. I am learning how to have good relationships with others. I need advice. If I were good at relationships, I wouldn't need to be making these amends. Seeking a sponsor's experience on questions of amends is the attitude a humble person would have, and it is the attitude I need to have.

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“Do we lay the matter before our sponsor or spiritual adviser, earnestly asking God’s help and guidance – meanwhile resolving to do the right thing when it becomes clear, cost what it may.”¹

I was vociferously sued over one of my amends. My business was threatened. I prayed about it and was led to surrender and settled with them.

I would make this amend again even though it caused me much anguish. The peace and serenity and victory over fear and anguish I found when I completed that last of my more than two hundred amends is worth far more than the price of any anguish I had to go through to receive it.

There are also those people whom we find difficult to forgive. I must be willing to forgive them in my heart and pray for their welfare before I can complete this step.

The most important amends I have to make re those I make to God on my knees (looking into the mirror). When I finish my amends, a triangle of peace overwhelms me.

By making amends to others, I had mended a spiritual tear that existed in my relationship between myself, the world, and God. When I was at peace with everyone in my life, I became at peace with myself and God. For the first time in my life, I tasted that “peace beyond understanding”. At last I experienced some of the “Twelve Promises” that had previously baffled me; “We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word ‘serenity’, and we will know peace.” (“Big Book” pp.83, 84)

Working a step, tradition or concept to me means that I am willing to write inventory and allow it to surrender me. Making amends is a regular part of my nightly tenth step inventories.

If I am not at total peace, or if I feel hurt (i.e., the “martyr” or “victim” feeling), I need to look within for the existence of an unmade amend. (“If we are deeply hurt, we cannot recover unless we make an amend.”²)

¹ “12 & 12”, Ninth Step, p.86

² Jack Terton

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Do I have any unmade amends to God, to those in A.A., at home or at work? When I reviewed the "Twelve Promises" last week ("Big Book", pp.83-84) did I find that any of these promises had not come true in my life yet? Let us write inventory!

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I have made repeated amends to someone at the office because my behavior has not changed.
- b) What did I do wrong? I am insincere because I try to use the ninth step to give me peace of mind.
- c) What would God expect me to do instead? Write inventory on my shortcoming and become entirely ready to for God to remove my defect and humbly ask him to do so.