

PREPARING FOR THE EIGHTH STEP

**THE EIGHTH STEP:**

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all”

Read the third paragraph on p.76 of the “Big Book” and pp. 77-82 of the “12 & 12.”

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”  
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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

Read the third paragraph on p.76 of the “Big Book” and pp. 77-82 of the “12 & 12.”

To make our eighth step list, we go through our inventory and write down each person (living and dead), institution (hospital, airlines, IRS, etc.) and sections of society (police, teachers, doctors, etc.) we have harmed. (We can then burn our fourth step inventory and purify our past.)

I would suggest that we also make a list of those who have harmed us where we find forgiveness difficult. We need to pray for a spirit of “willingness” to forgive others to work the eighth step. I have found that I owed these same people an amend just as much, if not more, than they to me. I remember that the amends steps are to clear my side of the street, not theirs.

I once heard Jack Terton say these provoking words at a meeting. “When we are deeply hurt, the only way we can recover is to make an amend.” So let us prepare to become willing to make the amends that lie beneath any existing hurts in life.

Are we at total peace? If not, let us see if any amends need to be added to our list.

The chief amends that I needed to be willing to make were to God. They were physical, mental, and spiritual amends. I needed to become willing to praise Him, not blame Him, for my alcoholism. I needed to become willing to make amends to Him for insisting upon understanding Him with my overrated intelligence before I would trust him. I needed to become willing to make amends to him for not accepting life as he gave it to me with a loving and grateful attitude.

When our list is complete, I recommend that the fourth step inventory that we used to compile this list be burned. The only reason to hang on to it now would be “ego”. The inventory has become a part of our past, and events in it will only come to mind when we have the opportunity to share our experience, strength, and hope with a sick and suffering alcoholic going through a similar experience.

Step Eight is our first effort to right our relationships with others. Therefore, we want to discover which personality traits make it necessary for us to make amends. So we follow the suggestion on page 77 in the “12 & 12” and “redouble (our) efforts to see how many people

(we have) hurt, and in what ways.” We examine what kinds of “harm” we have done others in order to point up our flaws. We decide “exactly what personality traits in us injured and disturbed others.”<sup>1</sup>

Next to each person’s name, we list our personality trait that injured that person. (One word or phrase will suffice.)

Besides learning what the pattern is in regard to our behavior with others (my recurring personality trait was “arrogance”), we also learn why we are making the amend so that it can be made more pointedly. Now we are able to say, “I am making this amend to you because of the arrogant way I treated you” rather than “I am making this amend to you because I think I should.”

“Calm, thoughtful reflection upon personal relations can deepen our insight. We can go far beyond those things which were superficially wrong with us, to see those flaws which were basic, flaws which sometimes were responsible for the whole pattern of our lives. Thoroughness, we have found, will pay – and pay handsomely.”<sup>2</sup>

I cannot recommend enough making this dual list of amends followed by our flaws, which made it necessary to make the amends. It led me to the realization of life long patterns that I needed to become willing to have changed. (“We consider how, with our new-found knowledge of ourselves, we may develop the best possible relations with every human being we know.”)<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the idea of a dual list as suggested by the eighth step in the “12 & 12” has not become standard practice in A.A. programs nor is it usually discussed at step study meetings I have attended. I suggest following the program as described in our books.

When I came to the eighth step, I felt worn out by the considerable effort a thorough fourth and fifth step took. I didn’t realize it, but my alcoholism was subtly trying to take over. It was trying to convince me that I needed a rest and did not need to practice the step I was on one day at a time. It knew that the only way I could go back to drinking and kill myself (suicide in sobriety or a drunken death is the goal of my alcoholism) was to become paralyzed in working the steps.

My alcoholism is cunning in sobriety by trying to convince me to hook into the depression it tries to send my way. I know that depression is fantasy. What is real in my life is that I am sober and can continue to be sober as long as I work the step, tradition, or concept of service I am on a day at a time. In short, my prayer tells me, “I grow or I drink”.

So I began each day with the idea of writing at least one name down on the eighth step list. It wasn’t long before I was finished. God heard my prayers for “willingness”, the key idea of the eighth step.

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<sup>1</sup> “12 & 12”, p.81

<sup>2</sup> “12 & 12”, Eighth Step, p.80

<sup>3</sup> “12 & 12” p. 77

Step 8

Let us see if improved “willingness” on our part would improve our relationships with God, A.A., intimate relationships, or work relationships.

Let us also examine the results of last week’s homework assignment. What basic flaw in us recurred most behind our amends.

Let us now write inventory on where our willingness most needs to be improved and ask God to remove the chief flaw behind our failed relationships.

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

- a) The Story: Sometimes I am unwilling to go to the places my wife wants to go.
- b) What did I do wrong? My basic flaw of “arrogance” recurs, and I only want to go where I want to go.
- c) What would God expect me to do instead? I should surrender with enthusiasm and not with gritted teeth, and think about the rewards of a closer relationship I will receive if I surrender to win them.