

When a slip happens, a crime has been committed. Our sobriety has been murdered. If we are serious about getting and staying sober (and we must ask ourselves this), we become investigators. The Steps provide us with the forensic tools needed to investigate the slip. We must find out where our program of spiritual action failed. We turn to page 84 of our investigator's manual (the A.A. Big Book), and look at the second paragraph. Each of the instructions here must be converted to a personal question.

We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past.

“Did I vigorously commence this way of living?” Am I giving as much energy to this way of living as I gave to my addiction? “Am I continuing to clean up the past?” We will never fully complete the amends process. There will be some people that cannot be seen. But, am I current? Have I made amends to all the people I can make amends to? If not, why not?

We skip four sentences.

Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear.

In this endeavor I am to be a watchman or guardian. “Was I fulfilling my duties as a watcher? Did I slip into ‘automatic pilot?’” These character defects are the suspects in our crime scene. One or more of them killed our sobriety. If we see them before the crime has been committed (which is our job as watchmen) and follow through with the correct action, then no crime will be committed.

When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.

We have admitted in the past that we are just as powerless over our character defects as we are over our addiction. We need to understand that our duty as watchmen is to watch and sound the alarm when we see a problem. God is the backup. He shows up and does the actual eviction of the character defects. If we go in after the henchmen, then we leave the perimeter unguarded, where others can slip in. “When these cropped up, did I ask God to remove them?” It is important to remember that it says that we asked God to remove them when they cropped up, not later. This means immediately. We stop what we are doing, close our eyes, humble ourselves before God, and ask Him to remove these character defects.

We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone.

If these bad guys have shown up, we need to call for more backup to help assess the damage they may have caused. They help us figure out what repairs need to be made if any. “Did I discuss them with someone?” “Did I harm anyone?” “Did I make amends?” “Did I do all this immediately?”

Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.

Resolutely: having or showing a fixed, firm purpose; determined; resolved; unwavering. “Did I put as much effort into this as I did my addiction?” It implies that we do more than just think about it. It does not say that we have to help another addict. It does us the most benefit if we help someone we have struggled to get along with, or if it is someone that is subordinate to us. However, nothing helps us more with our obsession than working with another addict. They help us to remember the cunning and baffling nature of our disease.

Love and tolerance of others is our code.

“Was I exhibiting an attitude of love and tolerance of others?” If not, it's time to go back to the inventory. **If we do not have an attitude of love and tolerance, then there is a resentment, fear, selfishness or dishonesty that we have not dealt with.**

Next are the 10th Step Promises. If these are not evident in our lives, then there is something missing in the work, we have not had our spiritual awakening. We must find what is missing by repeating the process.

Sometimes it requires a different sponsor to show us what we missed. We should be sure first that we were not holding something back in the work, before we switch sponsors.

Next, we reflect back to Step 1. The next paragraph on Page 85 tells us why.

*It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of **action and rest on our laurels**. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is **a daily reprieve** contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.*

If we have let up on our spiritual program, it is because other things have become more important. If we have made other things more important, then we have forgotten some serious elements of **Step 1: Powerlessness, the insidious insanity, disease progression and lethality**. If the spiritual awakening has happened, then we are able to bring into our minds with sufficient force these attributes. They alone should be motivation enough to continue a spiritual regiment. We must understand if we don't do this very important work, we will meet an early grave, with a detour through complete loss of sanity and/or complete loss of freedom. If we lose sight of this then we must return to Step 1.

In Step 1 we have entertained a "lurking notion" that we still in some way have power over this disease. We have entertained delusional thinking somewhere with thoughts like: "This time will be different," "Everyone does it. Why can't I?" "It's just a little _____. What harm could that do?" We must ask ourselves where we thought we still had power. **We must expose the "lurking notion"**. We must expose our plan to institute that power. We must expose how that plan failed us. We must illuminate every aspect of this and re-admit our powerlessness and our subtle insanity.

In looking at our 11th Step, we again make questions from the instructions. We ask ourselves if we have neglected any of the Step 11 instructions. "Did I do my nightly review?" "If not, why not?" "Did other things become more important?" If so, then we must again return to Step 1, for we have forgotten the reason for the urgency of working a vigilant program: **THIS THING WILL KILL US!** If we did do our nightly review, then we need to ask, "Did I miss something?" or "Was I unwilling to face something I found there?"

We then look at the second part of Step 11. "Did I hit my knees when I woke up?" Remember that for many of us, that period between sleep and consciousness is very dangerous. The second we are aware of consciousness; we must ask God to direct our thinking. This keeps our minds on the "higher plain of thinking".

Part 3 of Step 11 is very important. "Am I making quiet time for God?" We have 2 ears and 1 mouth. What does this tell us about what God wants us to be doing more? Prayer is for talking to God. Meditation is for listening for God. Make time for God!

In Part 4 of Step 11 we are asked to stop whenever we are agitated or doubtful and seek His will. We are to ask for a decision or inspirational thought. We are to say many times each day, "Thy will (not mine) be done." "Am I making time for small periods of quiet in my day?" "Am I seeking God's will in all aspects of my life?" We get this all down on paper. Nothing is as indelible as pen to paper. We share the investigation with our sponsors.

We must then look at our Step 12 work. "Am I putting as much energy into this work as I put into my addiction?" "If not, why not?"

If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from [acting out] as intensive work with other [sex addicts]. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other [sex addicts]!

There are three reasons for a slip. Either we are omitting something in the work, we failed to carry the message, or our sponsor doesn't have what we want. A tough question to face, but we must: "Do I have the right sponsor." It's nothing personal, but perhaps he/she is unable to help us see the truth in our work. Someone with different life experiences might be able to cast a different light on our introspection. A different perspective can truly enlighten us. Our first sponsors will always be the first people who took us through the work, and therefore special to us, but there may come a point in our lives that they are unable to help us see what we need to see in ourselves. Remember that our own spiritual growth is the imperative, not taking care of our sponsor's feelings.