

# **Full Circle Parent Group Step Study**



**Understanding the Recovery Phenomenon.**

**The 12-Steps of Recovery complemented with:**

**Paths of Recovery** – the 12-Steps and 12-Traditions of Al-Anon

**Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions** – Understanding A.A.'s 12-Steps

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## *Parent Group Step Study*

*“We, having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps tried to carry our love and understanding to others, and to practice these principles in our daily lives.”*

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## **Forward**

Prior to getting into the material, I would like to take a brief moment to introduce this step study and outline what to expect from this handout. Let me start by saying that in the ‘universe’ of recovery and 12-step programs, there are countless individual experiences that have arisen. Furthermore, there is no ‘one way’ to interpret, study and work these steps. We all have certain things in common; however each of our personal situations are somewhat unique. As such, each person will have their own ‘agenda’ and desired outcome with regard to the 12-steps. This step study was created to address three specific needs:

1. Offer a study that will give an overview of what our children will be challenged to do as they work through their own 12-step program.
2. Offer a study that outlines the basic premise of the 12-steps from several perspectives; that of the person in recovery, that of the family member in relation with the person in recovery, and that of the parent wishing to personally work through the steps.
3. Offer a study that introduces a set of concepts and topics that will inspire further discussion and allow for people in the discussion group to share their own experience, strength and hope.

As a person who is personally working the 12-steps for my own sobriety issues I have included some of my own recovery observations within this study. This study highlights my personal process from three different 12-step programs; A.A., Al-Anon and the Cornerstone Parent Program. Early on in my involvement with Cornerstone the joke was that I am actually working a 36-step program. To a certain degree that was the case but the principals and suggestions in each program are virtually identical. The 12-steps of recovery, regardless of which one, offer a design for living that can result in a life filled with peace, joy and serenity.

I do not believe in chance, I believe that each of us are in our own situations in life for a reason. Each of us has the opportunity to realize this reason and to gain our own personal enlightenment from each and every life situation that is presented to us. Being people of free will, we do not have to find our freedom in these challenging situations, but we can. We can be free from the insanity that the effects of mind-altering chemicals have brought into our lives. We can find and experience the truth of our lives. We can make a difference in the lives of our children, our family members and our fellow parents in the group. The 12-steps of recovery are a path of discovery. The 12-steps can be entered into at any level of participation that you desire; neither is there a requirement to have an intense experience nor is there a requirement to have a mild experience. Take the steps at your own pace and from your own place in life and see what comes up for you. Each of us is unique and each of us has our own truth. The exhortation from these steps is: **“To Thine own Self be True.”**

As always, I wish you all the best that life has to offer and hope that your journey is as exciting and rewarding as mine has been. - Chris Ebersberg

## **Getting a Sponsor**

### ***Introduction –***

The tradition of the 12-Steps began with sponsorship. It became apparent early on in the recovery process that only someone who had been through alcoholism / addiction could help someone else going through the same thing. The concept is much like the absurdity of going to a marriage counselor who has never been married. Nonetheless, the process of parent group sponsoring is where a parent who has had some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another parent who has made a commitment to growth and parental ‘recovery’ in the Full Circle Parent Group.

It is often the case that when we begin to attend the parent meetings we come in a bit apprehensive and perhaps scared or even confused. And, between the initial ‘foundations’ meetings numerous questions arise. It is advantageous to have a close and available support person as we begin to learn how to adapt to the recovery process of our child / children and as we begin to deal with our own issues as they relate to the recovery program.

So, we select a sponsor, another parent from the group, with whom we feel comfortable, someone we can talk freely and confidentially with and we ask them to be our sponsor. It should also be noted that we are free to change sponsors and many people find it easier, initially, to ask someone to be their ‘temporary’ sponsor. This gives the ‘sponsee’ the opportunity to change sponsors without either party feeling uncomfortable.

### ***What do Sponsors and Sponsees do? –***

There are several things that are accomplished within sponsorship. The first is in having a contact for questions or situations that require immediate feedback. The second is in having someone to talk to and to get information and experience from who has been around for a while. And, the third is for working through the 12-Steps. A sponsor is for our support. As such the sponsee sets the ‘agenda’. Only we know what our needs are. We set the pace and we determine what we would like to accomplish during our parent group experience. Furthermore, the sponsee initiates the activity. The sponsee calls the sponsor. The sponsee outlines what the areas of need are. We are learning to take ownership of our lives and our situations as they have been affected by addiction and the dysfunction that develops from it.

### ***What’s my role in this? –***

When we first come to Full Circle we do so because our child is suffering. They are afflicted with the disease of addiction. It is easy to think that this is their issue, their problem. However, addiction is a family disease. It affects everyone who is close to the addict. We who are in relationship with the suffering addict have made adaptations to the insanity of addiction. We adapt behaviors and attitudes that often times are very unhealthy and can even enable the addict to continue using. At some point we must ask ourselves the question; “What is my role in all of this?” Having an addict in our life has caused at least part of our lives to become unmanageable. We have a process of recovery to go through as well. As we recover our relationships become strong and healthy. We enhance the process that our children are going through.

***Step Work –***

The most dynamic element of recovery is the 12-Step program. Some parents resist working the steps. Many of us have come into the program thinking that this is our child's issue, that we have done our part by committing to the program and of course the weekly parent meeting is all we really 'had to' sign up for. As stated before, addiction is a family disease and all of us have been affected. All of us have a role in the family dynamic. This being the case, the 12-Steps offer us a way out of these dysfunctional and enabling behaviors. We can make certain that 'our side of the street is clean' and that we are getting the most out of this intense, 'life and death' situation.

Working the steps does not mean that every tiny element of our life is to be examined by someone else. Working the steps does not require us make radical personality changes. Working the steps does not require a full-time commitment. Working the steps is enlightening. There is an exciting and extremely fulfilling outcome when we work the steps. Old, non-beneficial elements of our life fade away. We come to know a new happiness and a state of serenity begins to permeate our experience. Our old fears dissipate and we are empowered with a strong sense of 'centeredness'. It is an amazing thing to go through this process in peace, a peace that is rooted in understanding, bearing tangible fruits in our life.

***Keeping it by giving it away –***

As time goes on and our experience expands we become a source of help for others in the group. It has been said that our experience is maintained by helping others. One day we may have the opportunity to be a sponsor for a new parent. It seems only appropriate that if we are to assist someone else with working the 12-Steps, we ourselves should have gone through them. As we share our experience, strength and hope with others the quality of our ongoing program only gets better. An important dynamic of the group is to be able to be there for others.

***The Challenge –***

Pride and ego are two of the most deceiving adversaries we face when confronting the effects of addiction in our lives. If we can see through our preconceived ideas and our limited perceptions of what we think is happening, tremendous growth and healing can occur. The challenge is to take this opportunity of growth to its fullest potential. Many of us see this as a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity. We want to get the absolute most out of this situation. There may never be another time and place where so much can be accomplished. All of the tools for a complete recovery are available. We therefore encourage you to join us in this process. Using all of the resources that you have been offered will bring amazing results. We welcome you to our team of 'winners' and hope that you will get a sponsor, work the steps and help us share with others our personal and collective experience, strength and hope!



## STEP-1

### **Full Circle Step-1 Text:**

*“We admitted that mind-changing chemicals have caused at least part of our lives to become unmanageable.”*

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-1 Text:**

*“We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.”*

From the parents’ perspective of the Full Circle version of Step-1, it may seem like a foreign concept to think about our lives being unmanageable due to a drug and/or alcohol problem that our child is experiencing. After all, they are the ones who have a problem. However, each one of us, as parents, has been affected by addiction. Our child is suffering from a disease which in actuality is a family disease. Everyone who lives with or has a relationship with an addict/alcoholic is affected. Manageability or more precisely, unmanageability can come in the form of worry, anxiety, anger, stress, guilt, regret, shame, and depression. Even subtler effects such as having a controlling or manipulative relationship are additional side effects of addiction. We have come to find that many of us have been in a deep state of denial regarding our situations.

These responses seem quite justified due to the fact that most of us have been lied to, stolen from, controlled and manipulated by our ‘using’ children. Many of our children have had problems with the law, problems with school and problems with work and relationships. Furthermore, none of us want to see our children suffer. We want the best for them and we want them to reach their full potential. It is easy to see how unmanageability has taken over at least parts of our lives. As a response, many of us have become the ‘fixers’. Some of us have incorporated the addict so much into our daily lives that we even ‘thrive’ on the dysfunctional state.

Now that we realize this way of living no longer works for us, what do we do? Our first response is to get our kids into some sort of a program; in this case, Full Circle. This is where the healing begins. It is also where we are introduced to the “H.O.W.” of recovery; Honesty, Open-mindedness, Willingness. Step-1 is all about being honest. The text states that we “admitted” that mind-changing chemicals caused at least part of our lives to become unmanageable. There will be no recovery unless we come to the admission that there is a problem in the first place. Furthermore, Step-1 is the only step that requires 100% perfection in its working. This is important because either the person is an addict/alcoholic or they are not<sup>1</sup>. There is no middle ground. Abuse does not equate to addiction, however addiction will always include abuse. The number one reason for relapse (drugs and codependency/enabling) is due to slipping on step one.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that there is fine line between severe abuse and true addiction. It is impossible to test for the difference. In some cases, especially with our younger children, the issues revolve around drug abuse and they may not have entered into full addiction. Additional clarification can be obtained through one of the Full Circle counselors.

According to medical professionals, addiction is a disease, one without a known cure. It is a progressive disease and it is terminal. The good news is; the effects of the disease can be arrested. The only know ‘cure’ or release of the effects of addiction is abstinence. It is proposed that the addict/alcoholic is given a daily reprieve from the effects of the disease which is based on their spiritual condition of that day. This is where the ‘one day at a time’ concept is introduced. The process of using follows this pattern; a mental obsession sets in and once yielded to (taking the drink or drug) a physical compulsion takes over. This is what is referred to as the phenomenon of craving. Once the substance is introduced to the body, the physiological response is to have more. The addict does not seem to have an ‘off’ button. So, the way around the craving is to avoid the first drink or dose. It is further proposed that the cure to the mental obsession that is followed by a physical craving is a spiritual awakening.

The recovery phenomenon is not just about abstinence. It is about sobriety. Within the context of true recovery, sobriety can be defined as abstinence accompanied by a personal state of “Peace, Joy and Serenity”. Due to the overwhelming emotional and physical nature of addiction, recovery is worked out one day at a time. It is impossible to propose that abstinence is ‘forever’. This is especially true with teenagers and young adults. One month seems like an eternity, and eternity –forever- is inconceivable. Nonetheless, most people can make a commitment of 24-hours. It is also proposed that the quality of each 24-hour day will be in proportion to the quality of our ‘spiritual fitness’ for that day.

As parents we must come to the realization that we cannot keep our children sober. We can neither make our kids use nor not use. This is not in our power. Thus, we are powerless over their ‘state’. The key is in understanding that over which we do have control or power. We have control over our choices, how we respond to the situations in our daily lives that present themselves. There is an underlying assumption with regard to recovery. The assumption is that anyone can recover; to experience peace, joy and serenity, regardless of the situations in our lives.

Herein lies the challenge; how do we, as parents, continue to fulfill our roles as people of ‘authority’ with the inherent responsibilities of parenthood and at the same time become free from the unmanageability that has manifested in our lives? The answer comes from a two-fold strategy. This first part of the strategy is to create a home environment that is supports the recovery process. Suggestions to this can be found in *Beyond the Yellow Brick Road*. Please refer to the footnote for specific text to study and evaluate for your own particular situation<sup>2</sup>. The second part of the strategy is to completely evaluate our role in our situation. This is most effectively done through working our own 12-step program.

As such, we find ourselves here at the first step. We admitted that mind-changing chemicals have made at least part of our lives unmanageable. We are encouraged to get honest about this unmanageability. At the end of this study guide are questions to help us get specific about the unmanageability in our lives with regard to drugs and alcohol.

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<sup>2</sup> *Beyond the Yellow Brick Road*; pages 64-70.

We need to take a keen look at our ‘bottom’. Are we really ‘done’? Have we really had ‘enough’? Are we certain that we are ‘powerless’ over mind-changing chemicals? And, are we truly committed to go to ‘any length necessary’ to get through our process? More about this step can be found in our related support materials. Refer to the footnote<sup>3</sup>.

### ***Three Elements of Relationship Dysfunction***

#### **Control –**

Control is one of the dynamics in our relationship with the addict; we try to control the situation and to control the behavior of the addict. Control often manifests as aggressive, domineering, threatening behaviors on our part. An underlying anger is prevalent in controlling situations. In our attempt to fix the situation or to fix the addict many of us take over the responsibility of the addict’s life. We assert our power as a means of making the addict do what we want them to do. Asserting our power in their lives leads to a resistive and frequently resentful response. Ultimately, when we try to control others they will retaliate. This creates a viscous cycle. The more we try to control the more the addict resists and acts out their resentment. When this happens we intensify our efforts. One reaction fuels the next until things escalate out of control, which is the opposite of what we were trying to achieve in the first place.

#### **Manipulation –**

Similar to control, manipulation is a technique that many of us have resorted to in order to get our children to do what we want. The hallmark of manipulation is trickery. We use mental, emotional and material tricks to effectuate a change. Underlying manipulation is dishonesty. Manipulation can manifest in using guilt to motivate others. Manipulation is often saying one thing but really meaning something else. Another subtle application of manipulation is ‘reverse psychology’. Simply stated, reverse psychology is forward manipulation. Again, the response to manipulation is resentment. Manipulation breeds manipulation. As we use manipulation we are teaching our children how to manipulate.

#### **Denial –**

Denial is looking past a problem. Denial manifests in the form of excuses or rationalizations as to why a situation is the way it is without addressing the real issue. Denial keeps us from taking ownership of our own responsibility in a situation. The problem with denial is that it actually worsens our underlying unease. Denial builds layer upon layer of communication blockage. And, the greater and more prolonged our denial, the more shocking and traumatic is the awakening from denial. Denial is like building a huge tower upon which we stand to see everything but the problem at the foundation of the tower. The higher the ‘tower’ the greater the fall once the tower collapses. One of the prominent activities that denial inspires and motivates is what is referred to as, ‘hitting

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<sup>3</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; pages 21-24 & Paths to Recovery; pages 7-10.

the asphalt'. Those of us who have come through denial have seen how we have placed ourselves between our child and their own personal bottom. We throw ourselves to the asphalt before they fall off their 'bicycles' in order to prevent them from experiencing pain. Beyond the Yellow Brick Road addresses this dynamic. Please refer to the footnote for further study<sup>4</sup>.

***Relief from Dysfunction –***

Control, manipulation and denial are the primary dysfunctional responses we parents fall into when dealing with the addiction of our family member(s). Relief comes when we 'opt out' of these responses in favor of healthy resolutions. Healthy resolutions are: Honesty and Communication. We need to be honest about those things we label as unmanageable.

We need to be honest about the true nature of the disease of addiction. We need to be honest about our true feelings. We need to be honest about what is actually required to experience the peace, joy and serenity we are talking about. And, we need to be honest about how we have tried to use control, manipulation and denial to manage our situation.

Once we have become honest about these things we can enter into a constructive conversation with our suffering family member. We have often heard that communication resolves all problems. This is true. Communication which is based on honesty, love and an attitude of humility can have amazing results.

So, let's get back to the primary objective, to come to terms with our admission of the unmanageability that has manifested in our lives. Remember:

***“To Thine Own Self Be True!”***

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<sup>4</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road – Page 64.

***Step-1 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ What ‘parts’ of my life have become unmanageable?
- ◆ What are the undesirable feelings that arise from this unmanageability?
- ◆ What would the situation look like if it were not unmanageable?
- ◆ How do I define ‘peace, joy and serenity’?
- ◆ Do I understand that addiction / alcoholism is a disease?
- ◆ Do I understand that I cannot cure the disease?
- ◆ How do I feel about addiction being ‘incurable’?
- ◆ Do I try to ‘fix’ things (people and situations)?
- ◆ How have I tried to ‘control’ my addict?
- ◆ Have my effort to control worked?
- ◆ How have I tried to manipulate my addict?
- ◆ Has my manipulation worked?
- ◆ How have I manifested denial with regard to my situation?
- ◆ Am I still in denial?
- ◆ Am I willing to work a program of my own for the resolution of my unmanageability?
- ◆ What does enabling mean?
- ◆ What does ‘powerless’ mean?
- ◆ What do I have ‘power’ over?
- ◆ Can I imagine having a ‘higher power’?
- ◆ What does ‘surrender’ mean to me?

***Suggestions for Working Step-1:***

(It will be most beneficial to write down your thoughts about the following topics)

Take some time to reflect on how mind-changing chemicals (including alcohol) have made part(s) of my life unmanageable. Then write about the specifics surrounding unmanageability.

Define for yourself the following terms: Peace – Joy - Serenity

Describe what your ‘bottom’ is. Where do you draw the line? What are the things that will not be tolerated/accepted? Take some time to define the basic issues that impede your peace, joy and serenity and then write about those issues.

What do I do to be ‘controlling’? List how I try to control people and situations.

How do I manipulate? When have I said one thing but really meant another thing?

How has denial been perpetuated in my situation? List the specific things I have denied and how I have denied them.

How have I tried to fix situations that were not of my making?

Do I often say ‘yes’ when I really want to say ‘no’? List instances of this.

What am I doing currently to meet my own physical, emotional and spiritual needs? List.

Do I have power over other people? If so, list specifically what power I have. If not, describe why not.

***Looking forward to Step-2:***

Step-2 is about being in the company of ‘winners’ in order to grow. We will be discussing what defines a ‘winner’ and who the ‘winners’ in our lives are in addition to how to increase the winners in our lives. One of our winning team members is our Sponsor. We will also be talking about including our ‘higher power’ as one of our winners. As such a bit of thought and reflection on what a ‘higher power’ means to us will be important as we move into step three.

## STEP-2

### **Full Circle Step-2 Text:**

***“We have found it necessary to stick with winners in order to grow.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-2 Text:**

***“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”***

Pre-study Note: Full Circle has incorporated an important step for adolescent / young adult recovery; the necessity of keeping the proper company throughout the initial recovery process. The A.A. and Al-Anon Step-2 will be carried into Step-3.

The concept of Step-2 can be summed up with the following phrase; “If you sit in a barber shop long enough, you’re bound to get a haircut.” The agreement our children enter into during the out-patient phase of the program is to completely disassociate themselves with their former friends. This is to keep them entirely focused on their recovery. If the child is hanging out with others that are using, they will ultimately use again. Because the nature of addiction is ‘cunning, powerful and baffling’, it is critical to not be exposed to those who would encourage using. This is a disease that tells the afflicted that they do not have a disease. And, people who are using dislike having others around them that do not use. Even former friends that do not use usually don’t have a problem if someone else does use and therefore will not influence our children to not use<sup>5</sup>.

Let’s take a look at what is defined as a ‘winner’. The Full Circle definition is: A person that does not allow us to get stuck. One of the objectives in the recovery process is to reshape how the addict thinks about things. People who are not in recovery really do not know the dynamics of recovery and although perhaps they are well meaning can actually hinder the recovery process. The recovering addict will be challenged to shift their views; to exit from ‘victim’ mentality into taking ownership of their own state. It is easy to get into mental ruts and a winner assists the recovering addict to climb out of them and grow through the tough challenges encountered in recovery.

A winner is also not a user. As parents we are relieved that this is a ‘rule’ to the recovery program. We really don’t like many of the kids our children were hanging out with. The Full Circle program is based on enthusiastic recovery within a positive peer group. Only a recovering person (someone who has ‘been there’) can assist another person with recovery.

It must be defined that not being a winner does not mean that that person is a loser. It takes a commitment to growth and forward progress to be considered a winner. We are not placing judgments upon a person that is not a winner. It is simply important to

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<sup>5</sup> Step Two found in Beyond The Yellow Brick Road; pages 122 - 124

recognize that the people in our lives will influence the quality of our life's experience. If we want to get the most out of life we should be discerning about who is influencing us.

### ***Being a Winner for our Children***

Even though we may be powerless over our child's 'state', we can be and are a powerful force in their life. As we move out of dysfunction we are better able to support their process. As we become stable in our experience, as we work through our dysfunction, as we experience serenity in our lives, we radiate this to all those around us. Ultimately, we can become like a pillar of stability. We can truly be a point of reference and a source of safety for our child.

This, however, is based on the quality of our own program. We have the opportunity to be in our 'center', remaining in a state where we are 'true to our own selves'. There seems to be a connection between the quality of the parent-child relationship and the quality of the parents' personal program. Deep understanding breeds deep compassion. This compassion is a powerful thing and has a strong effect in the relationship.

It must be cautioned that not everything in your relationship with your child needs to revolve around program related issues. Sometimes parents think that everything the child is going through has to do with their recovery. This is not the case. These kids are also moving along in their maturation process. They will experience challenges that are just like any other person. Being sensitive to what is really going on is helpful. Again, communication resolves all problems. Honest communication that is conducted in love with an attitude of humility will resolve a myriad of issues.

### ***Our Winners***

***Be your own winner first.*** It has been said that most of our conversations we conduct are held with ourselves. If this is the case, then we should be aware of how our 'self-talk' is being conducted. What is the quality of that inner dialogue? Are we being positive influences to our self? We can improve the quality of our experience by improving the quality of what we continually tell ourselves.

***Members of the parent group can be winners for us.*** Take some time to get to know some of the parents you are in fellowship with. Our group has a phone list for a reason. Challenge yourself to call someone on the list once a week. Meet up with a parent for lunch every so often. One-on-one time is a positive way to expand your Full Circle experience.

***Get a sponsor.*** Of all the resources we have in Full Circle the most dynamic is having a sponsor and nurturing that relationship. 'Real' step work is done with a sponsor. Our growth in this program cannot be done alone. This is not a solo flight. The dynamic that makes a program like A.A. work is that the only person who can help an alcoholic recover is another alcoholic is also true with parental recovery. People who do not have children who are suffering from addiction do not know what we are going through.



We parents of the group do know. It is tempting to fall into the mindset that this recovery thing is not about us. It is. Working the steps with a sponsor does not mean that every tiny detail of our life will be pulled out and examined. Working the steps with a sponsor is done at our own pace with our desired outcome in mind. Having a sponsor and working the steps will have a profound effect on our children in addition to the profound growth and healing that we will personally experience. Do not discount this. Amazing things develop by placing our attention on your personal needs. If we do not have a sponsor and are thinking about getting one, refer to the supplement to this study; “Getting a Sponsor”.

***Your child can be one of the best winners on your team.*** When we have made a commitment to the process and we are learning about recovery our children become very interested in our process. They are steeped in the program and are moving in a bold, new direction. We can actually approach them for their advice and their ‘take’ on a step. Having meaningful conversations with our kids is an excellent thing indeed.

Ultimately, your most reliable winner will be your ‘Higher Power’. The discussion around our ‘Higher Power’ will begin with the next step, Step-3. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the quality of our daily experience will be in direct relation to the quality of our spiritual condition, our connection and surrender to our ‘Higher Power’.

### ***Staying ‘Unstuck’***

The best way to ‘not get stuck’ is by keeping in motion, keeping our momentum. The program speaks of our progress rather than perfection. Going to the parent meetings, talking with our sponsor, having friendships with other parents and working the steps will keep us in motion. Being consistent is of great value. We simply need to keep making steps, even small ones, and we will avoid getting stuck.

And if we find that we are getting bogged down, call someone. Get together with another parent for lunch and have a good chat. Talk about what you are experiencing in the parent meeting; keep the focus on your experience, what you are going through.

Keeping a journal about our process can also be a great benefit. Writing is a powerful thing. Simply write down your thoughts, it does not matter if they make sense, just write. Write until nothing more comes to mind. Just start writing about the feeling you are having or your impression of your current state. It may only take a few minutes of writing to clear even big blockages out of the way.

***Step-2 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ What makes a winner?
- ◆ Am I a winner for myself?
- ◆ Where do I need to grow?
- ◆ Are there areas of my life where I am stuck?
- ◆ Have my words or actions kept my child stuck?
- ◆ What can I do right now to be a better winner?
- ◆ What phrases should I eliminate from my daily conversations?
- ◆ Is there one thing I could do right now to enhance my child's experience?

Add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-2:***

Take some time to reflect on who the ‘winners’ in my life are. List them.

Are there areas in my life that are in need of enhancing? Meaning, what can I do to be a better winner myself?

If I had a sponsor, what would my expectations from a sponsor be?

On a scale of 0 – 3 (Zero being frozen in time and Three being in full forward motion) where am I in my current life experience?

Think of all the people that I know in the group. List three people that I think I could have a meaningful conversation with about my current life experience.

Call one of the three people on that list to see how they are doing.

Think about areas in the program where you might be experiencing some degree of ‘stuckness’. List them and review them and then ask your child for help to get less stuck with one of those areas.

What is the single most self-depreciating thought that consistently reoccurs in my inner dialogue? Write down a simple counter phrase that you will endeavor to repeat to yourself whenever the depreciating thought comes up.

If I were (or currently am) a sponsor, what one thing would I encourage my sponsee to do to enhance their Full Circle experience?

Do I have a sponsor? If not, why not? Is there someone in the group who could offer me something that would enhance my growth?

Is there someone in the group who could benefit from my experience?

***Looking forward to Step-3:***

Step-3 is about restoring sanity into our lives. We will be discussing how our own best efforts only got us so far. This step offers us a new and dynamic way to get out of the insanity that addiction has presented us. Step-3 offers us hope by introducing a ‘Higher Power’ into the situation. We will be looking at what a ‘Higher Power’ is for us. We will also talk about the difference between religion and spirituality. Take some time to review your work (from Step-1) on making a survey of your current spiritual state. We will be talking in terms of ‘God’ as we understand God (our personal concept). This is very personal and there is no value judgment placed on our own personal ‘Higher Power’.

## STEP-3

### **Full Circle Step-3 Text:**

***“We realize that a Higher Power, expressed through our love for each other, can help restore us to sanity.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-2 Text:**

***“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”***

Pre-study Note: Due to the fact that Full Circle has incorporated an extra step in their program, until step seven, A.A. and Al-Anon steps run one step out of sync.

Step-3 brings us to two important ideas; ‘Higher Power’ and ‘Sanity’. In *Beyond the Yellow Brick Road*, Bob Meehan states that his approach to rehabilitation relies upon spirituality<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, within the context of recovery, spirituality must be completely segregated from religious interpretation. As such, all 12-step programs refer to the spiritual dynamic in terms of a ‘Higher Power’. For the recovering addict it must be noted that recovery has rarely been accomplished through personal effort alone. If this were the case there would be no need for recovery programs.

The Full Circle model proposes that a ‘Higher Power’ as expressed through our love for each other, can help restore us to sanity. This, for many people, is an easy way to focus on a Higher Power without introducing preconceived notions about God. For many children and young adults the concept of God is baffling and nebulous. Most of their concepts about God are those that have been handed down and do not necessarily spring from a deep personal experience. The A.A. ‘Big Book’ states in the chapter titled; ‘We Agnostics’; “If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.” Furthermore, the text reads; “If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism (addiction), many of us would have recovered long ago.... Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.”<sup>7</sup> And finally the text goes on to say; “Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another’s conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him.”<sup>8</sup>

### ***Love of the Group***

Using the group or ‘our love for each other’, as our Higher Power was originally proposed in the book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* where it states; “We saw that we were powerless over alcohol, but we also perceived that faith of some kind, if only in A.A. itself, is possible to anyone.”<sup>9</sup> Within the Full Circle program, as one of the main keys to successful recovery, our children are admonished to disassociate from their former friends and to allow the

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<sup>6</sup> *Beyond the Yellow Brick Road*; pg. 125

<sup>7</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous*; pg.’s 44-45

<sup>8</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous*, pg. 46

<sup>9</sup> *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pg. 34

power of the group, the love for each other within the group, to become the initial power that will activate transformation from a using mentality to one of a preferred state of sobriety. The group consciousness, as a sober entity, is the drawing force that keeps the perspective of sobriety in the forefront of all activities. We must refer back to Step One, having admitted that we were powerless over the effects of mind-changing chemicals, that at least parts of our lives had become unmanageable. It is only through a Power ‘greater than ourselves’ that any significant progress can be made in recovery and further, to restore sanity into our lives.

Simply stated, neither our children nor we could beat addiction through our own efforts. A new approach needed to be employed. Twelve Step recovery is based completely upon the premise that sobriety can only be achieved through a program and process which is spiritually based. We are not required to have a fully functional definition of God or how the universe works. We need only to be open-minded to the concept that a power greater than ourselves can (and will) restore us to sanity.

For our children, this will be a challenging prospect. Much of their ongoing work and attention will revolve around establishing a relationship with a Higher Power of their own understanding. It is proposed that the quality of today’s sobriety is in direct proportion to the quality of one’s spiritual condition for that day. Again, the dynamic of one-day-at-a-time becomes ever more relevant. Sobriety is much more than abstaining from mind-altering chemicals. Furthermore, sobriety includes sanity. Our experience today is rooted and grounded in applied spirituality.

For us as parents we too are challenged to find our sanity, to have our sanity restored through a power greater than ourselves. We remind ourselves that our best efforts to manage the effects of our children’s use of mind-changing chemicals, including alcohol, did not work. Although many of us have religious or spiritual backgrounds, we may not have been able to apply our beliefs to the recovery phenomenon. For us, being involved with the parent group allows us an environment where we can be completely honest about our experience. As a group, each of us individually brings together our common plight, where we can share our experiences without judgment. Each of us has experienced the spectrum of emotions associated with having an addicted child. Unlike someone without direct knowledge of what addiction in the family is like, we understand and can offer a safe haven for our own process to occur. There is a bond of love and compassion that weaves us together. Our group exists and thrives because of our commitment to one another. As we share our challenges we receive back the ‘experience, strength and hope’ of other parents who have already gone through similar situations. We learn and grow and then we become empowered to transform the insane into the sane.

### ***Good Orderly Direction***

One of the acronyms we use for GOD is Good Orderly Direction. The dynamic of our group allows for keen insight into how we should proceed when we are confronted with certain situations. As we receive feedback on how to deal with new ways of interacting with our children we are initiating change. Change precedes transformation. Our goal is to apply new strategies based on functional responses that will heal and transform the entire family structure. Many times the changes we are talking about are simply a matter of perception. Dr. Wayne Dyer

is quoted as having said; “When we change the way we look at things, the things we look at change.”<sup>10</sup> As we incorporate these changes and the changes bear fruit in our lives we will have gone through a transformation. Once we have become transformed we need never go back to old and dysfunctional ways of living; or more specifically, old ways of reacting. One of the hallmarks of having sanity restored in our lives is that we begin to respond to situations opposed to reacting to them.

Having the power of the group as our ‘Higher Power’ is only a starting point. We will be encouraged to develop a close and intimate relationship with the God of our own understanding. Each of the twelve steps directs us to this outcome. It must be clarified that we are entering into a spiritual experience opposed to a religious experience. An old A.A. phrase offers this observation: “Religion is for those who don’t want to go to hell; spirituality is for those who have already been there and don’t wish to return.” We who are affected by addiction are offered a unique challenge. We are challenged to live our lives along spiritual lines in order to maintain our sanity. From the perspective of the suffering addict/alcoholic it is a bit more drastic. Untreated, addiction is a terminal disease. The practicing addict/alcoholic has quite literally been given a ‘death sentence’. However, if the addict wholeheartedly commits to a life of sobriety, one day at a time, which is founded on the platform of spirituality, that sentence will be commuted. The reprieve is a ‘sentence to growth’.

## **Conclusion –**

In summary, although we may be powerless over the effects of addiction in our lives, we are not helpless. Employing the power of the God of our own understanding, we change our perspective and our tactics which in turn brings about a miraculous transformation. This step is about open-mindedness. We become willing through open-mindedness to allow a power greater than ourselves to restore sanity to our lives. The opportunity to bring our spirituality into a daily practice yields the fruits of sobriety; peace, joy and serenity. All of the issues that were undesirable in our lives can, and will, be transmuted into wholeness and sanity.

Eckhart Tolle says about acceptance and action in our life situations; “...leave the situation or accept it. All else is madness.”<sup>11</sup> We do not have to stay in dysfunctional behavior patterns, we can change our approach and if we find that we must continue on in a certain situation, we must accept it. Here, in the now we can access the transformative power of God, as we understand God.

Our experience, strength and hope will help others in the group. As a group we become part of a power that can be greater than the resources of a single individual. The concept is ‘synergy’, that is to say; the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Through our collective experience we will have guidance to proceed with the ‘next best action’ and to have offered to us ‘good orderly direction.’ All we need to do is to become willing to allow the sanity to be restored.

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<sup>10</sup> Dr. Wayne Dyer – From the CD “The Power of Intention”.

<sup>11</sup> Eckhart Tolle – The Power of Now; pg. 68

***Step-3 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ Define ‘Sanity’?
- ◆ How has the ‘group’ been like a ‘power greater than myself’?
- ◆ What instances have I tried to restore sanity in my life that has not worked?
- ◆ How have I received G.O.D. (good orderly direction) from the group?
- ◆ Does the concept of being ‘willing’ and ‘open-minded’ offer a new dynamic into the process?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-3:***

Looking honestly at my current life situation; how would I rate my personal spirituality?

Am I satisfied with my current spiritual experience in life?

Define what my 'Higher Power' really is; right here, right now.

Is my definition of my Higher Power the same as my experience of my Higher Power?

Define 'sanity'. (list 12 examples/definitions of sanity)

Are there areas of my life that do not meet my definition of sanity?

Do I trust that a power greater than myself can completely restore sanity to all areas of my life?

During this process, am I willing to 'Let Go and Let God'?

Are there areas of my life where I am not willing to "Let Go and Let God"?

Take a few minutes and write out a response to the following: Ideally, my spiritual experience of life looks like.....

***Looking forward to Step-4:***

**Step-4** is about making a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand God. We became willing to allow a 'power greater than ourselves' to restore sanity into our lives and now we come to a decision. The decision boils down to this; are we going to make all this happen through our efforts or are we going to turn things over to our higher power? In this step we will further discuss the dynamic of "Letting go and letting God". This is the step in the A.A. Big Book where the serenity prayer is introduced.

***"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference."***



## STEP 4

### **Full Circle Step-4 Text:**

***“We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-3 Text:**

***“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”***

Pre-study Note: Due to the fact that Full Circle has incorporated an extra step in their program, until step seven, A.A. and Al-Anon steps run one step out of sync.

Step-4 ushers in a commitment to the spiritual dynamic of recovery. It is also the ‘W’ in the H.O.W. of recovery, Willingness. With regard to our children, in Beyond the Yellow Brick Road, Bob Meehan says; “Anyone who has ever been addicted to a drug knows exactly what I mean when I say that the addict gives the power over his life to a chemical. He loses control, allowing his life to be run by a power greater than himself. Clearly, addiction and the belief in God has much in common.”<sup>12</sup> He goes on to say; “Quite obviously, Steps Three and Four initiate the spiritual aspect of recovery. Step Three requires that the abuser recognize that Good Orderly Direction from the positive peer group represents a power that can help him distinguish between right and wrong for himself. Step Four requires that the abuser make a decision to let the power of the group be the major influence in his life. That doesn’t mean he loses anything of himself. It simply means that when faced with decisions (e.g., ‘Do I take this drug or not?’ ‘Can I hang around with such and such or not?’), the abuser must depend upon the positive force of the group to help him choose between right and wrong. The group doesn’t make the decisions for him, but its power helps him make the right choice for himself.”<sup>13</sup>

Our children will continue to be encouraged to deal with the dynamic of turning their lives and their will over to the care of God as they understand God. For many of them, this will be the power of the group. Prior to being released from the outpatient program, the child will be expected to show compliance with this step. One of the objectives of the outpatient program is that the participant shows competency with the first four steps. Step Four prepares the way for our children to enter into the fifth step, Moral Inventory. The inventory can be intense and without a ‘power greater than ourselves’ to turn these issues over to, there can be a great avoidance in progressing through the remaining steps.

Before we look at how this applies to us as parents it is interesting to note that according to a national pole, ninety-one percent of Americans believe in God. While six

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<sup>12</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road; pg 128

<sup>13</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road; pg 129

percent are agnostic and only three percent are atheistic.<sup>14</sup> It should therefore not be a difficult transition into this Step. Step Four is about making a decision, the prelude to action. We are reminded that our own best efforts were inadequate in relieving the negative effects that addiction has had in our lives. We were challenged to be openminded regarding our Higher Power being able to restore sanity to our lives and now we make a decision to turn our lives and our will over to the care of God as we understand God. In the Al-Anon book a simple example is given in putting this step into perspective; “Three frogs sat on a lily pad. One made a decision to jump off. How many frogs are left? The answer is three. The frog merely made the decision to jump – he hasn’t jumped yet!”<sup>15</sup> What we are looking for is a decision. This is important because action is always preceded by a decision, regardless if it is conscious or unconscious.

### ***Making a Decision –***

So, what decision are we making? We are making the decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding. To many of us, this may seem a bit overwhelming. As such, we start with the immediate issue, the addiction of our children. We are powerless over our children’s addictions. We cannot get them sober. Our first action is to turn at least this one issue over to the care of our Higher Power. It is important to remember that recovery, even ‘parental recovery’ is a spiritual process. Our goal is sobriety; not just living an abstinent life, but of emotional and spiritual sobriety. We know that the fruits of sobriety are; peace, joy and serenity. As we turn the issues of our lives that disturb our peace, rob our joy and impair our serenity over to our Higher Power, we spend less time and effort in worry and unease. Simply stated, there are things that are out of our control. Therefore we can simply say; “I can’t, God can, I’ll let him.”

Practicing Step Four (Full Circle) is like the opening of a door which to all appearances is still closed and locked. All we need is a key, and the decision to swing the door open. There is only one key, Willingness. Once unlocked by willingness the door almost swings open of itself, and looking through it, we shall see a pathway besides which is an inscription. It reads: “This is the way to a faith that works.”<sup>16</sup>

Further in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions it states; “Once we have come into agreement with these ideas, it is really easy to begin the practice of Step Three. In all times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in the stillness simply say: ‘God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine, be done.’”<sup>17</sup>

We can now take on situations which used to baffle us. Our mind and our perceptions are limited. Sometimes our judgment is clouded with residual dysfunction; control, manipulation, hurt, anger, false expectations, denial, etc. When we operate from a base of old information, judging today’s events with yesterday’s information, our

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<sup>14</sup> Newsweek April 9, 2007; “Religion: Is God Real?”

<sup>15</sup> Paths to Recovery; pg 23

<sup>16</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; pg. 34

<sup>17</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; pages 40 - 41

results can be quite disappointing. Rearranging our focus, turning our intentions from ‘self’ orientation to ‘spirit’ orientation will bring about refreshing and liberating outcomes.

***Easing God Out – E.G.O. –***

This leads us into the business of looking at self-will in comparison to God’s will. Self-will can be described as Ego. One of the prevalent Full Circle acronyms for E.G.O. is; Easing God Out. Herein lies our challenge for a paradigm shift, moving from ego centered will to one of being surrendered to our Higher Power. The following quote puts into perspective this view of spiritual orientation:

***“You are not a human being in search of a spiritual experience. You are a spiritual being immersed in a human experience” Pierre Teilhard de Chardin<sup>18</sup>***

We naturally will ask, ‘What about my say in all of this, after all it is my life.’ Are we to deny ourselves and take up a holy crusade or become barefooted mystics roaming the earth in search of God? Not necessarily and not likely. What we are really talking about is faith. We are exercising a spiritual law, a dynamic that actually works. There is a tremendous, creative power in the universe. This power is much more effective when we cooperate with it. We align our will with that of our Higher Power. It has been said that; “Faith is the evidence of things hoped for, the substance of things not seen.”<sup>19</sup>

We can become overwhelmed with all the ‘conditions’ the ego throws at us. Many of us are negatively predispositioned. Our ego driven world has conditioned us to believe all sorts of limiting and self-sabotaging things. This step allows us to transcend our restrictive, non-productive and often fear oriented state. Therefore we make a decision to turn our limited will and the direction of our lives to the care of God as we understand God.

We should remember that there is a difference between our life (our true essence, what we really are) and our life situations. In so much as we are spiritual beings our quest is to break through the ego and allow the divine to manifest. In so doing, natural law, the infinite creative power of the universe, the realm of all possibilities is then given authority and ultimate responsibility for the results. An interesting thing about how our Higher Power works is that we do not need to know how our issues are going to be worked out, that is the job of the ‘universe’ (God, Higher Power, Supreme Being, etc). The ‘how’ is God’s job, the ‘what’ is our job. That is to say, what are we turning over and what will we do in response to the impulse or inspiration that comes from this form of surrender? An old A.A. phrase says; “To win the war we must surrender the battle.”

In summary; step by step, issue by issue we exercise our faith by turning our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding. It only takes a few moments to do this. As we find ourselves falling into undesirable behaviors, negative emotions, a fearful disposition, we let go and let God. We are now entering into an intentional life.

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<sup>18</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin – French geologist, priest, philosopher and mystic – 1881 - 1955

<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)

We are aware that we are no longer a victim. We have a new tool, a new power to assist in our transformation. When we become aware that our state is undesirable, we only need to utter a few simple words to our Creator. Even the word ‘help’ works. Regardless of our spiritual orientation, this power is ours and will activate the change which precedes transformation in our life. The impending Steps call us to action. This action will require an element of fearlessness. The empowerment that comes with surrender on this level will cause us to have incredible results with the remaining steps. We are not alone; we do not need to have all the answers.

***Third Step Prayer –***

The following is from the A.A. Big Book regarding Step-3 / 4: “We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him:

**‘God, I offer myself to thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.**

**Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.**

**Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life.**

**May I do Thy will always!’**

We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Alcoholic Anonymous; pg. 63

***Step-4 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ How do I feel about turning my life over to a Higher Power for guidance?
- ◆ How do I know who or what my Higher Power is?
- ◆ Am I willing to try to turn my problems over and if so, what could help me to be more willing?
- ◆ How well do I make decisions?
- ◆ How might this Step allow me to keep my hands off of problems and situations created by others?
- ◆ When I 'Let Go and Let God' am I willing to act on the guidance I receive?
- ◆ How has my ego gotten in the way of a good thing?
- ◆ What can I do to stop myself from taking my will back?
- ◆ What can I do to try to see others as God sees them?
- ◆ How can I let my loved ones find their own life paths as I am finding mine?
- ◆ How can I express God's will in my actions and words toward others, including the addict?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-4:***

Write at least one page on what my Higher Power is to me?

Write an affirmative statement that reflects my decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of the God of my understanding?

List the areas of my life where I might have difficulty in turning control over.

Can I make time each day to consciously turn something over to my Higher Power?

List what I am ‘willing’ to do or ‘willing’ to turn over to God.

What simple thing can I do to acknowledge God in others?

How do I define ego?

List situations or events where my ego definitely got in the way of a positive outcome.

***Looking forward to Step-5:***

**Step-5** is about making a fearless and searching moral inventory of ourselves. The activity is like a house cleaning. In life we tend to carry around things that weigh us down. Some people call this ‘baggage’. The spiritual life allows us to walk free, to face any situation, to be able to look anyone in the face with complete equanimity. Step Five allows us to take care of our unfinished business and to live a life without any regrets.

## STEP 5

### **Full Circle Step-5 Text:**

***“We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-4 Text:**

***“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”***

Pre-study Note: Due to the fact that Full Circle has incorporated an extra step in their program, until step seven, A.A. and Al-Anon steps run one step out of sync.

Step-5 is often accompanied with the exclamation; “Oh my, what an order!”

To work Step-5 effectively we need to break it down into its parts. And, we need to realize that the premise of this step is that what we are dealing with are basic human instincts. We were given instincts for a reason, mostly good in nature. It is when these instincts are given excessive allowances that dysfunctional behavior takes place. When our human instincts are allowed to be over-indulged or one particular instinct becomes the excessive driving force of our lives, all sorts of undesirable results can manifest.

This is a step that covers a lot of ground and there are numerous ways to approach it. This study will outline an approach used by many 12-Step sponsors. Regardless, let us look at some preliminary aspects before we get into the study.

This is the first step that our children will be expected to work outside of the outpatient program. By now they will have gotten a sponsor and established a safe and trusting relationship with them. This step is probably the most important step they, and we, will take in order to achieve sobriety (opposed to abstinence alone). Step Five is a fact-finding mission where the conditions and causes of addiction and use are fully discovered. This is also the step where most people ‘bog’ down and there is a huge risk of getting stuck. As such, it has been strongly recommended that this step be entered into without delay. This is one of the reasons the step states that we made a fearless and searching moral inventory of ourselves.

It is easy to see how this applies to our children; after all they are the ones who were addicted. They are the ones who lied, stole, cheated, manipulated, and broke the law. The addict’s recovery process most certainly requires that this step be taken. Some of us, as parents, want our children to get right into this step for our own reasons. Sometimes we can feel that they owe us something, maybe an apology or an amend for their behavior. It should also be noted that our children may take a while before they get into this step. We should therefore allow them their space and not try to take inventory for them or dictate when and how they should do this step. The best way to motivate them is to do our own and let the fruits of our work be its own example.

***What About Us? –***

So, what about us? What about our role in all of this? Before we get into the substance of this step let's cultivate our work with the following concepts:

“There ain't no victims, only volunteers.”<sup>21</sup> Bob Meehan

“Enlightenment is simply a process of ongoing disillusionment.” James Arthur Ray

“The significant problems we face can never be solved at the level of thinking that created them.” Albert Einstein

The A.A. Big Book says; “Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves.”<sup>22</sup>

Upon entering into Step-5, let us remember the advances we made in Step-4. We turned our will and our lives over to the care of God. We are in good hands. This step need not be overwhelming. The dynamic is quite simple; we are cleaning our house, cleaning our side of the street. The ultimate object is to be able to ‘look anyone in the eye without reservation’, to be on equal ground with all. Step Five informs us that our problems are basically of our own making. More importantly, this step allows us to live a life without regrets. Imagine that, no regrets, no baggage, no emotional encumbrances. We can clearly see how this is the foundation of peace, joy and serenity. We are now entering into the realm of emotional sobriety.

Many of us are aware of the ‘universal law’ or concept, which states; “Reality Follows Perception”. As such, our reality today, our current life situation has been designed and created by us; consciously and unconsciously. Here and now we have the opportunity to look at the pathology of our own behavior, how we react and respond; how we have created our lives. As we conduct our inventory we will begin to see patterns. Once we identify and become aware of what we are doing and how we are doing it, we can employ different strategies. We are now living a ‘self-examined’ and intentional life.

It must be noted that the best way to do this step, the key as it were, is to take action and do it. It is strongly recommended that this step be done with the guidance of a sponsor. Many people, left to their own devices, employ sophisticated strategies of ‘creative avoidances’. Again to be noted is that there is no one single way to complete this step. Some of us were methodical and ‘matter of fact’ in our approach, others of us

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<sup>21</sup> Bumper Stickers; pg 66

<sup>22</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous; pg. 58



were more ‘journalistic’ in our applications. However, many of the issues that arise deserve the attention that can come from writing.

***Collision of Instincts –***

Step-5 deals with our basic instincts that have ‘run wild’. All of our dysfunctional behaviors can be boiled down to how the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions spells it out: “To avoid falling into confusion over the names these defects should be called, let’s take a universally recognized list of major human failings – the Seven Deadly Sins of pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. It is not by accident that pride heads the procession. For pride, leading to self-justification, and always spurred by conscious or unconscious fears, is the basic breeder of most human difficulties, the chief block to true progress. Pride lures us into making demands upon ourselves or upon others which cannot be met without perverting or misusing our God-given instincts. When the satisfaction of our instincts for sex, security, and society becomes the sole object of our lives, then pride steps in to justify our excesses.”<sup>23</sup>

So, we are looking at several areas of our lives. We start with our resentments. We then list our fears. After that we look at our relationship dynamics. Then we look at our character defects. And lest we worry, we are not digging up things that are truly dead and buried. If an issue is resolved we keep it that way. However, if an issue still has energy, it is still an issue. Lastly, we list our assets; the good things about us. It is important to harmonize all of these issues with our strengths for they ultimately are what we will continue to build our lives upon.

***Getting Started*** – Please reference the supplementary guide for working Step-5.

The easiest way to begin to see these patterns in our lives is to start with our resentments. First of all we list anyone we hold resentments against. We can also write down situations or circumstances which cause us to become resentful. These issues or situations can be called our ‘triggers’; the things that set us off. It is beneficial to start listing all of the people and situations that set us off before we look at the specifics of each incident. Once we start with one thing it often leads to another. When we feel that we have exhausted the list of resentments we go back to the beginning, the first resentment on our list, and fill out the rest of the columns. We look at who we are resentful toward, what the situation was and what our predominant emotion was. At this point we will not get into the element of our role in the situation; that comes last. We take time to list out the situations and emotions as related to each resentment. Once that is complete for all the people and situations on the list we can move on to what our role in the event was. Please refer to Diagram 1 in the supplement.

Evaluating our role in each of these situations will require honesty and deep reflection. Perhaps our role in a particular event was that we were simply passive and allowed something to be done to us. Perhaps we were controlling and the situation was retaliation against us. Each of us has a different pathology and we should go through our list with a certain amount of detachment. This step is not about casting judgments; it is

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<sup>23</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; pages 48 & 49

about seeing what is there and identifying it. Our personal inventory is much like a business inventory, we take stock of what is there and list out what we have, good and bad.

As previously stated, the first part of inventory is listing our resentments. This is often referred to as our 'grudge' list. We list our resentments and then we look at what our role and our underlying motivations and dysfunctions were. These will be discovered by following this process. We take Number 1 of the emotions on our resentment list.

This concept can be clarified by the following: "We are not looking to answer our questions; rather, we are questioning our answers."<sup>24</sup>

***Example Process –***

From Diagram 1, Resentment 1 Let's work this through:

The question is posed, 'I feel unappreciated and this makes me feel resentful because...?'

Answer: "...because I work hard and do a great job and I am not acknowledged by my boss."

Question: "And why is it important for me to be acknowledged by this person?"

Answer: "Because I am a person who has worth and he is supposed to recognize my value."

Question: "And when other people do not recognize my value I feel what?"

Answer: "I feel rejected."

Question: "And why does being rejected make me feel bad?"

Answer: "Being rejected makes me feel disconnected and alone."

Question: "And what am I disconnected from, alone without what?"

Answer: "From something that makes me feel safe and nourished."

Question: "And what would happen to me if I went unnourished?"

Answer: "I would die."

Question: "Am I afraid of this?"

Answer: "Yes."

Obviously, this is an extreme working out of the example. We are looking for reoccurring patterns and as such we take this process through with each of our resentments/emotions.

This answer, the fear that manifests, then goes onto our fears list. After we have gone through our resentments we take a look at our fears. Fear is one of the most powerful motivators in existence. Fear will have been a predominant factor in many, if not most, of our dysfunctional behaviors. Fears may be based on real or

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<sup>24</sup> Don Myers: Steering Committee – North Older Parents Group (His motto for his personal business)

imagined situations and events. Fears are often rooted in past situations that no longer apply. The 'fear' list should include everything we can think of that causes us anxiety or creates a feeling of being unsafe. Once this list is made we then take a deeper look at the fear. We take the first fear and ask ourselves, "I have this fear because...?" Once we have come up with the 'because' we ask again, "And this is because...?" We take this all the way to the foundational fear.

***Following our Issues –***

Ultimately, our objective is to take our issues and follow them to the source. If we had a plant and saw that its leaves were falling off, withered and we realized that this was due to dehydration; it would be silly to water the leaves to solve the problem. Of course we would water the roots. Literally, we would go to the root of the problem. The same is with our own personal dysfunctions. Treating the symptom will not bring about healing. When we look at the symptoms we can then go to deeper and more subtle levels to administer the treatment.

Now we enter into the realm of relationships. Please refer to DIAGRAM 3 in the Step-5 supplement. Often times when we are severely influenced by dysfunctional behavior we affect those whom we are in relationship with. Sometimes there is damage that has been caused. This is a tricky portion of the inventory, especially for us parents. Nonetheless, if there are unresolved relationship issues it is recommended to list them and ultimately deal with them. Once again, the objective is to clear any wreckage from our past.

This leads us to the part of our inventory where we take a look at our defects of character. Please refer to the Supplement to Step-5, DIAGRAM 4. Again, these 'defects' are those natural instincts that have been overindulged. Since our involvement with the Full Circle Parent Group we have continually asked ourselves the question as to what our role is in all of this. Being completely candid, as we look at our issues as they pertain to our children, we are also being challenged to look at all the issues of our lives.

So, at first glance the seven deadly sins of pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth may seem pretty harsh. It is important to understand that these are merely categories that will help us to be honest about our lives. Not every one of these will apply to us. But, left to our own devices, we will have the tendency to avoid rather than to confront. As such, these categories of defects are there for us to look at so that we may be complete and thorough with our work. On the diagram, fill out instances where any of these issues still apply in your life and keep you from your peace, joy and serenity. Once listed, as with the rest of the inventory items, they will be dealt with appropriately.

The 'suggestions' from the 12-Steps is that we are to enter into a spiritually based life. This process of evaluation and self-discovery is a very spiritual process. We can applaud ourselves that we are boldly progressing with our self-actualized lives. And last, but certainly not least, are our strengths. On DIAGRAM 5 list out all the good things that make you who you are. Here we bring into balance the whole picture of what makes us up. Many of us are generous, spiritual, humorous, caring, positive, supportive encouraging, happy, diligent, trustworthy,

loving, etc. Take the appropriate amount of time to allow yourself to really look at the positive things that make you who you are. This is very important.

***Conclusion –***

Now what? Here we have a great big pile of stuff. As we stated in the beginning of this step, we are not going to resolve all of this in one step. This is a process of solutions. If we take a careful look at the steps in general we see that they follow a pattern. First we are faced with our problems; we are powerless over (whatever), that at least parts of our lives have become unmanageable. We are then provided a solution in the next three steps. We are confronting problem areas with steps five and six. In step seven we are offered solutions. In steps eight and nine we are again facing our problems. Steps ten, eleven and twelve offer us more solutions and resolution. In all reality, the work we are commencing in Step Five is given an additional four steps to work all this ‘stuff’ out. Let’s remember the phrase; “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” This is totally appropriate with regard to Step-5. Once again it is important to work this step with a sponsor or someone who has worked it already and is someone you trust.

We are taking a complete inventory of what makes us up, what we are all about. We are pulling things out and looking at them to see if they serve us or if we need to discard them. It is that simple. Once we have all of our stuff out on the table we can deal with our ‘stock-in-trade’.

If we are honest and open-minded we will come to the conclusion that each of our issues really boils down to turning something over to the care of the God of our understanding. Our fears are all connected to some aspect of life that we have not resolved with our maker. The real point is to come to this conclusion. The question will be; ‘What do I need to turn over to my Higher Power?’ There is tremendous freedom that comes with doing this step. Perhaps this can best be summed up by the following quote:

**“I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough to confess my errors and to retrace my steps.”**  
**Mahatma Gandhi**

***Step-5 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ Why would it be important as a parent to complete an inventory?
- ◆ Who and What should go onto my inventory list?
- ◆ Who and What does not need to go onto my inventory list?
- ◆ How long should it take me to do my inventory?
- ◆ How might doing an inventory empower me?
- ◆ What would be my fears regarding my inventory?
- ◆ Am I prepared to be completely honest about my inventory?
- ◆ Who will see my inventory?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-5:***

Please refer to the Supplementary Handout; “Working Step-5”

Write your inventory. Use as much paper as is necessary. Do this by listing four categories and answer each category for the following subjects:

Resentments:

Fears:

Relationship Issues:

Strengths:

<b>Resentments: Who:</b>	<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Emotion:</b>	<b>My Role:</b>
1.			
2.			

<b>Fears: What:</b>	<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Why:</b>	<b>My Role:</b>
1.			

<b>Relationships: Who:</b>	<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Emotion:</b>	<b>My Role:</b>
1.			
2.			

<b>Strengths:</b>

Each issue needs to be concluded with, “What was my role in this?”

From the list above and from the events of your life, compile a list of all persons you have harmed, both resolved and unresolved.

**Character Defects –**

Using the list of the “Seven Deadly Sins”, list all areas that apply: Pride, Greed, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth List instances of where the above has had a negative effect in our lives.

**Looking forward to Step-6:**

Step-6 In Step Six we will be taking our inventory to the next level. We are now going to share our inventory with another person. It was not enough just to write down our issues for us and God. The crucial and freeing element in this work is to come to a position of humility and share this information with another person. In preparation for this it is suggested that we begin to determine who it will be that we share our inventory with.

## Supplement to Working Step-5

Prior to working Step-5 it is strongly recommended that the following texts be read. These will give additional insight of what the purpose of the step is and what our desired outcome should be. They are:

Beyond the Yellow Brick Road: Pages 130-131.

Bumper Stickers: Pages 66-71.

Alcoholics Anonymous: Pages 64-71.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: Pages 42-54.

Paths to Recovery: Pages 38-52.

Resentments:

### DIAGRAM 1

Resentments:	Who:	Issue:	Emotion:
	My Boss (Fear)	Depreciating, mean, selfish	Anger, frustration
	My Neighbor	Has trashy yard	Lowers my value, self esteem
	Coworker	Takes Credit for my work& ideas	Anger, lowers worth
	Other Neighbor	Nicer House	Envy, I don't feel as good as him.

My Role:	Emotion:	My Role:
Resentment	Depreciated – Self Esteem boundaries.	I do not stand up for myself and establish
Resentment	Value, Self Esteem	I have not communicated with them.
Resentment	Value, Self Esteem	I allow this to happen by not standing up for myself.
Resentment	Envy, Self-Worth in comparison to me.	I am evaluating who I am by what others do

***Fears:***

Simply use a chart similar to the one shown below and complete it as thoroughly as possible.

**DIAGRAM 2**

<b>Fears:</b>	<b>What:</b>	<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Why</b>
	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
	6.		

The fears list will clearly outline influences that play a role in our behaviors. As we specifically identify them we can then turn them over to our Higher Power. When we do this, we alter our reactions and move in to responses. This process will ultimately be addressed in Step-7.

***Relationships:***

**DIAGRAM 3**

<b>Relationships:</b>	<b>Who:</b>	<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Emotion:</b>
	1.		
	2.		

***The Seven Deadly Sins:***

**DIAGRAM 4**

<b>Pride</b>	<b>How Manifested</b>	<b>Undesirable Effect:</b>
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

<b>Greed</b>	<b>How Manifested</b>	<b>Undesirable Effect:</b>
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	



*Parent Group Step Study*

Lust	How Manifested	Undesirable Effect:
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Anger	How Manifested	Undesirable Effect:
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Gluttony	How Manifested	Undesirable Effect:
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Envy	How Manifested	Undesirable Effect:
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Sloth	How Manifested	Undesirable Effect:
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

***Strengths:***

DIAGRAM 5

Strengths	What Manifests	How:
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	
	6.	

## STEP 6

### **Full Circle Step-6 Text:**

***“We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-5 Text:**

***“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”***

Pre-study Note: Due to the fact that Full Circle has incorporated an extra step in their program, until step seven, A.A. / Al-Anon steps run one step out of sync.

Along with Step-5, Step-6 initiates emotional recovery. Our children will be informed through the meetings and their sponsor that the drug abuser who cannot own their behavior will never beat their habit. “The recovering abuser must see that his problem is in his own soul and that he cannot blame others for his shortcomings. When he blames others, he becomes a victim and provides himself a rationale for taking drugs. Each time he points a finger at another; he must look at his hand and see that the other three fingers are pointing right back at him. The solution to the problem lies in him, not in other people, and certainly not in drugs.”<sup>25</sup>

This step puts the “H” in the H.O.W. of recovery (Honesty, Open-mindedness, Willingness) to the test. Are we really being completely honest about our recovery process? There are those who might say that a person does not actually need to share their inventory with another person, that admitting these issues to themselves and to the God of their understanding is enough. In the context of the 12-Steps, this is not correct; if this were so the step would read; “Admitted to ourselves and maybe God and maybe another person the exact nature of our wrongs.” The freedom that comes from the 12-steps of recovery is actualized by being thorough. The Big Book of A.A. says; “Half measures availed us nothing.”<sup>26</sup>

### ***Regaining our Perspective –***

Before we get into this step let us take a look at Step-12 to regain perspective. We need to continually remind ourselves as to why we are doing all of this, what is our outcome and what should our intention be? Step-12 boldly states; “Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps tried to carry our love and understanding to others and practice these principles in our daily lives.”<sup>27</sup> We are in the process of a deep and authentic spiritual awakening which will empower us to share our love and understanding

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<sup>25</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road; Pg. 131

<sup>26</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous; Pg 59

<sup>27</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road; Pg. 135

with those who are still suffering. Furthermore, to insure our ongoing peace, joy and serenity we practice all of what we have learned in all of our daily activities.

### ***Breaking the Silence***

Step-6 comes on the heels of Step-5. When working with a sponsor the verification and completion of Step-5 is Step-6. As with virtually all of the steps, this one too will seem to go contrary to our natural desires. This is all part of becoming free of the unwanted and unnecessary dysfunction that has been part of our lives. An old recovery adage states that “secrets make sick”. There is nothing more burdening than to carry our transgressions and our regrets. Also, this step allows us to be free from dishonesty through omission. This step is the gauge of our depth of honesty. It is one thing to mull our shortcomings and failings over in our own heads; it is another to bring them to light in the presence of another person. When we actually hear ourselves speak out the issues from our inventory something amazing happens. The burdens begin to lift in a remarkable way.

In addition to this, when we share our inventory with another person who we trust, and who, hopefully, has done an inventory as well, two things are likely to occur. The first is that we have immediate feedback as to the quality of our inventory and the second is we will find that our issues are not so unique. Virtually everyone who has completed Step-6 with a sponsor will be privy to the sponsors’ foibles as well. Many a sponsor will share with their sponsee that they too have done and experienced similar things. This step allows us to ‘break the silence’ of our undisclosed issues. In most cases much of what we have covered in our inventory has been issues that we alone have knowledge of.

Confession is an ancient tradition that is incorporated in virtually all major belief systems. The power of confession has healing properties. Harboring issues such as those in our inventory can be a source of stress and ultimately illness. Step-6 is a medicine in and of itself. An honest and thorough Step-6 activates deep healing.

To God: We have our inventory – we embody the totality of who we are and we consciously present ourselves to our Higher Power: “God, here I am; this is who I am and what I am – Today.” Completely conscious of the entirety of our inventory we offer / expose ourselves to the God of our understanding. And, in the spirit and intent of this step we admit the exact nature of our wrongs, our shortcomings. To Ourselves: In the same spirit we enter into a conversation with ourselves. And again, completely conscious we admit to ourselves who we are today. Our inventory is fresh on the papers that we have created.

### ***Deep Listening – Deep Communication***

As we prepare to share our inventory with another person it is recommended that we choose well who this person will be. In conventional recovery programs this step is usually undertaken with one’s sponsor. The key point in selecting the Step-6 person is to choose someone who will honor our process, both in spirit and in absolute confidentiality. This person should be familiar with the recovery process. Also, this person should be someone who is capable of ‘deep listening’ and who is in a strong and positive place in life.

A ‘deep listener’ is someone who will be there for us. This person should not be in a place in life where they are suffering themselves or where they are experiencing an inordinate amount of life distractions. In addition to this, a deep-listener is someone who will not judge us, rather be there for our process. Our partner in step-6 is not to give us advice or commentary on our inventory. If the person we are sharing with is not our sponsor we might wish to seek out our spiritual advisor, if we have one. This could be a person in our church or spiritual group. We can even seek out one of the counselors from the program or even a professional counselor.

Once we decide who it is that we want to take this step with we will need to contact them and ask them to participate. When we do so we should give them a brief outline of what it is that we are doing and what is requested from them. Let them know that this meeting might take a couple of hours or may require a couple of meetings to accomplish the work. Many of us completed this step in one sitting, but that is not always the case. We need to be prepared to even set an entire day aside for this step, depending on how extensive our inventory is. We let our Step-6 recipient know that we are going to be as honest and thorough as we are capable of.

As such, we will be entering into the realm of ‘deep communication’. Deep communication is the state where we have settled our mind, calmed our thoughts and intentionally directed our awareness to the task at hand. Many of us take a period of time to meditate and to communicate with our higher power prior to commencing with the sharing. We allow ourselves to enter into a state of deep awareness of what is happening. When we share our inventory we make sure that we are in a place where there will be no distractions or any other responsibilities that need to be tended to. This is a ‘deep cleaning’ of the soul, as such we prepare appropriately. We should also prepare our personal life to accommodate this step. Our family members need to be informed about what we are doing and what we need in order to have a complete experience. Our significant others and our children should be asked to respect what it is that we need on the day of our Step-6.

### ***Contemplation***

Once we have completed the sharing we are encouraged to go to a quiet place by ourselves and bring the step to completion. We should take out our notes on the previous steps and read through the steps that have led us to this point. We ask ourselves, “Are we good with Step-1, Step-2, Step-3 and Step-4?” We then ask, “Was I thorough and honest? Did I leave any ‘stone’ unturned?” It is important to take at least one hour for this process. We contemplate the work we have just done. This time is also for us to ‘decompress’ and to allow what has just occurred to settle and take root. Some of us have found it beneficial to stay in a quiet and undisturbed environment for the rest of the day. We have just completed a very important and very special event.

***Conclusion –***

Step-6 is an activity that will challenge our natural instincts. It is a step that requires humility, courage and honesty. One of the recurring themes of this step is thoroughness. Doing this step allows us to take ownership of our life, the entire package. We are moving out of victimization and into empowerment. Let us also recognize that we are now at the mid point of our step work. We should avoid being like the person who set out to swim the English Channel who after having gotten half way across decided that they couldn't make it and turned around and swam back.

***“A confession has to be part of your new life.” Ludwig Wittgenstein***

***“Confess yourself to heaven,  
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,  
And do not spread the compost on the weeds  
To make them ranker.” William Shakespeare***

***“The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion.” Albert Camus***

***Step-6 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ Why do I need to share my inventory with another person?
- ◆ Do I need to share everything?
- ◆ What would happen if I did not share my inventory?
- ◆ Who should I share my inventory with?
- ◆ How should I prepare myself for this step?
- ◆ What would be my fears regarding the sharing of my inventory?
- ◆ What are the ‘fruits’ of taking this step?
- ◆ How long should this step take?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-6:***

Choose a person with whom you will share your inventory.

Set a time to do this. It may be beneficial to take an entire afternoon or evening.

Communicate with your family as to when you are doing this so that you have the time and the space to complete this step without interruptions or distractions.

Allow yourself the appropriate time after the session to reflect on the work you have done.

Complete this step as soon as possible after your inventory is complete.

Make sure you extend your thanks and appreciation to the person with whom you did your Step-6.

***Looking forward to Step-7:***

Step-7 unifies the traditional steps into sequence. Full Circle combines the A.A./Alanon Steps 6 and 7. In step six we shared our inventory and brought our issues into the open. Step-7 allows us to commence unloading our useless 'stock in trade'. We will be turning our defects of character over to our higher power. Step-7 relieves us of the majority of the burdens we have accumulated and have carried thus far in our lives.

## STEP-7

### **Full Circle Step-7 Text:**

*“We became willing to allow our Higher Power, through the love of the group, to help change our way of thinking and humbly ask Him to help us change.”*

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-6 Text:**

*“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”*

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-7 Text:**

*“Humbly asked Him to remove our short-comings.”*

Pre-study Note: Due to the fact that Full Circle has incorporated an extra step in their program, Step-7 now incorporates the traditional A.A. / Al-Anon steps six and seven into this step.

For our children, this step requires humility – Ego and self-will become challenged. The long-term dynamic of the Full Circle program begins to manifest in this step. “This step is similar to Step-4 in which we agreed to turn to the Higher Power of the peer group when faced with questions of right and wrong.”<sup>28</sup> Once our children are out of outpatient and the aftercare program a new dynamic of sobriety emerges. This transition ushers in the phase of ‘Living Life on Life’s Terms’.

Until our kids have a good 18-24 months of sobriety, they are still in a precarious state. Even though the ‘fog’ has lifted, their neurons are firing correctly, and the ‘pink cloud’ has dissipated, they remain at risk. By now, a foundation for recovery has been laid and the structure of sobriety is being erected. Things look different. A new confidence is emerging and a feeling of being ‘normal’ begins to transpire.

The urge to pronounce themselves ‘well’ can be overwhelming. The inclination to return to ‘normalcy’ will arise. All these newly developed sensations can lead to, is what is referred to in recovery as, “The Great Obsession”; the simple desire to be normal, to be just like everyone else, to not be an addict/alcoholic. It is at this phase where many in recovery begin to doubt their being addicts/alcoholics in the first place. Knowing this, the power of the positive peer group is intensified and our children face the challenge of either continuing their submission to the process of recovery or indulging the ego by resisting the group’s direction.

G.O.D. (Good Orderly Direction) which come from the peer group will be an ongoing encouragement for our kids to stay connected and to deal with their ‘stuff’ – and in order to live life on life’s terms they will need to deal with and ultimately purge their

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<sup>28</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road – Pg. 132



‘defects of character’. Our children may resist the groups’ direction, but as they quell their ego and deal honestly with their old nature a wholeness of character will displace their former inadequacies. The crossroads of self-will and surrender is a precarious junction. When the ‘high road’ of growth and ongoing personal development is taken the ‘psychic change’<sup>29</sup> is imminent.

### ***Positive Peer Group –***

It should be pointed out that Full Circle places great importance on the power of the positive peer group. The number one priority is to maintain sobriety and secondarily to insure that the integrity of the group is not compromised. The survival of the group is paramount. In the arena of enthusiastic sobriety it is good to remember that recovery is based on three dimensions; physical, emotional and spiritual. It is sometimes necessary to give or withhold attention to group members in order to motivate them to change their way of thinking. At times this may rub some of the kids the wrong way. The recovering young adult is plagued with issues of the Ego. It has been said that the addict/alcoholic is an “Ego Maniac with an Inferiority Complex”. Sometimes the direction as administered by individuals in the group meets with resistance. Young adults who are recovering from addiction are more often than not emotionally immature. As such the emotional response from corrective measures as administered from the positive peer group can be of a rebellious nature. It takes time and experience to sort out ego issues and to become comfortable living a sober life. Again, this process is the transition into the ‘psychic change’.

For us as parents; being practitioners of the 12-steps we too will be challenged by this step. As we commence with the second half of our 12-step work let us take a moment to review where we have been in order to get to where we are now at.

We admitted that the effects of drugs and alcohol had caused at least part of our lives to become unmanageable and we realized that we were powerless over the causes of this unmanageability. We then came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Accepting this we turned our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power, even if initially this higher power represented itself through our recovery group. Based on this foundation we entered into a process of deep cleansing by conducting a fearless and thorough moral inventory of our life. To insure our thoroughness we examined our inventory, we presented it to the God of our understanding and then we shared it with another human being. Because of this work, our own defects of character became identified and exposed and our shortcomings were revealed. In this step, we began the process of actively eliminating the undesirable aspects of our psyche.

From our inventory, we listed our ‘defects of character’. In order to recover fully we must now relinquish our shortcomings. The text that covers A.A. step seven is only one paragraph long. Nonetheless, this is one of the most important steps in our process. A.A. Step-6 states that we were entirely ready to have our defects of character removed.

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<sup>29</sup> In A.A. ‘psychic change’ is the hallmark of moving out of obsession or the craving to use. This change carries with it other manifestations such as humility, service and self-discipline.

We are encouraged to really look at ourselves and determine if we truly wish to be free. Once we have said ‘yes’, we approach our Higher Power and humbly ask that our defects of character, our shortcomings be removed. To put our process in perspective let us look at a simple set of paradoxes<sup>30</sup>. These four paradoxes outline the epitome of recovery and growth.

### ***The Four Paradoxes of Recovery***<sup>31</sup>

#### **“We surrender to win.” –**

Original A.A. text: (*“On the face of it surrendering certainly does not seem like winning. But it is in AA. Only after we have come to the end of our rope, hit a stone wall in some aspect of our lives beyond which we can go no further; only when we hit "bottom" in despair and surrender, can we accomplish sobriety which we could never accomplish before. We must and we do surrender in order to win.”*)

Surrender is a daily (even hourly or moment by moment) event. Once we realize that we are powerless over other people, places and things we can turn our attention and energy to that which we do have power over; ourselves. In Step-7 we surrender our defects of character, our shortcomings to our Higher Power.

#### **“We give to gain.” –**

Original A.A. text: (*“That seems absurd and untrue. How can you keep anything if you give it away? But in order to keep whatever it is we get in AA, we must go about giving it away to others, for no fees or rewards of any kind. When we cannot afford to give away what we have received so freely in AA, we better get ready for our next "drunk". It will happen every time. We've got to continue to give it away in order to keep it.”*)

As we give away our ‘experience, strength and hope’, we maintain our personal equilibrium. It serves as a continual reminder as to why we are doing all this work. When we give up our ‘defects of character’ we gain peace, joy and serenity; we gain functionality.

#### **“We suffer to get well.” –**

Original A.A. text: (*“There is no way to escape the terrible suffering of remorse, and regret, and shame, and embarrassment which starts us on the road to getting well from our affliction. There is no new way to shake a hangover. It's painful. And for us necessarily so. I told this to a friend of mine as he sat weaving to and fro on the side of the bed, in terrible shape about to die for some paraldehyde. I said, "Lost John - that's his nickname- Lost John, you know that you are going to do a certain amount of shaking soon or later". "Well", he said, "for God's sake let's make it later" We suffer to get well.”*)

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<sup>30</sup> **paradox** ( ) n. A seemingly contradictory statement that may nonetheless be true.

<sup>31</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous – Second Edition – Personal story of Francis Crotty.

If it were not for our suffering, we would not be here. It suffers us to see our children damaging themselves, destroying their lives. It suffers us to be lied to, to be stolen from. It suffers us to admit that things are not all right. However, once we surrender to the truth and submit to the process of recovery, the healing begins.

**“We die to live.” –**

Original A.A. text: (*“That is a beautiful paradox straight out of the biblical idea of being 'born again', or 'losing one's life to find it'. When we work at our twelve steps, the old life of guzzling and fuzzy thinking, and all that goes with it, gradually dies and we acquire a different and better way of life. As our shortcomings are removed, one life of us dies and another life of us lives. We in AA die, to live.”*)

Clearly, the way of thinking, the way of life that brought us here did not work. This old way, this old life must perish in order for a new life to emerge. The work we have done and the work we are doing births us into a new and free life. Specifically, with Step-7, giving up our defects of character, our shortcomings is putting to death the limiting and debilitating way of life that kept us prisoners to fear, anxiety, worry, denial, manipulation, loss and all of the maladies that active addiction brought to us.

***The Parent Group –***

In the Full Circle text we are encouraged to turn to the collective wisdom and experience of the group to gain deeper perspective into the daily nuances of a family life that revolves around sobriety. Our children are changing and so are we. As we get more in touch with the subtle aspects of how addiction has affected our lives, we need a point of reference, a feedback loop to ground our own experience. The direction of the group as presented by the various topics and sharing from other parents greatly helps us to do the next right thing. Our egos will be challenged as we humble ourselves to the direction of our Higher Power. The group experience is monumental in sorting out our will and reactions that are based in ego from our personal Good Orderly Direction, which promotes appropriate and healthy responses.

***Conclusion –***

Step-7 is an open proclamation that we are no longer following dysfunctional ways of life. We are actively turning over to our higher power these defects of character. We now have a point of reference to combat our dysfunction in so much as we can remind ourselves that these old behaviors have been abandoned. If and when the urge to go back to the ‘old ways’ presents itself to us, we can simply say to ourselves; “No thank you, this way of reacting is no longer an option for I have given this over to the God of my understanding.” We enter into moral strength. We are rooted in awareness and submerged in honesty. We have allowed the old way of dysfunction to die and we can enter into the final phase of our house cleaning on solid ground.

In this humble state we begin to notice the difference between Abstinence and Sobriety, from Tolerance to Acceptance, and from Change into Transformation. The work we have done thus far moves us from a point of Sincerity to Authenticity. This process is our own psychic change and the transformation that occurs allows for an intentional life to manifest.

***Step-7 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ Am I clear as to what my defects of character are?
- ◆ Is there a difference between shortcomings and defects of character?
- ◆ What would stop me from wanting to let go of my character defects?
- ◆ Why is this step important? <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> What happens if my character defects manifest after doing this step?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-7:***

Review your ‘defects of character’ and shortcomings from your inventory.

Determine if you are completely ready to relinquish your defects of character.

Set a time to meet with your sponsor to formally turn these issues over to your higher power.

Simply state that these old ways no longer serve you and with humility ask the God of your understanding to remove them from you.

***Looking forward to Step-8:***

Step-8 puts into black and white all the issues that require personal attention to bring our lives fully into order. This step will ask us to make a list of all persons that we have harmed and to become willing to make amends to them all. Step-8 is our ‘road map’ to our final destination in our house cleaning process.

## STEP – 8

### **Full Circle Step-8 Text:**

***“We made a list of all persons we have harmed and became willing to make amends to such people, whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them, others or ourselves.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-8 Text:**

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

Working this step is no different for us as it is for our children. Amends are amends. Furthermore, this step does not actually ask us to make amends to those we have placed on our list. It states that we made a list and, through a process, became willing to make amends. So, what is meant by ‘harmed’? As Bob Meehan puts it; “We are speaking of actions that caused serious physical or emotional damage to another person. My first list was several pages long and included half the people I’d ever met, from neighbors on the block where I grew up to the spectators at a fight I once had. My definition of ‘harmed’ was far too loose. Normally, this list will not exceed a dozen names. For teenagers, it often contains far fewer.”<sup>32</sup>

As parents, it is natural for us to hope that our children will be putting us on their amends list. However, this is a tricky thing. We have come to learn that “expectations breed disaster”. We do well to remind ourselves that we are working our own program. As such, our process of ‘recovery’ is about our life and how it is that we have created our life as it is. This step is quite simple. There are two components to this step; willingness and a review of our 4th Step. This step states that we made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Another perspective on the concept of ‘harmed’, comes from the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; “We might next ask ourselves what we mean when we say that we have ‘harmed’ other people. What kinds of ‘harm’ do people do one another, anyway? To define the word ‘harm’ in a practical way, we might call it the result of instincts in collision, which cause physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual damage to people.”<sup>33</sup>

Let’s take a look at the list. From our inventory we have listed our ‘shortcomings’. Part of our inventory takes into account those people who we have ‘wronged’. As a point of reference, we are dealing with issues that remain unresolved. As we have already discussed, if an issue is dead, then it is dead. There is no reason to dig up that which has been resolved and put to rest.

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<sup>32</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road: Page 132

<sup>33</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: Page 80

### ***What Harm? –***

However, if there are any people who we have harmed we will need to deal with them. We have made a commitment to go to whatever length necessary to achieve our ‘spiritual awakening’ or, our ‘psychic change’, which is required to exit our former way of being; our release from dysfunctional behavior, our codependency and enabling. We also want to become free from the fear, anger, depression, frustration, which are some of the results of codependent relationships. As Bill Wilson, the founder of A.A. puts it; “In many instances we shall find that though the harm done others has not been great, the emotional harm we have done ourselves has. Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness. At the time of these occurrences, they may actually have given our emotions violent twists which have since discolored our personalities and altered our lives for the worse.”<sup>34</sup>

The obstacles of pride and fear may rear up and entice us to avoid this step. However, one of the most important and often times difficult aspect of this step is forgiveness. Again, from the 12 and 12; “The moment we ponder a twisted or broken relationship with another person, our emotions go on the defensive. To escape looking at the wrongs we have done to another, we resentfully focus on the wrong he has done us. This is especially true if he has, in fact, behaved badly at all. Triumphantly we seize upon his misbehavior as the perfect excuse for minimizing or forgetting our own.”<sup>35</sup>

The thing to be aware of with this step is that we only need to list the people we have harmed. In Step-9, we will evaluate what to do with this list of people and how we shall go about dealing with those on the list. So, looking back, who have we caused physical harm to; emotional harm, financial harm, spiritual harm? We list each person and what we did, or perhaps did not do. Maybe we were simply neglectful, not available emotionally. Perhaps there are people who we harmed by avoiding the truth in a situation, where denial controlled our behavior. It could be that there are people we have cheated or lied to, maybe even stolen from. There are cases where our behavior caused harm by promoting a dysfunctional relationship or situation.

Let us not overlook the obvious, ourselves. Are we able to list the wrongs we committed against ourselves? From starting our fourth step through to our ninth step, we are involved in a radical house cleaning. The beautiful thing is that this work has amazing results. We are redesigning our life. We are creating a new reality by altering our former perception.

In earlier steps, we discussed how great it is to live a life without remorse, without regret. We are now standing on the threshold of being completely free. We are building up to a finale of sorts. Clearing the wreckage of our past relieves us of tremendous burdens that we have carried. These encumbrances only slow us down, blur our vision and cloud our minds. A clear vision of life as it is empowers us to maintain our sobriety – whether physical, emotional or spiritual.

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<sup>34</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: Pgs; 79 &80

<sup>35</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: Page 78

As we live our lives, this new perception attracts a deeper and more actualized reality. Having a 'clean slate' allows us the luxury to experience our own personal 'peace, joy and serenity'. This state becomes the 'rule' and not the 'exception'. We are now becoming practiced in the ways of response opposed to being stuck in our reactions.

This step is so very powerful, so very active. Once our list is complete, we can place our attention on becoming willing to make amends to those we have harmed. To become willing we do not need to look at the 'how' of it, rather the 'what' of it. We seek out our Higher Power and simple start by becoming willing to be willing. We remember to keep Step-8 in perspective and not worry about Step-9, for that would be contrary to the spirit of our recovery program and not honoring the "One Day at a Time" approach to our process. Once the list is complete and we have entered into communion with the God of our understanding, and having achieved a state of willingness, only then are we ready for Step-9.

### ***Conclusion –***

Step-8 is an action step, one which requires courage and honesty. The groundwork was laid in our step four/five. We search the last troublesome areas of our relationships. In essence, this is an 'organizational' step that is to be cultivated with humility and honesty. The 'house cleaning' is almost complete and the promises are beginning to manifest.

***Step-8 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ Am I resisting making an amends list based on the people in my life who I have harmed? If so, why?
- ◆ Do I understand that 'willing to make amends' is different than making a list?
- ◆ Have there been times when 'minding' someone else's business may have caused harm?
- ◆ What kind of actions constitute harm?
- ◆ How willing am I to be completely honest?
- ◆ Can I see that by including myself on my amends list is an important part of this step?
- ◆ Since I am not an addict or alcoholic, is this step even necessary?
- ◆ What does 'psychic change' mean to me?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic



***Suggestions for Working Step-8:***

Review your fourth Step inventory.

Start a list of people you have harmed.

Make a column at the left of your list and use it to rate your willingness to make an amends to the people on your list. (0 = not willing at all – 5 = completely willing)

Next to the person's name describe the 'harm' done. Next to that, describe what an appropriate amends would be. (i.e. is money owed, is the truth required, is a simple apology enough, etc.)

After the list is complete, take time to approach your higher power and reflect on the work you have done. Ask for the willingness to become willing. Take time to enter into the realm of the spirit and turn this process over to the God of your understanding.

Continue this until the willingness manifests.

***Looking forward to Step-9:***

**Step-9** asks us to make amends to those people on our list, unless to do so would injure them or others. There is a specific and manageable process to accomplish Step-9. Step-9 puts the 'finishing touches' on a very difficult part of our process. Nonetheless, once this work is completed, a new freedom and a new peace will manifest. We will have become unburdened and free as never before. Living in equanimity will be a reality

## STEP – 9

### **Full Circle Step-9 Text:**

***“We made direct amends to such people, whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them, others, or ourselves.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-9 Text:**

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

Step-9 is the follow up to step eight. The Full Circle perspective states; “...But the attempt to make amends will have been successful because the relationship will have been changed. We must be very careful not to make the other person’s forgiveness the issue when making amends. We make amends for ourselves – not for others. Whereas, we must be ‘willing’ to make amends to everyone we’ve harmed, and we have to confront only those for whom it is reasonably possible. I wouldn’t recommend anyone jump on an airplane and fly across the country to make amends. If confronting a person would be extremely uncomfortable, I would say it was enough to be willing to make amends. If someone doubts the wisdom of making a particular amend, he can always consult his Higher Power – the judgment of his peer group.”<sup>36</sup>

The key for our children is that there is a change, a change of behavior, a change of attitude and a change of intent. The process of recovery requires a methodical and deliberate set of steps be taken. A practicing alcoholic or drug addict is a very selfish and egocentric individual. Their behavior and actions are obsessively self-oriented. Sobriety is solidified by the systematic reduction of ego and the consistent surrender to humility.

In most cases our children have created damage on multiple levels. Their havoc can range from falling out of the graces of school to legal infractions, from alienated personal relationships to broken family bonds. The goal of Step-9 is to formally right the wrongs done, to exhibit on all levels that a transformational change has taken place. This is a public and personal declaration that the old has passed away and the new has supplanted the former. Each of our children must find their own truth in the reality of their lives. They will ultimately be called to take full ownership of their thoughts, attitudes and actions. Step-9 is the mortar which will cement their being into their new way of living.

For us as parents it is perhaps important to look a bit deeper at the subtle requirements of this step. First of all let’s examine the word amend(s):

### **amend**

v 1: make amendments to; "amend the document"

2: to make better; "The editor improved the manuscript with his changes" [syn: better, improve, ameliorate, meliorate]

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<sup>36</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road; pg. 133

[ant: worsen]

3: set straight or right [syn: rectify, remedy]

Simply stated Step-9 is the setting straight of that which was incorrect. We are remedying the ills, the wrongs in behavior, relationships, conversations and thoughts. For we parents this is very subtle. As our children began to use mind-altering chemicals their behavior began to change. We were affected by these changes. As they moved into dysfunction we followed. At first we did not overtly recognize the changes. Perhaps we disregarded the signs by making justifications such as; 'This is just a phase', or these are the results of puberty, etc. And, in most cases, rightly so. As our children grow and mature, behaviors can be erratic and often times 'squirrely'. To assume that these manifestations are drug related from the 'get go' can be an overreaction on our part. As they change, so do we. When mind-altering chemicals are incorporated into their lives, the reality of what is actually happening becomes blurred and hazy.

It often takes years to determine that drugs and/or alcohol abuse has been an influencing force in our children's lives. Because of this, we have made subconscious adaptations and adjustments. When, for our children, things get out of hand, situations and dysfunctional behaviors escalate. Grades may slip, rules of the home become breached, infractions with the law occur and family relationships deteriorate. Nonetheless, by the time we realize that our children are under 'foreign management', the damage has been done and our parenting skills may have been reduced to a series of codependent reactions and over-reactions. Our sanity has been apprehended, our sense of reality has been warped and once we awaken to the truth of the situation our realization is that we too have become altered.

As justified as our behaviors might be, chances are that we have not responded to the situation at hand with strength and dignity. We may have fallen into 'fixing' mode, jumped deep into denial, become obsessed with control and our reactions are often tarnished with anger, frustration, fear, depression and helplessness. This undesirable state affects our entire life. Other relationships become strained. Our work environment can become infiltrated with our dysfunction, our social life is compromised and we ourselves may find that we are creating our own brand of havoc in the lives of those around us.

Furthermore, there are those of us who have grown up in an addicted or alcoholic family. If so, our expectations for dysfunction can be extremely high, even though they may be subconscious. Our codependent and enabling behaviors may be deeply engrained in our psyche. This being the case, those of us so afflicted, have most likely participated in harmful actions, reactions and defensive, self-preserving ways of functioning. Either way, there are most definitely relationships and personal encounters that have been compromised due to our adopted dysfunction.

In step four/five we conducted a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. This process brought to light our defects of character. We listed our resentments, our fears and our shortcomings. We looked at our relationships; good, bad and neutral. And, we made a list of all persons we had harmed over the course of our lives. Regardless of the reasons of our behaviors and our motivations we became tacitly

aware of the reality of our lives. We have looked deeply and honestly into the nature of the harm we have, or may have caused others. Our process in 'parental recovery' is to exit the madness of codependency. We are reestablishing ourselves as beings free from dysfunction. We are creating an environment of health and restoration. We are changing our psychic disposition from victimized reactionaries to intentional creators of peace, joy and serenity.

So, to make amends, by the very nature of the word, is to right what was wronged, to have changed that which is unacceptable and to have made a declaration as manifested through our words, thoughts and actions that the old ways have been forsaken. To solidify this new position we take action, we apply appropriate corrective measures.

Some of the wrongs we have done to others are simple and straightforward. Perhaps we were spiteful or intolerant. Other wrongs may be of a very sensitive nature that involves other people, directly or indirectly. In our quest to put our own lives back into right standing we are not to do so at the expense of others. Our desire to be honest and forthcoming is about correcting our deficiencies and not those of other people. As such, the adage; "The better part of valor is discretion"<sup>37</sup>, applies to our application of this step.

Prior to embarking on Step-9 it is recommended that we consult our sponsor and discuss the nuances of the harms we have done. Ideally, this was initiated when we worked Step-8. Each 'harm done' has a specific and ideal rectification. Some wrongs require financial restitution; others require a simple but sincere apology. Sometimes the resolution is unknown and only a conversation with the individual involved will determine what is required to set things straight.

It may be asked; 'how do we go about making amends?' Usually a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate one. This allows us the opportunity to enter the deepest levels of humility and express our most sincere desire to make things right. In some cases it will be difficult if not impossible to make a direct contact with certain individuals on our list. As such, a letter may be in order. In other cases willingness alone will have to suffice. Some situations have deeper ramifications, more intense consequences. There may have been issues where laws were transgressed and 'coming clean' could result in penalties or even incarceration. Again, it is best to discuss these issues with our sponsor and follow the hallmark of recovery: "To Thine Own Self Be True."

We are not looking for forgiveness; however forgiveness may be extended to us. We are not out to have the wrongs committed against us to be righted. We disregard our own discomfort and boldly exit our avoidances however creative they may be. We do not harm others or increase the harm done through our amends process. The single most dynamic statement of our amends is the change in our daily life, what is known as our 'Living Amends'. Actions speak louder than words. Our communications combined with our behavior bring to fruition this foundational step of recovery.

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<sup>37</sup> William Shakespeare, 'King Henry IV part I'

## **Conclusion –**

Step-9 is another action step, one which requires discretion and courage. Prior to commencing this step, working with and consulting our sponsor is vital. A clear understanding of the wrong committed and the appropriate remedy is prerequisite to fulfilling this step. Once we have the specifics of this step down on paper (the harm and the resolution) we immediately set out on our mission. This is the final step in clearing the wreckage of our past. It is important to not discount this step, regardless of the mildness or severity of our history. This step may take some time to actually complete, and in fact, some people have certain amends that take years to conduct personally. It all depends on each individual circumstance and the opportunity to present itself to make direct amends. Lastly, we remain completely willing to make these amends, being available to the right time and the right place to do what is required.

The A.A. big book concludes Step-9 with the following:

### **The Promises**

**“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through.**

**We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.**

**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.**

**No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.**

**That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.**

**We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.**

**Self-seeking will slip away.**

**Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.**

**We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.**

**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 quickly, sometimes slowly.**

**They will always materialize if we work for them.”<sup>38</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous – pages 83-84**

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<sup>38</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous – pages 83-84

***Step-9 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ Which people on my list do I need to make direct amends to first? What might be stopping me?
- ◆ Did I include myself on my amends list?
- ◆ What can I do or do I need to do in order to make amends to myself?
- ◆ What can I do to insure that I will not avoid an amends that may be embarrassing or uncomfortable?
- ◆ Which people are on my list that it would be impossible to make direct amends?
- ◆ What options do I have to make an amends to those people?
- ◆ What amends on my list will be the most difficult? <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Do I understand how important a 'living amends' is?
- ◆ What steps can I take to avoid blaming others when making my amends?
- ◆ Which amends are best given by demonstrating a change in my behavior?
- ◆ Why does the Full Circle version of this step include the phrase "...except when to do so would injure them, others or ourselves."; when the A.A. / Al-Anon version does not include the word 'ourselves'?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-9:***

Meet with your sponsor to discuss your eighth step work.

Make sure you have listed the people you have harmed and the appropriate remedy to actualize an amends.

Categorize the list with those individuals who need to be contacted immediately, working down to those who are the most difficult or even impossible to make direct amends to.

Formally commit to your sponsor who your first amends will be made to and when.

Set a realistic time frame to complete the majority of the amends.

Keep a ‘short list’ of individuals who you have lost contact with in your purse or wallet. Review the list on a regular basis.

***Looking forward to Step-10:***

**Step-10** allows us to keep our house clean. We have just conducted a major cleaning, a major overhaul on our entire life. Step-10 keeps us from having to conduct future comprehensive restorative work. If we have been thorough in our preceding steps, we can walk without encumbrances daily. We can retire at night free from the burdens of unresolved dysfunction. Step-10 ushers in the remaining three ‘maintenance’ steps. These are the steps that will insure our long-term recovery and emotional, physical and spiritual sobriety; the fruits of which are – Peace, Joy and Serenity.

## STEP – 10

### **Full Circle Step-10 Text:**

***“We have continued to look at ourselves and when wrong, promptly admitted it.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-10 Text:**

***“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”***

Step-10 is the first step of what are known as the maintenance steps. These last three steps move us into maintaining our sober state. Bob Meehan writes; “This step encourages maintenance of our commitment to honesty and self-awareness. It reminds us that we must continually take inventories and make amends whenever possible. Some people find diaries helpful for working Step Ten. Others meet weekly with a significant other to review their behavior. Step Ten helps us make self-honesty a way of life.”<sup>39</sup>

Our children, by the time they arrive at Step-10 have accomplished a major set of tasks. They have faced themselves in courageous ways. Their program has entered into a level of deep honesty and they have had a relatively long period of practicing clear and meaningful communications. The power of the positive peer group has assisted them to reveal themselves to others, to express their feelings and emotional challenges. They have completed their inventories and compiled a list of all persons that they have harmed, and they have begun to make direct amends to the people on their list. For most of them, repeating an extensive inventory and amends list is completely undesirable and as such, the only way to keep a clean inventory is to maintain the personal housekeeping day-by-day, moment-by-moment. Step-10 puts into daily practice the power of responding opposed to the infirmity of reacting. This step puts into action living by integrity and self-appraisal.

As parents we too have completed a hefty load of work. Nonetheless, the gravitational pull to old ways of behavior, enabling and codependency, is subtle and cunning. When we operate on dysfunctional levels we experience our own brand of aftereffect; Emotional Hangovers which “come as a direct result of yesterday’s and sometimes today’s excesses of negative emotion – anger, fear, jealousy, and the like. If we would live serenely today and tomorrow, we certainly need to eliminate these hangovers. This doesn’t mean we need to wander morbidly around in the past. It requires an admission and correction of errors now. Our inventory enables us to settle with the past. When this is done, we are really able to leave it behind us. When our inventory is carefully taken, and we have made peace with ourselves, the conviction follows that tomorrow’s challenges can be met as they come.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions goes on to say; “It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road; pg. 134

<sup>40</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; pg. 88

<sup>41</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; pg. 90



***Spot Check Inventory –***

Thus arises the opportunity for what is known as a ‘spot check’ inventory. When we find ourselves in doubt, frustrated, resentful or agitated, we pause and look at what is really going on. We evaluate what it is in us that is allowing our state to be compromised. In our moment of pause we may choose to remember the serenity prayer or to simply “let go and let God”. In the event we have reacted improperly and owe an apology, we promptly offer it. It is an amazing thing when we ‘promptly admit our wrongs’; actually two things happen. The first is that we immediately clear ourselves of any ‘baggage’ and the second is that we will find that it is better to pause and respond more appropriately and spare ourselves having to make an amends in the first place.

The ‘spot check’ inventory is also for our unresolved feelings. When we are feeling out of place, when we are not fully experiencing our desired level of peace, joy and serenity we have an instant opportunity to deepen our relationship with our selves. This process increases the depth of our personal truth. Furthermore, living such a life sets an example to those around us.

There is a power and a strength of character that develops as we lead the ‘self-examined’ life style. Living with deliberate intention creates a living efficiency. We can actually do less and accomplish more. Our minds and our emotions are free to focus on the action at hand, to be able to manifest our activities from the now, without encumbrance.

***Daily Review –***

To get the most out of this step it has been suggested that at the end of each day we take some time to review our day. We look at those areas where we struggled, where we might have become resentful, angry, fearful, depressed, dishonest, avoidant, or any other behaviors we might deem undesirable. We make a mental ‘ledger’ of our liabilities of the day. We then tally up our assets for the day; what did we do right, where we were helpful, encouraging, positive, efficient, aware and present. As we progress we will find that our assets will outweigh our liabilities. Conducting a daily inventory allows us to end the day clear of baggage. We can sleep well and when we begin our next day, we can do so with a clean slate. Again, there is tremendous empowerment that results in living such a life.

It is also important to consider any amends we need to make to ourselves. Did we ‘sell ourselves short’? Were we overly critical with ourselves? Did we allow ourselves sufficient time for our own process, for prayer and meditation? We look at these areas and simply ask ourselves, ‘what corrective measures can be taken?’ Avoiding a gloomy or self-defeating demeanor, we become available to whatever inspiration comes upon us as to what our next best step should be. Again, consulting our higher power, we continue to turn our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding.

Some additional key points in Step-10 are the concepts of self-restraint, honest evaluations of what is really happening in our lives, a willingness to admit when we are wrong - when we are at fault and an equal willingness to forgive others when the fault is elsewhere. Reacting without restraint often times causes fair-mindedness to evaporate.

Tolerance becomes absent and seemingly insignificant situations can rapidly escalate into overblown and damaging events. It has been suggested that we avoid ‘quick-tempered criticism’ and ‘furious anger-driven argument’.

In addition to this, we are to avoid playing the martyr, sinking into gloom or sulking over situations that may manifest. We are moving away from victimization and into ownership of our reality. We are no longer making unreasonable demands on those we love. We are now able to extend courtesy and fairness to those we seem to dislike. When confronted by someone else we begin to see that they too are hurting, perhaps even sick. We can allow compassion to express itself and apply forgiveness. Tolerance of others is paramount. As we conduct our lives in honesty, acceptance and humility we become protected from the ills of the world. We are, in a sense, a beacon to others. Leading our lives in this way causes us to be an example to those around us and we become a powerful force in the lives of those we encounter.

***Conclusion:***

The A.A. big book suggests; “We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for a lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code. And, we have ceased fighting anything or anyone - ...

“... Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense.”<sup>42</sup>

As we ‘live by the spirit’, our words and our deeds represent the depth of our experience. Practicing this step is the manifestation of living a surrendered life. From our earlier studies we have examined the powerful state that comes from one of the four paradoxes of recovery; “We surrender to win”. Surrendering our ego, admitting our wrongs and extending forgiveness is the epitome of living a completely surrendered life. These suggestions are the nutrients with which our ‘sobriety’ grows, ever yielding its fruits: Peace, Joy and Serenity.

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<sup>42</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous; pages 84 & 85

***Step-10 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ What is the purpose of Step-10?
- ◆ What type of things should one make immediate amends for?
- ◆ What do I still do that is self-defeating, things that would cause me to make an amends to myself?
- ◆ Are there times when restraint would be a better response?
- ◆ Am I open-minded to practicing forgiveness on a daily basis?
- ◆ Am I willing to set time aside for a daily inventory? <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> What would cause me to not admit when I am wrong?
- ◆ What simple thing can I do to make an immediate amend when required?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-10:***

Begin each day with the intention of being aware of your emotional and spiritual state.

End each day with a review of the events and how you responded or reacted to different issues.

Evaluate if there is anyone who is owed an amends from the day.

Evaluate if there are any issues that are unresolved and would be best dealt with by speaking to your sponsor or some other trusted individual.

List any reasons that you would not admit being wrong, when wrong.

***Looking forward to Step-11:***

**Step-11** calls for a deepening of our spiritual experience and to continually improve our conscious contract with our higher power. Step-11 reminds us that the twelve steps of recovery are a spiritually based program and that a systematic and consistent reduction of ego and self-will is the hallmark of our recovery. Step-11 encourages us to become deliberate and disciplined in our spiritual program, setting aside time for prayer and meditation. We are also exhorted to continue turning our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding and to persistently seek the will of our creator in all of our activities.

## STEP – 11

### **Full Circle Step-11 Text:**

***“We have sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power, that which we have chosen to call God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the courage to carry that out.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-11 Text:**

***“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out .”***

Step-11 encourages us to become spiritually fit. We are told that the process of prayer and meditation will assist us in securing a closer bond with the God of our understanding. “Step Eleven simply reminds people that to live a sober life, they must tap into the power of Good (God with two o’s) and use this power to help them in their daily lives. It means stopping for a moment of self-reflection now and then...

....I can’t insist enough on the personal nature of what we choose to call God. No one tells anyone else in my programs what that God should be, except to say that God is all good and that God is love.”<sup>43</sup>

As our children progress through the steps they will have learned that long-term sobriety is maintained through a few simple actions and further that the 12-Steps of recovery is a spiritually based program. One of these simple actions is taking time every day to pray and meditate in order to improve their conscious contact with their higher power, to enliven and strengthen their God-Consciousness. In all programs of recovery the labels, names, perceptions and any other ‘man-given’ titles for God is irrelevant. The question is not in who or what we have faith; it is that we have faith in the first place.

### ***Connection with our Higher Power –***

It has been said throughout this study series that one of the most challenging aspects of our children’s recovery will be their connecting with, and maintaining a relationship with a God of their own understanding. This is one of the reasons that working with a solid and active sponsor is so important; to have one of their peers continue to remind them of the importance of this step. And, at this step, our children are most definitely encouraged to define (come to terms with) what their own higher power is. Until this point the focus has been on using the love of the group, the good orderly direction of the group as their higher power. As they are moving through the final steps it is now time for them to connect with and surrender to their own higher power. Maintaining and increasing their conscious contact with their higher power is done through prayer and meditation.

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<sup>43</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road – pg. 134

As parents, these dynamics are no different for us. If we are to live a life free from dysfunction, even if our children are operating in a state of wellness, we too are exhorted to live a God-Conscious life style. It is easy to slack off with this all important step. Many of us have had our lives returned and the sanity restored. Even if our children are not working a program or have relapsed, we have come to a greater peace and have come to understand the importance of working our own program. Nonetheless, our experience and the depth of our experience will continue to grow and increase as we nurture our spiritual life. It is only through prayer and meditation that our conscious contact with the God of our understanding can increase. Relationship with God is not an intellectual thing. Relationship cannot be achieved from reading or discussion groups. It cannot be obtained by listening to someone else expound their opinions. The knowledge and wisdom which comes from the spiritual lifestyle is completely experiential. There are no theories involved as theories are neither liberating nor empowering.

The teachings of all great spiritual masters, those who many of the world's great religions have been built upon, instruct their followers that words cannot explain or describe God. Words are only sign posts showing the direction to the experience. There is an ancient Eastern phrase that says; "The finger pointing to the moon should never be confused as the moon". As such, the words that point to God should never be confused with God. Establishing a deeper and more authentic relationship with our higher power can only be done through experience. This experience comes through prayer and meditation.

Before we look at the dynamics of prayer and meditation, let's briefly discuss why this step is so important. Looking back, we learned that the recovery process is spiritually based, that the sanity we were looking for could only be received through a power greater than ourselves. Along the way we came to believe that if this higher power were to truly work in our lives that we had to get out of the way, and would need to become humble. The program became a systematic and persistent process of reducing our ego, our will in favor of Gods will. We came to learn prayers of surrender, we were introduced to the paradoxes of recovery (Surrendering to win, suffering to get well, in giving we receive and in dying to the old life we become alive in our new life), and we decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand God.

These actions, for most of us, were done in faith, in hope that mighty and miraculous results would follow. For most of us this has happened. Step Eleven advises us that in order to maintain our state of wellness we can never forget what got us to where we are at and that if a deeper and more profound healing is to take place, it can only be done through a deeper and more profound relationship with our higher power. This step is the second of the three 'maintenance' steps. In addition to this, maintenance does not just mean physical sobriety, we are now dealing with sobriety on all levels, physical, emotional and spiritual.

### ***Prayer:***

Prayer is integrated into every spiritual belief system. Each belief system incorporates numerous types and forms of prayer. Simply stated; prayer is the act of

conducting a dialogue with the God of our understanding; talking with God. When we pray we are aligning our thoughts along spiritual lines. It has been suggested that our prayers not be of a selfish nature and always with the ‘will of God’ as the foundation. It has also been suggested that we be cautious when praying for other people as we do not know what God’s will is for them. The basis of most prayers is being in a surrendered state, open for the divine to manifest. As we surrender and relinquish control of our lives to our higher power we enter into an empowered state.

There have been thousands of books written about prayer. Every belief system has their own focus and ‘take’ on how to pray. As such, it is recommended that if we are lacking direction as to how to pray, consulting such a source can be advantageous. Suffice it to say, time should be taken each day to pray. Many people in recovery start and end each day with prayer and meditation. The ‘morning prayer’ is a way to start the day surrendered to the will of God so that the greatest good and highest levels of efficiency can be achieved throughout the day. Getting out of the way of ourselves usually brings powerful results. When we commence with the activities of the day, after having had our prayer time, there is less resistance, less manipulation and our desire to control will be lessened as well. The AA big book says that if we are not sure how to pray or what to pray for that we might use one of the many profound prayers as offered by spiritual leaders of the past. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions offers this prayer as an example:

***“Lord, make me a channel of thy peace – that where there is hatred, I may bring love – that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness – that where there is discord, I may bring harmony – that where there is error, I may bring truth – that where there is doubt, I may bring faith – that where there is despair, I may bring hope- that where there are shadows, I may bring light – that where there is sadness, I may bring joy. Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted – to understand, than to be understood – to love, than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen”<sup>44</sup>***

This step encourages us to seek the will of our higher power, to know that will and to be empowered to carry that will out.

### ***Meditation:***

As with prayer, there are many meditation techniques from a multitude of traditions. Nonetheless, virtually all people who are skilled in meditation will agree that the point of meditation, if there is one, is to dive deep into our self. Meditation will take us beyond the distractions of thought, into the gap between thoughts. Meditation has also been identified as being in a state of mindfulness. This state is where we are aware of things as they truly are, where labels and preconceptions do not apply. To experience our ‘true’ self we need to get beyond the restlessness of the mind, to turn inward past thought and rest in a state of simply being. Most meditation teachers will tell us that there should

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<sup>44</sup> Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: pg. 99 – The prayer of St. Francis

be no desired outcome attached with meditation. This is to say that the act of meditating, practicing, is good enough. When we enter into this silent space a 'cultivation' commences. We are tilling the field of our existence. We bring our internal energies into coherence. As our nervous system is nurtured we become much more sensitive to the subtle flow of communication from our higher power.

There are numerous books on the subject of meditation for further instruction. However, a simple practice is to follow our breath. We simply sit comfortably with the intention to give 15 or 20 minutes to being quiet. As we sit we close our eyes and become aware of our breathing. As we breathe in we know that we are breathing in, as we breathe out we know that we are breathing out. As we stay aware of our in-breath and our outbreath we rest our mind on our breath. When we notice that our thoughts have taken us away from the awareness of our breathing, we simply return to our breath. Again, as we breathe in we know we are breathing in, as we breathe out we know that we are breathing out. It is important to not resist the process, to not resist the thoughts, to not resist our wandering. We become aware of all that is happening and as soon as we are aware that we have wandered we return to our breath. And, in the same spirit we rest our breath on our mind, by being aware of our in-breath and our out-breath: Mind resting on breath, breath resting on mind.

This practice is just that, practice. As time goes on and we become more and more regular with our prayer and meditation time, we become more comfortable with the process. Ideally, we spend 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the evening in meditation. As we cultivate our being through meditation we are more receptive to knowing what God's will is for our individual lives. We continue to surrender our will, and ego and live a life of Good Orderly Direction (G.O.D.).

### ***Contemplation:***

Sometimes what is described as meditation is really contemplation. Contemplation on things of the spirit is a good thing. Contemplation can be entered into just after a meditation or just after prayer time. It has been said that in this still and quiet space is where we can 'hear' from God, receive inspiration. The contemplation of a prayer such as we just looked at is a way to deepen our experience of that prayer. We can slowly look at each sentence, each word in each sentence, and dwell on its meaning and how we can integrate it into our life. If we are centered we can enter into contemplation and yield direction or a course of action. Opposed to worry or obsessive thought, contemplation allows us to view an issue or a subject from many different angles and take the issue to its depth to manifest the truth, the actual reality of what is going on.

The A.A. big book has a wonderful meditation/contemplation for ending each day. "When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into



the steam of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others.

After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken."<sup>45</sup>

This 'end of the day' contemplation is an excellent way to clean the slate for the day. As we are open to the guidance of our higher power, the 'corrective measures' we seek will be revealed. As with prayer and meditation, the point is to take time to integrate the contemplative way of living into our daily lives.

### ***Conclusion:***

To maintain our emotionally sober state we are encouraged to practice prayer and meditation on a daily basis. It has been stressed throughout this entire study that the twelve steps of recovery is a spiritually based program. We have matured from using the love of the group as our only higher power to having connected with our own higher power. As we deepen our contact and relationship with that higher power our emotional and spiritual sobriety is strengthened and the quality of our life experience is increased. As a result, our ability to stay centered and to not be drawn back into old ways of thinking and behaving is solidified. We are now incorporating all of these steps into our daily activities. The recovery is manifesting in virtually all areas of our lives. As the Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hahn writes:

***"Our faith must be alive. It cannot be just a set of rigid beliefs and notions. Our faith must evolve every day and bring us joy, peace, freedom, and love. Faith implies practice, living our daily life in mindfulness. Some people think that prayer or meditation involves only our minds or our hearts. But we also have to pray with our bodies, with our actions in the world. And our actions must be modeled after those of the Living Buddha or the Living Christ. If we live as they did, we will have deep understanding and pure actions and we will do our share to help create a more peaceful world for our children and all of the children of God."***<sup>46</sup>

Remember; ***"You are not a human being in search of a spiritual experience. You are a spiritual being immersed in a human experience"*** Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

We manifest our progress by our actions. Our higher power, the God of our understanding, inspires, empowers and encourages us to fulfill our spiritual calling in all of our activities.

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<sup>45</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous: pg 86

<sup>46</sup> Living Buddha, Living Christ: pg. 136

***Step-11 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ What is the purpose of Step-11?
- ◆ Can I give myself the time I need daily to integrate this step in my life?
- ◆ What would be my resistance to taking time daily to pray?
- ◆ What would be my resistance to taking time daily to meditate?
- ◆ Based on my personal belief system, do I have any conflict with prayer and/or meditation?
- ◆ Do I fully understand that the quality of my daily experience will be proportionate to the quality of my spiritual fitness?
- ◆ What would hinder me from practicing Step-11 daily?
- ◆ What can I do to overcome these hindrances? ¾ What resources do I have to enliven and strengthen my prayer life?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-11:***

Begin by scheduling your prayer and meditation time.

Set your first session and show up.

Select a 'prayer' that you will use to start your program with.

If you are reluctant in trying to start to meditate, contact someone you know who does meditate and ask if you could get together for a 'beginner' session.

If you are a member of a spiritual group (church, fellowship, sangha) commit to practice regularly with them.

Allow yourself time in the evening, ideally just before sleeping to make your 'daily review'.

Set a time weekly for contemplation and set a single theme or topic to contemplate. This can be done on a walk in nature or somewhere peaceful.

If appropriate, include your significant other in your prayer and meditation time. • Remember to drop expectations of results. The activity is the goal. Do for the sake of doing.

***Looking forward to Step-12:***

**Step-12** is the last step in the twelve step program. It is sometimes referred to as the 'primary purpose' step. It outlines three important outcomes in working a program. One; Having a spiritual awakening, Two; carrying our message to others like us who are still suffering and Three; to practice the principals we have learned in our daily lives. It has been said that step twelve is what gives us our long-term results. By reaching out to others and working with them, we are constantly reminded as to how far we have come and where it was that we came from.

## STEP – 12

### **Full Circle Step-12 Text:**

***“We, having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps tried to carry our love and understanding to others, and to practice these principles in our daily lives.”***

### **A.A. / Al-Anon Step-12 Text:**

***“Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps we tried to carry our message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”***

Step-12 is a three-fold step. First we acknowledge that due to our process, we have had a spiritual awakening. This being the case we came to understand the importance of helping others who are still suffering and because this program is a design for living, not just a once through and you're done program, we practice all that we have learned in all aspects of our lives.

In ‘Beyond the Yellow Brick Road’, we read; “Step Twelve asks people to acknowledge that they have changed – that they are different people. Instead of trying to con others and themselves as they did before, they are now honest and self-critical. The previous eleven steps have forced them to undergo a spiritual transformation, and they now have access to a positive force that they call God, who guides them and gives them strength. In sum, they have broken the tyrannical control drugs had over their lives.”<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, Bob writes; “Every person who reads this chapter can benefit from working through the Twelve Steps. These steps aren’t just a way to stop taking drugs. They are a way of life, one so attractive that I can compete even with the overwhelming, however perverse, power of drugs.”<sup>48</sup>

By the time our children arrive at this step and work through it they will be completely different than they were on their first day in the outpatient program. They will have had their ‘ups’ and their ‘downs’, they will have experienced wins and losses. Some will have had a relapse or two. But all of our kids who make it through to Step-12 will have undergone a powerful change. Their tool box will be complete with all the instruments and tools necessary for a successful sober life. It is important to understand that even though they may have completed all twelve steps it does not mean that they have completed their maturation process. There could still be some considerable growing up to do, but they will be well on their way in doing so.

At this point in their experience the ‘con’ will be over. Getting high will never be the same. There will be no denying that they are what they are. Furthermore, they will no longer be allowed to blame anyone else for their using. If they do go back to being a

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<sup>47</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road; pg. 135

<sup>48</sup> Beyond the Yellow Brick Road; pg. 136

practicing addict it will be done with complete knowledge of what they are doing, all on their own.

Many of our children will have made the progress that we wanted for them all along. They may be living on their own, going to work every day, paying their bills and being productive members of society. They will be keeping the company of winners and some may still be in the group preparing for the next graduation. They will know the importance of being available to the new kids and their attitude towards people will be kind, caring and giving. These are the ‘promises’ that will manifest if they give themselves to the program in an honest, open-minded and willing way. In short, they will have the emotional and spiritual skills to take responsibility for the outcome of their lives. And, for many of them, this is where the adventure begins. Now they can get on with things, to get to where they wanted to go but could not due to their active addiction.

As parents, we too have come a long way. Like our children, we are not the same people today as we were when we were sitting in the office with one of the counselors telling them our story and the distressing details of our lives with our children on drugs and alcohol. During the past months in the parent group we have seen new parents come in and have heard their stories, many of which are carbon copies of our own. We have shared our experience, strength and hope in the meetings. We have shared our challenges and our victories along the way. Our experience has given hope to the other parents in the group. By showing up and participating we have been doing 12th step work. This is the nature of the twelfth step, working with others.

***Primary Purpose:***

Step-12 is often referred to as the ‘primary purpose’ step. It shows us the outcome we can anticipate when working the 12 steps. Let’s take a look at the three separate components of this step and how they outline our desired outcome, our primary purpose.

Part One: - “Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps...” The opening phrase of this step tells us that after having worked all of the preceding 11 steps we will have had a spiritual experience, a spiritual awakening perhaps unlike anything we have ever encountered in our past. Our recovery came from a new surrender and a relinquishing of ego as manifested in a new and unique way. This spiritual awakening was of an authentic variety and is being nurtured and developed on a daily basis. This awakening is one that causes us to have a deep and profound compassion for others, like us who are suffering. Empathy for other parents with children who are facing this cunning and baffling disease has manifested in our lives. For some of us this awakening was of a dramatic nature, for others the awakening was progressive and subtle. Either way, we should be cautious as to not sell our experience short. There need be no ‘burning bush’ event for the fruition of this part of step 12. Because of this awakening we are able to enter into the next part of the twelfth step.

Part Two: – “We tried to carry our love and understanding to others...” is the natural response to the first part of this step. We have received a great blessing in our lives; our personal and family sanity has been restored. As such, we share that which has benefited us with those who are still suffering. Coming to the parents meetings, sharing our stories and talking with new parents after meetings are some of the materializations of this part of the step. Being there for other parents is a tremendous gift. Furthermore, there are people we know in our personal and professional lives that might also be struggling with having a child on drugs and/or alcohol. When we share our experience and put them in contact with Full Circle we are applying the second part of step twelve.

Part Three: – “...and to practice these principals in our daily affairs.” This part is about applying all that we have learned through the steps in all facets of our lives. The phrase ‘practicing what we preach’ is apropos. All that we have learned, studied and experienced is to be exhibited in everything we do. We become a ‘walking testimonial’ to the recovery phenomenon. Furthermore, practicing these principals in our daily affairs is a ‘living amends’. Our new lifestyle will make up for a multitude of past indiscretions. The way in which we conduct our daily lives now is vastly different than how we behaved prior to our entering the Full Circle program. This new way of living is attractive and compelling. Other people will see the changes and perhaps inquire as to what is making our lives different. With some people we will share our story, and with others it may not be appropriate to do so, as each case is different and so we remain responsive to and respectful of our own personal truth.

In a nutshell, step-12 encourages us to continue to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God, to continue to give up our defects of character and shortcomings, continue to make prompt amends when we are wrong, to continue to improve our conscious contact with our higher power through prayer and meditation, daily. We now incorporate the whole of the recovery phenomenon into our daily lives. We are empowered to do this because of our ‘spiritual awakening’.

### ***Working with Others –***

Working with others, meaning being available, perhaps even being a sponsor is such an important element in the recovery phenomenon that the A.A. big book dedicates an entire chapter to step 12. The concept in recovery is that the best way to maintain sobriety is to help another person achieve sobriety. For us as parents the dynamic is a bit different, we are seeking a different kind of sobriety, one of the emotional and spiritual variety. Nonetheless, once we have completed the twelve steps for ourselves, we are completely qualified to sponsor other parents in the program who would also like to work through the steps. Having gone through the steps ourselves gives the potential sponsee the assurance that they will be working with someone who has also done the work. This builds confidence and trust as the sponsor/sponsee relationship is developing. Also, with regard to sponsoring, it is not advisable to be one of ‘the blind leading the blind’. All sponsors should act from a position of experience, not theory. Furthermore, working with others keeps our experience fresh; we stay close to the reality that brought us into the program in the first place. Working with others is the constant reminder to us that we need to acknowledge and surrender to our first step each and every day.

Our parent program is a 12-step program, not dissimilar to Al-Anon. However our focus is from the parental perspective. Working the steps is such an empowering experience and one that should not be passed over. One primary reason for parents not wishing to work the steps stems from ego. That is to say; we do not recognize our role in the situation and we can feel that the addiction of our kids has nothing to do with us. Often the case is really about coming to terms with our own painful issues and a fear arises that if we indeed commit to the steps we will have to deal with issues we would prefer to leave alone. The phenomenon of recovery allows for a deep healing to occur. We do not have to become free, but we can become free. Choosing to conduct our lives in the spirit of the steps is completely up to us and just as importantly we must be at the right place in our lives to deal with our issues. As parents who have now come through these steps, it is important to be sensitive to those who are new to the group. We are to be available, not forceful. Remember, our groups are ‘grown’ through attraction opposed to promotion.

### ***Obedience to Unenforceable Laws –***

In Bumper Stickers, Bob Meehan writes; “One day, I commented to my sponsor, Father Charlie, that I’d seen some people in his church and they really seemed to have class (he really had a great “flock”). Charlie said, “That’s not class, Bob. Class is the ability to obey the unenforceable laws. Obedience to the Unenforceable Laws is what makes a man a man. We spent hours talking about that.”<sup>49</sup> Step-12 is all about obeying unenforceable laws. The laws of Sobriety, if there were any, would be (might be) the 12- steps. As parents, we don’t have to work the steps, we don’t have to study the steps, we don’t even have to acknowledge the steps. However, we can if we so choose. Furthermore, we don’t have to share our love and understanding with others, but we can. We don’t have to ‘practice these principles in our daily lives’, but we can if we so desire.

Applying the suggestions as outlined in the 12-steps is a ‘classy’ way of living. It has been said that the definition of integrity is “Doing the exact right thing at the exact right time, even if the ‘exact right thing’ is doing nothing at all.” As we conduct our lives surrendered to a power greater than ourselves we are elevated into a ‘first class’ experience. The ‘highs’ we get from this lifestyle are earned highs. Making a decision and a commitment to continue on in the spirit of sobriety is the essence of step 12.

### ***Conclusion:***

Step 12 is much more about a beginning than an ending. It is much like experiencing a year of life. An entire year contains the four different seasons; it contains short nights and long days, long nights and short days. There are warm days, cold days, starry nights and lonely nights. A year may have brought us the sorrow of death or the joy of birth, pleasurable events, and painful events. A year has the whole package for us, and

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<sup>49</sup> Bumper Stickers; Pg. 43

the Twelve Steps are not dissimilar. As we experience our life at each different step and as we add up all the steps together we will have made a wonderful circle around our experience and life. We will have been exposed to the different ‘seasons’ of sobriety, the ups and the downs, hot days and cold days. To some degree or another we will have touched and tasted the fruits of sobriety; peace, joy and serenity. We can now fully maintain this way of living, enjoy the fruits of our work and the benefits of surrender. Step-12 is the awesome opportunity to continue our growth, equipped to face any challenge, any obstacle, any windfall and any blessing.

We are now in a place where we are fully qualified to share our experience with others who wish to work each of the steps; from one to twelve. Being available and being a sponsor, working with another parent through the steps will, in many cases, be just as rewarding and enlightening as was our own process going through the steps for the first time.

It is in this spirit that the authors of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous stated that as we progress through our own process and as we work the steps according to our own particular situation that no matter how extensive the suggestions in the book are, for each of us, “More Shall be Revealed.” This is the response to being true to ourselves.

Having now completed the study through step 12 you are by no means done. Your journey continues as you now are the guide, the trusted servant. Freely all this has been given to you, now you are to freely give to others; for it is in giving that we receive.

May you continue to sow the seeds of Peace, Joy, Serenity and Love – and may your harvest be overflowing!

**LOVE IS –**

**RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW**



***Step-12 Questions and Discussion Topics:***

- ◆ What is the purpose of Step-12?
- ◆ What does a ‘spiritual awakening’ look like?
- ◆ How can I acknowledge my own spiritual awakening (growth)? <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> What does ‘practice these principles in all my affairs’ mean?
- ◆ How can I better share my ‘love and understanding’ with others?
- ◆ How might I be able to be of service to the group, Full Circle or to the recovery process?
- ◆ What area of my life could benefit from applying one of the recovery principles?
- ◆ Have I seen a ‘spiritual awakening’ in someone else in the group? If so, have I told them so?
- ◆ Have I over-complicated the concept of ‘spiritual awakening’? If so, how can I simplify it?
- ◆ How can I better share my ‘experience, strength and hope’ in my daily life?

Or, add your own comments and experience on this topic

***Suggestions for Working Step-12:***

Begin to serve the group in a more specific way.

Be available as a sponsor. • Be available as a steering committee member.

Call other parents on the phone list just to see how they are doing and to tell them that you were thinking of them.

Be sure to share your experience during meetings.

Take time to introduce yourself to new parents and to talk with them.

Go to coffee after the meeting and sit with someone you have never had a conversation with.

Remain sensitive to others in your daily life. Be prepared to express compassion should the opportunity manifest.

***Looking forward to working with others:***

We have now completed our first go-around with the twelve steps of recovery. Many people repeat the steps from time to time, some do this every year, others less often. And, some people go through the steps with each sponsee. That is the wonderful thing about working with other people. You will have the opportunity to look at the steps with a fresh set of eyes, from someone else's perspective. When you work with another person as a sponsor you will have the opportunity to remember what it was like when you were new to the program. You will be reminded how you were before you got involved with the Full Circle program. You will see how far you have come and how much healing has taken place. In addition to this, you will be privileged to help someone else out of the pain and suffering that comes with being the parent of an addicted child. It is a blessed lifestyle to have had a spiritual awakening, to carry our love and understanding to others, and to practice the principals we have learned in all of our affairs.

We encourage you to reach out to others. Become a sponsor or be available to new parents in the group. Your personal experience is valuable. Part of the awakening is that we know we need to share our experience, strength and hope with others.

## **Conclusion**

The twelve steps of recovery are a vast and all-encompassing vehicle for personal growth and emotional, mental and spiritual health. As was previously stated, there is no 'right' way to go through the steps. This study is just one individual perspective. The idea is to have a reliable reference point for each step and as a result an outline from which a meaningful discussion can be conducted. It is with this intention that this study was written. Furthermore, this study was not designed as a 'stand-alone' program, rather a catalyst for discussion. The wonderful thing about the group dynamic is the multi-faceted elaboration that arises from numerous experiences. It is the culmination of all of our sharing that creates an awesome meeting or group study.

There are other resources for further study. Any bookstore will have a plethora of choices. There are 12-step programs designed for each and every form of addiction. There are 12-step programs for family members, co-workers, employers, parents, etc. There are 12-step programs that are of an agnostic perspective, from a Christian perspective, from a Buddhist perspective, from neutral perspectives, etc. The idea is that if you are in any way afflicted from drugs or alcohol there is a solution. It has been said that the fruits of sobriety are Peace, Joy and Serenity. If these are missing from your life, dive deeper into a 12-step program that specifically meets your needs.

This study may have brought up issues for you that are uncomfortable or even painful. Some of us have avoided working the steps for exactly that reason. Some of us did not want to open up issues that we had packed away in neat and tidy boxes, in the back recesses of our minds. But, like the introduction stated, we can be free of these issues, free from pain and dysfunction. We do not have to be free, but we can be, it is completely up to us. Living an unencumbered life is an amazing thing. Living without regrets is an amazing thing.

Living an empowered and intentional life is an amazing thing. The insight that comes from working a 12-step program, especially with a sponsor is incredible. Furthermore, once you have completed your own 12-step work, and you begin to lead others through their own 12-step work, you will find your experience deepen and to become even more meaningful. Sharing your experience, strength and hope with others is a great thing to do. When you work with others you are making this world a better place, you are doing your part in lessening the suffering in the world, you have taken a stand in the current of life and your actions make a difference. As such, I congratulate you for your courage and your willingness. Your participation, at whatever level, is greatly appreciated.

Lastly, I encourage you to always remind people of the truth. The truth that there is a solution, the truth that there is a love that can get us through anything, the truth that peace, joy and serenity is within reach. I have personally seen the miracle of recovery. The process happens; sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, but for those who completely give themselves to the process the work they do will always bear fruit.

May God bless you as your journey continues – Chris Ebersberg

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