



Ron L.

Matt Talbot Retreat
April, 2024



Forgiveness



Forgiveness

Self Forgiveness

God's Forgiveness

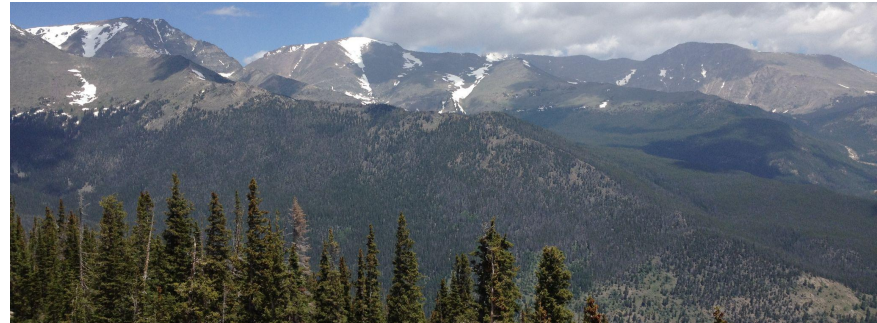
Forgiveness for others



Forgiveness

Self Forgiveness as
powerlessness

Self Forgiveness as being a
victim





Steps 1-3



As Giving Up



Step One

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.



What does it mean to be powerless?

Step One in the 12 & 12:

Our sponsors declared that we were the victims of a mental obsession so subtly powerful that no amount of human will power could break it.

Victims



Victims of the disease of alcoholism

Growing up with the disease of alcoholism
I was *affected* way before I was *afflicted* by
the disease.



Step Two

Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.



That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism and that God could and would if he were sought.



Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.



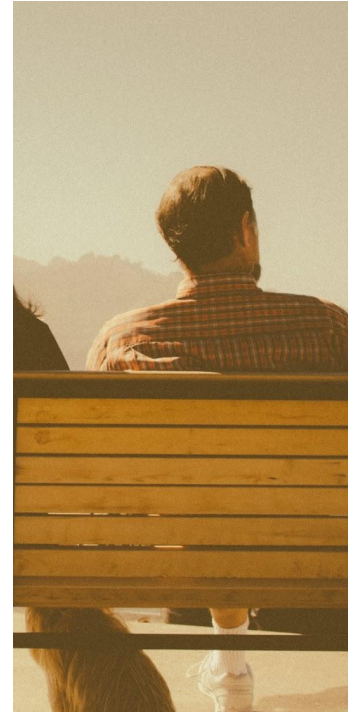
A close-up photograph of two hands reaching towards each other against a dark background. The hands are positioned as if about to clasp or support each other. The word "Care" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font in the center of the image, overlapping the space between the hands. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the veins on the hands.

Care

One of the most powerful steps of the twelve.



The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self will can hardly be a success.



God I offer myself to you to build with me and to do
with me as you will.

RELIEVE ME OF THE BONDAGE OF SELF,
THAT I MAY BETTER DO YOUR 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.



Recently, in reading Step Three, “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him,” something jumped out at me:
the word “CARE.”

Just what would a life lived in God’s care look like?



For me, living a life in God's care means that He loves me always, forgives me instantly, and never holds my mistakes against me. I don't have to worry about the future, which is in His hands, or regret the past, which He has promised to make good out of. Instead of obsessing about my problems, I can focus on gratitude for my blessings.



In the care of my Higher Power, I can make the most of my life and enjoy it, leaving everything else to a Power greater than myself.

“Letting go is easier when I remember that my Higher Power cares about me.”





Good



Night!





Saturday AM



The Third Step Prayer

From page 63 of The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous

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! Amen



It all started with the
1957 Buick, on
10-15-1961



Made a searching and
fearless moral inventory
of ourselves.



Step Four Inventory in the Big Book

Resentments

Fear

Sex



Resentments are the #1 offender

If we were to live we had to be free of anger.

We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us.

We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how?



This was our course:

We realized that the people who wronged us
were perhaps spiritually sick.



And how about taking an inventory of what our life was like before we started drinking and drugging?

What would that look like?



What Does It Mean to Have Shame?

Shame is a feeling of embarrassment or humiliation that arises from the perception of having done something dishonorable, immoral, or improper.

People who experience shame usually try to hide the thing they feel ashamed of. When shame is chronic, it can involve the feeling that you are fundamentally flawed. Shame can often be hard to identify in oneself.



What Does It Mean to Have Shame?

While shame is a negative emotion, its origins play a part in our survival as a species. Without shame, we might not feel the need to adhere to cultural norms, follow laws, or behave in a way that allows us to exist as social beings.

Since we want to be accepted, shame is an evolutionary tool that keeps us all in check.



When Does Shame Become Harmful?

Toxic shame can be problematic when it becomes internalized and results in an overly harsh evaluation of oneself as a whole person. This inner critic might tell you that you are a bad person, worthless, or have no value. The truth is, how deeply you feel ashamed often has little to do with your worth or what you have done wrong.

Other common concepts that overlap with shame include embarrassment, humiliation, and guilt. However, these different terms have nuances in meaning that are important to know to better understand shame.



While shame is often confused with guilt, they are actually two separate things.

- **Guilt:** Guilt is generally about something that you have done. It refers to something you did wrong or a behavior that you feel bad about.
- **Shame:** Shame refers to something about your character or who you are as a person that you believe is unacceptable. Shame is not about doing something wrong. It is about a feeling that you have when you perceive that you are not good enough in some way.

While guilt is about wrong actions, shame is about being **wrong as a person.**



Toxic shame is associated with avoiding failure and its consequences while guilt is connected with **forgiving** and improving one's self, along with making amends. Learning to separate your **guilt** from your **shame** is one of the first steps to feeling less shame in general.

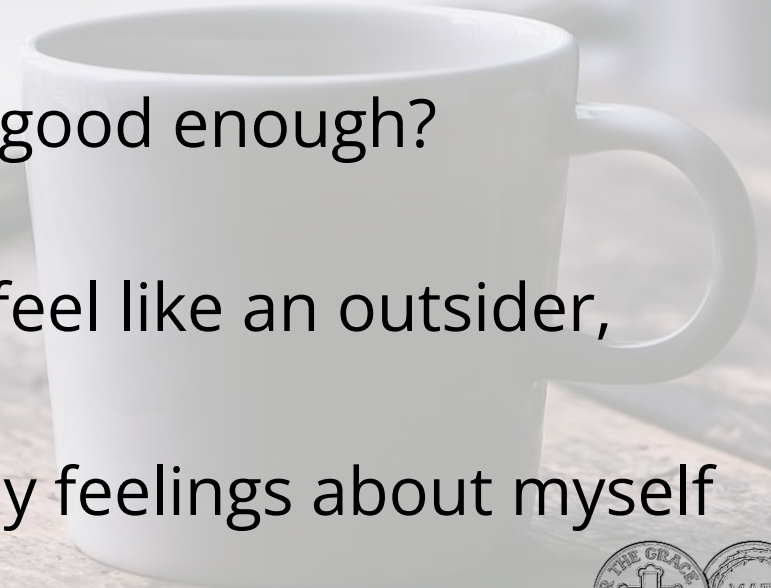


What Are the Symptoms of Shame?

- Feeling sensitive or being worried about what others think of you
- Feeling unappreciated, used, or like others take advantage of you
- Feeling rejected, regretful, inadequate, or like you have little impact
- Uncontrollable blushing, or being afraid to look inappropriate or stupid
- Worrying that you aren't treated with respect, or wanting to have the last word
- Feeling that you can't be your true self, losing your identity, or not sharing your thoughts or feelings because you are afraid to be embarrassed
- Being more worried about failure than doing something immoral or dishonorable, being a perfectionist
- Feeling like an outsider, that you are different or left out, or feeling suspicious and like you can't trust others
- Being a wallflower or shrinking violet, wanting to shut people out or withdraw, trying to hide or be inconspicuous, or not wanting to be the center of attention



Looking back to the time before I started using:
How did I feel about myself growing up?
What was I told about who I was?
Did I feel insecure?
Did I feel afraid?
Did I feel not smart enough, not good enough?
Not able enough?
Did I feel like I belonged or did I feel like an outsider,
never quite fit in?
Can I see that using just made my feelings about myself
worse as time went on?



We begin to see how the disease affected us before we started drinking.

My whole family was spiritually sick from alcoholism, the disease.



No one is to blame, but I get a
chance to recover from the
spiritual malady one day at a time.



A scenic background image showing the silhouettes of two people climbing a mountain peak. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, hazy glow. The overall tone is soft and atmospheric.

Saturday PM

Steps Five - Nine

God's forgiveness

Forgiveness for others

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



God's Forgiveness

Step 5 from the 12 & 12

As far as alcoholics are concerned, AA would go even further. Most of us would declare that without a fearless admission of our defects to another human being we could not stay sober.

It seems plain that the grace of God will not enter to expel our destructive obsessions until we are **willing** to try this.



What are we likely to receive from Step 5?

For one thing we shall get rid of that terrible sense of isolation we've always had.

Almost without exception alcoholics are tortured by loneliness.



Step Five was the answer. It was the beginning of true kinship with man and God.

This vital step was also the means by which we began to get the feeling that we could be **forgiven**, no matter what we had thought or done. Often it was while working on this step with our sponsors or spiritual advisors that we first felt truly able to **forgive** others, no matter how deeply we felt they had wronged us.



Step Five, con't.

Our moral inventory had persuaded us that ***all-around forgiveness*** was desirable, but it was only when we resolutely tackled Step Five that we ***inwardly knew we'd be able to receive forgiveness and give it, too.***



Step Six in the 12&12 states:

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

This is AA’s way of stating the best possible attitude one can take in order to make a beginning on this **LIFETIME** job.



So we ask.

When ready, we say something like this: “My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.



Forgiveness for others

Made a list of all persons we have harmed,
and became willing to make amends to
them all.



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



Forgiveness involves willfully putting aside feelings of resentments toward someone who has committed a wrong, been unfair or hurtful, or otherwise harmed you in some way. Forgiveness is not merely accepting what happened or ceasing to be angry. Rather, it involves a voluntary transformation of your feelings, attitudes, and behavior, so that you are no longer dominated by resentment ***and can express compassion, generosity, or the like toward the person who wronged you.***



Discussion Topics:

Have I forgiven myself and others?

Why am I holding onto unforgiveness?

Do I want to be free of this pain?



Sunday



God's Loving Care for Us



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



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



ALAN JACKSON

A silhouette of a person standing on a rock with their arms raised in a gesture of triumph or praise, set against a vibrant sunset sky with orange and red hues. The person is positioned in the center-left of the frame.

AMAZING GRACE