

## A Working Steps 5 – 7 Guide

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### Step 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Notice that the Fifth Step doesn't say that we just admit our wrongs. It says that we admit the EXACT NATURE of our wrongs, so we need to do more than just confess what we did. We also need to see WHY we did what we did so that we can ask God to help us with it. The guides provided in Fourth Step help us see just that.

Please turn to page 72, paragraph 1. This is the beginning of Chapter 6, "Into Action". Please notice that this chapter is not named "Into Thinking" or "Into Hearing About What To Do" or "Into Telling Others What To Do" or "Into Studying"; but is called "Into ACTION". Page 72, paragraph 1:

"Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude (Step 2), a new relationship with our Creator (Step 3), and to discover the obstacles in our path (Step 4). We have admitted certain defects; we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. (Of course, that is a promise. The book continues.) This REQUIRES ACTION on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the EXACT NATURE of our defects. (You might have remembered that Step 5 actually says, "...the exact nature of our WRONGS." But this sentence says, "...the exact nature of our DEFECTS." Bill Wilson likes to use different words that mean the same thing. Throughout the book, he uses the words faults, wrongs, mistakes, defects of character, things we have admitted are objectionable, shortcomings, flaws, and in "Bill's Story" he uses the word sins. They ALL mean the same thing - whatever blocks us off from God and others. Back to the book.) "This brings us to the Fifth Step in the program of recovery mentioned in the preceding chapter.

This is perhaps difficult - especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal INSUFFICIENT. (Like we said before, self cannot overcome self, a sick mind cannot heal a sick mind.) Many of us thought it necessary to go MUCH further. We will be MORE reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so."

Next, the "Big Book" tells us why we need to admit our shortcomings to another person:

"The best reason first (here's a warning): If we skip this VITAL step, we may NOT overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably (or almost always) they got drunk. Having persevered with the REST of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never COMPLETED their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only THOUGHT they had lost their egoism and fear; they only THOUGHT they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it NECESSARY, until they told someone else ALL their life story.

The "12 & 12" expresses this warning in a similar way when it states on page 56 and 57:

"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."

It's obvious why we share our inventory with another person - because we are MASTERS at believing in our own justifications and half-truths. Aren't we the ones who used to say we didn't have a drinking problem? Didn't we tell ourselves over and over that we were doing fine as we were sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss of alcoholism?

Since we're not good judges of character, especially our own, we confide in someone else. Only ANOTHER person or person's can see us as we REALLY are. That's why it says that a SOLITARY self-appraisal is insufficient.

The book continues on page 73, first full paragraph. I'm going to change a few words here to personalize it a bit and I think you'll see what I mean:

"More than most people, I lead a double life. I am very much the actor. To the outer world I present my stage character. This is the one I like my fellows to see. I want to enjoy a certain reputation, but know in my heart I don't deserve it. The inconsistency is made worse by the things I do on my sprees. Coming to my senses, I am revolted at certain episodes I vaguely remember. These memories are a nightmare. I tremble to think someone might have observed me. As far as I can, I push these

memories far inside myself (which is another way of saying that I ignore my conscience, or my Inner Guide which is that piece of God within me. The book continues.). I hope they will never see the light of day. I am under CONSTANT fear and tension - that makes for (or leads to) more drinking."

Our experience shows that if you've been thorough to this point, and you take Step Five as prescribed in the "Big Book", you WILL receive results. I can GUARANTEE that those results go contrary to having "constant fear and tension."

Let's skip a paragraph and pick up the reading at the last line of page 73.

"We MUST be ENTIRELY honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person OR PERSONS with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion. We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem. Of course, we sometimes encounter people who do not understand alcoholics.

If we cannot or would rather not do this, we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend. Perhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person. It may be one of our own family, but we CANNOT disclose ANYTHING to our wives or our parents which will hurt them and make them unhappy. We have NO right to save our own skin at another person's expense. Such parts of our story we tell to someone who will understand, yet be unaffected. The rule is we MUST be hard on ourself, but ALWAYS considerate of others."

Like it was said before, when the Big Book came out, the mentality was that this book would fall into the hands of a person who had no AA in their town. We are so fortunate that our fellowship has grown to the point where today very few people have to go outside the fellowship to do their Fifth Step. Some may still choose to confide in someone who is not a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, but we find that most newcomers nowadays prefer to share their inventory with their sponsor.

The person we choose should be closemouthed, trustworthy and supportive. He or she MUST NEVER discuss our inventory with ANYONE else. It's important that they are able to keep a confidence, and fully understands and approves what we are about to do.

So the book gives us four specific attributes to look for in someone who is going to hear our Fifth Step. First, on page 74, toward the end of the middle paragraph, it says we share our inventory with someone who will understand, yet be unaffected. Then, two lines up from the bottom of the page, it says that it is important that they be able to keep a confidence. The next line says that they need to fully understand and approve of what we are driving at. And then the next few words say that they need to not try to change our plan. So these are the four points to look for in someone who is going to hear your Fifth Step.

The "Big Book" gives us specific instructions for taking the Fifth Step. At the top of page 75, they tell us that, as soon as we decide who is to listen to our inventory, we take action immediately:

"When we decide who is to hear our story, WE WASTE NO TIME. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a LONG TALK. (I'd like to suggest that the most effective way to do a Fifth Step is by doing it all in one sitting. That way, we get the full effect and the full picture of how devastating our life run on our will is to ourselves and to others. The book continues.) We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a LIFE-AND-DEATH errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence."

Something that is not often mentioned at our meetings is that you'll notice that the Fifth Step says, "Admitted to GOD, to ourselves, and to another human..." Before we meet with whoever is to hear our inventory, please take some time at a place where you feel God strongly, like a church or a synagogue or a place in nature or even in your own home, and share your inventory with your Higher Power. You may see something more in the inventory that you didn't see before. When we first share the Fourth Step with God, we begin to feel a sense of forgiveness and begin to accumulate power that we bring into admitting these things to someone else. When we finally admit them to someone else, we experience humility and see that we can trust again by telling our deep, dark secrets to someone else. In admitting these things to ourselves, we gain more of an understanding of our inner workings.

In the second paragraph on page 75, the "Big Book" provides us with more directions:

"We pocket (or put away) our pride and go to it, illuminating EVERY twist of character, EVERY dark cranny of the past."

There are two important points that I want to mention about the fourth column of the Resentment Inventory that I think are very transformative and that I try to draw out of every Fifth Step that I have ever had the privilege to listen to. First of all, almost every resentment can be boiled down to a simple statement: "They're not acting the way I think they should" or "Life's not treating me the way I think it should." This is very self-centered and a form of trying to play God because we are assuming that we know what's best. We are just not capable of judging that. Secondly, something that I think is very interesting is that usually what we resent in OTHERS

are the things we struggle with OURSELVES. In other words (using gossip as an example), people who are bothered most by being gossiped about, usually participate in gossip themselves. We are merely seeing in others something we don't like about ourselves. The other person's behavior is being a mirror for us, so we can see OUR OWN defects. The realization of these two perspectives about resentment has brought about much freedom in my life. Also, when listening to the Fear Inventory during a Fifth Step, I ask the person if they can share with me their earliest recollection of each fear. This helps us see where all this fear came from.

To get the FULL effect and the FULL picture of how self-will has damaged and controlled our lives, we'd like to suggest that a Fifth Step be done ALL on the same day, if possible. Sometimes it takes most of the day, so please make it a priority and simply get started early enough by perhaps setting aside an entire day to focus fully on this life-changing part of the process. You'll be grateful that you did.

Then, the book tells us that after we have shared our inventories, we will get more results. Further on in the second paragraph on page 75, the "Big Book" includes more benefits as the result of finishing this Step. These are the Fifth Step Promises:

"Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are DELIGHTED. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs (Step 2), but now we begin to have a spiritual experience (which is as THE result of taking some actions). The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."

We are now well on our way toward recovering from alcoholism. The "Big Book" states we are in the process of having a spiritual awakening and as a result, our obsession to drink is being removed.

Please review this paragraph after you have done this Step. Think about how these promises are coming true in your lives. They CERTAINLY have come true in ours.

In the next paragraph the "Big Book" gives us specific directions on what to do AFTER we have finished sharing our inventories:

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for AN HOUR, carefully reviewing what we have done. (So we take ONE hour after the Fifth Step to do the following.) We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him BETTER (now, through our actions and experiences, we learn more and more about what God is NOT, and the more we know what God is NOT, the more we know Him better). Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the Twelve Steps (which is page 59). CAREFULLY reading the first five proposals (which is referring to the first five Steps) we ask if we have omitted ANYTHING, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"

Notice that the book asks us if the stones are properly in place, if we've skimped on the cement put into the foundation, and if we've tried to make mortar without sand. What stones are the "Big Book" referring to? What is the book saying by asking if we've skimped on the cement put into the foundation? What does it mean, "to make mortar without sand"? Without an explanation of these terms, these important questions could be quite confusing, therefore some important information may be overlooked. Let's take a moment to review:

Any structure has a foundation, a cornerstone, and a keystone. (And let us remember: the stronger the foundation, the stronger the structure will become.) In the chapter "We Agnostics", the book tells us that we are building a "wonderfully effective spiritual structure". In "Bill's Story" on page 12 when Ebby says to Bill, "Why don't you choose your OWN conception of God?" Bill realizes that it was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than himself. Nothing more was required of him to make his beginning. Bill saw that growth could start from that point. He then says, "Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend." Bill tells us that willingness is the foundation of our journey toward a spiritual awakening.

When we took the Second Step, we learned that believing is the cornerstone of our personality change when on page 47 the "Book Big" states:

"We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I NOW believe, or am I even WILLING to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he DOES believe, or is WILLING to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built."

So believing is the cornerstone.

The third step required that we make a decision. On page 62 the "Big Book" tells us that our decision to turn our will and our lives over to God's care is the keystone of our personality change (let us remember: the keystone is the stone at the top that holds ALL the other stones in place). The "Big Book" explains this when it says:

"We decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom."

Willingness is the foundation. Believing is the cornerstone. Our decision is the keystone.

Now let's take another look at these questions at the bottom of page 75: "Is our work solid so far?" Which is another way of saying have I omitted ANYTHING from the first five steps that will cause my structure to crumble? It then says, "Are the stones properly in place?" Which is another way of saying do I have willingness as my foundation; belief as the cornerstone; and have I made a decision to let God direct my life, which is the keystone? Are my first three steps solid? Then it says, "Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation?" Which is another way of saying have I skimmed on the willingness in my foundation? Then it says, "Have we tried to make mortar without sand?" Which is another way of saying have I tried to take the rest of the steps without really being convinced of the First Step?

After sharing our inventories with our sponsor or "spiritual advisor", we answer these questions during an hour of meditation and quiet time to make sure we haven't omitted anything.

This brings us to the end of Step 5. For an AA Grapevine article about it please go back to the Step 5 – 7 files and read "Step 5 The Wraparound Mirror."

Please turn to page 76 in your Big Book.

#### **Step 6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**

The 12 & 12 says the following about Step Six: "There is a big difference between striving for a self-determined objective and for the perfect objective which is of God. The only urgent thing is that we make a beginning, and keep trying. We shall need to raise our eyes toward perfection, and be ready to walk in that direction. It will seldom matter how haltingly we walk. The only question will be "Are we ready?" It is suggested that we ought to become entirely willing to aim toward perfection. We note that some delay, however, might be pardoned. That word, in the mind of a rationalizing alcoholic, could certainly be given a long-term meaning. He could say, 'How very easy! Sure, I'll head toward perfection, but I'm certainly not going to hurry any. Maybe I can postpone dealing with some of my problems indefinitely.' Of course, this WON'T do. Such a bluffing of oneself will have to go the way of many another pleasant rationalization. At the very least, we shall HAVE TO come to grips with some of our worst character defects AND take action toward their removal as quickly as we can. The moment we say, 'No, never!' our minds close against the grace of God. Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be FATAL. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives, and move toward God's Will for us."

In the Big Book, all of Step Six can be found in the first paragraph of page 76. The first line says:

"If we can answer to our satisfaction, we look at Step Six."

If we can answer WHAT to our satisfaction? The Book is talking about the questions in the last paragraph of the page before this, page 75. These are the questions we ask ourselves when we take the hour of reflection AFTER we do our Fifth Step by asking us to review whether or not we were thorough and honest in completing the first five Steps. So the Sixth Step is done IMMEDIATELY after taking the hour of quiet time after the Fifth Step.

Starting with the second line on page 76, the book now makes a statement and then asks us two simple questions:

"We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable (which means absolutely essential. What follows is the FIRST question). Are we now ready to let GOD remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? (And here is the SECOND question) Can He now take them all - everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

So in the last three sentences here the book asks us two questions, and depending upon what our answer is FOR these two questions, will depend upon whether we need to involve the last sentence. According to the "Big Book", immediately after we do our Fifth Step, it will be decision time once again.

After going over Step Six in the Big Book, the person or person's hearing your Fifth Step will ask you the first Sixth Step question, which is for nothing more than the WILLINGNESS, or to be entirely ready, to have God remove the defects of character that block us

off from our Higher Power working in and through us. These "unsalable goods" or "shortcomings" were disclosed in our Fourth and Fifth Steps. Take a moment of silence to reflect on whether you are entirely ready, by asking yourself if you are willing to let God help you with these defects.

After you answer the first Sixth Step question, whoever is hearing your Fifth Step will ask you the second Sixth Step question, which is if you believe that the God of your own understanding is capable of now taking them all - everyone.

Notice that the Book says in the last line of the first paragraph on page 76, that if there is still a defect of character that we are NOT willing to ask God to help us with, we pray for the willingness. That is all there is to the Sixth Step: Is the God of my own understanding capable of removing my defects, and am I willing to ask my Higher Power to help me with these shortcomings. If I am NOT yet entirely ready to turn over one or more of these human failings to my Higher Power, I pray to ask God to help me become willing.

If you are NOT willing to go to God with one or more of these defects, please remember to pray daily for the willingness and it WILL come, but still go on to Step Seven with the REST of the flaws you ARE willing to let God help you with.

### **Step 7 Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.**

We need to start realizing that when God begins to remove our self-will defects of character, He will ALWAYS replace them with one of HIS OWN characteristics. If he didn't, we would be the hole in the doughnut and we would be left with an empty space. That space needs to be filled with the OPPOSITE of the defect that we are asking our Higher Power to remove. For instance, if I found a lot of selfishness in my inventory, when I ask God to help me with it, He will replace it with unselfishness. Or if I saw my own dishonesty all over my inventory, when I ask God to help me with it, He will replace it with honesty. And so on. God does for us what we CANNOT do for ourselves, BUT He will NOT do for us what we CAN do for ourselves, so we need to start practicing the opposite of our defects of character. He will help us with our motivation and our thinking, but part of the Seventh Step is that we need to start practicing God's Will characteristics.

In the Big Book, Step Seven is straightforward. It consists of a prayer.

The second paragraph on page 76 contains the Seventh Step Prayer. It reads:

"When ready, we say something like this: 'My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, GOOD AND BAD (which is another reference back to the Third Step). 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.'"

Step Seven says, "Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings" so I'd like to attempt explaining the difference between just ASKING, and HUMBLY asking. Being humble is becoming aware of the littleness of ourselves, compared to the bigness of God. Did you ever think that your only problem is not getting your way? Being a servant of God is the highest attainment in AA. We CLIMB our way all the way to servant. That's what a winner is - a servant. We're just out there doing what God gives us the intuition to do. And when this transformation takes place, our needs are being met from the inside, so we don't have to go out and get anything to get fixed, we're ALREADY fixed because we already have everything we need, and we're simply moving through life, just looking for ways to be of service to God. So humility is an awareness that we are willing to go through whatever it takes to become God-centered. That means we're going to have to go through the pain of often not getting our way and voluntarily go through this transforming pain. We'll use the following story as an illustration:

A lump of gray clay was sitting on the shelf next to beautiful teacup. The clay says to the teacup, "Is this all there is to life, just sitting here not doing much of anything? Why can't I be just like you, a teacup that people say is very beautiful?" The teacup says, "Not too long ago, I was just like you. One day soon you will be a teacup too, and people will say that you too are very beautiful and they will also want to take you home with them." "Yes, I would LOVE that," says the lump of clay, "Can you ask the Master to make me into a beautiful teacup?"

Right HERE, in THIS part of the story, the clay is just ASKING to become a teacup. But HUMBLY asking is a little different than that, as will be shown by the REST of the story.

The teacup continues: "Let me tell you what it takes to become the most gorgeous, the most beautiful little teacup that everyone admires and loves.

"I didn't always look like this. There was a time in my life when I too was just a hard cold lump of gray clay. Well, one day my Master came along and He picked me up and He began to pat me and roll me and I said, 'What are you doing, stop it, quit, that hurts, don't do that, ouch, leave me alone.' And He simply said, 'Not yet.'

“And then He put me on this wheel and began to spin me around and around and around and I said, 'I'm getting dizzy, getting sick to my stomach, let me off of here, I can't stand this, oh, oh, what's happening, my whole shape is changing, stop it, stop it.' And He said, 'Not yet.'

After my shape had changed, He began to paint me all over. I said, 'Eew, cough, cough, that stuff stinks, stop it, stop it.' And He still said, 'Not yet.'

“Then He put me in this oven and closed the door. The oven had a little window and He kept just looking at me. And I said, 'I can't stand this heat, let me out of here, cough, cough, don't You love me, let me out of here, why are You just looking at me?' And He simply looked at me through the door and said, 'Not yet.'

“Then, finally, He opened the door, took me and dried me on the shelf for a while and put another coat of that awful paint on me (cough, cough). And then He turned that oven back on seven times hotter than it was before and put me back in there again, and I said, 'What are you doing, I can't stand this, You don't understand, I can't do this, I can't take it, let me out of here,' He just looked through the glass at me and said, 'Not yet.'

“Finally one day, He opened the door, took me out and set me on the shelf, let me cool off for a while and then came by with a mirror and He held it up in front of me and I couldn't believe it. I was so beautiful, I was so changed, I was so different. I didn't even look like that old lump of gray clay any more. And now people EVERYWHERE appreciate and love me.”

NOW, if you ask, you're HUMBLY asking. You KNOW what's involved, you KNOW that it's not going to be easy, but you want it ANYWAY. Spirituality is about changing our attitude about pain and discomfort. It is looking THROUGH the pain to see the beauty of what is coming. The transformation is just on the OTHER side of the willingness to experience not getting my way. And as soon as we go through it, it wasn't even painful, it merely becomes a little effort. It's kinda like when you're OUT of shape and you want to get back IN shape. It's hard at first. Remember that first week in the gym when you go home and everything hurts, everywhere? But as you keep it up, a month later, it's no longer painful, it merely becomes a little effort. And it's wonderful because you know the great results it's going to produce. After a while, you LOVE pushing yourself because of the wonderful results. And the same thing can happen in the spiritual world. I UNDERSTAND that at times I'm going to be uncomfortable, but I'm willing to go through with it anyway because I trust my Higher Power. That's the difference between just ASKING, and HUMBLY asking.

After doing Steps Five, Six and Seven all on the same day, please begin saying the Seventh Step Prayer on a daily basis

From now on, please include the Third and Seventh Step Prayers as part of your daily prayer life. Also, the following attachment will assist you in working our part of Step Seven going forward (since God will do for us what we CANNOT do for ourselves, but our Higher Power will NOT do for us what we CAN do for ourselves). It has two lists. One is a list of SELF-will characteristics and the other is a list of the OPPOSITE, or GOD'S Will characteristics. Please use this handout by marking off on the left side the self-will characteristics that you are struggling with. Then, each morning and when needed throughout the day, ask your Higher Power to replace them with the opposite or the GOD'S Will characteristics. In other words, if fear is one of your defects, silently ask God to take away your fear and replace it with faith and trust in God. And so on down the list. Not only is this a great way to include God in on relieving our shortcomings, but it is also a great way to affirm daily the direction within ourselves that we are trying to move toward.

[For more on this please go back to the Step 5 – 7 files and see the “Step 7 Card Enlarged.”](#)

[For a deeper Step Seven exercise please go back to the Step 5 – 7 files and see the “Step 6 & 7 Exercise.”](#)

[For an article on Step 7 please go back to the Step 5 – 7 files and read “Step 7 From Head to Heart.”](#)

According to the "Big Book" we have completed the information for practicing Step Seven on an ongoing basis. Now, it is time to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends or restitution.