

## Steps 6 and 7

From Step work to this point and “feedback” from Step 5, we can create a list of our more conspicuous defects or shortcomings. These are but human personality characteristics that often get very pronounced as the malady of alcoholism takes its course. We wholeheartedly agree that these items may be the root cause of most human suffering, but disagree with any notion that these are a causal factor in our illness. However, if we are going to live “beyond the pale” by adapting ourselves to a Spiritual Way of Life that embraces a FOURTH dimension of existence, with a VITAL 6th sense, we must move forward beyond what would be considered “normal” ways of thinking, acting and living. Dr. Silkworth states: “... their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives.” This point is stressed by Dr. Carl Jung: “Ideas, emotions and attitudes which were once the guiding forces ... are cast aside, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them.” The themes of the book are recoverED and permanent recovery. To this end, in Appendix II, we find: “...this book which, upon careful reading shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism...”

We think, act, re-act, and do things for the satisfaction of desires, or the alleviation of suffering - for EFFECT. For this “phase of our development” is very difficult, often impossible, to “create” the life-or-death willingness and desperation to be released from our manifest defects such as shyness, the tendency to manipulate, or outright lying that we had “forced upon us” to park the whiskey bottle. In short, we must have God’s help. Having a list of terms meaningful to us and asking for God to enter our lives, our thinking, and our hearts for willingness is Step Six.

And we must do our part in the “work.” First, we need to truly “OWN” these aspects of ourselves and search diligently for the “payoff.” They ARE us. And each and every item on our list will be a “tool” to help us get what we want, have things our way, avoid fear, or justify our thinking and actions. When we can “see” this aspect of ourselves in this manner, there will be a far greater degree of willingness. That conclusion, which usually is the result of frank sharing with one’s sponsor, coupled with prayer and meditation can move us forward on the “path of willingness.”

When we look at most of the published “lists” for daily inventory, we see a column of “defect” words on one side and a column of their “opposites” on the other. Again, in frank discussion and prayer, it will be “revealed” sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, that in nearly all cases, the OPPOSITES will give us the same EFFECT!

When we are willing to explore this avenue of recovery and do our part, we are ready for the 7th Step Prayer. We DO this out loud, on our knees, with another member of AA - preferably our sponsor.

The “Poker Chip” Method of Step 7

We DO NOT “work on our defects.” PERIOD! Steps 6 & 7 state in terms that simply cannot be misconstrued, WHO is going to remove them - GOD. Our role in these Steps is the “entirely ready” and the “humbly asked” parts.

This is the “poker chip” method. We take poker chips, blank business cards, or pieces of paper and write the “defect” on one side and the “opposite” on the other. We put them all in a paper bag or box. We pray that God help us, Guide us, and Direct us in our work.

For the purposes of “analysis” we have been separating ourselves into compartments, pigeon holes, shoeboxes; dividing the mind and who we are for the purpose of our work. Truth is, we are a “package deal” not divisible, and you can find out for yourself as follows:

We ask God’s help and dip our hand into the bag. Taking one chip, card or piece of paper out, that becomes our “focus” for the day (or week). Trying to work on 8, 15, or 27 items at once leads to confusion, frustration and we soon give up. Akin to ONE-DAY-AT-A-TIME (or try ONE-ROOM-AT-A-TIME) we “work” on trying to BE the OPPOSITE, ONE-ITEM-AT-A-TIME.

It is only through experience that we begin to understand, however vaguely at first, how incredibly powerful this is. If a man has three “big ones;” lust, petty thievery and a severe case of phoniness, and exerts his efforts at the “chip” thievery/BUY it with sincerity - in a remarkably short time, he will discover, often to his AMAZEMENT, that his lust has simmered down and his phoniness is diminished.

Many of us have spent fruitless years of effort trying to think our way into right action. It doesn’t work. But the concept of acting our way into right thinking has a proven track record. It is formally called “learning by substitution,” and here is a chance, an opportunity to exert what efforts we can to progress along the Path to conscious Union with God and our Fellow Travelers.

## STEP 7

Step 7, in our experience, is perhaps the Step most underused. All through the Process of the Steps we find powerful opportunities to grow. The continuing application of Step 7 helps produce just such an opportunity. In fact, with an open-mindedness firmly in place, there seems to be NO LIMIT to the spiritual changes we can experience. We are now beginning to prove that Step 3 was not an intellectual exercise. We are now beginning to feel the transition from an "unsuspected inner resource" to a *known* inner resource. "Lack of power, that WAS our dilemma." The development of Step 7 in our lives affords us a wonderful and simple format to help us realize that we really DO have access to a Power greater than ourselves. That we no longer suffer from a lack of power.

In our journey we have found several blocks to a full experience of this step. One of which has to do with the stigma attached to the words 'defects' and 'shortcomings'. As long as we continue to judge ourselves harshly for having these characteristics, we tend to produce a powerful negative energy which blocks the process of letting go. Once again, we are not allowing God to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. This is NOT about sin. This is NOT about fulfilling the requirements of an external moral code. This is about being sincere in prayer (or however your heart stays open) to have those things removed which "stand in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows." The commitment to become what we could not even imagine is all that's required. CHANGE = SURRENDER PLUS ACTION.

Sometimes it's fun and helpful to create a ceremony to help the surrender process. In the spirit of daring to share, here is one we have used effectively. Having written a list of fears that have been blocking us, we gather a few people around us and meditate. We allow the energy inside of us to move freely. Letting go of all resistance with our breathing, we are given an ever-increasing consciousness of the sacred place in our heart. When "entirely ready", we begin to read the fears out loud to our friends. Slowly. After each one is read aloud, we pause and feel what we feel without anticipating the result. If there is no fear inside we simply check that one off the list and go on to the next one. If however, after voicing it out loud, we still feel the fear, we leave it on the list. No judgment. Remember: the results are none of our business. The next day, after meditating, and in front of our friends, we read the ones that are still left on the list. In doing this every day for a week or two, we have found that most, if not all of our fears are taken from us. The spiritual life is NOT a theory. It works - it really does!

We have many other ceremonies that we have used, some of which are quite fun and elaborate. We allow ourselves the freedom to borrow from any spiritual practices we encounter and to create our own! We would love to share them with you and to hear of Step 7 surrender techniques that you have experienced. The main thing is to dare to believe differently, grab something that seems interesting and have fun in learning to let go of the resistance to change. Remember: the Steps are here to HELP us!!!!

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