

### Amends & Restitution List

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**Step 9** says, “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

\* “+” (plus sign) = Willing to make the amend, “-“ (minus sign) = Not willing (If you have any minuses, continue to pray for the willingness.)

\*\* There may be additional harms you've caused this person. Ask them, "Is there any other way I've harmed you that I'm not aware of?"

\*\*\* Fill this space in **after** you've made your initial approach to the person and you've asked them "What can I do to **right this wrong**?"

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## **Important Points Regarding Amends & Restitution**

Excerpted from the Big Book's explanation of Step 9, pages 76 - 83

### **Amend type (a) – *The people we hated / resented:***

- It may be some have done us more harm than we have done them. With a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than a friend, but the benefit is greater.
- We go to them in a helpful, forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.
- Under NO condition do we criticize or argue.
- We are there to sweep off OUR side of the street, realizing that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so.
- NEVER try to tell them what they should do. Discuss YOUR faults, not theirs.
- Be calm, frank, and open.
- It doesn't matter if they accept the apology or throw us out of their office. We've made our demonstration, done our part.

### **Amend type (b) – *The people / institutions owed money:***

- Most (All?) alcoholics owe money.
- We do not dodge our creditors.
- In some cases, some of us had to disclose our alcoholism by way of explaining what drove us and what we are now trying to do.
- We do not try to beat anyone out of anything, but we arrange a deal that we can live up to. Arranging time payments has worked for many of us.
- Let them know we are sorry. Drinking has made us slow to pay.
- We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them.

### **Amend type (c) – *Incidents of criminal offense:***

- Some of us padded expense accounts, fell behind on child support, wrote bad checks, and committed other offenses of the law, which might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities.
- We remind ourselves that we MUST be willing to go to ANY lengths to set right these wrongs if we are to stay sober. We don't have the power to do this so we ask God for strength and direction to do the right thing.
- No matter what the personal consequences may be, we know God will protect us if we try to do the right thing (for a change).
- We may lose our position or reputation or face jail (though most of us had already experienced that), but we are willing anyway. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.

### **Amend type (d) – *When others are involved:***

- We are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save ourselves.
- Before taking drastic action, which might implicate other people, we secure their consent.
- If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink.
- Sometimes it is better to take these risks than to stand before our Creator guilty of our wrongs.
- We have to place the outcome in God's hands or we may soon start drinking again, and then all would be lost anyhow.

### **Amend (e) – *Domestic troubles:***

- We may be mixed up sexually in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised. After years with a drunk, spouses get worn out, resentful, and uncommunicative.
- We begin to feel lonely, sorry for ourselves. So we look around for "someone who understands", feeling justified, when WE were really the source of the problem in the first place. If we are involved in this way, we often feel very remorseful at times and we have to do something about this.
- If the spouse does not know, we do not always say it is best to tell them. If they know in a general way that we have been wild, we admit our fault.

- We feel we ought to say that we have no right to name the people involved even if our spouse insists on knowing all the particulars. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated. It is better that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom our partner can vent jealousy.
- Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation.
- It may be that both of you will decide that the way of good sense and loving-kindness is to let by-gones be by-gones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind.
- Keep it always in mind that we are dealing with that most horrible human emotion: jealousy. Don't risk more combat over this.
- Even if we have no such complication as sex outside of the relationship, there is plenty we should do at home.
- Some alcoholics say that the only thing we need to do is to just keep sober. This isn't true because we are yet a long way from making good to our spouse and family whom for years we have so shockingly treated. Sobriety without amends is NOT enough.
- We have been like a tornado roaring our way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Our selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil.
- A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize any of them. Yes, they may have defects, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible for a lot of them.
- We set right our wrongs with the family, asking each morning in meditation that God show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness, and love. The spiritual life is not a theory. WE HAVE TO LIVE IT.
- Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we think we ought not to urge them. Our behavior will convince them more than our words.

#### Amend type (f) – *Wrongs we can never fully right:*

Be **very careful** about listing anyone or anything here. We only list someone here if we can HONESTLY say that the wrong cannot be righted, usually when to do so would further injure them or another person. We are **willing** (or pray for the willingness to become willing) to make the amend if we could. This should also be discussed with others practicing this way of life because we are very good at justifying just about anything.

- We don't worry about them if we can HONESTLY say to ourselves that we would right them if we could.
- If the case is that they cannot be seen, we write them an honest letter. If they are alive, we send it to them; if they are not we read it to them (perhaps at a place or with a person that we associate with them).
- There may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases but we don't delay if it can be avoided.
- We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. We don't crawl before anyone.

#### 9th Step Prayers from the Big Book

- "Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, *we ask [God] that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be.*" (pg. 79, ¶ 1)
- "If we have obtained permission [from other people who might be affected by us making this amend], have consulted with others, *asked God to help* and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink." (pg. 80, ¶ 1)
- "*Each might pray about it* [in cases of domestic problems], *having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind.*" (pg. 82, ¶ 1)
- "So we clean house with the family, *asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.*" (pg. 83, ¶ 1)

#### Examples of 9th Step Prayers

- **Asked before we attempt every amend:** "God, with regard to this amend, please remove my fear and give me strength, courage and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. Amen" (from the thoughts on pg. 79, ¶ 1)
- **Cleaning house with our family, we pray each morning:** "God, please show me how to find **patience, tolerance, kindness and love** in my heart, my mind and my soul. Please help me show these attributes to my family and also, to those around me. Amen" (from the thoughts on pg. 83, ¶ 1)

## Step Nine and Authentic Listening

Saying “I’m sorry” doesn’t change anything. Our focus should be on how the other person feels. Listening, not speaking, is the real work of Step Nine.

### To Listen and To Love

Someone at a meeting once said, “You know how I learned to make amends? I learned to listen. I thought it was supposed to be about me talking about what I had done, but in the end I learned that it was all about me listening to the other person about how they felt about what I had done. The more I talked, the more distant the other person was. The more I listened, the more close we both felt to one another.”

Listening is an act of intimacy. When we truly listen, when we open ourselves to the truth of another without trying to change their experience or our own, when we simply stand undefended in the face of another’s reality – be it joyous or sorrowful – a bond is established between the listener and the one being listened to. This is what Step Nine asks of us.

Inviting those we harmed to speak their pain is risky. We cannot be certain what will happen or what they will say. Once again we are brought face-to-face with our lack of control, but this time we welcome it consciously. Listening to others speak about the effects of our actions without apologia, without making excuses for our behavior, is more daring still, for their pain will only add to our own as we realize that we were the agents of their suffering.

### Practice: Authentic Listening

In the Sussusa Sutta the Buddha lists six qualities for authentic listening that, when applied to Step Nine, translates as: hearing, attention, meaning, focus, understanding, and patience.

**HEARING:** It is not enough that we invite the other to speak; we have to make ourselves receptive to what is being said. Physically this means we have to soften our faces; if we glare at the other or if we look so pained as to make the other too self-conscious to speak, we are not allowing ourselves to hear what might be said. On the other hand, if we make our faces into blank masks, staring into space or looking through the other rather than at them, we are also not hearing. Rest your gaze lightly on the other’s face. Be neither stoic nor overly dramatic. This isn’t about your reaction but about the other’s healing. Take care that your body language invites honesty. Don’t tighten up, or cross your arms and legs defensively. Stay as relaxed and as vulnerable as you can. Feeling another’s pain, even when you are the cause of that pain, won’t kill you, and it may just “save” the other’s life by allowing them to heal from the pain you caused and constructively move on with their life.

**ATTENTION:** The goal of Step Nine is to allow another to reclaim their voice, to tell their story of suffering that they might begin to be free from it. It isn’t enough that you invite the story to be spoken or even that you hear what is being said. You must attend to the words; that is, you must feel the other’s pain as if it were your own. The key phrase here is AS IF. This isn’t your pain, and if you try to take ownership of it, if you become overly dramatic in your listening and act as if you were the one suffering rather than the one who caused the suffering, you are robbing the other of the capacity to heal through this process. Doing this makes Step Nine all about you, and that shift from other to self is just another manifestation of your addiction. Allow yourself to feel what the other is feeling but never pretend that doing so puts the two of you on par.

**MEANING:** Authentic listening delves more deeply than the story you are hearing to grasp the meaning the story holds for the person telling it. It is one thing to listen to another tell you how devastated they were to discover that you were stealing from them. It is quite another to realize that by stealing their money you were

also robbing their capacity to trust. Don't listen only to the words, don't lose yourself in the other's pain or your own guilt; listen more deeply to see what the pain means.

**FOCUS:** In our context, focus means to focus on the intent of Step Nine. It is not enough that we hear what the other has to say or even that we grasp the meaning of their experience for themselves; we are listening in order to make amends. Focus on what you can do to change your behavior so that you never cause this kind of suffering again. You cannot change the past, you cannot undo what you have done, and listening does not excuse you in any way from facing the karmic consequences of your actions. But by focusing on what you can do differently now and in the future, you honor the other by changing yourself in response to their experience with you. By actually doing differently, you set in motion healthy karma that will ripen to create conditions that will encourage healthy actions. In turn, these healthy actions will yield even more healthy karma. What was a vicious cycle of selfishness becomes a compassionate cycle of selfless caring.

**UNDERSTANDING:** Thus far you have been listening to the other, now you must also listen to yourself. Having carefully examined the karmic conditions that gave rise to the actions that caused the pain to which you are now listening, begin to understand how strong karma is, and how vital it is for you to begin to produce different karma. You come to understand that your behavior creates a field that can produce only that which was sown. Understand deeply that you must sow differently. Changing your actions will not take away the other's suffering, but it will honor it. Listening may not cause the other to like you or love you or trust you, but it will allow you to become more likable, more lovable, and more trustworthy. And that is a lot.

**PATIENCE:** You cannot make amends "on the clock." You cannot say to yourself, "OK, I've been listening to this for ten minutes now. I've got what I can from listening, let's wrap things up and be friends again." You may never be friends again. That isn't the point. You aren't fixing a relationship, though that may happen. You are trying to change yourself into a better human being by deeply listening to another's story. It may take a long time and several conversations for the other to feel comfortable enough with you to do more than yell at you or cry. You may never get beyond these, but if you do, if you earn the other's trust just enough to allow them to open up to the pain you caused them, you must be prepared to listen for a long time. I am not saying that you have to be patient with another berating you; that isn't what Step Nine is about. If that is all the other can do, and you have honestly tried to move deeper than that, then it may be wise to move on to someone else. But if the other can get past the desire to hurt you and becomes willing to share their hurt with you, you must be patient enough to let them finish.

You must be patient with yourself as well. As the pain of another sinks into you, the desire to run from that pain either by ending the conversation or trying to apologize for and excuse your behavior becomes strong. This is the Twelve Step equivalent of the fight-or-flight response. Be patient: Neither fight the other's story nor flee from it. Simply continue to listen. In time the two of you will soften, an intimacy will develop from your shared vulnerability one to the other, and the story will end.

Recovery - The Sacred Art: The Twelve Steps as Spiritual Practice by Rami Shapiro

## A GREAT AMENDS LETTER

Told by his ex-wife that he couldn't see her daughter directly, he WAS allowed to send her daughter a letter. After three edits from his sponsor, here is how it ended up:

Dear S.\_\_\_\_\_,

I'm writing to do what I can to set right the harms that I did during the years that I was in a relationship with your mom. I've chosen to type rather than phone for two reasons: First, my handwriting is pretty awful, and second, because I want you to have something tangible that you can look at later when life may be treating you rough. To tell you the truth, I'm tempted to let things just stay the way they are because your mom tells me that you have some good memories of the time we spent together. Part of me says why mess with that? The best answer I have is that I loved you and I'm certain deep in my heart whether you know it yet or not I did you harm. I'm sure that you were aware that during the years we were together I was an active alcoholic. **LET ME BE VERY CLEAR THAT THIS IN NO WAY WHATSOEVER RELIEVES ME OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS.** I used alcohol and drugs because they were the only things I knew that could give me the relief from the constant fear I felt. I was drawn to you and your family because I desperately wanted to love and to be loved, but I was also scared to death of the prospect of being responsible, especially to others. Emotionally I felt like I had one foot on the gas and the other on the brake. I'm sure that it was hard for you to figure out what was real - is the real Mike the one that wants to loves me or the one that's pushing me away? You weren't crazy, I was. You were a wonderful, lovable child and you had every right to expect consistent love, emotional support, and parenting from me. What you got instead was fear, chaos, confusion, and abandonment. I want you to know that I didn't fail to give you those things because you were unlovable or undeserving but because I was a sick and frightened man incapable of giving. If you feel emotionally ripped off it's because you were. If you feel abandoned you're not crazy, you were. I know at some deep emotional level it's hard not to believe that if you were really worthy and valuable that these things wouldn't have happened to you. Please believe me, this just isn't so. You are worthy and deserving of love then and now, it was I that failed you. S.\_\_\_\_\_, I hope that you'll accept my heartfelt regret for these and the unlisted harms that I did to you. Should you ever want to talk about any of this please give me a call. If I can ever be of any service to you as a friend I'd be honored.

Mike L. from Indianapolis, IN.

## **WHAT IS EXPECTED OVER THE NEXT WEEK (from 7/16/12 to 7/23/12)**

For the newcomers and those taking the Steps with us, your assignment for the next week is:

- 1) Continue saying the Third Step prayer every day.
- 2) If you have not done so already, please finish writing the rest of your three Fourth Step Inventories (Resentment, Fear, and Sex & Harms).
- 3) If you have not done so already, please create your Future Relationship Ideal.
- 4) If you have not done so already, BEFORE doing a Fifth Step with another person or persons, please spend an hour or two sharing your Fourth Step Inventories alone with your Higher Power at a place where you feel God strongly and where you will not be interrupted.
- 5) If you have not done so already, do your Fifth Step within the next week or two (please schedule an entire day for this life-changing event).
- 6) If you have not done so already, immediately after sharing your inventory with another person, please take one hour of uninterrupted and undisturbed quiet time (remaining at the place where you did the Fifth Step) to see if you have been thorough and honest in working the first five Steps (meditating on and answering the questions found at the bottom of page 75 in the Big Book).
- 7) If you have not done so already, after completing this one hour immediately after your Fifth Step, the person who listened to your Fifth Step will return to see if you came up with anything else that needs to be added to your Fourth & Fifth Step and also ask if you've been thorough in working the first five Steps. After that, the person who listened to your Fifth Step should immediately review Steps Six and Seven with you (asking the two Step Six questions found in the first paragraph on page 76, and then saying the Seventh Step Prayer with you). As the Big Book instructs, the most effective way to do Steps Five, Six, and Seven is to do them all on the same day.
- 8) If you have not done so already, the day after you complete your Fifth Step, fill out the Step 6 & 7 Action Exercise (pages 3 – 6 in this handout) and share it with your Big Book Step Sponsor. Also, start using both sides of the small yellow Sixth & Seventh Step card (the opposites list and the Step 7 prayer) on a daily basis. Use the Step 6 Exercise on the little yellow card to help with your more difficult defects.
- 9) Immediately after you start working with Step Seven, put together an amends list, and start making amends by going out to those you have harmed. Before going out to make any specific amend, talk with your Sponsor, spiritual advisor, &/or recovery network to ask for help. Please also keep in mind that one of the definitions for the word "amend" is "to change". So part of making amends is not ONLY to set right the wrong we may have done, but ALSO to change our behavior so that we no longer continue to harm others.

Even if you do NOT finish this week's assignments, please still come back for the last week of this Big Book workshop. If you were not able to finish your Fourth Step and do your Fifth Step during this past week you may do it over the next week. If you wait much longer than that to do your Fifth Step you will begin to deteriorate the transformational effectiveness of the process so please be sure to finish your Fourth and Fifth Steps by this coming week. You'll be grateful you did because this is quite possibly the single most important thing you will EVER do in your life.

For extra copies of this and all previous handouts from this workshop please do the following:

Go to [www.justloveaudio.com](http://www.justloveaudio.com)

Then click on "free resources"

Then click on "12 Steps (Recovery)"

Then scroll down to the bottom and click on "Nyack NY Big Book 12 Step Workgroup Handouts".

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