

Life With God In Recovery

STEPPING INTO HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



Book 5

*Partners in Hope Recovery Society
is a Christian community
outreach organization
offering hope, support, and healing
through Jesus Christ
to victims of
harmful circumstances and dependencies,
as they reclaim the gift of their life.*



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For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10 NLT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	MEETING MATERIALS	
	Welcome	4
	Lord's Prayer	4
	Some Areas of addiction and Dependency	5
	Prayer for Healing and Restoration	5
	Twelve Steps and Bible Principles	6
	Life Affirmations	8
	Serenity Prayer	8
	DISCUSSION TOPICS	
1	Step Eight: BECOMING WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS	10
2	Step Eight: MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED	14
3	Step Nine: MADE DIRECT AMENDS	19
4	Step Nine: CONSIDERING OTHERS	23
	How To Enjoy New Life With God in Recovery	27

Partners in Hope LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY MEETING

THE WELCOME: We are a Christian 12-Step Recovery Group. We practice the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and welcome individuals seeking healing and recovery from a variety of destructive and addictive lifestyles. The only requirement for membership is a desire to love and be loved regardless of one's current condition in life.

We choose to affirm God, the Creator, as our higher power. We believe He has revealed Himself to us through His Son Jesus Christ, who said, **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. I am the way, the truth, and the life."**

We share through stories, discussion, singing and prayer, the experience, strength and hope we have found in relationship with God and with each other. We seek to gain strength from one another in order to carry this message of hope to others who suffer. We gratefully acknowledge God's presence and pray for His guidance and direction in all we do and say.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.
Amen.**

SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

SUBSTANCE ADDICTIONS: Alcohol Caffeine Injected or smoked substances such as: Crack, Crystal Meth, Heroin Marijuana Prescription Medications Sugar Tobacco	BEHAVIOUR ADDICTIONS: Anger/Rage/Bullying Cutting Crime Eating Disorders: Bulimia, Anorexia, Binging, Obesity Gambling Hoarding Sex/Pornography Verbal Abuse: Gossip, Lying, Accusing Blaming, Condemning Violence (physical, verbal, cyber)
SOFT ADDICTIONS: Digital Use: (Time or Content) TV/Phone/Tablet; video games, Social Networking; Cyber-bullying; Online shopping; Gambling, Pornography Exercise Food (See Eating Disorders) Isolating/Sleep Money: Debt/Fraud Religion Shopping Sports Work/Achievement	RELATIONSHIP ADDICTIONS: Abusive Relationships: Includes: Intimidation, Isolation, Domination, Blaming, Humiliation, Withholding, Forcing acts against one's will Approval dependency Attention Seeking Codependence/Rescuing Power/Control

PRAYER FOR HEALING AND RESTORATION

Loving God, Thank You for rescuing us from the dark power of Satan and bringing us into loving relationship with Your Son, Jesus. We ask for wisdom and understanding from Your Spirit in order to live as people who honour You. Heal us. Make us new. Make us strong followers of Christ. Root us deeply in Your love. We place our trust in Your power that can do far more in us than we dare ask or imagine. Amen.

12 STEPS AND BIBLE PRINCIPLES

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our dependencies -- that our life had become unmanageable.	1. I know nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (Romans 7:18)
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.	2. For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood Him.	3. Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.	4. Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord. (Lamentations 3:40)
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.	5. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.	6. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.	7. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.	8. Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:31)
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.	9. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother. Then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.	10. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. (1 Corinthians 10:12)
11. We 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 it out.	11. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. (Colossians 3:16a)
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.	12. Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

**Taken from: The Twelve Steps -- A Spiritual Journey, ©1988 RPI Publishing, Inc, San Diego, CA*

LIFE AFFIRMATIONS:

1. *I am loved by God, always. I am loved without condition.*
2. *My life is of great beauty and infinite value. God has a plan for my life that is meaningful, purposeful and joyful. There is a work for me to do today that will bless others and give me deep satisfaction.*
3. *God is always with me. I need never face my problems alone. Together with God, any difficulty can be worked out and overcome.*

SERENITY PRAYER:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

STEPPING INTO HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Steps 8-9



BECOMING WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS

Step Eight – Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Relationships matter. While on earth, Jesus demonstrated how to live in loving relationship with His Father as He prayed with Him about everything He did. Just like Jesus, having a loving relationship with God, and praying with Him about everything we do, is the foundation for our life as followers of Jesus and persons in recovery. When we experience the love and peace that an intimate relationship with God brings, the desire for our earthly relationships to be renewed and restored will be stirred up within us. This desire is foundational to the hard work Step Eight calls us to undertake.

Jesus said: ***Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven.*** (John 13:34, Luke 6:36-3 NLT)

We have all been hurt and let down by others. It's simply part of being around humans in our world. Some of us however, are so focused on how we've been victimized and how others have hurt us, that we fail to see how we've been hurting others and ourselves. Step Eight is about acknowledging the pain and brokenness in our relationships instead of running from them. We ask God to show us how our way of relating to others is different from His plan for loving relationships. We ask God to bring to mind particular people and circumstances where we caused harm. We write down what happened, clearly outline our part, and acknowledge our responsibility. We ask God for healing and forgiveness so we can become willing to make amends to the individuals we have hurt.

“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let

me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye. (Matthew 7:3-5 NLT)

For most of us, when we think of the things that have been harmful in our interactions with others, making a list may sound like a big undertaking and, in early recovery it can even seem overwhelming. For a long time, some of our past relationships have been the source of frustration, heartbreak, or confusion. Indeed, some individuals entwined in our histories may have died or exited from our lives. Doing anything that might contribute to restoration and healing seems impossible. However, God will help us as we become willing to make the effort. God lives in us and He promises that His unfailing love will find full expression in our lives and relationships as we work to complete this step.

Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. Let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. (1 John 4:11-12, 1 John 3:18 NLT)

This step encourages us to write down what happened, and clearly outline our part and our responsibility. It’s painful, because we see not only our actions, but the actions of others who brought pain to us, to which we reacted imperfectly. To truly become willing to make amends we have to see God in the middle of each painful and fearful circumstance or memory, and choose with God’s help to face it rather than run from it. We have to get connected to the God who knows, who cares, who heals, and who makes something good out of even the most traumatic events. We need to first receive healing and comfort from God or we’ll never be secure enough to forgive others who have harmed us, and acknowledge our own failure to act in a loving way.

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:7-8 NLT)

Broken relationships are a significant issue in the majority of relapses into active addiction. We do the work this step asks of us in order to recognize these powerful influences and, once and for all, get to the root of the problem. Refusing to acknowledge pain in a relationship, unwillingness to accept responsibility for our part in how things went wrong, and reluctance to forgive the wrongs of others are all significant issues to consider as we make a list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all.

Make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:2-4 NLT)

When humility surrounds all of the Step Eight process, God is willing to undertake deep restoration. Others have failed us, but we have failed others as well. Others have not lived up to their good intentions and honourable ideals and caused us pain in the process, and likewise, so have we. Are we better than those who have harmed us? Obviously not. Did Jesus take the suffering of all the wrongs done to us and all of the wrongs done by us to the cross? Yes. Making a list of all persons we have harmed and becoming willing to make amends to them will help us go forward with confidence in the journey of love and freedom which God has set before us.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What's the process been for me to become willing to make amends?
2. How am I dealing with the sense of "overwhelming" that exists when I consider the amount of wreckage that exists in my circle of relationships?
3. How am I "breaking the cycle" of pain and dysfunction in which I grew up? Where is God in this process?
4. What new beliefs have I needed to develop in order to even believe I need to make amends?
5. What needs to change in me as I seek to relate to God and others as God intends?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for creating me to live in relationship with You and others. Thank you for Jesus, whose death on the cross for my sins made loving relationships with You and others possible. Your word says there is no fear in love and I believe Your perfect love will cast out all my fear, and help me become willing to make amends to those people I have hurt. I desire to do an honest inventory of my relationships and, where I've been wrong, I ask for your help to acknowledge my part in the situation. With You as the strength of my life, I have nothing to fear. Thank You Lord that You never leave me nor forsake me. I am forever grateful that You care. AMEN

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED

Step Eight – Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

What prompted us to physically, mentally, or emotionally, hurt someone? Regardless of the excuses we may make for our behaviour, it is time to admit we caused harm to persons we had contact with on our life's journey. An important part of Step Eight is coming to an accurate view of what actually went wrong in our relationships.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31-32 NLT)

There are some types of behaviour that quickly come to mind when we reflect on ways we have hurt other people. Perhaps we spoke in anger or we used distance and coldness to wound others deeply. A bad temper brings out anger in others. Lying, cheating, stealing not only takes from others but deprives them of peace of mind and emotional security. Our seemingly "victimless crimes" always have a victim. Many of us were domineering and controlling and always had to have our own way. Everyone around us had to "walk on egg shells" to protect their own peace and security. At other times we wallowed in self-pity and did nothing but complain and find fault. We were masters of playing the blame game and were unwilling to actually talk about our issues or take responsibility for the circumstances we created around us. As we seek God's wisdom in making amends, He will show us how our attitude and behaviour hurt others. He will also help us identify and list all those who were harmed by our actions, either directly or indirectly, and help us become willing to make amends.

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants. When people's lives please the Lord, even their enemies are at peace with them. (2 Timothy 2:24-26, Proverbs 16:7 NLT)

To identify those persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all, we need to look at our past actions and the root cause of why we behaved the way we did towards each person we have listed. With God's help, we will be able to sort out some of the contributing factors of what went wrong in our lives and break the cycle of injuring others. As we begin to understand God's way of treating others, we will develop a loving and caring attitude and begin to have healthy relationships in the future.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS: Relationships often go wrong when we have unrealistic expectations of others. We carry within our being a deep need to be loved. We believe that God created this need in us because we are made in His image and the Bible tells us "God is Love". In His unfailing love for us God wants us to feel secure, accepted, cared for, and appreciated. Our core value and peace must come from God. However, many people in recovery bypass this primary relationship with God and end up demanding security, acceptance, love, and appreciation from others. In our neediness, we approach others expecting them to meet our demands and end up building toxic relationships. God's intent is that we love each other as He loves us. His plan is that we approach each relationship with the qualities of giving and blessing rather than needing and getting.

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet

shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3 NLT)

BREACHES OF TRUST: Broken promises, lying, cheating, stealing, betraying, etc. are breaches of trust. Before we go to the other person, we need to establish if resentment or a sense of entitlement fueled our past behaviour. We need to deal with any underlying issues before God. We need to be honest about our part in the breakdown. Our purpose must always be to seek restoration, and not to establish blame.

And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5 NLT)

FAILURE TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY: If our needs were not met during childhood, we may be unsure how to meet the needs of others – children, parents, spouses, or friends. We may have been so overwhelmed by our experience, or avoidance, of responsibility that we stayed in denial about how our lifestyle affected others. The truth is, when we fail to responsibly provide for the needs of loved ones, they experience the hurt of neglect and abandonment. We can become willing to make amends by simply admitting that we were wrong and we failed in our responsibility towards them. We can seek God's wisdom today to help us grow in His grace as we commit to love, support, and encourage our loved ones and friends. With God's help we can become one known for our lifestyle of integrity.

Once we've taken inventory with God and explored the underlying issues of our behaviour in relationships, we can then take the next step in preparing to make amends -- we choose to forgive those who have harmed us or let us down, and submit them and their actions

into the care of God. As long as we refuse to forgive we will experience the pain of the event. While that pain is within us, we will be unable to accept responsibility for any part of what went wrong in our lives and relationships. Our responsibility will always be overshadowed by “blame.” Forgiveness acknowledges that wrong was done to us. Forgiveness turns our attention to God and away from the person who harmed us. Forgiveness establishes God as the source of our healing and restoration and He promises to work all things together for our good.

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. (James 5:16 NLT)

For too long we’ve focused on the wrong person in our desire for healing. No person can give it. Healing comes from God. Receiving healing from God, forgiving the offender, making amends for our part – this is the process of healing and restoration. Any other way is flawed.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What efforts am I making to come to an accurate view of what went wrong in my relationships? Does this view reflect what Jesus was teaching about dealing with the log in our own eye before dealing with the speck in someone else’s?
2. As I make my list of people I have harmed, what rationalizations do I hear “the committee in my head” trying to offer me?
3. What core issues resulted in my hurtful ways of interacting with others?
4. As I make my list of all persons I’ve harmed, am I checking with my sponsor or another responsible person with regards to it? Am I willing to adjust my perspective on the circumstances based on their input?
5. Where do I notice resistance in myself to “becoming willing to make amends”? Am I still resentful about the other person’s wrongs? Am I ashamed to make that admission to a person I respect? Are there real-world consequences I fear if I come clean (jail/unemployment/divorce)? What am I going to do about that?
7. Am I willing to pray and ask God to show me ALL persons I have harmed and to help me become willing to make amends to them ALL?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for bringing me out of darkness into your glorious light. Help me to stay on the path of loving you with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and of loving my neighbour as myself. I confess that I have allowed the problems in my own life to cloud my judgment and have believed the lie that others are to blame for my bad attitude and behaviour. Help me to see where my self-centered ways have impacted my relationships. Give me the courage to admit when I am wrong and help me to become willing to make amends to anyone I have hurt. My desire is to walk in your ways and live life to the full. Through the power of your Holy Spirit strengthen me to structure my daily life and relationships according to your word. I am forever grateful that You care. AMEN

MADE DIRECT AMENDS

Step Nine – We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step Nine is about the work of peace – seeking peace and making amends. Both the Bible and the program of AA call us to this work.

Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. (Romans 12:18, Matthew 5:9 NLT)

For the readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step Nine. (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions p. 87)

Making amends is a responsibility we must take very seriously if we want to protect our sobriety. While making amends is not necessarily a comfortable process, it is necessary for our growth. If we don't try to sort out our part in what went wrong in our relationships in the past, there is a very good chance that we will make the same mistakes again. This familiar environment would likely trigger the embarrassment, shame and pain we experienced in the past, which could bring us to relapse. Step Nine requires that we be willing to go to any lengths to make amends.

Suppose you are offering your gift at the altar. And you remember that your brother or sister has something against you. Leave your gift in front of the altar. First go and make peace with them. Then come back and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24 NIRV)

Returning to make amends to someone we've hurt is a scary thing. The passing years, lack of communication, and memories of the anger and hateful emotional exchanges can all create tremendous anxiety. How many times have we written people off because of

some dispute in the distant past? Years pass and people mature and change; yet we cling to our old ways of seeing them. Events that took place have inflicted wounds which have festered for years or even decades. Sometimes, due to our painful memories, we were too afraid to approach the offender and communicate with them. Had we done so, we might have found that we didn't see the situation clearly in the first place. It's now time to take action and find God's perspective.

An amend is not simply an apology. It is a clear and purposeful act designed to clear up a problem from the past – an injury, insult, infidelity, an act of aggression or abandonment. It's important to write letters, make phone calls, schedule cups of coffee to have conversations with those we've harmed. We need to sincerely apologize and make restitution wherever possible. However, real amends are proved by a changed life. To make real amends, we now take the time to listen and to seek to understand the other person's point of view. It includes going back and reassessing an event or personal relationship with the intention of knowing truth, and settling emotional accounts. When we've judged someone harshly, we need to reexamine what actually happened with that person. If we expect others to change how they look at us, we will need to do the same for them. To make amends means that whatever we do, we must do it for the good of the person who was harmed. The intention is to lift them up and lighten their load.

Make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:2-4 NLT)

For us to risk taking the first step in making amends with others would be impossible if God had not first demonstrated the way for us. Over and over again we failed to keep God's commandments and

yet while we were still in rebellion God sent His Son Jesus into the world to atone for our sin, so that we could be reconciled to Him. God has completed the work necessary for us to know peace today and now He calls us to extend that peace to others in our circle of family and friends. God didn't wait for us to come to Him. He prepared in advance. He reached out to us with this wonderful gift of reconciliation when we didn't dare approach Him. As we begin the work of restoring our troubled relationships, we can reflect on God's way of reconciliation.

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19 NLT)

When we make amends under the guidance of our loving God, everyone is blessed. Confessing our wrong to someone means they no longer have to carry around the lingering excess baggage of the event. Resentments begin to disappear and we both experience more freedom. The more we put this step into practice the more our self-centeredness is replaced by a compassionate awareness of other people. Where we were callous and uncaring, we now find ourselves becoming more understanding and flexible. Serenity grows as we take these steps to right wrongs and make restitution where necessary.

So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall. So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. (Romans 14:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT)

God created us to live in loving relationship with Himself, and with each other, and to practice speaking the truth in love. When we approach someone to make amends with this in focus, we will experience increasing joy, freedom, and satisfaction. When we allow God into the process of interacting with others according to His will and plan, we can leave the outcome with Him.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How is the work of making amends in Step Nine a work of peace?
2. Why did the founders of AA tell us that we needed to take the making of amends seriously if we wanted to protect our sobriety?
3. How is making amends different from simply offering an apology?
4. What do the amends of "a changed life" look like for me?
5. How does God's generous and endless forgiveness of my wrongs help me approach making amends with others?
6. How has the practice of making amends and seeking forgiveness impacted my relationships, both past and present?
7. Where do I continue to feel challenged in sorting out problems in my relationships and making amends?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for your unending love and forgiveness. Thank you for Jesus who died on the cross for my sins so that I could be reconciled to You. I ask for wisdom and courage to humbly approach family members and friends and to make amends to them with a heart and mind that honours you. Give me eyes to see each circumstance as You do, rather than with the flawed perspective of my own memories. I ask for humility to take responsibility for my part in the event. Where necessary, I graciously offer forgiveness as I live in gratitude of the forgiveness I have received from you. Help me to remember that I am dealing with the log in my own eye as compared to a splinter in the other person's eye. I am forever grateful that you care for me. Amen

CONSIDERING OTHERS

Step Nine – We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step Nine calls for direct amends except when to do so might cause further injury. We want to be careful that we aren't trying to achieve our personal serenity at the expense of someone else. When we're making amends, we need to be wise in the way we go about it. We may be so anxious to get things off our chest that we may blurt things out without fully considering the other person involved. We need to consider how our actions may injure them. We may feel so pressured by guilt and fear of exposure that we rush ahead and make mistakes we can't erase.

The wise are known for their understanding, and pleasant words are persuasive. Discretion is a life-giving fountain to those who possess it, but discipline is wasted on fools. From a wise mind comes wise speech; the words of the wise are persuasive. Kind words are like honey — sweet to the soul and healthy for the body. (Proverbs 16:21-24 NLT)

When making amends, we need to weigh the feelings and needs of the people who will be exposed to what we want to say and do. Since we are not always the best judge of what needs to be disclosed and when, we need to rely on God, our sponsor, and perhaps other trusted friends in recovery, for help and guidance in these decisions. Reviewing our intended amends with a sponsor or trusted friend helps us consider our motivation and the consequences of our intended actions. Sometimes an indirect amends is the most appropriate choice (i.e. amends through changed behaviour).

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:3-4 NLT)

There are several reasons why we might consider NOT making direct amends. It might be that simply seeing us would cause great pain and stir up wounds that the other person is not ready to face. It might be that the other person is unaware of the harm we have caused and simply making them aware, would cause them great pain. Sometimes an indirect amends – being aware of what we have done and working hard to live differently is the best we can do. Sometimes the person has died or moved out of our known world. We do not avoid making amends simply to spare ourselves discomfort. We check with our sponsor or a trusted friend as we sort through the list we made in Step 8. We pray for wisdom and seek wise counsel from trusted individuals to help us select the most suitable time and method of approach.

Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone. (Colossians 4:5-6 NLT)

Timing is an essential part of this step. We should make direct amends when the first opportunity presents itself, except when to do so will cause more harm. Procrastination, fear or embarrassment should not prevent us from contacting the person to whom we wish to make amends. It is a good idea not to take this person by surprise. There are people to whom we can make full amends as soon as we get sober. There are others who should not be contacted until we have some time in sobriety. This might include a child who would be disappointed if struggles and even a relapse were to be part of our early recovery.

Don't be concerned for your own good but for the good of others. I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:24, 33 NLT)

We do not avoid making amends to spare ourselves discomfort. Avoidance will only increase our guilt and prevent our healing. In some situations, just changing our behaviour such as, gossiping, complaining, or controlling, would be sufficient in making indirect amends in relational situations. Prayer for guidance as we approach each task is essential. Our motives should be revealed to a trusted individual and their counsel listened to. In all cases, when we are not sure what type of amends is called for, we remind ourselves that making direct amends is our responsibility, except when someone would be harmed by doing so.

She [Wisdom] will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying. Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her; happy are those who hold her tightly. (Proverbs 3:17-18 NLT)

Honesty, balance, and realism are essential tools to keep at hand as we approach the making of amends. If we are leaning towards self-justification, we may find it useful to remember the Golden Rule, ***“Do to others as you would like them to do to you.”*** (Luke 6:31 NLT) This step calls us to humility as we clean our side of the street, walk in forgiveness and have a desire for reconciliation in relationships. As we seek Him, God will teach us the truth about our lives, past, present, and future. Humility says we have much to learn.

It is essential that we become willing to make amends to people we have harmed. However, we need to do so with the motive of taking responsibility for the harm we have caused. When the time is right, and with a prayerful attitude of seeking God to heal the people we have harmed, God will guide each of us to the pathway to peace.

Because of God’s tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace. (Luke 1:78-79 NLT)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What must we let go of before we start making our amends?
2. How do we prepare to make amends? Who needs to be involved in this preparation?
3. How do we go about “weighing the feelings and needs of the people who will be exposed to what we say and do?”
4. Why is it useful to check with someone else, both our approach and our motives, when we are preparing to make amends?
5. When might it be more appropriate to use indirect amends rather than direct?
6. How can we maintain a healthy sensitivity to the needs of others without sliding into unhealthy avoidance of difficult issues?
7. What is my experience in how making amends provides an opportunity for everyone involved to move towards a pathway of peace?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for your unending love and forgiveness. Please help me to sort my motives as well as my actions as I do the work of making amends with those I have harmed. Help me to be teachable and humble. Help me to not simply do what’s best for me, but to be wise and considerate of others. Thank you for guiding me to the pathway of peace and teaching me how to live in peace with others. My desire is that others would have the same opportunity. Holy Spirit, please give me courage and discernment as You guide me step by step in Your way of truth and love. I am forever grateful that you care for me. Amen

How To Enjoy A New Life With God In Recovery

God created us to have a wonderful life. In love, God planned for us and carefully put us together. God has always been calling out to us to enter into a relationship of love with Him. He doesn't force us but He invites us. Many of us have learned what a painful and confusing wreck our lives become when we try to live them independently from God. This is a wonderful day to begin to live the full and rich life God intended for us. Nothing in our past can keep us from this life, if we want it and choose for it.

The 12-Steps remind us that our lives are unmanageable without the loving care of God and that we can get to know and come to believe that He is a power greater than ourselves. As we turn our will over to God's care, we find a solid foundation upon which to build a new life. All it takes is confession of our sin and brokenness to God and a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God's loving care. When we invite God to come into our lives we find that He is ready and waiting. A simple prayer like the following, offered sincerely, establishes this new relationship with God that will last forever.

God, my life is unmanageable without you. You created me to live filled up with you. There really is no good way to live on my own. Forgive me for not including you. I turn from my independent ways and surrender my will and my life to you. Thank you Jesus for dying on the cross for my sins and making a way for me to have new life filled up with Your Spirit. Come into my heart and make me clean. Teach me your will. Transform my way of thinking. Strengthen me to obey all that you show me.

If you prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart, God receives you and forgives you. God makes you His son or daughter. God wants to show you how to live well and give you strength to do that every day. We would love to provide you with some helpful information to help you move forward in your journey with God. Please contact us. You'll find our contact information on the front cover of this booklet.