

Considering Others

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

Healthy recovery brings with it renewed sensitivity in our relationships.

Is it honest? Is it kind? Is it necessary?

Live wisely among those who are not Christians, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone. You say, "I am allowed to do anything" -- but not everything is helpful. You say, "I am allowed to do anything" -- but not everything is beneficial. Don't think only of your own good. Think of other Christians and what is best for them. I try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what I like or what is best for me, but what is best for them so they may be saved.

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 people 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. When making amends we need to weigh the feelings and needs of the people who will be exposed to what we say and do. Since we are not always the best judge of what needs to be disclosed and when, we can rely on God and our sponsor, or another trusted friend in recovery for help and guidance with 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)

The wise are known for their understanding, and instruction is appreciated if it's well presented.

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.

We do not avoid making amends in order to spare ourselves discomfort -- that will only increase our guilt and prevent our healing. In some cases we need to stop doing something, such as gossiping, complaining, or controlling. In all cases, when we are not sure what type of amends is called for, we remember that making direct amends is our responsibility except when someone would be harmed. We pray for guidance as we approach each task. We check out our intentions with a trusted individual who can help us look at our motives and plan our approach.

Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing. Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position. (Excerpts from Colossians 4, 1 Corinthians 10, Proverbs 16, and Philippians 2)

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 unto others as you would have them do unto you.) The amend also needs to fit the situation. For example, if we cut someone off in traffic, it is probably better to start driving with more caution and courtesy than to chase down the other driver and apologize.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Why is it useful to check both our approach and our motives when we are preparing to discuss an issue with someone?
2. When might it be more appropriate to use indirect amends rather than direct?
3. How can we maintain a healthy sensitivity to the needs of others without sliding into unhealthy avoidance of difficult issues?