

Wise and Sensitive Speech

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

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

Healthy recovery brings with it renewed sensitivity in our relationships.

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. Don't think only of your own good. Think of other Christians and what is best for them. 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. 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 need to rely on God and our sponsor, or another trusted friend in recovery for help and guidance with these decisions.

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.

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.

Honesty, balance, and realism are essential tools to keep at hand as we approach the making of amends. 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.

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

(Scripture excerpts are from Colossians 4, 1 Corinthians 10, Proverbs 16, and Philipians 2)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How do the opening questions provide a helpful filter for our approaches and words with others?
2. How does renewed sensitivity for the needs and feelings of others affect my dealings with people these days?
3. How can we maintain a healthy sensitivity to the needs of others without sliding into unhealthy avoidance of difficult issues?
4. Why is it important to change our present behaviours as well as make amends for past mistakes?
5. What action do I take these days to check whether I am actually being considerate for the feelings and experience of others or not?