

OA Desert Recovery

August 2022 – Step Eight

**“MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD
HARMED AND BECAME WILLING TO
MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL.”
[Spiritual Principle: Self-discipline]**

The Spiritual Principle of Step Eight is self-discipline, "... the ability to pursue what one thinks is right despite temptations to abandon it." That sounds a bit like courage to me. When I first did my 8th Step, years ago, I carefully looked through my 4th Step inventory at my resentments. Rather than looking at what harms I'd been dealt, I looked for my part to see what I caused. What a different perspective! No longer was I saying "poor, poor, pitiful me." I'd been at fault. Now it was time to start listing names and becoming willing to make amends.
~Anonymous

Compared to Step Four's "fearless and thorough moral inventory" and Step Nine's "made direct amends," 8 is easy-peasy. My sponsor made it even easier. He said, "Make a list of those you might, perhaps, possibly, maybe, someday make amends to." That was brilliant. It kept me from overthinking—and procrastinating. So, I made the list, the "might, perhaps, possibly, maybe, someday" list. Then I prayed about it. And talked to my sponsor about it. And then, when the list was edited, I was ready to move one. But at first—it's just a list. ~Michael A.

Step Eight is where I become willing to mend relationships. To do that, I see the need to change my behavior and calm my defects of character. For example, I heard that being sensitive is a defect of character. I never considered sensitivity, but it is true that I am being a victim. I am saying, "Don't you see how bad it is?" And I am full of self-pity. Victims, such as me, punish others by the silent treatment, aloofness, holding onto resentment, gossiping. I never wanted to have self-pity. I never wanted to treat others poorly. But there was the evidence. My selfishness was dancing in my motives again, all wrapped up in a pink tutu, looking innocent, but being disastrous. God helps me to recognize what needs changing. And, in Step Eight, I see the need for those changes in each relationship. ~Becki B.

My first sponsor suggested I make a 3-column list: people I am willing to make amends to, people I might be willing to make amends to, and people I never want to make amends to. Somehow just putting anyone into the "never" column showed me how much power I let them have over me. I quickly realized that I wanted to make amends to those people first because I wanted to be well. I wanted to be happy. I wanted to be free. My first sponsor had the patience of a saint and always seemed to know what I needed to hear. The great news is that my current sponsor does, too. ~Michelle S.

While the spiritual principle assigned to Step Eight is "self-discipline," which is important for spiritual and emotional maturation, for me, this Step is really about forgiveness. If I skip this important part of the work, then true amends to myself and others will be impossible. Here, writing becomes the essential tool. I need to be honest with HP, myself, and my sponsor about the attitudes, words, and actions that need to be changed in me. Then, I need to become willing to change them.

Here are some little bits to consider . . . "Self-discipline" takes practice to change a habit of thought or behavior. – How did my negative attitudes harm myself? Others? – I pray for willingness. When it comes, I check it out with a sponsor. Then I act. – Forgiveness of others often requires forgiveness of self. – God, please help me to know who I have harmed. – Keep praying. The feelings will change. ~Neva

My experience is that it is vital that I run the list by my sponsor before rushing out making amends. The *Big Book* warns us about making amends when the amends will make the matters worse – for example, when someone doesn't know I hurt them. In order to avoid that Step 9 mistake, I have to run my list by my sponsor.

So, in a sense, there are two Step 8 lists. The one with the people who I must face and make amends – apologize for the past and do what I can to remedy the harm I caused. The second list is the list of MY amends. My changes in behavior. This kind of amends is on me, and I must be ready to make it.

For me, it is much easier to be ready to make amends to someone else. As a food addict, I am quite used to admitting my mistakes. The tricky part here is the second list. For that, I must be ready to change my behavior. This kind of amends is harder for me to make, and that is where my true recovery lies. ~Roni B.

Joy instead of pain. Step Eight. How have my character defects affected others? What's been essential in my recovery? Making amends to self? What's the purpose? Not to judge others but learn attitudes of mercy and forgiveness. So, the first half of Step 8 is writing the names of people I've hurt; the second half is to become willing to make amends. Yikeees, am I on the list? No.... Yes.... Working this Step means I need to look at my side of the street. I know when I've got a finger pointing at you, there's three pointing back at me! So, prayer for me is the key. When I can look at myself without guilt and shame, with tons of prayers, for more to be revealed, asking to let go of the pain and harm of the past, I find more recovery, freedom, and serenity! I get to learn first to forgive myself. Then, as that happens, the door opens to forgive others who have harmed me. What a gift this program is! Bless them, change me. 🙏 ~Patti S.

Are you one of those people who carries guilt around, even for the smallest things? Well, I am, and it has branded me for my entire adult life. Guilt has given me an imbalance of sorts as well because I haven't been able to know what is inconsequential (i.e., I *just knew* that I had harmed someone).

Enter Step Eight. When I first read this step, my perfectionism defect kicked into high gear – trying to categorize types of harms, how many, etc. – I know, just totally overthinking the concept, right? So, when a fellow member told me to “just make the list,” I did just that. Everything that was on my mind hanging out as a guilt trip went on that list.

So....as was told to me, “Just make the list!” Be open to writing that list, and you will be ready to make your amends...and experience the gift of life-changing peace. ~Brenda W.

As usual, I tend to overcomplicate things, and Step Eight is no different. ALL it says is that we make a list (and check it twice) and become willing to make amends. Luckily, we have the foundation already built for us in Steps Four through Seven. So, Step Eight just involves going through my inventory and identifying potential amends. I say “potential” because I tend to be really hard on myself, and I grovel to everyone, begging them to forgive me. That is why I review the list with my sponsor. She helps me interject a dose of reality, separating those I truly owe amends to from the people included on the list due to my own perfectionism or lack of self-esteem. Once I have the final list, all that's required is willingness to make amends. The actual amends we save for Step Nine. I don't bite off more than I can chew. ~Randi F.