

## ACTIVATING THE 12 STEPS IN MY LIFE

". . . Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (2 Corinthians 12:9b, NIV)



*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."  
Matthew 5:3*

### step one

*We admitted that we were powerless  
over our addictions and/or difficulties;  
that our lives had become unmanageable.*

The First Step calls for an admission of powerlessness over living in the extremes. As part of this step, you need to put together evidence to document both powerlessness and unmanageability in your life. This is the starting point for understanding the story of your illness. Specifically outlining the history is essential to the developing of the story. The following exercises can help you in documenting your history:

- I. Family Map and Addiction -- Most addicts/obsessive compulsive types have other addicts and co-addicts (codependents) in their families. By working through your family map, some patterns may emerge that will indicate how some part of your powerlessness started within your family.
- II. Addiction History/Inventory -- As an addict and/or co-addict (codependent), other addictions will be a part of your powerlessness. One example would be the sex addict whose alcoholic behavior affected his sexual "acting out." Another example would be the codependent whose excessive weight from compulsive overeating increased feelings of worthlessness.
- III. Abuse Checklist -- Sexual, physical and emotional abuse are typical and common in addictive/dysfunctional families. Children are powerless over the abuse they receive from the adults in their lives. In addition, the abuse damaged them in basic ways which serve as the means to their becoming addicted and co-addicted.
- IV. Step One For Addicts/Dependents -- Once you have documented your history in exercises 1-3, you are ready to start working and reflecting on your First Step. You start to carefully document the powerlessness and unmanageability in your own life.

- V. Step One For Co-Addicts/Codependents -- You will indicate the type of addiction to which you are "co-addicted," and start to document your powerlessness and unmanageability.

[Note to all addicts: There is a very high probability that you are co-addicted too. At some point you may want to return and do a First Step on your co-addiction/codependency.]

- VI. Sharing Your First Step -- If you are really activating the First Step, part of it is sharing what you've learned about your own story with your sponsor(s) and others in the recovery group. Remember, the answers may not come easily as you work these exercises. If you feel stuck, get your sponsor(s) to help you. And, pray for God's wisdom to be with you as you begin this most important journey (James 1:5).

### I. Family Map And Addiction

As a part of Step One, it frequently helps to understand "powerlessness" in relation to the family system. Do a "map" of your family of origin back three generations. After entering each person's name, record any of the following characteristics by placing the letter of the item next to the name. If you are unsure but have a pretty good idea about an individual, put the letter of the item and circle it. So, if grandfather John Doe was a compulsive overeater and you think an alcoholic as well, you would enter -- "John doe (D, A )". Here is a checklist of compulsive or addictive types:

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| A. Alcoholic            | F. Victim of child abuse               |
| B. Compulsive gambler   | G. Perpetrator of child abuse          |
| C. Anorexic/Bulimic     | H. Mental health problem (clinical)    |
| D. Compulsive overeater | I. Other compulsive/addictive behavior |
| E. Sex addict           | J. Co-addict/Codependent               |

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Now list any other relatives (brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.) who fit one of the ten categories (or another which you may have added).

Are there patterns of addiction in your family? What thoughts do you now have about your own powerlessness given the role of addiction/compulsion in your family? Are you able to see ways in which your addictive/codependent behavior was learned, or ways that your behavior was a means of coping with an unhealthy family system? Record your observations by the system of "journaling" (keeping a spiritual growth journal of your personal thoughts and observations about you).

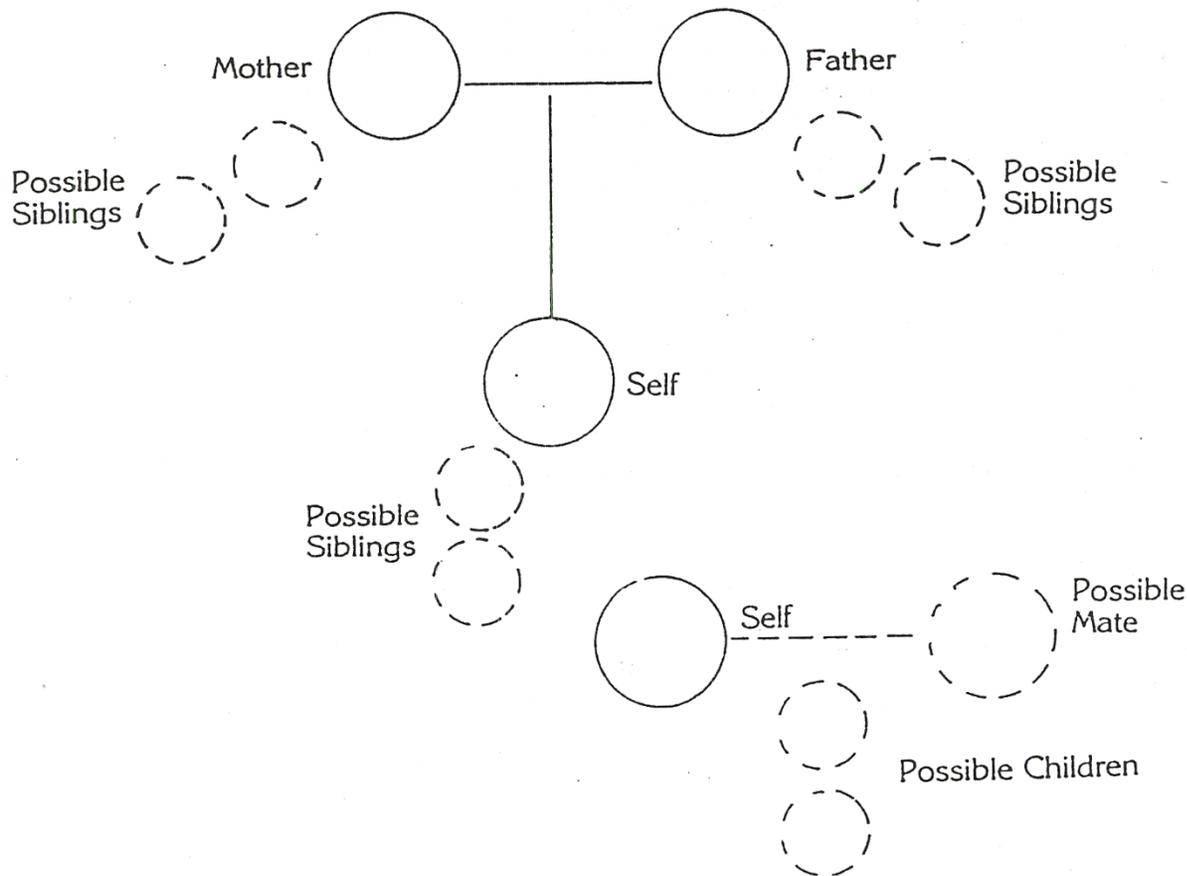
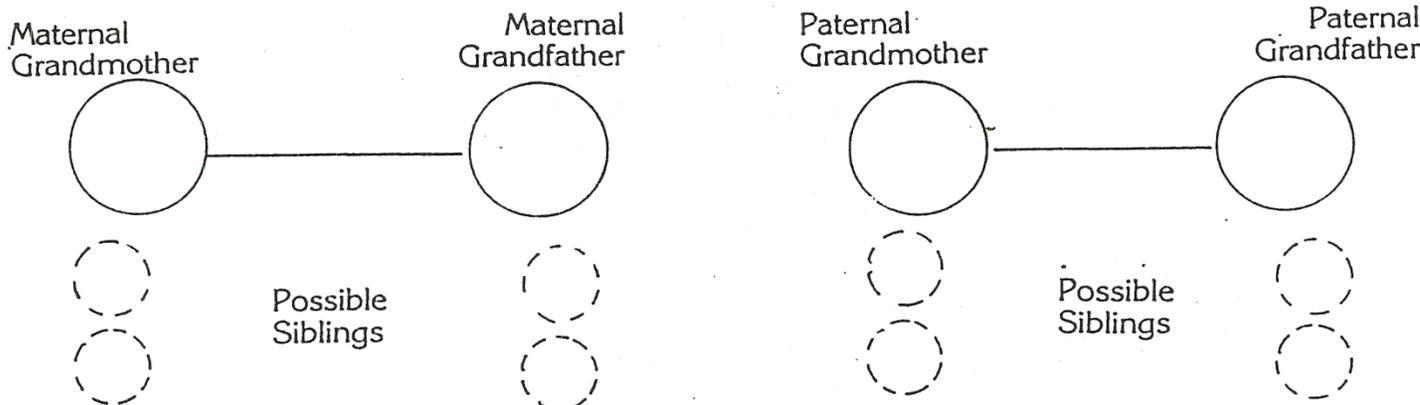
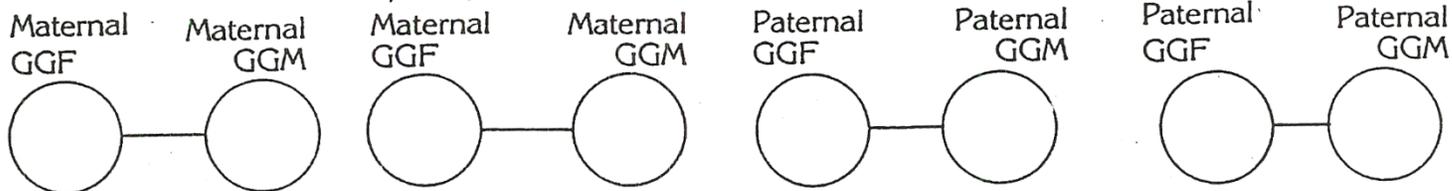


# Family Map

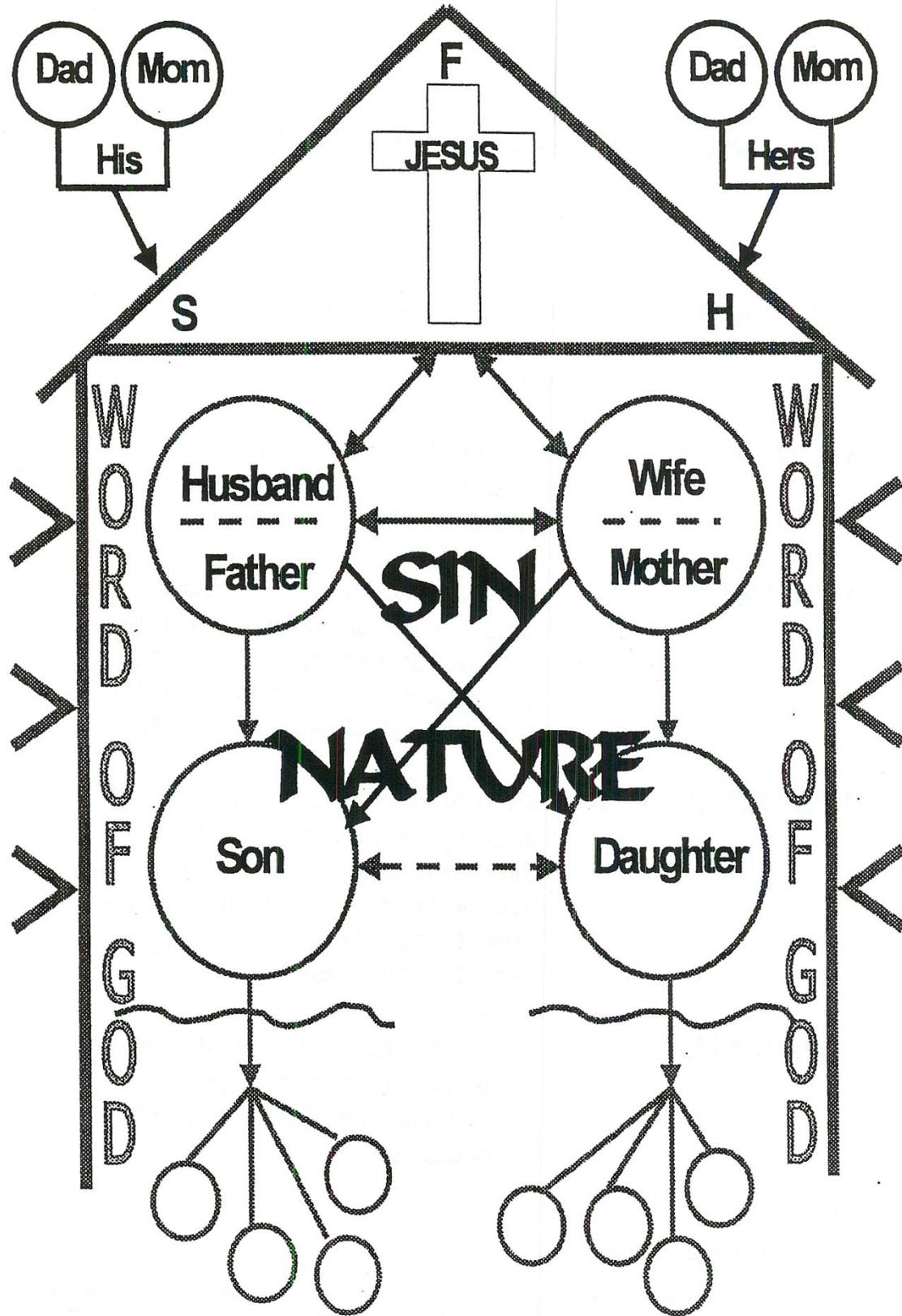
*A family map gives you an opportunity to see yourself in the context of family life. It provides a framework to understand your position in the family system. You are able to look for connections and repeated patterns. Use the map in the book for a permanent record. You may want to transfer the map to a large poster and add many more subjects to the key and keep the information current.*

*The map is a tool for understanding.*

# Family Map



# Biblical Analysis Of The Family CS Worksheet



## **BASIC HUMAN NEEDS**

<b>PHYSICAL:</b>	stimulation/touch, being held, caressed; medical care; food; warmth; shelter; clothing; water; sexual contact.
<b>MENTAL:</b>	stimulation/excitement/challenge; pleasure; pain; play; security; peace of mind; boundaries.
<b>SOCIAL:</b>	structure; limits; predictability; consistency; attention; being regarded as special; guidance; modeling; identification with significant others; time with significant others; feedback.
<b>EMOTIONAL:</b>	affirmation of needs and feelings; encouragement; praise; warmth; affection; sense of self as separate from yet cared for by others; sense of uniqueness and worth, of being wanted or valued for oneself.
<b>SPIRITUAL:</b>	grace, mercy, forgiveness; redemption, repentance, sanctification; maturity; gifts of the Holy Spirit, ultimate glorification.

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## II. Addiction History/Inventory

As a part of your Step One, it is good to journal how various addictions or "self-abusive" behaviors have affected one another. Review the following categories of addictive/compulsive (i.e. "unstoppable") behaviors. Write examples of how other out-of-control behaviors affected the development of your own addiction/co-addiction during each of the age categories. Your notes can be short, descriptive, and abbreviated.

Behavior	Age 0-10	Age 10-18	Age 18-25	Age 25-40	Age 40+
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### Eating

Other examples of compulsive behavior: e.g. shoplifting

spending

smoking

working

dangerous or high risk type activities

### Sexual

### Co-Addiction

### Gambling

### Alcohol

### Other Drugs

After completing your addiction history/inventory, think about the ways your addictions and codependencies affected one another. How does looking at the patterns of extreme living help you in looking at your Step One? Record your observations by journaling.

### III. Abuse Checklist

The following checklist and worksheet outline will help you determine the degree to which you were abused in your childhood situations. Read over each of the three categories of abuse (sexual, physical, emotional). Then fill in the information in the spaces next to the items which apply to you. For each type of abuse, record the information to the best of your memory. [Note: Extended spaces of "blank" memory (blocks of years, etc.) may be a warning signal that you have experienced a "memory shut-down" as a defensive way of coping with something. If this is the case, talk with your sponsor(s) or counselor about the possibility of specialized in-patient or out-patient treatment to help you.]

Age -- How old were you when it started?

Abusing Persons -- Who abused you? Father, step-father, mother, step-mothers, adult relative, adult friend, adult neighbor, professional person, brother, sister, stranger, etc.?

Frequency -- How often did it happen? Daily, 2-3 times a week, weekly, monthly or occasionally?

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Form of Abuse	Age	Abusing Person	Frequency
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- Sexual Abuse
  - Suggestive flirting
  - Propositioning
  - Inappropriate holding, kissing
  - Fondling of sexual parts
  - Masturbation
  - Oral sex
  - Forced sexual activity
  - Other
- Physical Abuse
  - Scratching, pinching, shoving
  - Slapping, punching, whipping
  - Burns
  - Cutting, wounding
  - Broken bones, fractures
  - Damage to organs
  - Permanent injury
  - Other

Form of Abuse	Age	Abusing Person	Frequency
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3. Emotional Abuse

- Neglect
- Downgrading of worth
- Harassment, malicious tricks
- Blackmail
- Unfair punishments
- Cruel or degrading tasks
- Cruel confinement
- Abandonment
- Other

How did the abuse you received affect you as a child? As an adult? How do you feel as you reflect and contemplate these events? What has been the impact on your addictive/codependent or co-addictive behavior. Record your observations by journaling.

IV. Step One For addicts/Dependents

We admit we were powerless over (insert alcohol, drugs, sex, food, etc.) and that our lives have become unmanageable

Acceptance (by you) of Step One paves the way for your walk to recovery. As you grow in understanding of your own powerlessness and just how unmanageable your life became when you tried to control your addiction, you begin to realize the power that addiction had had over your life. Acknowledging your powerlessness and recognizing the unmanageability in your life will help make you ready to use the rest of the 12 Steps.

Fill in the following chart for a clearer picture of your addiction. Write out your examples in journal form and be prepared to say a word or two that will remind you of the situation. Sharing your First Step with your group or your sponsor(s) will allow them to help you in your recovery walk. Doing a worksheet and keeping it to yourself will not help you recover. If one of the aspects of addiction doesn't apply to you, just leave it blank.

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Aspect of Addiction

Give Three or More Examples

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1. Obsessing or fantasizing about my addictive behavior.
2. Trying to control my behavior.
3. Lying, covering up, or minimizing my behavior.
4. Trying to understand and/or rationalize my behavior.
5. Effects on my physical health.
6. Feeling guilty or shameful about my behaviors.
7. Effects on my emotional health.
8. Effects on my social life.
9. Effects on my school or work life.
10. Effects on my character, morals, or values.
11. Effects on my spirituality.
12. Effects on my financial situation.
13. Contact with the police or courts.
14. Has my preoccupation led to insane or strange behavior?
15. Has my preoccupation led to loss of memory?
16. Has my preoccupation led to destructive behavior against self or others?
17. Has my preoccupation led to accidents or other dangerous situations?
18. Do I keep overly or unnecessarily busy?
19. Do I feel depressed a lot of the time?
20. Am I able to share my feelings?  
If not, why?
21. Have I changed my physical image to support my addiction?
22. Have I made promises to myself that I have broken?
23. Have I denied that I have a problem?
24. Has my addiction affected my self-esteem?
25. Have I tried to relieve my pain about my behavior? How?
26. Have I tried to manipulate people into supporting my addiction? How?

27. Have I given up my hobbies and interests? What were these?
28. Is there anything else you might want and need to say about your addictive behavior?

[Note: If you don't think an item applies to you, remember the answer that is widely used in support groups -- NOT YET!]

Journal your responses and share some of them with your group and your sponsor(s).

#### Powerlessness Inventory

List as many examples as you can think of that indicate how powerless you have been to stop your behavior. Remember, "powerless" means unable to stop the behavior despite obvious consequences. Be very explicit about the types of behavior and frequencies. Start with your earliest example of being powerless and bring it up-to-date with your most recent. Try to come up with at least 30 examples. Remember--in doing this, practice gentleness. You don't have to complete the list in one sitting. You can add to the list as examples come to your mind. Doing this exercise will significantly add to the depth of your understanding of your own powerlessness. When you finish this "inventory", don't go further until you have discussed it with your sponsor(s).

#### Unmanageability Inventory

List as many examples as you can think of that show how your life has become totally unmanageable because of your dependency. Remember, "unmanageability" means that your addiction created chaos and damage in your life. Again, when you finish this "inventory", stop and talk with your sponsor(s).

### V. Step one For Co-Addicts/Codependents

We admitted that we were powerless over our insert type of addiction; that our lives had become unmanageable.

Acceptance (by you) of Step One paves the way for your walk to recovery. When new to a 12-Step program, most people find it a lot easier to recognize the "sick" behavior of the addict than to recognize their own co-addictive/codependent behavior. As you grow in understanding your own powerlessness and just how unmanageable your life became when you tried to control the addiction, you begin to realize the power that addiction (and the addicted person) has had over your life. Acknowledging your powerlessness and recognizing your unmanageability will help make you ready to use the rest of the 12 Steps.

Fill in the following chart for a clearer picture of your co-addiction. Write out your examples in journal form and be prepared to say a word or two that will remind you of the situation. Sharing your First Step with your group or your sponsor(s) will allow them to help you in your recovery walk. If you have a hard time thinking of examples, ask them to help you.

Doing a worksheet and keeping it to yourself will not help you recover. If one of the aspects of co-addiction doesn't apply to you, just leave it blank.

Aspect of Co-Addiction	Give Three or More Examples
1. Obsession about the addict's behavior.	
2. How do I try to control the addict's behavior?	
3. Lying, covering up, or minimizing the addict's behavior.	
4. Attempts to figure out the addict's behavior.	
5. Effects on my physical health.	
6. Effects on my emotional health.	
7. Effects on my social life.	
8. Effects on my school or work life.	
9. Effects on my character, morals or values.	
10. Effects on my spirituality.	
11. Effects on my financial situation.	
12. Contact with the police or courts.	
13. Has my preoccupation with the addict led to insane or strange behavior?	
14. Has my preoccupation with the addict led to loss of memory?	
15. Has my preoccupation with the addict led to destructive behavior against myself or others?	
16. Has my preoccupation with the addict led to accidents or other dangerous situations?	
17. Have I checked through the addict's personal mail, journals, etc.?	
18. Do I dress to accomodate the addicts wishes?	
19. Do I lecture the addict for his/her problem?	
20. Do I punish the addict?	
21. Do I blame myself for the addicts problem?	
22. Do I use sex to get what I want?	
23. Do I make excuses to not be sexual?	
24. Do I attempt to persuade the addict to take care of him/herself?	
25. Am I overly responsible or irresponsible?	

26. Do I keep overly busy?
27. Do I feel depressed a lot of the time?
28. Am I able to deal with my feelings?
29. Have I changed my physical image to please/displease the addict?
30. Have I believed I could or should change the addict?
31. Have I believed the addict's promises?
32. Have I denied the addiction?
33. Has the addiction affected my self-esteem?
34. Do I try to relieve the addict's pain?
35. Have I tried to manipulate the addict into changing?
36. Have I given up my hobbies and interests?
37. Has fear of rejection kept me in the relationship?
38. Do I put the pieces back together after chaos?

#### Co-Addict's Powerlessness Inventory

List as many examples as you can think of that indicate how powerless you have been to stop your behavior. Remember, "powerless" means unable to stop the behavior despite obvious consequences. Be very explicit about the types of behavior and frequencies. Start with your earliest example of being powerless and bring it up-to-date with your most recent. Try to come up with at least 30 examples. Remember--in doing this, practice gentleness. You don't have to complete the list in one sitting. You can add to the list as examples come to your mind. doing this exercise will significantly add to the depth of your understanding of your own powerlessness. When you finish this "inventory", don't go further until you have discussed it with your sponsor(s).

#### Co-addict's Unmanageability Inventory

List as many examples as you can think of that show how your life has become totally unmanageable because of your codependency. Remember, "unmanageability: means that your co-addiction created chaos and damage in your life. Again, when you finish, stop and talk with your sponsor(s).

### VI. Sharing Your First Step

You have not fully "activated" your First Step unless you share it with others. When you share Step One, usually with a group, focus on telling about the depth and pain of your powerlessness ("what it was like"), not necessarily on telling your whole story. Select incidents that are most moving to you. Ask for feedback and support from your sponsor(s) about what to share. Remember, your goal is not to "perform" for others, but to help you see--and accept--you powerlessness. The more honest you are, the more relief you will feel.

Step one is an invitation to share freely, holding little back. This is called "taking a step" or "activating a step" and means a fundamental acknowledgement (by you) of the illness and a surrender to a different life. Some people go through the motions of Step One without actually "activating" the step. They avoid the step by sharing examples of their powerlessness and unmanageability as if they were unrelated--they are detached from the impact of their illness. Taking the step means admitting clearly the patterns of the illness and sharing the feelings that accompany the realization that you have been out of control. Healing occurs only when the step goes past intellectual acceptance to emotional surrender ("Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3).

Here is a comparison of some of the characteristics of "taking/activating" versus "avoiding/pretending" a step:

Taking A Step	Avoiding A Step
1. Deliberate	1. Speedy
2. Thoughtful	2. Just reporting
3. Emotionally present	3. Emotionally absent
4. Feelings in line with reality	4. Absence of feelings
5. Statements of ownership of feelings and responsibility for behavior	5. Blame, denial, projection
6. Events form patterns	6. Events seem isolated
7. Acceptance	7. Defensiveness
8. Acknowledge impact	8. Deny impact
9. Surrender to illness	9. Attempt to limit illness
10. See addiction as part of life	10. See addiction as something to be fixed

Be aware of the tendency to become detached when telling your story. Try to stay open to both your own feelings and the group with whom you are sharing your step.

There are many reasons why people avoid, sometimes for indefinite periods, taking Step One. Consider the following items and see if any of them apply to you:

- A. Failure of courage -- To face an illness requires great courage. Some people are unable or unwilling to do it. If you find yourself thinking that you "don't really need to do anything" or that you can "handle it by yourself," find someone in the program to support you in your fearful moments.
- B. Not witnessing a good First Step -- If you have never seen a First

Step taken, you have no real model of what to do. Watch someone else take the First Step or ask your sponsor(s) to talk to you about his/her First Step--how it was taken, what it meant, etc.

- C. Inadequate preparation -- If you haven't carefully prepared and consulted with your sponsor(s); if you haven't carefully examined your own story--do not proceed. A First Step is not something you can do hastily.
- D. Denial of impact -- If you find yourself "minimizing" ("things weren't really so bad") or wondering if you are making something out of nothing, it's time to go back over your story with your sponsor(s).
- E. Acting out -- Actively holding on to some aspect of the addiction or co-addiction, even in some very small way, will interfere with taking the First Step. Remember--you will not feel better until you completely stop your compulsive behavior.
- F. Holding on to a major secret -- Secrets most often involve shame, and shame will serve as a barrier to the self-acceptance necessary in taking a First Step. Share the secret with your sponsor(s) or counselor/therapist before going on.
- G. Distrust of group -- Having confidence in your group is necessary in order for you to take the risks for Step One work. If you do not feel comfortable in the group, talk to your sponsor(s) about your options.
- H. Inadequate understanding of the 12 Step program -- When you came into the program, someone explained how the steps work. Each step has a special purpose--all 12 Steps taken/activated in order will lead you to recovery. If you are still confused about the program, seek some help before attempting your own step work.

The concept of the **addictive personality shift** will help you here. Addicts and co-addicts acknowledge that in their illness it seems like there are two people inside them--the real person who tries to live up to values and cares about people, and another person whose values and relationships are sacrificed to addictive obsession (See Romans 7:15-20,23-24). This Jekyll-Hyde syndrome is very common. The addict within us all is, in the words of the "Big Book" of AA, "**cunning and baffling.**" Even being able to recognize the shift from when you are your true (spiritual) self and when your addict has taken over is an extremely helpful tool, for detaching from your addict's power.

In terms of "**activating**" your First Step, your addict within will try very hard to sabotage your efforts at an open sharing of your illness. However, we know that it is Biblical to share and talk about our weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9) so we should ask God to give us the

boldness and courage to openly share with others what the First Step means to me.

Ask the Holy Spirit to be your companion (He is the Counselor and Comforter) as you undertake your walk in recovery.

[Portions of the previous material have been adapted and modified from Carnes, Patrick. A Gentle Path Through The Twelve Steps. Minneapolis: CompCare Publishers, 1989, pp.13-66.