

## ACTIVATING THE TWELVE STEPS IN MY LIFE

“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord . . . ”  
(Isaiah 1:18, NKJV)

*“Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.”*  
(Matthew 5:4)



# step two

*Came to believe that Jesus Christ could restore us to sanity.*

If it is useless to try to manage our lives, because it is impossible, then what should we do instead? It's one thing to discover and be able to admit our lives are unmanageable, but after a lifetime dedicated in trying to manage ourselves, what are we supposed to do instead? The First Step doesn't answer this question. Therefore, it is time to move on to Step Two.

“Restore us to sanity”? Now, that's an idea that can cause the “piecemeal experimenter” (also known as “get me a quick fix” recovery to move right along to another Step. Those who think they need to work (activate) only the Steps they believe apply to themselves are likely to try and pass by Step Two. How can we be restored to sanity unless we are insane? “I've never been in a padded cell, nor a in a mental hospital, nor even been treated by a psychiatrist,” some of us will rationalize; “therefore, this Step doesn't apply to me.” Step Two is obviously a good Step, but only for those who are insane. That's right, Step Two is for the insane. But before you rule yourself out of that category, let us reexamine just how rational we really are (Isaiah 1:18-20).

People in recovery accept that they have been living in insanity. The insanity was the almost constant attempt to escape from reality. Life is tough for any of us to handle at times; and many of us have chosen alcohol, drugs, food, sex, work, or some other obsessive/compulsive behavior as a means of running away from our reality. The truth is, escaping from reality only enslaves us more. Consider these words by Richard Wilson:

“My own personal experience of mourning (Matthew 5:4) as it relates to the Twelve Steps was the incredible blow I received when I realized I was, in fact, not God. I was living a delusional, immature and very often insane life (Step One), and I had to make a decision to turn my life over to God, my Higher Power (Steps Two and Three). I grieved the loss of my old life. It was all I knew and it was crazy, but it was mine. There are many days I grieve the loss of my old self-indulgent life while I pursue righteousness. It's a constant battle. I must take the first three Steps often, several times.

“In this second beatitude, we must also accept our mortality, the difficult reality many of us don’t want to think about. Our denial of reality is our form of insanity. The tough reality is that our bodies die. Through the truth of sadness comes the truth of comfort. Jesus says **in death there is life.** Through our true mourning comes our acceptance, and with acceptance comes comfort. We can go ahead with our earthly lives after a loved one’s death (or any other kind of loss) and know we will die too, but there will be another life for us. That is our comfort.

Jesus is saying we must turn and face the truth, making a choice to turn away from insanity. When we accept and feel reality, we walk into the comforting spirit of a loving God. Even though we are asked to mourn, it is the pathway to life.”

\_\_\_\_ Wilson, Richard. **Journey of the Beatitudes.**  
Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1986, pp.14-15.

Recovering people need God, and each other; Jesus makes this kind of statement throughout the Beatitudes. Do you want to experience the power of the promises in the Beatitudes? Then consider walking the road to reality--guided by the Holy Spirit of God.

The First Step calls for an admission that you **“are dysfunctional.”** Steps Two and Three call for us to confront the question of what gives meaning to our lives. Without meaning in our lives, our addictions and codependencies can grow and take us to the hell of living in the extremes. Without meaning we can’t establish priorities which will help us restore the balance, focus, and self-discipline we seek when we enter into a program of recovery.

There are two exercises which will help to make Step Two easier for you:

- I. **Spiritual Care Inventory** – This type of inventory helps you to identify obstacles that may hinder your completion of Step Two and Three.
  
- II. **Loss of Reality Inventory** – This type of inventory will help you to focus on your priorities in life.

## I. Spiritual Care Inventory

Your first task in the Spiritual Care Inventory is to accurately identify to what degree you are able to accept help from others and from God. Begin by circling the six words from the following list that best describe you now:

beginning	rebellious	loner	cooperative
scared	challenging	unique	nurturing
uncertain	resisting	free	guiding
tentative	non-trusting	separate	assisting
learner	questioning	individualist	directing
vulnerable	testing	detached	reliable

Now circle six words that best describe God, as you understand God at this point in your life:

judgmental	caring	distant	hoax
strict	trustable	indifferent	unreal
negative	loving	uncaring	nonexistent
rigid	purposeful	non-attentive	fanciful
cruel	compassionate	absent	imaginary
arbitrary	predictable	disengaged	joke

Note that, as a part of developing an identity, we all go through different phases of dependency (i.e. how much we depend on others for help). These phases are defined (for this exercise) as follows:

**Dependence** -- We need and want help.

**Counterdependence** – We need help but resist it.

**Independence** – We think we are self-sufficient and do not need help.

**Interdependence** – We freely give-and get help to-and from others.

From the first list of words above (24) you were asked to select the six words which most aptly described you. These same 24 words are arranged below in terms of dependence, counterdependence, independence, and interdependence. Find the six words you selected and circle them again. Did you circle three or more words in any one category (phase)?

<b><u>Dependence</u></b>	<b><u>Counterdependence</u></b>	<b><u>Independence</u></b>	<b><u>Interdependence</u></b>
beginning	rebellious	loner	cooperative
scared	challenging	unique	nurturing
uncertain	resisting	free	guiding
tentative	non-trusting	separate	assisting
learner	questioning	individualist	directing
vulnerable	testing	detached	reliable

Now then, look for patterns in the words you have selected. Do you see any connection between the words that describe you and the patterns of your addiction or co-addiction (codependency)?

Consider these situations: In a store when you are looking for something and can't find it, do you: (a) keep searching until you find it; or (b) ask for help? When you are constructing something from a kit, do you: (a) follow directions carefully; or (b) quickly go through the instructions only when you're stuck; or (c) figure it out yourself? When you are personally in pain, and need support, do you usually: (a) talk to people immediately; or (b) wait until the crisis is over and then tell people; or (c) get through it the best way you can without help?

As you responded to these situations, did you see a pattern of not letting yourself be helped? Very often addicts and co-addicts (codependents) rely heavily on themselves. As an addict and/or co-addict (codependent), you have used your obsessions to deal with pain and difficulty. It's possible you have learned not to accept help based on the way your "primary caregivers" treated you as a child. Consider the following list of people. How did they affect your ability to receive help? Did they support you when you made a mistake? Did they show you how to do things or did they expect you to know already?

Your father \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Your mother \_\_\_\_\_

Employers (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Brothers/Sisters \_\_\_\_\_

Clergy (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Other significant adults \_\_\_\_\_  
(specify)

Other significant peers \_\_\_\_\_  
(specify)

Note that your perceptions of God have evolved over the years. Before you can be truly reflective/meditative about God, you need to clarify your attitudes toward God. Four "types" of God exist for most of us:

**A punishing God** – who punishes our mistakes but does not reward or help.

**An accepting God** – who accepts that we fail and cares anyway.

**A noninvolved God** – who is detached and unconcerned with our lives.

**A nonexistent God** – from whom no help is available.

These concepts often interfere with determining your relationship with God, as you understand Him.

Earlier in this exercise you selected six words from a list of 24 which most aptly described your perceptions of God. These 24 words are arranged below in terms of a punishing, accepting,

noninvolved, or nonexistent God. Circle the six words you selected previously. Does any category get three or more words?

**Punishing**

judgmental  
strict  
negative  
rigid  
cruel  
arbitrary

**Accepting**

caring  
trustable  
loving  
purposeful  
compassionate  
predictable

**Noninvolved**

distant  
indifferent  
uncaring  
non-attentive  
absent  
disengaged

**Nonexistent**

hoax  
unreal  
nonexistent  
fanciful  
imaginary  
joke

Were there any patterns in the words you selected? Has your perception of God changed over time?

How does your current way of accepting help (**dependent, counterdependent, independent, and interdependent**) fit with your perception of God?

Name the five persons who most influenced your attitudes toward God over the years:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

Do they have anything in common? If so, what is it?

What obstacles does your religious background/upbringing create for you in trusting God?

What strengths does your religious background/upbringing create for you in trusting God?

Based on what you have learned about recovery so far, how do you see the “turning over” process of Step Two? What are the things that might prevent you, emotionally and intellectually, from accepting the help of God?

In what ways do you see God working in your life now?

## II. Loss of Reality Inventory

Denial and delusion come from addictive and co-addictive (codependent) impaired thinking (many support groups refer to this as “**stinkin’ thinkin’**”). Considering that insanity involves some loss of touch with reality, addicts and co-addicts need to get back a perspective on what is real and what is not. Here are three descriptive categories of reality loss:

**No reality**—Memory is lost due to a combination of factors including obsession, overextension, exhaustion, or anxiety and intoxication. Or, contact is lost with here--and--now events due to the same combination.

**Distortion of reality**—Reality is blurred because of the addiction’s power (cunning, baffling, powerful). Think of things you thought were true because your addict self wanted them to be. Or, the distortion of reality due to faulty beliefs (know what you believe, and why you believe it). If you start with a faulty belief, such as “women have to be forced in order to enjoy sex,” your thought processes will likewise be faulty as well, i. e. force is the only way to get needs met.

**Ignoring reality**—The clear assessment of risks is set aside (I want what I want when I want it.) or, the recognition that recent experiences were disastrous is overcome by the compulsion to repeat them.

Now complete the Loss of Reality Inventory by reflecting/meditating on how you have lost contact with reality. Write specific examples under each of the following categories:

1. No reality \_\_\_\_\_
2. Distortion of reality \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ignoring reality \_\_\_\_\_

After doing this, reflect on your losses of reality. When you needed help, whom did you ask? When you asked God or other people for help, was your request based on reality? (“God, if you’ll get me out of this, I’ll never.....”)

. . . . I believe Jesus is saying to us that in the beginning of the process. . . .we must accept the darkness of our own lives **to see the light**. He doesn’t tell us it will be easy. In facing His own death, He asked that the cup He had to drink from be taken away. But He knew it wouldn’t be taken away. What He is saying to us now is that when we swallow from our cup of reality, **there will be comfort.**”  
(Wilson, p.14)

(Portions of the previous material have been adapted and modified from Carnes, Patrick. A Gentle Path Through the Twelve Steps. Minneapolis: Comp-Care Publishers, 1989, pp. 73-85.)

# GRIEVING AND HEALING

## GRIEF REACTIONS

- Normal reaction to any losses in our lives.
- We grieve the loss of anything GOOD or BAD
- Loss comes about as a result of change: as we grow, body changes, values change, etc.

## GRIEF PROCESS

PHYSICAL: numb, waves of grief, muscle weakness, sighing, appetite and sleep changes.

GUILT

PRE-OCCUPATION WITH THOUGHT OF THE LOSS

HOSTILE REACTIONS TO OTHERS AND EVENTS

UNABLE TO CONTINUE USUAL PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR

## FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

DENIAL: I don't admit I will ever die or the loss will never hurt me.

ANGER: I blame others for causing the pain associated with the loss.

BARGAINING: I set up conditions under which I will allow myself to move through my grief.

DEPRESSION: Feelings of great sadness that I, (or someone I love) has actually lost something (or someone).

ACCEPTANCE: Almost an emotionless state of readiness: I am peaceful and ready to let go of life, and get on with whatever God wants to do with me.

GRIEF is not orderly...there is no time frame...there are no clear lines between the stages...it is as natural as breathing...it is normal, physical and spontaneous. **GRIEVING IS TOO PRECIOUS TO DO ALONE!** (Matthew 5:4; Galatians 6:2)

The Healing Journey flows from the grieving process and essentially is a **Forgiving** process; the stages of forgiveness are normal, natural, and necessary. Every stage of healing uncovers **what**

has hurt me – who has hurt me – why I was hurt (affected); it is a discernment process. Finally, admit the hurt and forgive the person.

**SIX STAGES OF FORGIVENESS**

- |    |  |            |
|----|--|------------|
| 1. | I don't admit I was hurt or the hurt affect me.            | DENIAL     |
| 2. | I blame (and punish) others for causing the hurt.          | ANGER I    |
| 3. | I will forgive but only if my conditions are met.          | BARGAINING |
| 4. | I am sad over the hurt and the loss it caused.             | DEPRESSION |
| 5. | I admit I'm letting the hurt <u>continue</u> to affect me. | ANGER II   |
| 6. | I can forgive unconditionally                              | ACCEPTANCE |

**Blessed are those  
who mourn . . . . .**

**My own sins**

**Others' sins**

**Universal sin**

**Result of sin**

**Natural man's**

**inadequacies**

**. . . . . for they will be comforted**

**(Matthew 5:4)**