

# Spring Focus: Steps to a New Life

## STEPS TO A NEW LIFE

Many of us entered treatment and recover for one very basic reason. We simply wanted to stop using alcohol and drugs. We had no idea that one the way to sobriety we were going to find a new way of life. Not only would keep us from drinking and drugging, but also would result in a life filled with unexpected happiness and serenity. We had yet to learn that what was going to bring us to this new and fulfilling life was not abstinence. It was in fact a program of recovery consisting of 12 specific principles to be applied to everything in our lives. We were to learn that when we practiced these principles in all of our affairs, our lives would become so enriched that we no longer had a need or desire to use any mood or mind altering substances. We would learn that as long as we practiced these principles, abstinence was not difficult. It came naturally as we enjoyed the rewards of our new spiritual way of living. We now know that as long as we are living with the concepts of the 12 steps, our lives are going to be filled with goodness that surpasses any need or use of drugs or alcohol. Here are the steps we took which were suggested as a program of recovery. Here are The Steps to a New Life.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association

### Spring Fling Weekend 2002

May 17, 18, 19

Friday, May 17, 2002 – Speaker Meetings

6:30 pm – Linda Lee (Alanon)

8:00 pm – Scott Lee (AA)

Saturday May 18, 2002 – Workshop

Coping with a changing world – Father Leo Booth

Concurrent workshops – Paul Early, Annie Prescott, Richard Morgan

Sunday, May 19, 2002 – Spring Fling

Noon to 6:00 pm

Hot dogs, hamburgers, music, activities for kids, swimming, crafts, etc.

Poolside 12 Step meeting immediately following the activities.

Other events for the year include:

Lake Outing and Picnic – June 2002 (TBD)

Halloween Dance – Saturday, October 26, 2002

Gratitude Dinner – Sunday, November 24, 2002

New years Eve Dance – Tuesday, December 31, 2002

Contact any Alumni Steering Committee Member for more information.

# Spring Focus: Steps to a New Life

## STEP ONE

By  
Carrie S.

*Let's get one thing straight. I don't have a drinking problem. I have a few little quirks about myself – character defects – which need some fine-tuning. I'm willing to sit in an AA meeting, but I'm not a drunk! I may be in a wheelchair because of a suicide attempt, but I'll walk again, no damage done. My parents may be worried about me but it is just because they don't know me very well. My fiancée may be ready to leave me but HE IS AT FAULT, NOT ME! And don't push that GOD stuff on me either – religion is for wimps! I don't need friends because I can do everything myself! I am in complete control and if you say otherwise, I'll laugh in your face!*

---Me, my first few days in treatment.

*I have done so much damage to myself. I have hurt everyone in my life. I have wasted so many years. I am not strong enough to stay sober. I've ruined my life. I can't face all of this! Nobody could possibly understand what I have done or what I am going through.*

---Me, after a few weeks of treatment.

*This program works – if I work it. I am not alone. My life is worth living. I don't need chaos, sex, drugs or alcohol to get me through the day. I am satisfied and happy. I need help from others, and people need help from me. I have experience, strength and hope. Through recovery and service work, I have found serenity.*

---Me, now.

**We admitted** we were **powerless** over alcohol (drugs, emotions, sex, codependency, bulimia, anorexia, our alcoholic loved one) and that our lives had become **unmanageable**.

### **WE**

You can't get sober by yourself:

Have you tried?

Have you succeeded?

Were you happy?

How many times have you relapsed?

The Twelve-Step Program of AA is a "WE" program. The path of sobriety is paved with the Experience, Strength and Hope of every drunk in the program. In the Twelve-Step Program of AA, you will forever be the student and the teacher. In the not-so-distant future, your Experience, Strength and Hope will help another drunk on their path of sobriety.

### **ADMITTED**

Admit that your best efforts landed you where you are right now:

I don't need your advice!

I'm going to do this my way!

I know what I am doing!

I don't need GOD!

Why should I help others if they don't help me!

Admit that you are the owner of the following character defects:

Self-Centeredness – I can do this myself!

Self-Pity – Nobody understands me!

Resentments - I hate him for getting the promotion that I deserved!

Blame – If it weren't for my children, I wouldn't be in this situation!

Excuses – I don't have time to get sober, I'm a single mom!

Lies and Manipulations – I only drink on Weekends!

Admit that as a human being, you have limitations.

Agility – I will climb the highest mountain!

Durability – nobody will ever beat me!

Mentality – I am the smartest!

Admit that you have imperfections. Stop hiding from them:

Cosmetic – I need a nose job!

Emotional – Nobody will ever "dump" me!

Defense Mechanisms – I won't talk to you anymore!

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In the process of admitting your shortcomings, you bring yourself to reality. This is not a time for despair; it is a time for hope. You are not alone. In every meeting, there is someone else who has experienced what you are going through. Be open and honest with yourself.

## **POWERLESS**

You are a drunk. Your disease will tell you to rebel against powerlessness. Ask yourself:

Can I stop drinking by myself?

Can I get well by myself?

Do I get angry when people ask me about my drinking?

Do I ever regret my actions but then try to rationalize them away?

Do I feel lonely (even with many people in my life)?

Have I ever said, "why is this happening to me?"

You are not a bad person. You do not lack moral character. Alcohol is causing your behaviors to be skewed. You are already getting better. You are identifying and accepting your powerlessness. You are seeing your limitations and accepting them as realities. At this stage, change will begin.

## **UNMANAGEABLE**

Is your life truly unmanageable? Ask yourself:

Have I bargained my drinking? (i.e.: I will only drink on weekends.)

Do I think about alcohol when I am not drinking?

Do I feel different and alone?

Do I have so many problems in my life that I do not know where to begin?

Am I unable to accomplish ordinary tasks?

Do I take the everyday occurrences and actions of other people too personally and too seriously?

Do I think that if I move, my problems will be left behind?

Your unmanageability may manifest itself in feelings of:

Loneliness	Self-Centeredness
Shame	Fear of Rejection
Insecurity	Shyness
Fear of Involvement	Co-Dependency
Nervousness	Resentment
Anger	Jealousy

Physical Ailments (Headaches, Ulcers)

Low Self-Esteem or Self-Worth

Envy

You may find that you are acting out using:

Sex Food (Restricting or Bingeing)

Chaos Abuse (Physical or Verbal)

Violence Cutting / Self-Mutilation

Gambling Shopping

Rage Suicide Attempts

Your life will remain unmanageable if you do not change. Step One will cause you to look inward – at yourself, possibly for the first time. Be forgiving, you can't change the past. However, it is your responsibility to change the future. Think about what Step One has taught you.

In Step Two, you will find the strength to restore your health. You will begin to rely on spiritual guidance and the wisdom of others.

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## First Step Prayer

Dear Lord,

I admit that I am powerless over my addiction. I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it. Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness. Remove from me all denial of my addiction.

## Second Step Prayer

Heavenly Father,

I know in my heart that only You can restore me to sanity. I humbly ask that You remove all twisted thought and addictive behavior from me this day. Heal my spirit and restore in me a clear mind.

## Third Step Prayer

God,

I offer myself to Thee. To build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties. That victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of Life. May I do Thy will always.

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## STEP TWO

By  
Conrad W.

*Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

As with all the other steps, I have found that I needed to read it, read it, read it and read it again. As sufferers of the disease of addiction we are masters at taking in information and then managing with the fluency of an ancient Greek philosopher to completely turn that information around to something that will usually confirm our fears and paranoid delusions. As a result, on first approaching this step, I latched on to the first nine words with crazy glue like tenacity.

My initial interpretation was that this Step required me to evolve a hitherto unknown spiritual consciousness along with a definition of a Higher Power and then to exhibit faith in that Higher Power. Not only that, but I also had to achieve this state of enlightenment within the 2 week deadline my Ridgeview group counselor had given me to complete the Step. Within moments of starting to consider Step 2, I had already convinced myself that this was leading me into such alien and unacceptable concepts that I was doomed to fail. My addiction and I would live happily ever after until the disease won the ultimate battle and I ceased to exist in the not too distant future.

Having read it over and over again I finally found that for me the key to this step is in the last four words. We are being told that on the assumption we have honestly completed Step 1 the conclusion we must have already reached is that we suffer from insanity. Once I realized this I promptly re-read the life-story I had written for Step One and had no option but to fully accept that I was suffering from insanity. Not only were my actions insane, my attempts (on multiple occasions) to prevent my addiction and addictive behavior on my own had failed miserably. Only at this point could I approach the remainder of Step Two and deal with the first nine words that were so alien to me.

Re-visiting my Step One work proved conclusively that I was both insane and powerless over my addiction. Step Two asked me to accept that if I could not control it, then by default it would require something more powerful than me to regain my sanity. I could not refute the logic; I had to

accept these facts no matter how much I wanted to deny them. This realization turned the previously undesirable concept of a Higher Power into a necessary reality and even though I could not conceive of what my Higher Power was, I accepted that I must have faith in one if I was going to recover from my addiction.

Thus, my interpretation of the second Step is that it asks me to accept the logical conclusions that my first step work made glaringly obvious. Then to also accept that, as I had proved I was unable to control my addiction using my own resources, I would need to find an alternative resource. Finally it asked me to believe that the necessary resource had to be a Power Greater than myself.

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## STEP THREE

By  
Connie P.

*Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*

I began my spiritual journey with Step Three. I made a decision to stop playing God in my life and I began to search for my own understanding of God by placing my will and life into His hands. My own self will and my own agenda for life had me locked into a very lonely and dark place. The bottom of the bottle or the snorting of cocaine in a filthy bathroom of some nightclub were my only friends. I lived life in a black box with hopelessness and despair. Life as an alcoholic and drug addict left me spiritually bankrupt. I was far from God.

Clearing the wreckage from my past required a leap into blind faith and trust. I began to look at my alcoholic behaviors and the process of letting go was fearful. Once I made the decision to turn my life and will over to the care of God, weaknesses turned into spiritual strengths. Letting go wasn't so fearful and a new life has begun to emerge. The darkness turned to light and today I enjoy living in the light. My goal is to live a contented and sober life...a life of peace and joy. When the challenging times come and they do, knowing that a Higher Power is in charge of my journey gives me the strength to endure with grace, honor and dignity.

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As a grateful, recovering alcoholic and drug addict...my daily recovery proves that I am in the care of a Higher Power. It is a relief to turn my life and will over on a daily basis. Daily prayer and mediation keep me in contact with my Higher Power. I seek guidance now and I am learning to listen to that inner voice and I seek the counsel of my therapist, my sponsor and the women in this program as well as the recovering community. I love Step Three and keep the third step prayer close to my heart...." God, I offer myself to Thee – To build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve of the bondage of self that I may better Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

## STEP FOUR

By  
Susan D.

### *Made a fearless and thorough moral inventory of ourselves.*

Being new in recovery, those very works were enough to strike terror into my heart. I kept hearing how terrible it was, how people went out and drank after they did one. I was afraid of something I had actually never experienced. I was afraid of the 4<sup>th</sup> step because first of all it was too much like an assignment; I would have to do it perfectly, because I was afraid not to be the role model of recovery. Secondly, it meant I had to start taking a look at my part in my life. I had spent many years blaming other people and playing the victim. My finger was always pointing at someone else. What was I going to do if I didn't live that way anymore?

Was I really willing to go to any length to stay sober? Was I willing to change my behavior, to make amends, to stop justifying, rationalizing and blaming others? Yes I was. I took a deep breath, prayed for courage and stepped out in faith that GOD would help me through it. I didn't do the first one perfectly; I didn't do the second one perfectly. I did the best I could at the time. And my life began to get better. I will do another one soon, and another and another and my life will continue to get better. The longer I stay sober, the more clear-headed I

become. I can see more people I hurt by my behavior that I didn't think about before. I see more and more of my part in things and that is the only part that matters.

Doing a 4<sup>th</sup> step, and 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> has allowed me to begin to forgive myself and work through the shame and lack of self esteem, as well as recognize pride and ego and begin to let those go.

I have new relationships that I work at today instead of run away from. I am learning how to be a friend, without expectations and most important of all, I am learning who I am. The real me, the person GOD is intending me to be. No pretenses, fewer character defects, a relationship with GOD. And today I have hope. Hope that if I keep doing what I've been doing, I can continue learning and growing and living sober.

So, I will take a deep breath, be courageous and keep doing 4<sup>th</sup> steps, and all the others. Because with each one a weight is lifted and life gets better.

## Fourth Step Prayer

Dear God,

It is I who has made my life a mess. I have done it, but I cannot undo it. My mistakes are mine and I will begin a searching and fearless moral inventory. I will write down my wrongs. But I will also include that which is good. I pray for the strength to complete this task.

## Fifth Step Prayer

Higher Power,

My inventory has shown me who I am, yet I ask for Your help in admitting my wrongs to another person and to You. Assure me and be with me, in this step, for without this step, I cannot progress in my recovery. With Your help, I can do this, and I will do it.

## Sixth Step Prayer

Dear God,

I am ready for Your help in removing from me the defects of character which I now realize are an obstacle to my recovery. Help me to continue being honest with myself and guide me toward mental and spiritual health.

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## STEP FIVE

By  
Perry M.

**Admitted to God, to ourselves and another human  
being the exact nature of our wrongs**

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We will know peace and we will comprehend the word serenity.

That sounded so good when I would hear it in meetings, but I had no idea when or how that would actually happen. I wanted peace and serenity so bad it hurt, but wanting something and being ready to receive it are always separated by the willingness to take action.

The Fifth Step is the point at which the promises begin to be realized. The drudgery of the fourth step was over and the fear of rejection was the only thing left to overcome. I was like so many in A.A. I was not only guilty of many wrongs and filled with resentment I had a secret that was going with me to my grave. I was sure that if anyone knew this secret they would be unable to like or respect me. I especially didn't want to tell my sponsor who had become someone I looked up to and respected. I valued his opinion so highly that the thought of his disdain mortified me. How would I stay sober if I alienated the one person in the world who was willing to show me how this thing works?

The day came for my fifth step and I felt as if I was being led towards the electric chair. My heart was racing, my sleep the night before had been fitful and I was unable to keep anything down except coffee. My horror was redoubled when my sponsor suggested that since I had become so close with his wife that might she sit in as well. To make a painful story short, I got through the fifth step with both of them in attendance but I waited until my sponsor and I were alone to cover the secret. I spilled it and then waited to hear the invitation to leave his house or at the very least to see in his eyes that glare of disgust or disapproval..... It never came. He looked at me with the same understanding expression he had had all day and said is that it? With those three words, my life began to change from the inside out. The change was slow at first but I soon noticed a new ease. I began to realize that when I greeted people or carried on a conversation, I no longer felt a need to look at the ground.

I could look people in the eyes and it felt good.

All of the promises are that way...rich and beautiful, lofty and sublime. They were ideals sought by each of us through drugs and alcohol but were never attained. Each of us yearned desperately to be the person having those traits, but each of us fell hopelessly short. The reason being lack of willingness to put forth the work. Alcohol offered a quick and easy way to temporarily cure all our shortcomings and quiet all our uncomfortable feelings and fears but it quit working. If there was a lesson to be learned it might be that fear can absolutely block me from the Sunlight of the Spirit and that action in the face of fear can re-awaken honor and dignity.

## STEP SIX

By  
Betsy B.

**Became willing to have God remove these defects of  
character.**

I remember when it hit me that this book, the Big Book, is all about freedom. Through the service and willingness of my sponsor who took me through the Big Book, and made me do a thorough Fourth Step and spent as long as I needed to complete my Fifth Step, I clearly realized that I was bound by chains of self-destructive thought processes, unrealistic fears and down right selfish motives. When I finished my Fifth step I could not wait for God to release me, to remove these obstacles to a happy useful life. But that occurs in Step Seven. First, I had to do some work. Maybe that is why I needed Step Six so badly.

Step Six is "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." And if I really read each word of the step, the words "entirely" and "ready" must be reckoned with. Knowing that this is a program of progress not perfection allows me to deal with the concept of being "entirely ready", but this is also a program of honesty. Were there certain defects I liked? Did certain ones give me a sense of power? Luckily, the Big Book suggested that if I had trouble parting with some of my defects that I ask God to help me become willing.

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That willingness grows when I honestly review the many defects of character which were suddenly so glaring in light of my Fifth Step.

By looking at the results of these defective traits, I could see the true cause and effect. Because of these negative thought processes, unrealistic fears and down right selfish motives I was left with resentments that ate away my spirit and left me with bitterness that grew like a malignant cancer. Because of this perspective deficiency and arrogance, I was riddled with overwhelming fears that plagued me even during the good times. And because of my destructive character traits, I had harmed many people, even myself. That was the truth and I had to honestly face the fact that there was no use for these defects of character anymore. They had done enough damage. So part of my work was becoming ready, as ready as I possibly could become.

But the other part that was my responsibility was to know what these defects of character were. My sponsor helped me with this as we reviewed the columns of my Fourth Step. Her feedback helped me acknowledge defects I overlooked, recognize patterns I hoped were really not there, and break down my denial about defects others had suggested but my arrogance refused to accept. I had to be willing to consider and be open to what she and other caring friends saw in my thoughts and actions. She as well as other caring friends helped me go deep and get honest. There is no wonder the spiritual principle behind Step Six is "willingness".

Still, even if I am entirely ready and I know the nature of these defects of character there is one more part to Step Six that is my work. I have to truly own these defects as *mine*. And I must accept the fact that I cannot remove them. I cannot will them away. My sponsor told me that "a sick mind cannot heal a sick mind". So just as I recognize that these are my defects of character I must also realize that I am not the one to remove them; I do not have that power. That part is up to my Higher Power. That part is tough because I usually hate to ask for help. But by the time I reached Step Six I had experience asking for help. With Step Six I have to acknowledge these defects of character as my own but I am not the one who will take them away; they will be removed according to my Higher Power's timetable and in the manner my Higher Power sees fit. (Which is actually a relief because my best efforts never got me further

than full-blown addiction.) Step Six is a beginning that allows me to move with humility to Step Seven and continue the process of a new and very different life of freedom.

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## STEP SEVEN

By

Mary Jean and Daisy

### *Humblly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*

The principle behind step seven is humility. My first task was to discover the true meaning of humility. The definition in the dictionary reads "the quality or condition of being humble." So what is humble? Back to the dictionary: "meek or modest". I still had no clue. I knew what humiliation felt like for I had certainly accomplished this enough times while out there doing my thing but this still did not fit into what I kept hearing in the rooms so once again to my sponsor for answers. She assigned readings in the Big Book, 12 and 12, and the Little Red Book. There I found the answers. Character building and spiritual values must come first. Material satisfactions were not the purpose of living. In the 12 and 12, it says that the material satisfactions were not the final end aims of life. So for me humility was initially admitting that I was powerless over alcohol. I was powerless over other people places and things; everything except my actions. What a lesson for this alcoholic to learn! To realize that the life I had been living was geared totally toward self-centeredness and to accept that humility was a true necessity and not a sign of failure or loss. It was truly a milestone.

After completing steps four, five and six kicking and screaming most of the way, I had to look at my character defects / shortcomings. I had to live life one day at a time slowly becoming someone who could honestly want these things removed from my life. What a chore! I can honestly say that I did not come to an immediate understanding of any of the above for a long time even after completing all the steps with a sponsor. I just kept doing what I was told one day at a time. Over time I came to see that my largest and most harmful shortcoming was living in fear; not having faith that god would take care of me if I would just stay out of the way.

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The fear of losing what I had and the fear of the unknown haunted me.

Only after I was able to see this in my life and honestly pray for God to remove this shortcoming everyday for a lot of days and to stop making fear based decisions, was I able to grasp even the smallest understanding of what this whole deal was about. As this change came about in my life I was blessed for the very first time with such a sense of FREEDOM: freedom from fear, self-doubt, self-hatred, self-loathing and, fear of life. I am not relieved of all of this immediately or even forever.

My defects do return from time to time and HP takes them from me in Her time not mine. The best I can hope for is the complete removal of all defects right now but the reality falls somewhat short of that. If defects are the root of my problem then maybe cultivating virtues such as patience, forgiveness, tolerance, selfless compassion, honesty, courage, faith, hope and perseverance might be the solution. Now how might I do that? OH...Work The Steps...DUH!

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## Seventh Step Prayer

My Creator,  
I am now willing that You have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character, which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here to do Your bidding.

## Eighth Step Prayer

Higher Power,  
I ask Your help in making my list of all those I have harmed. I will take responsibility for my mistakes and be forgiving to others as You are forgiving to me. Grant me the willingness to begin my restitution. This I pray.

## Ninth Step Prayer

Higher Power,  
I pray for the right attitude to make my amends, being ever mindful not to harm others in the process. I ask for Your guidance in making indirect amends by staying abstinent, helping others and growing in spiritual progress.

## STEP EIGHT

By  
Bill D.

*Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

Dear God,

Thank you for my sobriety today. And for life. Thank you for inspiring Bill W. and the first 100 to put on paper my salvation from the hell of alcoholism. Thank you for the 12 Steps, which are teaching me daily to live like I always wanted to, but never thought I could. Thank you for being patient with me while I lived by ego and fear, never wanting to believe that anything could have power over me; that I always ran my life just fine, thank you very much. Thank you for the love that you poured out so steadily, and for protecting me and those who came close to me, until I humbled myself and asked you to take control of my thoughts and actions. Thank you for granting me courage and diligence and most important, honesty, as I looked back over a life that was filled with anger and fearfulness; a life focused on my pleasures, regardless of the cost to others... and myself. Thank you for my sponsor, the first man you put in to my life that I could trust enough with my secrets. Thank you so very much for preparing the fields of my heart. For granting me the desire live a new way, replacing all the old, rotten, moldy self with the attributes that You want me to possess, and for granting me the patience to wait on Your time for the change to occur. And for never allowing me to forget that the transformation hinges on my willingness, honesty and openness.

God, now I am facing another test. Fears crawls in to that little room of truth that I have let so few see. Have I done the preceding work with enough diligence and honesty that I may now make an exhaustive enough list of those I have harmed, or will the 9<sup>th</sup> step loom over my soul and forbid such a drastic measure? I need your help. And love. And patience.

I've read my 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> steps again, and in the reading of them, I still feel that icy needle of shame puncture my soul, the acknowledgment of the damage I caused to everyone close to me. I thank you, that today my first thought was not to drink when I looked at the past, but to look to the 9<sup>th</sup> step promises, the part about not regretting the past.

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You know how much I want that.

Bill W. wrote that our attitude must be “changed, only by a deep and honest search of our motives and actions”(1). How, God, did a recently sober New York stock speculator come up with that? Thank You that he did. What is my motive for doing the 8<sup>th</sup> step. So that I can stay sober? Because my sponsor tells me to? Is it because I have to complete the 8<sup>th</sup> step to get to the 9<sup>th</sup> step? Is my way of thinking actually changing; do I really want to clean up the wreckage of my past, not just for myself, but for those I hurt, for those I love, and for those who loved me? Or, as the Big Book promises, am I experiencing a ‘psychic change’?

God, as I prepare to do this work, the 8<sup>th</sup> step, grant me the courage to look at my past with the correct attitude. Help me to reach out to those who have gone before me and can lend me their valuable experience. Please be patient with me when I struggle with ego and false-pride. Please open my eyes to the truth that was, and can be again, my life, if I choose not to do your will. And please, God, remind me on a minute by minute basis my purpose on your Earth; to be of maximum service to You and others.

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## STEP NINE

By  
Stan D.

**Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**

For many years before I became sober, I made apologies for my actions, simply because it was all I knew to do. The words “I’m sorry”, were a prominent part of my vocabulary. It was not until I began working the steps, specifically step 9 that I learned that there is more to making amends than just saying “I’m sorry”.

I had been my worst enemy. I always laid blame on others for my actions or lack thereof. I never thought that I did any thing wrong. However, after starting to work my program of recovery and work the steps did I truly find my character defects and just exactly what role I played.

I have found that the only way I could work step nine is to have worked the previous steps to my

fullest ability. Without taking a fearless and moral inventory of myself and my character defects, I would not be able today to know exactly all the wrongs I have done to others and be able to make amends. Also, I would not understand that the amends process is not only for the persons that I seek out, but more importantly, it is for cleaning up my side of the street. Acceptance by others of my apologies and amends is something that I have no control over. However, I have learned that my actions speak louder than my words.

On a daily basis, I find that my list of all persons that I harmed is not complete. Usually the events of the day bring to mind someone else that I need to make amends to. In some cases, I have reluctantly traveled some distance to make these amends. The turmoil within myself over apologizing for years of bad behavior, using friends, relatives and money has been great. Until I finally started. It seemed that a great weight had been lifted from my shoulders. And, I found out that most of the people knew more about me than I did myself. They knew all along what the problem was. I was the only one that didn’t know. In most cases, my amends have been received with an open heart and unconditional love. After making an amends, I feel better about myself and also others around me.

Step Nine also prepared me for working the remaining steps. And, as I continue my program, I realize that I must work the steps every day for I am an alcoholic. And, I need this program in my life.

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## STEP TEN

By  
Christy G.

**Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.**

Having worked the first nine steps, I have developed somewhat of a conscience. As such, when I indulge my impulses, I generate within, a gnawing sense of emptiness and discontentment. My disease tells me that feeling bad is unacceptable, that it must be fixed. The program tells me that as long as I am doing the next right thing, I am doing all I can do to combat the negative feelings as well as my diseases demand to immediately stop these negative feelings. Positive actions combat negative emotions.

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It is important to keep tally of feelings and actions in this regard. Indeed, it demands a program of scheduled maintenance, much like a car, so that I am not surprised by a total breakdown based on neglect. The breakdown was insidious but completely predictable. Had I been checking the oil, I would have seen a measured depletion. The Tenth Step is like checking the oil. Without it I am playing Russian roulette with my disease.

I cannot assume however that I know right from wrong. Oh yeah, I had a pretty good day is not a measurable Tenth Step. What were my feelings, my actions, my character defects? Was this in God's Will or in self will through my actions? I have experienced patterns of behavior demanding self-destruction long before using and as such have a fear of my disease. It is like a tornado marked by a certain weather pattern. I am not "suddenly" in the torrid cyclone helplessly whirling out of control. After all, everyone else managed to get in a storm shelter. My Tenth Step is a prediction of the oncoming storm. It is a map to tell me where I am relative to the tornado. My disease has placed me in the land of storms. How foolish I would be ignoring the weather map.

I developed a Tenth Step based on my needs. And, I am very sick. I must look at a list of ten basic emotions trying to nudge my feelings out into the open. I then review a list of characteristics of self will such as selfish, dishonest, impulsive, intolerant and doubtful followed by God's Will; concern for others, honesty, humility, calmness, forgiveness and tolerance. I look at the list in context of my daily actions and thoughts. I review the twenty-six basic character defects again looking for any I have demonstrated. Finally, because I am oh so sick, I review a list of twenty-seven signs of relapse (based on Gorski). I identify positive actions as well as negative actions, admitting not only when I am wrong, but also when I am living God's Will and working the program. It is the maintenance step. A gauge of how I am doing in my program is preventative spirituality.

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## Tenth Step Prayer

Dear God,

I pray I may continue to grow in understanding and effectiveness; to take daily spot check inventories of

myself; to correct mistakes when I make them; to take responsibility for my actions; to be ever aware of my

negative and self-defeating attitudes and behaviors; to keep my willingness in check; to always remember I need Your help; to keep love and tolerance of others as my code; and to continue in daily prayer how I can best serve You.

## Eleventh Step Prayer

God, as I understand You,

I pray to keep my connection with You. Open and clear from me the confusion of daily life. Through my prayers and meditations I ask especially for freedom from self-will, rationalization, and wishful thinking. I pray for the guidance of correct thought and positive action. Your Will, not mine, be done.

## Twelfth Step Prayer

Dear God,

My spiritual awakening continues to unfold. The help I have received I shall pass on and give to others, both in and out of the fellowship. For this opportunity I am grateful. I pray most humbly to continue walking day by day on the road of spiritual progress. I pray for inner strength and wisdom to practice the principles of this way of life in all I do and say. I need You, my friends, and the Program every hour of every day. This is a better way to live.

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## STEP ELEVEN

By  
Vincent P.

*Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry out.*

(What It Was Like)

Prayer and Meditation Prayer was about me. My motives were self-centered, selfish and always in my favor. My meditation consisted of consuming any mind-altering substance to escape the restlessness, irritable and discontent I felt in my life.

My contact with God was 911 calls to save my life mentally, emotionally and physically from the consequences of my behavior. My will was prayer. I was the center of the universe.

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{ What Happened }

I hit the lowest point of my life. The pain was so bad I surrendered unconditionally.

(What It Is Like Now)

Prayer is praying for His will. God over me. I pray daily for anyone I have challenges or conflict with. I ask for them what I would ask for myself. I enjoy the quiet time daily to connect with God. His grace has lifted the obsession. The restless, irritable, and discontent feelings are now filled with spiritual wellness. I often ask myself "What would a spiritual person do in this situation?" What a concept! I am very grateful for the 12 Steps of AA. They are my blueprints for life.

## STEP TWELVE

By  
Cheralee R.

**Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

The 12 Steps of AA have been an important part of my daily life in recovery, but Step 12 has been especially instrumental in my sobriety. When I got to Ridgeview for treatment, I was told that one thing in my life was going to change. Little did I know that EVERYTHING about it was going to change. Working the steps has helped me to live life on life's terms on a daily basis, and without Step 12, I would not be a complete recovering alcoholic. Being sober and carrying the message of AA to alcoholics is a very spiritual experience for me. Working all of the steps (especially Step 12) has allowed the promises to come true for me, and for most people I come in contact with in recovery.

Being an active member of the Alumni and the Steering Committee has enabled me to work Step 12. Getting involved and staying connected and accountable to a lot of alcoholics since I came out of treatment has been the real core of my recovery.

Working with my sponsor and my sponsees on a daily basis is a great blessing and gift. Step 12 is merely an added bonus of life in sobriety and carrying the message to all alcoholics is a spiritual experience every day. I often am humbly amazed and full of gratitude at the things I am able to

accomplish and pass on every day to stay sober, only because of the 12 Steps of AA.

## Twelve Steps to Non-Recovery

1. We admitted we were powerless over nothing, that we could manage our lives perfectly and those of anyone else who would allow us.
2. Came to believe there was no power greater than ourselves and that the rest of the world was insane.
3. Made a decision to have our loved ones and friends turn their will and lives over to our care, even though they couldn't understand us.
4. Made a searching moral and immoral inventory of everyone else we knew.
5. Admitted to the whole world the exact nature of everyone else's wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to make others straighten up and do right.
7. Demanded others to either shape up or ship out.
8. Made a list of all persons who had harmed us and became willing to go to any length to get even with them all.
9. Got direct revenge on such people whenever possible except when to do so would cost us our lives, or at the very least, a jail sentence.
10. Continued to take inventory of others, and when they were wrong promptly and repeatedly told them about it.
11. Sought through complaining and nagging to improve our relations with others as we couldn't understand them, asking only that they knuckle under and do it our way.
12. Having had a complete physical, emotional, and spiritual breakdown as a result of these steps, we tried to blame it on others and to get sympathy and pity in all our affairs.

# Spring Focus: Steps to a New Life

## STEP THIRTEEN

By  
Paul L.

When I first said I would write an article on the 13<sup>th</sup> step, I thought of it as a joke to be used as a humorous antidote. As I looking back over the instances of the 13<sup>th</sup> step I have witnessed, I changed my mind. The 13<sup>th</sup> step can be one of the most dangerous things in AA.

The 13<sup>th</sup> step is not mentioned as such in the Big Book. What is the 13<sup>th</sup> step? Very simply, it is beginning an inappropriate relationship. There are two basic forms of the 13<sup>th</sup> step, 1) Foolishness and 2) a Reckless, Self-Centered desire to fulfill a want. There is a wide gap in the motivation between the two. The end result can be the same, disaster for someone.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> instance, Foolishness, someone just getting clean. Their mind and body are awaking almost from a coma. In many of us, all of a sudden, we are alive for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in a long time. We feel things we have not felt in a long time, so long we may not even remember. We reach out to others or others reach out to us and we feel such a joy in the companionship. Beyond friendship, beyond companionship. It can be very intense, we want more, we need more. Just like a drug, it fills us. We put more and more into the relationship, less and less into our recovery. Then many times just like a drug it turns on us. We change; they change. The intense joy wears off. The newness and excitement is gone. We are left drifting in a state of loss and remorse. How can we fill the hole that is left? Many times the answer is to a relapse. Every relapse is like Russian Roulette, will I survive and will I make it back?

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> instance, a force is at work. Some one who knows better, but just does not care if someone gets hurt or their desire can blind them to the hurt they are going to inflict on an innocent. Just like their desire for a drink or drug ran rampant thru their lives before, hurting those around them. Many times it is a person who has stagnated in the program. Some one who has gone just far enough into the steps to stop the uncontrollable desire to drink as long as it is filled by something else. They have not filled themselves with the program. All they see is the "deer in the headlights" look of those new in the program and know they can manipulate them. Those who have filled themselves of the

program are not as vulnerable to the manipulation. The power of the hunt and capture replace the humbleness that should have been growing. Instead of helping someone, they hurt them. The one being 13<sup>th</sup> stepped can lose their life. Someone new to the program can have this horrible experience and think this is what AA has in store for them, go out and never come back due to the treatment they received at the hands of a "recovering" person.

We often times hear that we should not go thru any major changes for one year. This includes relationships. You will not die because there is not someone intimate in your life. There is always "The 3 M's". If you don't know "The 3 M's", ask your sponsor about them. During the first year we go thru many changes. The year is only a guideline, for some it is longer. When the time is right, when you are right, someone will come into your life. If it is the right person, they will be here today and tomorrow. It will not be an instance of jump now or be forever alone.

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## THE PROMISES OF DRINKING

If we are casual with this phase of our development, we will be drunk before we are half way through. We are going to know a new imprisonment and a new misery. We will relive the past and won't be able to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word CONFLICT and we will know PAIN. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we'll sink even lower. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will deepen. We will gain interest in selfish things and lose interest in our fellows. Self-esteem will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will suck. Fear of people, and economic insecurity will multiply. We will intuitively know how to turn and run from situations which never used to bother us. We will suddenly realize that God would never have done to us what we are doing to ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not! They are being fulfilled among those of us who are still drinking --- sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, they will always materialize, IF WE DRINK FOR THEM.....

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

# Spring Focus: Steps to a New Life

## RIDGEVIEW ALUMNI ASSOCIATION STEERING COMMITTEE

The Ridgeview Alumni Association Steering Committee is a group of people in active recovery who have completed treatment at the Ridgeview Institute. We have volunteered to serve the Ridgeview Alumni and recovering community at large by participating in the planning and execution of various Alumni sponsored functions. Our main purpose is to promote and sustain our recovery through fellowship, service and unity. The only requirements for joining are active participation in a 12-Step program and a desire to serve.

The Alumni Steering Committee sponsors and chairs about 45 12-Step meetings per month in the Cottages and on the Ridgeview campus. These meetings are mainly for current patients and alumni, but some are open to the recovery community at large.

We also sponsor dances and outings. We have two softball teams (called the Lunatics). Our next function is the annual Spring Fling (Homecoming). This will be held on May 17, 18 and 19. All Alumni, family members and current patients are invited to attend. We help promote the idea that recovery can be fun.

A newsletter titled "The View" is published twice annually. We welcome all Alumni to submit first person articles, poems, cartoons and other appropriate material for publication. We also invite the Ridgeview Staff to submit similar articles focusing on personal experience, strength and hope.

Our Projects Committee provides an opportunity for each of us to give something back to Ridgeview and the recovering community. The Serenity Garden on the Ridgeview Campus, the Endowment Fund and "Brick Sales" for the Serenity Garden are just several examples of giving back. The end result for many of us has been borne out by one staff member's observation: "Seems to me that active members stay sober...." The Alumni Steering Committee meets every Thursday at 5:45 PM in the Pro-North building on the Ridgeview Campus.

## DESIDERATA

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plan.

Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Strive to be happy.

Lord,

Help me to remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that You and I together can't handle.

# Spring Focus: Steps to a New Life

## Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund Campaign

**Yes**, I want to contribute to the Alumni Endowment Fund. I've been in Recovery \_\_\_\_\_ years and would like to give back \$\_\_\_\_\_.

**Yes**, I am not an Alumni, however, I wish to contribute to the Endowment Fund. As a family member, friend, business owner or corporate representative/sponsor. Here is my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397.

## Serenity Garden Memorial Brick Order Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Message to be engraved on brick: (2 lines / 14 characters per line)

(Line 1) \_\_\_\_\_

(Line 2) \_\_\_\_\_

\$25.00 per brick

\*Please fill out name and contact number, even if you wish this to be an anonymous contribution, so we may contact you in case any questions arise about the inscription.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association, Bricks

**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397