

STEP TEN: AN INTRODUCTION

Step Ten is the key to living moment by moment in what the AA Big Book calls "the world of the spirit." The little studies in this section are about Step Ten. We hope that, while you might not agree with all that we say, it inspires you to explore Step Ten further and to make it a deeper part of your own spiritual journey.

Some background

For a long time, some people have suggested that we really practice a six-Step rather than a twelve-Step program. We acknowledge our powerlessness over our basic addiction (Step One), come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity (Step Two), and make a decision to hand our will and our lives over to the care of that Power (Step Three). We then begin to lead a life of self-examination and restitution (Step Ten), of prayer and meditation (Step Eleven), and service to others (Step Twelve). However, our initial working of Step Ten, when we have years and years of abuse of ourselves and other people to contemplate and act upon, is a formidable task; so that first working of Step Ten is broken down for us into six separate Steps -- Steps Four through Nine.

Perhaps the reason this thinking seems so strange to us is that we generally take some time to work Steps Four through Nine, making a very big deal particularly of Steps Four and Five. Some of us take years to work these six Steps. By contrast, the early members of Program worked them rapidly. Dr. Bob, the co-founder of AA, worked them in one day. Anecdotal evidence from early stories in the AA Big Book suggests that working Steps Four through Nine (or the equivalent of them) took days or perhaps a few weeks rather than months or years. The idea seemed to be to begin leading the spiritual life of the last three Steps as soon as possible.

These studies take the view that Steps Four through Nine are indeed an initial practice of the Tenth Step. Steps Four through Nine need be done only once -- and preferably quickly. We then begin to practice the last three Steps, in particular Step Ten, on a moment-by-moment basis. There may come times in our recovery when we choose to work Step Ten on an in-depth basis, perhaps by creating another written inventory on some troublesome matter. But when we do these things, we are not working Steps Four and Five again. We are practicing Step Ten.

If you are in doubt about this matter, you may want to re-read the AA Big Book's treatment of Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve. You will find there no suggestion that we somehow "return to" or "rework" the earlier Steps. There is no need to do so, if we are thoroughly working the last three Steps.

So it is our position that *Steps Four through Nine are only ever worked once. They are a guide to working Step Ten for the first time. And we can only "work Step Ten for the first time" once.*

The many facets of Step Ten

Many of us think that the AA Big Book suggests that we work Step Ten in the morning and the evening. This thinking is a result of confusion arising from lack of familiarity with the text of the Big Book. The suggestion to examine our day at its beginning and its end is part, not of Step Ten at all, but of Step Eleven. By contrast, the few paragraphs dedicated to Step Ten suggest that it should be done continuously. The word "continue" or some variation of that word occurs four times in a few brief paragraphs. There is no question that the founders of Program intended that we should practice Step Ten constantly.

If this is true -- and it is our position that this *is* true -- then Step Ten takes on a whole new complexion. The previous nine Steps are practiced sometimes, not all the time. For example, although it is critical for us to remember particularly in the early days that we are powerless over our addiction, few would suggest that we *practice* Step One constantly, merely that we *remember* that it is true. When we work Step Nine, we do not spend our time from dawn till dusk making amends to people. So there is something both *qualitatively* and *quantitatively* different about Step Ten. For the first time in our recovery, we are confronted with a task which is to be done, if possible, *all the time*. And of course, it's not possible. So we are also being given a task that we can never do with complete success.

As we look further at and work Step Ten, we will discover that this suggested commitment to its constant practice affects every single area of our lives. It *must* affect every single area of our lives, if we are truly attempting to work it constantly. These studies explore several of those areas.

When we attempt this constant practice of Step Ten, we find we start to become different people from what we were. This is not some far-fetched mystical claim. It is something that we have seen happen time and again with members of Twelve-Step programs who have moved from a repetitive practice of the first nine Steps to a committed practice of the last three.

They are the same people they used to be, but in some profound way they are different. Someone has said that they are not changed -- merely transformed.