

## STEP TEN

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

While working Step Nine, many of us had difficulty admitting our past behaviors. We were afraid to make amends for wrongs we had carried for years and years—the humiliation, shame and lack of compassion deeply rooted in our childhoods still haunted us. However, as we progressed through Step Nine, we did things we had never felt were possible. This step cleared away much of the damage from our past, not perfectly, but the landscape of our lives was changing. From this new, and for some of us even exhilarating vantage point, we saw the Ninth Step Promises begin to appear in our lives. It was a miracle!

So now as we approached Step Ten, we felt more capable of admitting and repairing any new wrongs. We were still human and continued to make mistakes. We awoke each morning and looked in the mirror at the same person who created the pain and chaos from which we had been given a tenuous daily reprieve. We had worked hard to get to this point, but we found that our recovery now depended on keeping the slate clean. Step Ten was an action step, building on the work of the previous steps. Our disease had kept us unconscious, hiding even from ourselves. Sobriety meant we were awake, alert and active. The work of Step Ten kept us in recovery and continued our healing—as a process, not expecting perfection.

We had found a degree of sanity, self-honesty, and peace. Hard experience taught us that this could be enlarged or diminished with each new day. Therefore, many of us had chosen daily spiritual practices which deepened our recovery. Some of us called these our “24-hour plan,” while others termed them our “dailies.” Step Ten became a part of our daily spiritual practice. We examined our relationships with ourselves, others and our Higher Power.

Focusing on our relationship with ourselves, we asked questions like these: “Have I abused the gift of my sexuality today? Have I been overly critical of myself today, forgetting to treat myself as I would a sick friend? Have I taken care of my well-being today, remembering H.A.L.T. (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)? Have I compared myself to others, tearing myself down or building myself up?” To assure that our inventory considered our assets as well as our liabilities, we also asked: “When was I gentle with

myself today? How did I nurture myself today? Did I find ways to accept the gift of my sexuality today?"

In relation to other people, here are some of the questions we asked: "What have I done today that was selfish or dishonest? Have I made an unreasonable demand on someone I love? If I behaved poorly did I blame someone else? Did I judge others? Have I been cold or distant? Have I objectified another person today either sexually or otherwise?" Then we looked at what we had done well: "When was I honest today? When did I act with caring toward others, including those closest to me? Was there a moment today when I took immediate responsibility for any poor behavior? Was I able to see people who I find triggering as valued children of a nurturing God?"

And finally, in looking at our partnership with a caring Higher Power, we might ask: "Did I forget or avoid the maintenance of my spiritual condition today, or have I taken steps through prayer, meditation or service to connect with my Higher Power? If fearful today, did I go it alone, or did I turn to God for help? Am I keeping any secrets today, or am I an open book with my Higher Power, myself and others I have learned to trust? Were there moments when I felt close to God today? Are there any additional actions I have taken today as part of my spiritual practice?"

For some of us these questions were part of a daily practice. We found a consistent time each day to sit down and write out these questions and answers. Putting pen to paper helped us see more clearly and gave us deeper insights into the events of our day. If we missed a day we simply began where we left off or started again. We did the best we could. In addition to regularly scheduled inventories there were also situations and questions that we examined moment by moment throughout the day. Many referred to this as taking a spot check inventory. Whether in writing or in the moment, we continued to be aware of ourselves and stay comfortable in our own skin. It became okay to admit that we were wrong. We asked ourselves why we did what we had done. We tried to understand the causes of our actions, recognizing that we may need to look at underlying beliefs or feelings in order to not repeat hurtful behaviors.

In our addiction, we often struggled with honesty, both with ourselves and others. This struggle could go from big lies around our acting out behaviors to little lies about what we had for breakfast. We saw how we could still be driven by deep rooted fear, shame and resentments. Working Step Ten provided us the opportunity to strengthen that honesty muscle one day at a time. We remembered the phrase, "we're only as sick as our secrets," and came to realize that when we had been hesitant to be transparent

with a family member, a boss, or a sponsor, we were once again being dishonest. Step Ten helped us push through this resistance. We called our sponsor or another trusted member and shared with them. In this way, we continued to break the cycle of shame and secrecy that kept us trapped in our addiction. With this help we were also ready to make amends when needed.

We were becoming witnesses to our own growth. Over time, taking action started to feel natural instead of forced. We admitted and repaired new damage to others and to ourselves. We just did it—immediately—before we became distracted. When making amends we found that it was most effective to use simple and straightforward language like the following: “I acted badly when I did that. I made a mistake. I am sorry. I will do everything I can to make sure that I don’t act that way again.”

Many of us believed that through these new behaviors we also continued the work of living amends that we cultivated in the Ninth Step. We did this through the daily practice of the Tenth Step and it became an active part of our living amends. We now treated people we once harmed better. Our walk and talk with our fellows was now more peaceful, more accepting, more charitable. We made more choices to be courteous, to be kind, to be loving and to be generous with others. We were continuing to choose a spiritual path.

We also found that we were making living amends to ourselves. Self-caring became an essential part of this. As we worked the Tenth Step and our shame continued to lift we were now able to be gentle and forgiving with ourselves. We intervened to protect ourselves from the negative self-talk of our damaged past. We stopped believing that we were one of God’s mistakes. We slowed the erratic swings of the thoughts and actions which had damaged our relationships. We were able to reach out for help when challenging situations or painful feelings arose. We did this by contacting our sponsors and other members of the program for support. We prayed, went to meetings, meditated, sat with and learned to accept our feelings. In all these ways we were making amends to ourselves.

This reminded us of the value of listing our positive actions. Taking specific notice of the positive ways we interacted with others led us to continually see our own inner healing and growth. Even the smallest things, such as speaking kindly to a sales clerk or cashier at the grocery store, were important to note. Had we helped somebody that day? Did we reach out and support another member? Did we show up in other ways?

We found that our growth accelerated when we acknowledged the positive actions that we were able to take—actions that had previously eluded us.

One final and important part of our Tenth Step was what some members called their “gratitudes.” We found something very different when we focused on gratitude. We felt loved. We felt that we were being taken care of. We felt closer to a loving, caring Higher Power. We trusted our Higher Power more deeply. We felt we were becoming part of the world and connected to other people. With this shift in perspective our lives improved and we increasingly believed in the power of the Steps. This helped us to keep sober, healthy and spiritually fit. Gratitude helped us through even our darkest days. We knew that if we stayed sober and continued in our SRA recovery all would be well.

The Tenth Step distanced us from our old self-centeredness and deadly forgetfulness and became a strong part of our defense against our sexual addiction in ways we didn’t even understand. This daily practice freed us from our old way of life. We were now more aware, more caring and more loving. We saw ourselves from a new vantage point. We were more open and honest with those we had harmed. Every day was an opportunity for self-review without the self-blaming of the past. We had permission to be imperfect and still be at peace. Our review of the day included more gratitude than regret, and our regrets faded with action. Our own self-worth and self-esteem grew. We relaxed and exhaled. These were the gifts that Step Ten gave us! Step Ten further deepened the promises of the Ninth Step. Both our humanness and our spirituality expanded as we accepted and forgave the mistakes of ourselves and others.

Now that we had established a daily practice of considering our behavior and making amends where necessary, we moved on to deepen our personal relationship with our Higher Power. We moved on to Step Eleven.