

Your First Step

An Introduction to the Twelve Steps¹ Using the Step Group Form

There is a yearning in our heart that is always longing to be expressed. It is the expression of who we really are. Who we really are is sometimes stifled by the ways that we think and live. Addiction and obsession come from not knowing or living as who we are. No matter how stuck or ingrained our way of life may appear, this voice in our heart ceaselessly calls out.

Sometimes we hear it through pain, sometimes in our own discomfort. Sometimes it is a beautiful spark which shows up as inspiration to try something better. The Twelve Steps can nurture that spark into a passionate flame.

The Step Group Form focuses on finding a new way of life through a daily practice that begins with a thorough but simple look at our past and current point of view. Throughout the practice we are asked to compare the moments of our life with the personal ideals inscribed in our heart, bringing out the very best that we can be.

There is a distinct possibility that you will become a completely different person through this work. This practice becomes a part of your life that has an everlasting effect. It begins with a decision to follow the 12-step path. This decision is a commitment that you make to yourself. It is a commitment that you make for you and by you; it is between you and your Creator. If you have decided to explore this work, welcome to your first step.

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable.”²

It is difficult for people to accept the concept that they are powerless over anything, or to understand the real cause of their problems. The idea here is to give you a sense of moving forward. It takes quite a long time to acknowledge and experience the powerlessness over a problem behavior. It takes a long time to grasp the idea of powerlessness. For that reason we recommend you spend some time on this step. Understanding the idea of powerlessness grows stronger as our work on the Twelve Steps progresses.

¹The Twelve Steps are first listed in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, p.71, 72, first edition.

²*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p.71, first edition.

Instructions to Begin

- **We recommend you answer the following questions and go over them with someone who knows the Twelve Steps:**

1. Why do you want to consider working the Twelve Steps?³
2. What do you expect to get from undertaking the Twelve Steps?
3. What are you seeking in life?
4. What do you think causes pain?

- **Get a Guide**

1. The very first thing to do is get a “guide.” There can be misunderstanding about this relationship. There are different approaches to the Twelve Steps. We do not recommend doing step work without the guidance and support of someone who has experienced the Twelve Steps. If you are in an anonymous program, this person is called a “sponsor.”
2. Ideally a guide is someone who has had success working the Twelve Steps and is happy. A guide would be someone whom you respect. If they are far enough ahead of you, this person is likely to be better able to guide you because they know where the steps are headed. This person will show you how to incorporate the Twelve Steps in your life, and answer any questions you may have.
3. In this form a guide is willing to meet with you weekly and talk about your step work.
4. Look for a guide who is actively participating in the Twelve Steps, either by attending meetings, or actively sharing with others. You may receive suggestions for picking a guide in *The Guide Relationship*.⁴ We suggest you read *The Guide Relationship*.
5. Knowledge of the Twelve Steps is an important criteria in choosing a guide. This person will lead you in what he or she has done themselves, and you will probably go as far as your guide has gone. A good choice would be someone who is progressing and actively working with his or her own guide.
6. There are people who are no longer active in the Twelve Steps. Someone who is stagnant or has stopped participating would be a risky choice. The outcome of the Twelve Steps is sharing our experience with others out of a spiritual experience we have had through working all the steps. If you need incentive to get going on this, you can even ask someone to be a “temporary” guide.
7. Get someone you can communicate with, and who is available to talk with you.
8. For those of you who are in a 12-step program, you can find someone to guide you through the Twelve Steps at your regular meetings. The Step Group Form will enhance one’s experience of the Twelve Steps while they remain in their individual program.
9. If you are interested in the Step Group Form, get a guide who has completed this Form. The Step Group Form essentially begins with the 4th Step, with input and suggestions through the eleventh step.
10. If you would like to know more about the Step Group Form and getting a guide, contact any one of the addresses at the end of this document. It is intended to enhance one’s experience of the Twelve Steps while they remain in their program.
11. If they are no longer active in the Step Group Form, they may not be up to

³Recommended Reading “Why Would Anyone Want to Work the Twelve Steps,” International Step Foundation.

⁴*The Twelve Steps as a Transformational Possibility using the Step Group Form, Section One, p. 46*

- date with the improvements and clarifications that have evolved in a living work.
2. Create a new habit. Call your guide often. Some think this means to call every day before 3:00. If this helps you, do that. This call is to get you used to using this person. When you do not know what to say, remember that you are using this person to guide you through the Twelve Steps. Talk about the difficulties in your writing, or in your life today. Talk about the things which are out of control in your life. If your guide has success with the Twelve Steps, they will know how the step you are on pertains to your life today.

Materials and Suggestions for Writing your First Step

- Choose the type of writing paper you want; do you want a three ring binder with lined 8 X 11 loose leaf paper to write on, or a hanging file system which will help you in your 4th Step.
- Do this writing every day up to thirty days until you and your guide agree that it is finished. It should take one week to thirty days to complete. This habit of writing is preparing you for further step work.
- Say a prayer for guidance each time you write. If you don't understand prayer, simply think of prayer as stating your intention out loud and talk to your guide about your difficulty with this understanding.
- Share what you have written with your guide.

Step One Writing Exercise

After you have answered the first four questions, answer the following:

1. As best you can, explain the nature of your problem behavior.
2. Write down your history with [fill in the blank] This space will contain whatever it is that is causing problems for you and brings you to seek a change. It is anything that seems out of control, or that leads to disaster and pain. This could be depression, unhappiness, lack of creativity or inability to follow through, overeating, relationships, sex, drugs, alcohol, work, anger, gambling, or something else.
3. Write about things that happened today that were out of control.

Our commitment is that no one find the 12-Steps, walk away and die. They can find the life-transforming miracle they are looking for through the beauty of the Twelve Steps. This is the principle the International Step Foundation stands upon as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public educational charity. We serve two categories of people: those in 12-Step programs wishing a clearer understanding of the Twelve Steps as an enhancement to their 12-Step program, and those people who are sincerely interested in changing their life and altering their current course of existence. For both groups we offer clear and understandable input and suggestions for embracing the Twelve Steps as a way of life.

Please Note

©Revised, January, 2002. March 25, 2000. **YOU MAY QUOTE THIS DOCUMENT AND REPRODUCE IT.** The Step Group Form is copyrighted by International Step Foundation. Nevertheless, we encourage readers to reproduce this document and quote from it, giving credit to the International Step Foundation. All donations are tax deductible. For information please contact the international office, P. O. Box 22, Glenwood, New Mexico, 88039. 505-539-2111. E-mail: isfoffice@stepgroup.org Web site: www.stepgroup.org.