

Quick to Help, Slow to Sponsor: Are They Willing?

"I am Davis C. I was abused at age 8 by a 10 year old sibling who had found dad's P. I obsessively M'd in junior and high school and added excessive S in college. Later, I S abused one of my students. Something was wrong with me that I could not fix. Thankfully, I found 12 Step recovery before prison. During those 20 months I lost my marriage and career.

I returned to meetings after my release, but made the mistake of not immediately working the Steps. I was not acting out but was miserable. Eventually, I found a sponsor who guided me through the Step, but it was only after I used the Steps to direct how I lived each day that I first glimpsed a growing spiritual awakening.

For the 26 years between being abused and being arrested, I lived a life ruled by lust which I define as taking something natural, in this case sex, and using it for an unnatural purpose, in this case to boost my self esteem or escape reality. I have an abnormal reaction to lust. The list of people I hurt is painfully long and I broke laws.

Living in recovery is less stressful than acting out, so, on balance I make better decisions. Results: new marriage in recovery, better job, and I sleep through the night. The Steps are not magic, I still have problems and I still hurt people. The Steps connect me with a higher power who helps me respond to my problems rather than react.

"Please think about these questions before you answer: On your own, can you quit acting out? Can you control when and how much you act out? Do you have options besides the 12 Steps?"

"If you answer yes to any of these questions, I cannot help you; I can only show you how I have recovered. I will help you find you another sponsor."

"If you answer no to all, I will be your sponsor. I will show you how I have recovered. A sponsor is not a drama or marriage counselor, friend, therapist, judge, or lawyer. The 12 Steps are about connecting with a power that will change my personality so I can help others who have the same problem. It is not about saving my marriage, job, or reputation. This is a good thing because, during my acting out, I lost my marriage, job, and reputation."

Ask them to answer the three questions.

If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps. (AA)

"Find healthy meetings. Listen to what people share. If they only share about their problems, this may not be a healthy meeting. If people also share how they are working the Steps to help with their problems and how they are helping others, this may be a healthy meeting."

"At a meeting, never describe what triggered you. 'A person triggered me,' is sufficient, details might trigger others. If you need to give away a specific person, gender, body part, or activity, do so with your sponsor. If you want to share about topics from therapy, religion, or non-12 Step literature, save them for after the meeting. (See Tradition 5) At a meeting, **never** share about crimes that have not been decided in a court of law."

"I run people through the Steps quickly."

Instead of running joyously to heaven, we seem to back away from our hell, one step at a time. (SA)

The sponsee is usually in withdrawal and the first tool for dealing with that pain is in Step 10. They need help *now*. Within a week or a month, their egos start to resume control.

I mostly use the Big Book because in it, "clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered." AA

Give them a copy of this/your syllabus and set up the next meeting.

The Work-the-Steps Meeting

Pray Serenity Prayer together, then read this paraphrase of the Doctor's Opinion and other paragraphs in the BB.

"I act out because I like the effect and distraction produced by my particular acting out: lust, be object of lust, control others through sex, anger, resentment, and selfishness. This sensation helps me forget that lust, in all its forms, is killing me and I cannot tell the true from the false. I am restless, irritable and discontented, unless I can experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by lusting and acting out. After I have, again, returned to lust, and the phenomenon of craving develops, I act out, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to act out again.

I am unable, at certain times, to bring into my consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. This cycle continues, and unless I can experience a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery, there is little hope of my recovery.

Faced with this problem, I feel that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change. I seek a Higher Power.

Once my personality change starts, me, who seemed doomed, suddenly finds, because I follow my HP's directions, easy release from my desire to act out, the only effort necessary is following the instructions in the Steps."

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable.

"Because you came to a 12 Step meeting, you probably took this step while acting out. You may hear other people give a written, formal 'First Step.' Because this process is not in the Big Book, I do not ask you to do it."

"If, when you honestly want to, can you quit entirely, or do you have more than a little control over how much you act out?" **If they answer no, proceed. If yes, help them find a new sponsor.**

"Acting out with sex was not my problem, it was my *solution* but after it no longer worked I could not stop. My brain always guided, suggested, and encouraged me, in my own voice, to return to lust. My body, once my brain took in lust, could not stop. I was powerless over lust."

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

"We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves... that's exactly what this book is about. (AA)"

"Because you came to a 12 Step meeting, you probably already took this step. Sanity refers to wholeness of mind. My actions often lacked sanity. The only requirement for this step is willingness to look for a Higher Power (HP). The only requirement of an HP is that it is not you. If you need help overcoming a God-phobia, we will read *We Agnostics* in the BB."

"Are you willing to believe that only a power greater than you can help you make better choices?" **If yes, proceed. If no, pray for willingness.**

"The BB is not about stopping my addiction, it is about connecting with a power greater than me. Sobriety is a happy consequence, but not the goal. I need to connect with my HP."

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

"If no human power can help, then you must let your HP help. Step Three is only a decision to surrender to and follow HP's directions. If you have options other than relying on an HP, please go try them. You may not need the Steps. Do you have any options besides the 12 Steps?"

If they have no other options, pray the Step Three prayer (AA 63) together. If they have other options, let them go try them first. Those options may work for them.

"This step is only a decision, further action is required. You also give up your right to judge yourself."

If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago. AA

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Instincts: Social (self-esteem, personal relationships), Security (material, emotional), Sex (acceptable, hidden), Ambitions (12&12 p. 42)

Defect of character: selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened, unrealistic expectations, inconsiderate, and blame-shifting.

1. Under Resentments, insert the name of the person or institution that upset you. Finish this column before moving forward.
2. Next to each name, in 6 words, write why you are upset. Finish this column before moving forward.
3. Next to each description, list the instincts (see above) that were threatened. Finish this column before moving forward.
4. Next to each instinct, can you be helpful to this person, release the anger, or at least be kindly and tolerant towards them? (No is acceptable.)
5. List the motivating defect for each resentment (see above.)

For Fears and Harms, use the same process and fill in the columns.

Remember that Harms can be sexual or non-sexual.

I find writing on paper is more helpful to my recovery than typing on a computer. In either case, be thoughtful as you write. To avoid legal problems, **omit** specific names, dates, times, activities, and locations. Use initials or other simple codes so you know what or who you mean, but someone else will not. This is to guard against the consequences of a roommate or spouse finding your writings.

Ask sponsee to, on a sheet of paper, fill out a simplified Step Four Inventory Template: 3 entries for each heading, limit to 30 minutes.

“FOR ANY CRIMES, OMIT NAMES, DATES, TIMES, AND LOCATIONS.”

Resentments (re-feeling past painful events)

We listed people, institutions or principles with who we were angry.	The Cause: Why am I mad at those in column 1? Try to limit to 6 words.	Affects my: What was hurt or threatened? (See instincts above)	This is a sick person, can I be helpful to them, release my anger, at least be kindly and tolerant?	...looked for our own mistakes. (See defects above)
Spouse	Does not recognize my progress	self-esteem, personal relations, and emotional security	Y	Dishonest, expectations
Boss	Yells at me for being late	self-esteem, material security	Y	Dishonest, expectations
Other drivers	Make me late for work	self-esteem, social ambitions	N	Dishonest, expectations

Fears (I will lose something or not get something I want)

Afraid of who/what	Why am I afraid?	Did self-reliance fail?	Can I trust HP, play the role He assigns, rely on HP as much as I think HP wants me to?
Spouse	May leave if I act out	Y	Y
Boss	Fire me for poor performance	Y	Y
Being caught again	Spouse may leave, I get fired	Y	N

Harms (Sexual, such as had an affair; Non-sexual, such as gossiped about a coworker)

Whom had we hurt? NO NAMES FOR CRIMES	Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate; unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness? NO DATES, TIME, OR LOCATIONS FOR CRIMES	Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead?	For sexual harm, was it selfish or not?	Do I owe any amends?
Victims	selfishly used them, did not consider their feelings,	I should not have used them.	Selfish	Y
Porn Actors	Used them, might be enabling their addiction	I should have avoided their sites.	Selfish	Y
Me	lost time, money, relationships by acting out; damaged my chances, limited my choices	Admitted I had a problem and sought help earlier.	non-sexual	Y

Remember that your resentments and fears, because you have replayed them in your head multiple times, are no longer the truth.

With each replay, they became worse and our part in them became less. They may have begun with the truth, but they are now mostly false.

“You have made a good beginning.” AA 71

The resentments, fears, and harms that need attention right now are probably the ones you wrote down. All the other ones will come up in their time as you write spot inventories in Step 10 and review your past day in Step 11.

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Sponsee's shares simplified inventory with me. Point out the patterns in the inventory such as repeated selfishness. Read AA 75 last paragraph.

"For people I resent, I pray the Third Step prayer for them. *God, I offer John Doe to you...*"

For resentments: pray for them or pray for willingness to pray for them (SOB prayer); "How can I help them?" if not, think kindly towards them; *For fears:* acknowledge that self-reliance failed, rely on HP, give to fear to HP and help others. *For harms and resentments:* see Step 8 and 9.

Steps Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Read and discuss the Step Six paragraph AA 76.

"Are you ready to have your defects removed?" **If yes, proceed. If not, pray for willingness and proceed.**

Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Read the Step Seven paragraph AA 76.

"Are you willing to ask your HP to remove your defects?" **If yes, proceed. If not, pray for willingness and proceed.**

Pray the Seventh Step prayer together.

"When a defect is in control, I pray the Seventh Step prayer for that defect. *My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me my selfishness...*"

Defects are not eliminated, but moved to a lower priority (re-moved.) They will try to take control, but you no longer have to obey them.

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

Create Step Eight list from simplified Step Four inventory.

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

"Write what you would say to each person or institution on your Step Eight list. When written by hand, it should comfortably fit on a standard Post It note otherwise it is probably an explanation and not an amends."

We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret. (AA)

A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. (AA)

An Inventory Template:

1. Why I am making this amends.
2. What I did to you, as briefly as possible.
3. "I should not have [what I did], I was [defect(s)], and I was wrong."

"Depending on the harm, modify this template to fit each harm such as adding restitution for stolen items."

Example: *I need to do what I can to make this right. I cut off all communications with you. I should not have done that. I was inconsiderate, selfish, and I was wrong.*

"Using amends template, write scripts for all people or institutions you resented or harmed (sexually or non-sexually.)"

"We will decide which amends will be direct (face-to-face) or indirect (living amends or in-kind) because the person cannot be seen or it would injure them or others. You do not count as an 'other.'"

Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit. (AA)

We are there to sweep off our side of the street [...] His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. (AA)

Write out amends scripts for each entry on their Step 8 list.

Review scripts and practice making amends. Caution them to start with amends for lesser harms.

DO NOT MAKE ANY AMENDS UNTIL WE DISCUSS THEM.

Read the Promises AA 83.

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. (AA)

"When I am disturbed, I seek, admit, and accept what I learn about my part and then patiently and persistently try to correct my thoughts and actions. I want to settle with the past and leave it behind. I want to choose my response rather than react. My part may only be my unrealistic expectations of another human."

A Written Spot Inventory Template:

1. Why I am disturbed (6 words).
2. Name my motivating defect(s) and/or instinct(s)(see Step 4).
3. Surrender lust/defect(s) to HP and make amends or forgive as needed.
4. Practice the opposite of the defect(s), can you help them or someone else. Follow through.
5. Discuss this with your sponsor or other SA.

Resentment Example: *Other drivers made me late--I was dishonest (I left late) and selfish--HP, I give my dishonesty, and selfishness to you--I will try to be honest, forgive the other drivers and help them merge, make an unselfish Program call, and share this with a fellow addict.*

Lust Example: *I recalled the image of a powerful trigger--medicating anxiety over pending tasks--HP, I surrender my lust and anxiety to you--I will pray for the person and start the pending task, make an unselfish Program call, and share this with a fellow addict.*

To help others, I make unselfish phone calls to Program people and ask how they are. I only talk about my problems if they ask. I make the call about them, not me. I do the same through emails and text messages.

If my problem happens at 3 am, I may not have anyone I can call at that hour. I must plan other actions to carry me through until I can contact someone. I keep headphones next to my bed and recovery speaker recordings on my phone. You will figure out what will work for you.

Ask sponsee to write a spot inventory.

Step Eleven: 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 that out.

Part 1. *At night, we constructively review our day. But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. We ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken. (AA)*

"Every night, I review what I did well the past day and identify what needs correction. I include a spot inventory (See Step 10 above) if needed. I ask HP for suggestions if unsure."

Example from a good day: *I planned my day with HP, I reached out to others, released temptation, did my chores, worked for my pay, listened to my wife, and held my tongue.*

Example from a less good day: *Euphoric recall--frustration at being unable to fix other people--unrealistic expectations--give defect, frustration, and lust to my HP--pray for the subjects of my euphoric recall--go help an addict or prepare to help one.*

"When I say, 'prepare to help one,' I mean I review my sponsee syllabus (you are reading it right now.) I regularly update this as I grow in my recovery process. **You can edit this syllabus to match your experience.**

Part 2. *On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day...we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. (AA)*

Ask HP in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the addict who is still sick. (AA)

"Each morning, in writing, I ask HP for guidance in planning my day."

Example from a good day: *HP, please help me plan today. I think you want me to help other addicts so I will contact them. I will love my family, hold my tongue, work for my pay, and do my chores.*

Example from a less good day: *Today I will do the Step work I skipped yesterday, including asking HP's directions for today, make amends to my wife, pray for the target of my lust, and call my sponsor.*

"Add a gratitude list."

Example: *HP, I love you! Thank you for recovery, location (geographic and in time), my wife, and our cats. Please watch over [list of people I resent or people who are struggling with recovery.]*

Part 3. *We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer... (AA)*

"This is what works for me. I suggest calling others in recovery and ask them what they do each day to build their recovery."

"I will share my Step 11 writing with you for a few days so you can see this process in action. Then you can develop your own style."

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

"My spiritual awakening (personality change sufficient to bring about recovery--suddenly or over time) is **the** result. The **message** is I had a spiritual experience as **the** result of **these** steps."

"Try to carry the message, no mention of success. The results are out of my control. Trying helps me be sober, happy, joyous, and free. I need to help other addicts or prepare to help them."

If sex is troublesome, I throw myself the harder into helping others. I think of their needs and work for them. This takes me out of myself. (AA)

Felt unqualified to help others. That was a lie. If I have studied and worked the Steps with a sponsor, then I have knowledge that the newcomer needs.

We know what you are thinking. You are saying to yourself: "I'm jittery and alone. I couldn't do that." But you can. You forget that you have just now tapped a source of power much greater than yourself. (AA)

I paid a heavy price to learn this knowledge, it is valuable and possibly life-saving. It was given to me, I must give it to others.

Why did I feel I could not sponsor--fear? I only share my ES&H and the Steps. Not worthy--Says who? I had no non-selfish reasons.

You become a good sponsor by learning from being a bad sponsor.

Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to our Higher Power and the people around us. (AA)

God [of my understanding], grant me [ask HP for help] the serenity to accept [not "enjoy" or "agree" but recognize reality] the things I cannot change [everything and everybody], the courage [power] to change the things I can [with HP's help, my thoughts and actions], and the wisdom to know the difference [if unsure, see "cannot change" above.]

This completes a basic working of the 12 Steps.

To experience the Promises, I had to find my Higher Power by continuing to study the 12 Steps, practicing them daily, and helping others work through the Steps.

This way of life took the place of my old daily plan, which was lust, resentment, and acting out.

Failure to help others increases your chances of relapse.

Use this guide as a framework to develop your own method.

Keep reviewing your method so you are ready to help.

Remember, the goal of meetings, fellowship, Steps, and sponsor are to connect me with my Higher Power.

HP keeps me sober and in recovery

While seeking sponsees, I prepare to help them.

Wrote and practiced reading my 1 minute Experience, Strength, and Hope speech out loud. The **experience**--my acting out--is an outline, omit details, they know how to act out. Focus on the **strength**--working the Steps--and the **hope**--the improvement in my life. It is the first four paragraphs of this handout.

Modified passages from Program literature that are important to me to read in the first person (For example, see first four paragraphs under The Work-the-Steps Meeting.) I read them, first thing, every day.

Made a daily Step work checklist, kept it with me and followed it until it became the way I lived my life (this took months to become a habit.)

Read my important Program sections.

In writing, constructively review yesterday, ask for HP to direct my coming day, and give thanks. See Step 10 and Step 11.

Answer and send 12 Step email/text

Make/return 12 Step contacts.

Love my family.

Work for my paycheck.

Do my chores around the house.

Attend meetings, work with sponsees, perform service work.

Keep Working with Others. *So, you see, there were three alcoholics in that town, who now felt they had to give to others what they had found, or be sunk. (AA)*

We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy. (AA)

Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. For if I failed to perfect and enlarge my spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, I could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. (Adapted from AA)

Keep connected with Program members. Isolation, especially emotional isolation, is a symptom of addiction. Keep in touch with people in the Program. Go to meetings to avoid isolation and find someone to help. Find the person at the meeting who is looking at their shoes or not laughing when everyone else does and talk with them.

Seeing much of each other, scarce an evening passed that someone's home did not shelter a little gathering of men and women, happy in their release, and constantly thinking how they might present their discovery to some newcomer. (AA)

We have a unique message. It is different from religion, therapy, or society. Tradition 5 says meetings are for carrying the message, Step 12 defines that message. If I want to share outside of those limits, I save it for after the meeting.

It takes less energy for me to connect with my HP, help others, and grow my recovery than it used to cost me to lust, resent, be afraid, and act out.