

District 41 Messenger

SUMMER – 2019

Addison – Bensenville – Elmhurst – Lombard – Oakbrook Terrace
Villa Park – Wood Dale

The 12 Steps ...STEPS 6 & 7

*Editor Note: This series is focusing on the The Twelve Steps of our Fellowship ...One Step at a Time.
This month we explore Steps Six and Seven.*

**Step Six ... Were entirely ready to have God remove
all these defects of character.**

Step Seven...Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

▣ Steps Six and Seven are only briefly discussed in the Big Book. In fact, The Big book only devotes two paragraphs to these Steps, which leaves a lot of people looking for guidance on how to actually put the directions into action in their daily lives. Even the dozen pages devoted to Steps Six and Seven in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions often get lost in the shuffle, as many people in recovery today haven't read or only skimmed this instructive book. Character is really the sum total of our personality traits, and our personality consists of our accumulated mental habits.

▣ Step Six is notable for what it doesn't say. It doesn't ask us to change our lives. It asks us to petition for relief. AA doesn't expect us to change on willpower alone. Instead, we appeal to a Higher Power for the strength to amend our lives. It doesn't ask for us yet to abandon our bad habits either. Read the words carefully. We were READY and WILLING to make changes. We must content ourselves with adjusting our expectations and changing our attitude.

▣ At Step Six of our journey, we brace ourselves for what is coming, and what is coming is a relinquishing of control, not merely over alcoholism, but all the negative feelings and actions which have led to ruin and despair.

▣ Honesty demands we make at least one admission. Our patterns of thought and behavior, the accumulated habits of years and decades, have controlled us, not the other way around. To abandon defects to our Higher Power is to regain control, not lose it. Unfortunately, some of us hold on to our negative behaviors and thoughts as if they were cherished companions. When we see the high price we are paying for these defects, it is easier to be willing to let them go. Flaunting a character defect can provide a momentary feeling of superiority. But when we get the bill for payment due, no thank you.

(Continued on next page)

God Doesn't Need to Take These Steps ...We Do



District 41 Treasurer
PO Box 7226
Villa Park, IL 60181

District 41 Answering Service
PO Box 6365
Villa Park, IL 60181

Websites

dist41.aa-nia.org
aa-nia.org/event
aa.org

**LEAD ME NOT
INTO TEMPTATION.
I KNOW THE WAY MYSELF.**

**I have
character
defects and
I'm not
afraid to
use them.**



ROTTENGRASS



☐ An aspect of humility is that of being teachable. If we are humble, we are open to new ideas and new ways of seeing things. Open-mindedness is a very important part of humility. We don't know everything. There is still more we can learn. And more important, some we need to unlearn. How many do we see who continue to say and do the exact things year after year? We simply do not know ourselves very well. When we look into a mirror and attempt to understand ourselves, our conclusions about what we see are usually very different from what a friend observes. Humility is acceptance of ourselves based on our continual surrender.

☐ The dictionary defines humility as the quality of being humble of mind or spirit; the absence of pride or self-assertion. Humble is defined as "having or showing a consciousness of one's defects or shortcomings." Humility is an attitude ...a discipline. Are we willing to change our lives or not?

☐ Anger is a common defect in attitudes and personalities. Beneath anger is more anger. And beneath that anger is the fear we will discover what we are angry about in the first place. Let truth and faith, our readiness, and humble quest give us courage so that when fear knocks, no one is there. Fear and guilt fuel anger.

☐ Remember what it says in the Big Book about alcohol being a symptom. It is just the tip of the iceberg. We need to closely examine our whole life for addictive and abusive patterns. If we are willing to give up our defects of character, we need to become willing to see them all.

☐ Step Steps Six and Seven are AA's way of stating the best possible attitude one can take in order to make a beginning on this lifetime job. The best possible attitude is always just a beginning. When we want to buy a new car, the first decision we must make is to get rid of our old one.

☐ All of our defects aren't revealed to us at once. God will reveal as much truth as we can live up to at any particular moment. We can trust God will not remove anything we need, or what is useful to our fellows. We humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings as He could or would under the conditions of the day we ask. And then we are willing to accept His will for us and the strength to carry that out. We must do the work. God provides the environment and opportunity. Strength, direction, and the proper teachers are made available to us if we ask for help. If we sow the seeds we are given, new plants will grow.

☐ Considering who we are NOT, we may find the surprising revelation of who we really are. Changes are about to take place in our lives. God will provide the direction while we provide the desire and action. All we require is the willingness to let God lead our journey. We must, at this point especially, invite Him into our lives. We must be ready to relinquish our destructive behaviors.

☐ By accepting God's help, we learn to think clearly, honestly examine our lives, play fair, and give generously. We naturally become less selfish and more useful. Our spiritual awakening washes over all of our relationships, even our most tender and personal. We no longer have to face remorse and guilt as we begin to treat others warmly, openly, and with respect. We give full effort to everything we do, reaching our goal of "Just for Today."

**THIS COULD
BE THE DAY
YOU STOP
DOING THAT
SELF-DESTRUCTIVE
THING YOU DO.**

There are
two types
of pain in
this world;
pain that
hurts you,
and pain
that
changes
you.

**Don't Make
Change too
Complicated
...Just Begin.**



**If you want to fly,
give up everything
that weighs you down.**

Steps 6 & 7 Mean Exactly What They Say

Doing Our Part

From the Joe and Charlie Big Book Study

"Are you ready to have God remove these defects of character? If you are you're done with Step Six. Have you humbly asked Him to take them away? If you have, then you are done with Step Seven.

"Now don't make the mistake I did, just asking God to give me the \$29.95 clean-up special. I found out it don't work that way. God will do for me what I cannot do for myself. And what I can do for myself is find out the opposite of that character defect, and with God's help and all the willpower I can muster, discard the unhealthy habit and practice the opposite.

"God can't help take away my selfishness and leave another hole in my head. It's going to have to be replaced with something else, which happens to be unselfishness. Most of my life I was habitually selfish. Now I have to learn the opposite.

"The only way to break a habit is to work against yourself. If I want to remove Fear, then I must practice Courage. If I want to remove being Inconsiderate, I must learn to be Considerate. And God will help me with my honest efforts, giving me strength when I ask for help.

"Not only have we learned we are sick, but we have the opportunity through these steps to do something about it. I no longer have to blame others. I am responsible for who I am, what I am, and how I relate to other people.

"If I stay selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened and inconsiderate it's got to be because that's the way I want to be. I no longer have the luxury of blaming my actions on other people, places, or things."

**The way we practice Steps Six and Seven
is very simple.**

Do the Right Thing for a Change.



**ACCORDING TO GSO
ARCHIVES BILL
COMMENTED ON
HIS USE OF
CHARACTER DEFECTS
VS. SHORTCOMINGS
INTERCHANGEABLY**

As Bill Sees It...

"I don't recall any particular significance in these phrases. In my mind the meaning is identical. I guess I just used two ways of expression rather than repeating myself. It's just as simple as that ... most people do equate it that way and there seems to be no difficulty. I used them as though they both meant the same thing, which is how it appears to many people.

GSR Meetings

Monthly GSR Meeting is held on the
third Thursday of every month
(except July) at 7 pm in
Elmhurst Presbyterian Church
367 Spring Rd at St. Charles Rd

Drop the Rock

"And I came into the rooms of AA and I was like swimming in an ocean of alcoholism. And the people in those rooms threw me a life preserver, but I still hung on to MY ROCK. I wasn't going to let that thing go. It was mine. It was who I thought I was.

"And they were yelling 'Hey, drop the rock before you go under!!!' But I was hanging on to that rock. It was me.

"Everyone was yelling 'It's great up here. Come on up.' And I said 'But how do I get up there?' 'Drop your rock and you'll make it.' That's what they said, over and over.

"But it was MY ROCK. I didn't want to drop it. But then something happened which distracted me and I accidentally dropped my rock and I was terrified. Then ...

"I was like a water skier who pops out of the water. And I went along without my rock. And I kept going along.

"One day I said 'Why did I need that rock anyway?' I couldn't figure it out."

*(Adapted from "Drop the Rock"
by Bill P, Todd W., and Sara S.)*

Humility
a strange thing.
The minute you think
you've got it,
you've lost it.

The Steps of Surrender and Trust

The Back Page

Step Seven is said to be the most difficult because it involves the word "Humbly." When we are always right, and we know everything, nobody is going to tell us anything. Letting go of Perfection may be one of the most difficult forms of surrender. Only WE can refashion our personalities. We have the power, and the right, to react to life with a different attitude. We have the ability to change our innermost selves. It does not happen overnight, but patience can be called God's timing.

Doing things which aren't easy or attractive will soon lead to the rewards listed in "The Promises." The old attitudes we used to act out will appear less and less as our new personality traits take their place. New ideas become new forms of action. Courage is the name of the game. We commit ourselves to the concepts of Steps Six and Seven and we are rewarded in ways we formerly could not imagine. We become useful in the world.

Simple, humble actions allow for change. Long held habits of destructive, repetitive thinking become a thing of the past as we step forward with strong mindfulness, concentration, and good intentions followed by proper action. As with all of our Steps, it is an on-going process powered by willingness. We are a process, we are possibilities, and we constantly change. Different aspects of our personalities and character come and go as we gradually face the facts of our lives.

The removal of shortcomings, and any real letting go, happens over time. It is a gradual chipping away which finally reveals a purified heart. The strength of a shortcoming's appeal must always be met by an equally strong mindfulness, concentration and intention.

Sobriety is finding a new way of living which involves engagement where there was withdrawal, generosity where there was self-centeredness, community where there was isolation, joy where there was bitterness, and trust where there was cynicism.

District 41 Messenger is published quarterly by District 41 of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is intended as a service letter to inform district members of service opportunities, events, and experiences relevant to carrying the AA message, in and through service. Opinions expressed herein are those of the contributors and do not necessarily express or reflect the thinking of Alcoholics Anonymous, District 41, or the editor. This newsletter is a confidential document. Please do not take it to jails, treatment centers, etc.

Editor's Note: The words of guidance in this newsletter are taken from years of scribbling in notebooks after listening to meeting comments and reading books. I don't often remember exactly where comments come from, and every paragraph has a little from one place and a little from another to promote fluidity. BUT, I can make a list of some references from my book shelf. "Shift Happens" by Robert Holden, Ph.D. "Drop the Rock" by Bill P. and Todd W. "Carry this Message" by Joe McQ. "The Steps We Took" by Joe McQ "Understanding the 12 Steps" by Terrence Gorski. "Emotional Resilience" by David Viscott, Ph.D. "The Spirituality of Imperfection" Kertz & Ketcham, Joe & Charles Big Book Studies and The Twelve & Twelve and The Big Book along with numerous on-line AA sites.

Change is the Name of the Game

Just for Today

Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problems all at once.

Just for today I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress appropriately, talk low, act courteously, criticize not one bit, not find fault with anything, and try to improve myself.

Just for today I will adjust myself to what is, not what I wish it to be.

Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself and relax. During this time I will try to get a better perspective on my life.

Just for today I will be unafraid. I will enjoy that which is beautiful. I will save myself from two pests ...hurry and indecision.

**Whatever
you
are, be
a good
one.**

Abraham Lincoln

(Editor Note) Information on upcoming workshops, reports, contacts, and other information can be found on our D41 website. It is the responsibility of GSRs (Group Service Representatives) to provide flyers and information to their groups. If you do not have a GSR for your group please choose your representative so they may attend the monthly meetings on the Third Thursday of every month (except July).


Good, sober is.