

STEP EIGHT

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

In Step Four we made a searching and fearless moral inventory. If we did Step Four thoroughly, one of the by-products was a list of most or all the people that we had harmed. Although this list may be incomplete, it will serve as a starting point for us to use in doing Step Eight.

Having done and now living the preceding seven steps, it should be apparent that we are not only in conflict with ourselves, but also with people and situations. Since both Steps Eight and Nine are concerned with personal relations, it behooves us to extract every bit of information about our inner selves and our functional difficulties by examining our personal relations.

The first portion of Step Eight is making a list of all persons we harmed. What is meant by "harmed?" Simply, it is the result of instincts in collision (the acquired false self and all its defects and shortcomings) which have caused physical, mental, emotional or spiritual damage to other people. In the process of compiling this list, we backtrack through our lives and make an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage that we have left in our wake. The time has come when we ought to redouble our efforts to see how many people we have hurt and in what ways. As we ponder twisted or broken relationships with other persons, the acquired false self goes on the defensive. Fear, conspiring with false pride, will hinder our making a list of all the people we harmed. But we must expose this negative impulse by making a deeper and honest search of our motives and actions.

The other portion of Step Eight is that we become willing to make amends to all persons we had harmed. Once again, willingness on our part is the key word. We are not asking for restitution at this point, only a willingness to make amends. Willingness has to do with forgiveness. In being willing to make amends, we are, in effect, asking other people to forgive us of our trespasses. However, we must first start out by forgiving the people that we have harmed and those who, we felt, had harmed us.

In summary, we carefully, survey this whole area of human relations. We further discover exactly what personality traits were acquired that caused us (the acquired false self) to injure and disturb others. In doing this, we commence to ransack the memory for the people whom we have offended. We shall want to hold ourselves to the course of admitting the things we have done, meanwhile forgiving the wrongs done us, real or fancied. Then we become willing, just willing, to make amends to them all.

The purpose of writing the eighth step is to compile a list of all the people we had harmed. In doing this, we deepen our awareness of the acquired personality traits that led to defective relations with other human beings. This awareness should then spur us on to

become willing to make amends to all persons that we had harmed. Go through the following examples in as thorough and as honest a manner as you can. You are out to get the destructive, acquired false self that has been ruining the personal relationships in your life.

1. What is your definition of the word "harmed"?
2. Do you believe that defective relations with other human beings have nearly always been the immediate cause of your woes? If so, briefly describe some of these defective relationships.
3. Make a list of all the people that you have harmed and also those people that you believe have harmed you.
4. Using the list from 3, admit the things you have done which causes physical, mental, emotional or spiritual damage to each person. Write these things beside each person's name.
5. Carefully survey the compiled list of persons and how you harmed them, and then decide exactly what character defects of the acquired false self injured and disturbed them. Briefly note beside each person the defects involved.
6. How are you going to become willing to make these amends?

An accurate and really exhaustive survey of your past life will lead to your eventual freedom from the bondage of self.