

STEP NINE

"Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

In the preceding step, Step Eight, we compiled a list of ALL people that we have harmed and also those people that we believed have harmed us. This list contains the names of people that we have harmed, amends for the things we have done and the exact character defects of the acquired false self which caused physical, mental, emotional or spiritual damage to these people. After making the list, we then became willing to make these amends.

In the application of Step Nine, we shall need the following qualities -- good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage and prudence. Good judgment will suggest that we ought to reflect upon these amends for a time. While we may be quite willing to reveal the very worst, we must be sure to remember that we cannot buy our peace of mind at the expense of others. We must be aware of when the time is right, however procrastination may allow us to pass up a fine chance to right a serious wrong. Since we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask God that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. In making direct amends, let us not talk prudence while practicing evasion.

In looking at the list of people we have harmed, we will see that the making of direct amends can fall into four categories. They are:

1. People who ought to be dealt with as soon as possible, providing that we are reasonably confident we can maintain our sobriety in doing so.
2. People to whom we can make only partial restitution, lest complete disclosures do them or others more harm than good.
3. People and situations where action ought to be deferred, and;
4. Others which by the very nature of the situation we shall never be able to make direct personal contact with.

In category one, we are dealing with people with whom we should make amends quickly. These are people who are readily accessible. Generally, they may include members of our family, employees or employers with whom we work, creditors whom we owe financial amends, friends, and enemies. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we will find it much more beneficial to us.

The second category may include people to whom we can make only partial amends. They may include our spouses, ex-partners, former business associates or friends. Before we make a complete disclosure of the damage done, we must see if this would seriously harm

the one to whom we are making amends or other people. In situations which might implicate other people, we secure their consent.

Thirdly, there will be cases in which action ought to be deferred. It is seldom wise to approach an individual who still smarts from our injustices to him. In some cases, the individuals may not be easy to locate; however, we must make every effort to locate these people and make our amends.

The last category includes people to whom we shall never be able to make direct personal contact. They may include situations with complete strangers or people who are now deceased. Since we cannot reach the departed one, we can still make amends to their living relatives. If this is impossible, we resort to God in prayer, asking him to forgive us in connection with these people.

We will be confronted with many obstacles in doing this step. Procrastination will pop up, telling us that the right time has not yet arrived. We will often manufacture plausible excuses for dodging the making of direct amends. Above all, we should be absolutely sure that we are not delaying only because we are afraid. Remember that in most cases we will require a lifetime to complete Step Nine.

Meditation and prayer are necessary in order to make amends. Before making the amend it should be preceded by prayer. Conscious contact with God in the matter of making amends will not only bring about a more satisfactory result, but can aid us in determining those amends to avoid if they might injure others.

The readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step Nine. Our behavior more than our words will convince those people to whom we are making direct amends.

If we are painstaking about making direct amends to those people we have harmed, we will be amazed before we are half way through. The Promises, on pages 83 and 84 of the A.A. Big Book, will be fulfilled -- sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

The purpose of writing the ninth step is to help us, in an orderly fashion make direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Go through the following examples and be as honest and specific as you are able to at this time. You are about to explore an opportunity that will allow you, if you are painstakingly thorough, to put most of the acquired destructive patterns behind you!

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING

1. What does "making direct amends" mean to you?

2. Why is prayer and meditation necessary before we make our direct amends?
3. Using the list from Step Eight, put the people and the associated amend to be made in the following categories:
 - a. people who ought to be dealt with ASAP
 - b. people to whom we can only make partial amends
 - c. people and situations where action ought to be deferred, and;
 - d. people whom we shall never be able to make direct and personal contact with.

Identify with an * those people for whom a complete disclosure will seriously harm them.

4. Make a second list of the people and institutions to which financial amends are due.
5. Now, reflecting on the list in 3 and 4, make a reasonable time estimate of when the direct amends can be completed. Write this down in two lists.
6. How are you going to get the strength and courage to make these direct amends?