

## Steps Ten and Eleven—Introduction:

We ended our discussion of Step Nine with the Hidden Promises of pages 84 and 85. The Big Book ends those promises with a very clear warning: “That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.”

If we do not keep in fit spiritual condition, we will relapse. Our mental obsession will return. We will become insane again.

How do we keep in fit spiritual condition? You might recall Dr. Bob’s summary of the Twelve Steps: “Clean House, Trust God, Help Others.” We will find that once we have recovered, that summary means Step Ten (Clean House), Step Eleven (Trust God), Step Twelve (Help Others).

### Step Ten:

For my first six years in program, I went through a cycle of recovery and relapse, recovery and relapse. This happened until I was finally introduced to the Big Book’s approach to recovery. As I began to recover using the Big Book approach, I analyzed what had gone wrong in my first six years. I discovered two things that were the main cause of my relapses.

The *first* was that I had refused to accept that there were certain foods and eating behaviors that caused me uncontrollable cravings—the notion of the “allergy of the body” that I discussed at length in our discussion of Step One. I had fallen prey to the notion that all the diets I had ever been on, and all the “experts” I read, told me, which was that after I lost my weight I could eat ANYTHING in moderation; so I “took back” foods that I had eliminated during my weight-loss time, tried to eat them in moderation; and soon found that I was gorging on them.

The *second*, though, was far more serious: there had been a number of times when I was trying to stay away from my trigger foods but I still found rationalizations to return to them—the “mental obsession” that I also discussed at length in Step One. Why was this mental obsession returning? Why were my “best” efforts not to eat these foods being undermined by my complete lack of will?

I discovered the reason by looking back on how I felt right after I had completed Step Nine each time I went through the steps after my relapses. Right after Step Nine I felt absolutely great. Food wasn’t

a problem for me. The “hidden promises” were true; I was placed in a position of complete neutrality. Yet that feeling of neutrality, of power over food, dissipated quickly and I went back to it after a few months.

Why was this? I was meditating—had five meditation books and said my prayers. I was sponsoring and giving service galore. So Steps Eleven and Twelve were covered. But how was I doing Step Ten?

Well, I was reading it “on the wall”—“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” So as life went on, and I yelled at my kids or began to feel bad about something, I admitted it. I apologized. That’s all I did. That’s all I thought I should do.

As I began to study the Big Book’s approach and learned, with the help of great teaching tapes, to look beyond the steps “on the wall” and read the Big Book’s actual instructions, I realized the mistake I had made.

Here are the Big Book’s instructions for Step Ten:

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.

If you look at those instructions, you will see pretty clearly that they are really the equivalent of doing Steps Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine. Here’s the annotated version of the same instructions:

Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. [STEP FOUR—In Step Four we encountered the concepts of “selfishness, dishonest, resentment, and fear”. Clearly that’s what the Big Book is talking about!] When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. [STEPS SIX AND SEVEN] We discuss them with someone immediately [STEP FIVE] and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. [STEPS EIGHT AND NINE] Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.

So Step Ten is Steps Four through Nine done in the context of recovery. We do exactly what we did in Steps Four through Nine, except we’ve recovered and we’re trying to keep that recovery. When I

finished Step Nine, I had dealt with my past, and had no fears for the future.

But each minute and day and week AFTER I finished my Step Nine means a little bit, and then a lot more, PAST that I have to deal with, and the only way I can deal with it is to do what I did successfully before—write it out, share it with another human being, realize my character defects, ask my higher power to remove them, and make amends for any mistakes I have made.

You'll recall that when we discussed Step Four, I pointed out that the complete inventory is really not just Step Four but Steps Four through Nine. Understanding that is the whole point to understanding Step Ten!

I have a simple twelve-point checklist (it just happened to be 12!) for when I do a Step Ten. I look at "The Doctor's Opinion" and find the words "They are restless, irritable and discontented unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks". I look at page 52 in "We Agnostics" and find the Bedevilments: "We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn't make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy,

As we'll see in the discussion of Step Eleven immediately following, the nighttime meditation also has the equivalent of Steps Four through Nine, so I had to consider what the difference is between a nighttime Step Eleven meditation doing Steps Four through Nine, and a Step Ten doing Steps Four through Nine. They're both done in the context of recovery. We've already had the miracle. How do we keep it?

Here's what I've come down to.

The Step Eleven evening meditation is done at night to review the day you've had. I'll talk more about that in a little while. Step Ten, however, is designed to deal with the resentments, fears, and sex conduct issues that have accumulated since you last did a Step Four through Nine or a Step Ten.

In other words, it's for the big things that you haven't been able to capture during your evening meditations.

we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people". I also look at my food issues.

So my Twelve Step checklist for when I do a Step Ten is:

1. Am I restless? (*Doctor's Opinion*)
2. Am I irritable? (*Doctor's Opinion*)
3. Am I discontented? (*Doctor's Opinion*)
4. Am I having trouble with personal relationships? (Bedevilments)
5. Can I not control my emotional nature? (Bedevilments)
6. Am I a prey to misery and depression? (Bedevilments)
7. Can I not make a living? (Bedevilments)
8. Do I have a feeling of uselessness? (Bedevilments)
9. Am I full of fear? (Bedevilments)
10. Am I unhappy? (Bedevilments)
11. Am I not of real help to other people? (Bedevilments)
12. Is my food or quantity of food getting sloppy?

If the answer to any one or more of these questions is YES, then it's time for me to clean house again.

So I take out my Step Four forms and I fill them out; I do a Step Five, and then a Six and a Seven, and I figure out and then do my amends.

What I usually find is that my amends turn out to be living amends, for the most part. I usually find that something has been going on in my life that is bugging me and I haven't really noticed it or given it much thought. And I get clean again and the answers to all the above twelve questions is a resounding NO and I get the promises again!

I also find, by the way, that when I finish the Step Four part of the Step Ten I've already got most of my insights into what's been bugging me. Step Five provides fewer insights, because I've already become clear about what my defects of character are. But I still do Steps Five and Six and Seven and then make amends quickly. (Often I will grab the last recovered person leaving my regular meeting and just ask for ten minutes of his or her time to do the Step Five part of my Step Ten.) My amends are usually living amends.

So Step Ten isn't as dramatic as Steps Four through Nine, when I'm learning so much about myself and where I'm really cleaning out the past respecting actions I've taken in the past. But Step Ten becomes essential to keep my house clean!

## Refining Step Ten:

One thing I've been doing lately with really powerful results is to use the Step Four Resentment form a little differently. For some very significant issues in my life, instead of writing those issues down in column 1, and writing down why those issues are in my mind in column 2, I've been taking what I would normally put down in column 2 and putting each one of those points as a separate point in column 1.

For example, I was trying to make a decision as to whether or not to change my career. In a Step Four I would write down "My career" in column 1, and then some points in column 2 like "I'm bored", "I want to feel more useful", "I'm worried about making money".

What I've been doing lately in Step Ten is putting down as separate resentments each of the ideas I would normally put down as *reasons* in column 2 for the resentments.

For example, instead of putting "my career" down in column 1, instead I'll put down "I'm bored" and "I want to feel more useful" and "I'm worried about making money" into column 1. Then, when I get around to column 2, I ask myself why *these* resentments are on my mind.

This has given me much deeper insight into the issues because I'm going deeper and deeper into my motivations and attitudes to life.

I wouldn't recommend this for Step Four. Step Four is to deal with the big stuff. But I sure do recommend it for major issues that you have to deal with in Step Ten. It clears your thinking!

It's because of this approach to Step Ten that I haven't had a relapse for over thirteen years. When I look at the journeys of people I have sponsored, it is precisely those who have not done Step Ten on a regular basis who have relapsed, unfortunately following the path I walked for my first six years in program!

I urge you—whenever you feel stressed out or kind of icky or food begins to become attractive—to do a Step Ten by repeating Steps Four through Nine!

I call this a Step Ten! It is NOT Steps Four through Nine because those are the steps that BRING us to recovery by allowing our higher power to remove our defects of character and give us sanity.

Now that we have recovered, we keep our sanity and our closeness to our higher power by doing Step Ten.

In Step Ten we Clean House. In Step Eleven we Trust God. In Step Twelve we Help Others. Dr. Bob's prescription for life is our guide!

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