

12-Step Worksheet with Questions

A Guide to Working the 12 Steps

To a newcomer, a 12-step program can be overwhelming. You may look at dramatic concepts such as making amends or reaching a spiritual awakening and wonder what that means in practical terms. Your first source for the substantive content of each step should be your sponsor. Do not work the steps without input from them and possibly from the rest of your group as well. The literature specific to your group is also valuable resources in this process.

The process is called “working the steps” for a reason. Each step requires exhaustive mental work alongside practical steps. The 12-steps are designed to help us better understand where our addiction stems from and what we can do about it. This requires a great deal of introspection and soul searching. It is for this reason that focused questions are a crucial element in the equation. If you work the steps, listen to your sponsor, and take your recovery seriously, your life will improve immeasurably. Answering these questions as you reach the appropriate step, will help you along that process.

This is not meant as a comprehensive source of questions relevant to your work on the 12 steps. Instead, we advise that you show the questions to your sponsor and decide together if they are appropriate for you. Answering these questions does not replace the work you do with your sponsor, attending meetings, using official literature, and daily prayer and meditation. Instead, it is meant to complement the traditional elements and assist you as you improve your life by working the steps.

Step 1

Focus of step 1: Step one is built around the realization that our addiction has defeated us. That our attempts to function have failed and that addiction is the cause of this outcome. Therefore, our questions at this stage will focus on how we were defeated, by what our lives look like as a result. These questions will seem dour, and they are. But keep in mind that we are not surveying the wreckage in our lives to feel self-pity. We are preparing to rebuild.

Step 1 Questions

How did you discover your addiction? Why did you enjoy it initially?

How did you feel when you had not engaged in an addictive behavior for a while?

List all the types of behavior of which your addiction consisted. Which did you do most often and why?

Did your addiction damage your most important personal relations? How did it do so?

Does your addiction isolate you from other people? Is it an internal feeling of isolation, or have the people in your life noticed it too?

Were there any feelings that you to bouts of engagement in addictive behavior? Were you trying to mask them? How did your behavior alter or influence those feelings?

What is the most regrettable outcome of your addiction?

How did your addiction affect your finances? How did you rationalize your spending? Did you have to hide the damage from other people?

How did you try to hide your addictive behavior from other people? Did it work?

Did you suffer any illnesses or maladies, either physical or mental, because of your addiction? What were they? How did you deal with them?

Did you ever do something you truly did not want to do (without being forced), knowing that you did not want it? Was it related to your addiction? How did it feel?

Did you ever put yourself in danger because of your addiction? How did you manage the situation? Did you put yourself in danger again or did you learn from the first time?

What is the most embarrassing situation that emerged in your life as a result of your addiction?

Did you ever manipulate other people to satisfy your addiction? How did you rationalize it?

In what period in your life did you feel you had the least control? Was it related to your addiction? What did it feel like?

How much time did you spend on your addiction, both when things were at their worst and normally? How did this influence the rest of your life?

Did you ever truly betray another person because of your addiction? How did you rationalize it?

Did your addiction affect your career? What lengths did you go to hide your behavior at work? Did it work?

When did you realize you were an addict? Did you feel like your life was unmanageable at that moment? In what way?

How step 1 helps us recover: Answering these questions will allow us to take stock of how our lives have become unmanageable and the damage we have done to ourselves and others. It shows how previous efforts to manage our addiction have failed. Admitting this failure allows us to prepare for a better path.

Read more about [step 1 & admitting powerlessness](#).

Step 2

Focus of step 2: This step focuses on the restoration of hope. Though we previously acknowledged that we cannot manage our own lives, that does not mean that control cannot be regained. It means that we must trust that a greater power can lead us to recovery. To do so, we will ask questions probing into our spirituality and our willingness to let go and stop trying to control our own lives.

Step 2 Questions

Do you believe that there is an order to the universe or are events random?

What was the attitude towards spirituality in your childhood home?

How do you feel about the spiritual tradition you grew up in? Did it contribute to your addiction or provide you any aid or comfort?

Do you ever attend religious services or rites of any kind? Why or why not?

What role does spirituality currently play in your life?

Do you wish spirituality played a larger role in your life? If so, why doesn't it?

Do you ever feel anger at a Higher Power? Why do you feel it? Is it justified?

Have you ever prayed to a Higher Power in moments of distress? Why? How did it make you feel?

Have you ever made a deal or bargain with a Higher Power? Did you keep to it? Why?

Does your Higher Power have characteristics? If so, what are they?

Did you ever feel like someone in your family had authority over you and abused it? How does that make you feel about the concept of a Higher Power?

How step 2 helps us recover: These questions will help you focus on your current vision of a Higher Power. They should also help you gain an idea of why you view a Higher Power as you do. You may also be thinking of what role your Higher Power will play in your future and how it will be different.

Read more about [step 2 & a power greater than ourselves](#).

Step 3

Focus of step 3: This step brings together what we learned in working on the previous two. We should now have an idea of why our lives are unmanageable and how we conceive of a Higher Power. The following questions will help us understand and manage the process of giving control to a Higher Power with spiritual meaning to us.

Step 3 Questions

Do you fear a loss of control or do you welcome the possibility of someone or something making decisions for you?

Did you lose control of your life due to a lack of rational judgment or a lack of emotional control?

Does your Higher Power have a plan for you, or does this power leave you with free will?

How do you maintain the presence of your Higher Power in your daily life? Do you believe recovery requires more of an effort than you are currently making? If so, why?

Do you ever pray? How does prayer make you feel? Does it matter why you pray?

Have you ever truly trusted anyone? Was this trust betrayed? How easy is it for you to trust now?

Do you feel like your life has meaning? Has anything you have done in the past made you feel like your life was meaningful? Why?

Are there things that are easy for me to surrender? Are other things very difficult to surrender? Why and what is the difference?

What is the most problematic habit or part of me which I have not yet fully surrendered?

How step 3 helps us recover: These questions were designed to provide insight into the process of surrender. At the same time, they help us begin to try to understand what role our Higher Power will play in our new path.

Read more about [step 3 and the third step prayer](#).

Step 4

Focus of step 4: These questions are designed to help us take stock of who we are. Since addiction has taken such a toll on our lives, we will focus on the deficiencies which got us here. However, we should never lose sight of the positive elements in our personalities and lives. The important part is to assess our lives fairly, so we are not captured by the twin dangers of self-aggrandizement and self-righteousness at one extreme or guilt and self-loathing on the other. To this end, answer these questions honestly and in a measured fashion.

Step 4 Questions

Has anyone hurt you deeply by judging our outing your addictive behavior? Do you feel anger at this person?

When you think of the person you hurt most through your addiction, how do you feel about yourself?

Do you ever get mad at random? At what? Why?

Have you ever tried to get revenge on a person? Why? What was the result?

Do you ever feel self-loathing? What triggers it?

Do you suffer from a lack of confidence or overconfidence? If so, do you ever veer from one extreme to another? Why?

What form of behavior do you find most aggravating in others? Do you ever behave that way?

When people hurt you, do they apologize? Would you prefer that they did? Do you apologize for hurting others?

Do you have character traits which you associate with addiction? Are they purely negative or have you also used them for beneficial purposes?

If you had a chance to do-over one incident in your life, what would it be? Why?

What is the best trait you inherited from your parents and what is the worst?

Think about your worst traits. Do you think you were born with them or were they shaped by your environment?

Do you blame anyone else for your addiction? Is that justified?

Have you ever experienced trauma? Was your addiction a coping mechanism?

Look at the most important decisions of your life. Do your good decisions have anything in common? What about your bad ones?

Do you feel responsible for the damage you caused because of your addiction?
Why?

Have you ever done something you are so ashamed of, that you have told no one or almost no one about it? Why have you avoided sharing it?

Do you think you judge yourself too harshly or too leniently?

How step 4 helps us recover: This step should help us look fairly and searchingly at our personalities. We have character flaws and some of them led us down a dark path. However, these questions also assess our positive traits. True growth occurs when we understand that many of the traits that led us astray, can also help us and others.

Read more about [step 4 & a searching and fearless moral inventory](#).

Step 5

Focus of step 5: Now that we have a better idea of who we are and how our flaws have led us astray, it is time to share those insights with others. The 12-step program believes that recovery is only possible with support: from your sponsor, your group, and your Higher Power. In these questions, we focus on the task at hand: the development of honest and genuine relationships with others.

Step 5 Questions

Have you lost an important relationship due to your addiction? Does that make it difficult to discuss it with other people?

Has anyone pleasantly surprised you by always being there for you? How has that influenced your recovery?

Some people have practiced “tough love” with you during your addiction and recovery. Others have taken a softer approach. Which helped you more?

What have you learned from your sponsor? What would you change about them?

Do you fear sharing your fifth step with another individual? What is the worst thing that can happen?

When you share your fifth step with your Higher Power, what do you feel? Do you get a sense of the response of your Higher Power to your efforts?

Once you have shared, write down what the experience was like. Were your fears overblown? Are you glad you did this?

Do you feel ready to share with other people, or are you happy to leave it as is?

How step 5 helps us recover: Now that we understand our wrongs and have seen what others think of our behavior, we are ready to work towards their removal. However, we are now humble enough to understand that we cannot do this on our own.

Read more about [step 5 & the importance of admitting out wrongs](#).

Step 6

Focus of step 6: The previous steps have helped us embrace humility. The previous questions have helped us assess our shortcomings. We are equally aware of that which is positive in us and will aid us in recovery. We are now ready to come before our Higher Power in the hopes that our flaws be removed. We do not make demands. We do not bargain. These questions are designed to help with that process.

Step 6 Questions

Have you ever been misleading in your prayers and interactions with your Higher Power? Do you believe your power forgives you?

When I am uncomfortable with what I am feeling, what steps do I take to change it? Are they healthy?

What can you do to improve yourself? Think of practical habits, which would improve your life if you followed through on them.

What destructive habits do I keep repeating? If they are destructive, why do I repeat them?

Do you still engage in activity that is harmful to yourself and others? How could you stop?

Do you contribute to the well-being of your community? Could you do more? If so, what are practical steps you can take weekly to do so?

Do you consider yourself a dishonest person? Has working the steps made you a more honest person?

Are you an envious person? Has working the steps made you more grateful?

Do you take responsibility for your actions? Has working the steps made you a more accountable person?

List the five most significant defects of character you possess. How have they harmed you and others?

Are there any actionable steps you can take to alleviate the implications of those defects?

Do you cling to any of those flaws? If so why?

How step 6 helps us recover: This step and the associated questions have helped us understand what our flaws are and how we hold on to them. Now that we know what we wish to remove from our life, we need to ask for their removal.

Read more about [step 6 & becoming ready to have God remove our defects.](#)

Step 7

Focus of step 7: We have spent our whole lives fighting our shortcomings, yet we are unable to overcome them. Sometimes it seems as though the harder we try, the more powerful our worst instincts become. In this step, we practice the humility we have learned previously. To allow our Higher Power to remove our shortfalls, we must acknowledge our inability to do so. In understanding our weakness, we gain the true strength of trusting in our Higher Power and our new path. These questions should allow us to understand the process better.

Step 7 Questions

How would you feel if you no longer had those characteristics? Would you be happier or would you feel like you have lost part of your identity?

Write a letter to your Higher Power asking for the removal of these traits. Make sure not to bargain or plead, but rather show a readiness to grow.

Do you believe your shortcomings can come back? In what situations is this most likely to occur?

Do you ever lose hope in the process of recovery? When does that occur and why?
Can you do anything to avoid it?

What are you most grateful for? Who do you credit with these elements in your life?
Do you show enough gratitude?

Do you spend enough time with loved ones? If not, how can you change your habits
to change that?

When do you feel most hopeful? How can you bring those situations into your day-
to-day life?

What have you lost due to your addiction? Should you try and reintroduce those
elements into your life? What would that look like?

If your Higher Power were to remove your defects, what would your life look like?
Are your expectations realistic?

Have you ever been truly happy? If so, do you think that happiness can be recaptured?

Have you improved the world around you? If not, how can you? If you have, could you do more? In both cases, think about how you can apply these insights to your life.

How step 7 helps us recover: Having answered these questions, we should now be humbler regarding our ability to remove shortcomings ourselves. We understand better the role of our Higher Power in helping us improve our lives. The process should also give us a better idea of what a better life may look like.

Read more about [step 7 & humbly asking our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings](#).

Step 8

Focus of step 8: This step has a much clearer actionable component than most. We all have a clear idea in our heads of some of the people we have hurt the most. However, certain emotions may stop us from adding the right people. We may feel some of the people we consider adding, have hurt us severely. In other cases, we still have a prominent voice in our head telling us we did nothing wrong. These questions will help guide the process of making the right list and helping your recovery along. Make sure to involve your sponsor, and possibly the rest of the group in this process.

Step 8 Questions

What are the most important relationships you destroyed or damaged because of your addictive behaviors?

Do you owe anyone an apology for your non-addiction related behavior? Should they be on your list?

Have you pictured making amends to anyone over the years? Who was it? What did it look like?

Who do you most fear making amends to? Do you look forward to making amends to anyone?

Will I be harming the person or others further by making amends?

What is your absolute worst fear regarding making amends? How likely is that to occur? What are your best expectations? How likely are they?

How can I let go of these expectations and realize I am powerless over the response?

How is making amends different from just saying you are sorry?

Now make that list. Try to include everyone you have hurt due to your addictive behavior. For each write how your behavior affected their lives as individuals. Only then write how it influenced your relationship.

How step 8 helps us recover: With the help of these questions, you now have a workable list of people to make amends to.

Read more about [step 8 & making a list of all people we have harmed](#).

Step 9

With a list of individuals in place, we now need to be very careful. The questions here will help us make amends in the right way and for the proper reasons. In the past, we have tried to apologize or make amends, but often had ulterior motives for doing so. We must avoid this problem as much as possible. Remember, it is also not too late to add people who come to mind to the list. Indeed, the list should be seen as a living breathing one and not a finalized document.

Step 9 Questions

Have you already made amends to anyone? What did they consist of? Were they sufficient? What did you learn from them?

Am I genuine in making my amends, or do I have hidden motives, such as to gain acceptance or love from someone else, or to prove them wrong and me right?

Am I trying to make the individuals on the list guilty? If so, why? Remember the idea is to make amends and not have the people you harmed console you.

Do you feel anger towards anyone on the list? If so, write a letter expressing all your reasons for anger. **DO NOT SEND IT.**

Figure out with your sponsor how to get rid of that anger. What mechanisms did you use? Did they work?

Write an apology and/or statement of amends for each individual you believe deserves one. **DO NOT SEND IT.**

Design a list of actionable amends to each person on your list.

Show the written apologies to your sponsor. Show the list of actionable amends as well. Your sponsor should now tell you if they sound sincere, or if an ulterior motive shows through. Write down your sponsors' comments.

Try to roleplay at least one process of amends making with your sponsor. Now you should be ready to make amends.

What happened in your first few attempts? What did you learn from them? How can you improve in the future? Remember this is a process and not a single event.

Did you have a desire to defend yourself? How did you deal with it?

How has this process affected your relationship with others?

Did you realize you have to make further amends? To whom? Write a list.

How step 9 helps us recover: In completing these steps, you have made a massive undertaking. You have made amends for many of the wrongs committed in our lives. Making amends is a life-long process but we have climbed the steepest part of that hill. We admitted our wrongs and have learned how to make amends in the future.

Read more about [step 9, making amends and the 9th step promises](#).

Step 10

Focus of step 10: This step marks a significant transformation from the previous ones. We have now stemmed from the bleeding of addiction. Our new task is to bring recovery and our Higher Power into our day to day lives. We continue to take inventory and admit our wrongs daily, to aid our path to recovery. These questions should help us focus on doing so.

Step 10 Questions

At the end of every day, ask yourself, what did I do today that helped me obtain serenity and peace of mind? What failed to do so? What can I learn from this?

Taking inventory requires time for reflection. How do you make time for that daily?

Do you still have triggers and behaviors you fear will cause a relapse? What are they? How can you guard against them?

Have I been resentful, self-serving or dishonest today?

What did you learn from the process of making amends which you can apply to your day-to-day life? How will you immediately make amends for, and acknowledge new wrongs?

Is there sanity in my life now? If so, what does that entail and how can I maintain it? If not, what steps can I take to restore sanity in my life?

How can I be critical and honest about my behavior, not only in retrospect but also while events are still unfolding?

Am I resting on my laurels or am I still fighting just as hard for my recovery?

How step 10 helps us recover: Once we have completed this step, we are no longer just addressing our past wrongs. We are now willing and able to improve our ongoing daily lives. We are now no longer allowing our lives to be controlled by our worst impulses and take daily steps to guard against them.

Read more about [step 10 & personal inventory](#).

Step 11

Focus of step 11: We have now established a better and healthier day to day life. However, we must not harbor any illusions that our efforts alone got us here or will keep us here. None of this would have been possible without following the plan set for us by our Higher Power. This step and these questions will help us build and maintain a close relationship with our Higher Power necessary to remain sober and happy.

Step 11 Questions

How has your belief in a Higher Power changed since you started working the steps?

How would you explain these beliefs to an atheist?

What do you believe happens after death?

How do I understand the difference between religion and spirituality? Do I have both in my life? Do I need both?

How often do I pray? How does prayer make you feel? What role does it play in your life?

When I pray do I make demands or petition my Higher Power? Do I express enough gratitude? Do I pray for others or only for myself?

Do I meditate? Why or why not? If you do, what role does it play in your life?

Do you feel connected to anything when you meditate? Are you listening to anything?

Has your perception of self been altered by your relationship with a Higher Power? How has it changed?

Do you always remember you are not in control? How do you remind yourself of that?

How step 11 helps us recover: Having answered these questions and worked this step, you should have a more secure and healthy relationship with your Higher Power. This is an indispensable part of recovery.

Read more about [step 11 & improving a conscious contact with our Higher Power](#).

Step 12

Focus of step 12: This step and the corresponding questions address the need to pass on the tremendous benefits you have derived from recovery to others. As [the Big Book](#) tells us to do, these questions will help us practice the principles we have learned in all of our affairs.

Step 12 Questions

How do you use your positive relationship with a Higher Power to make the world better for others?

Have you reached out to a recovering addict or an addict still in pain? If so, describe the situation and how it affected you. If not, why not?

What kind of support would you have liked to receive when you started the program? How can you use these insights to help those still suffering from addiction?

How did you handle conflict when you were an addict? Has working the steps changed that? If so, how?

Do you believe your life is now solid enough to maintain long-term recovery? If so, how can I build on this? If not, what do I need to do to get there?

How do you plan to be of service to the fellowship and other addicts? How will you work that into your daily life?

Do you think you are ready to be a sponsor? If so, when did you feel you were ready? If not, what do you think you need to work on to get to that stage?

Having understood the principles of recovery, what does it mean to “practice these principles in all my affairs?”

How step 12 helps us recover: We have now completed the 12-steps of recovery. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. Remember, being sober is not enough. We must maintain our recovery, one step at a time, as a lifestyle. You may find it necessary to work the steps again and consult these questions as you do so.

Read more about [step 12, carrying the message and practicing these principles](#).

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Remember: Keep coming back. Get commitments. Stay in middle of the herd. Be of service. Help a newcomer.

Best of luck on your journey in recovery!