

S.L.A.A. 12 and 12 Book Project – Sample Step Sharing Sheets

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Step 3: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity

Step One defines my problem — powerlessness and unmanageability. Step Two defines my solution — a Power greater than myself. Step Three is simply a decision to go forward and find that Power, or go back into the abyss of sex and love addiction. That seems too simple, but it's not.

Step Three is simply a decision to do something. I haven't done anything. I have only decided to do it. My friend Tom always gives the analogy of three frogs sitting on a log. One frog decides to jump off, how many are left? Three, the frog didn't jump, it only decided to.

Step Three asks me to decide to turn my will (my thoughts, hopes and desires) and my life (the sum of my actions in the past, present and future) over to the care of God. At first I read this as the *control* of God. Again a wise member pointed out to me the word is care, not control.

Recently I needed some surgery on my shoulder. I went into the hospital, allowed the doctors and nurses to render me unconscious and using knives and tubes and who knows what else and cut into my shoulder, tie things together, scrape other areas, and do whatever they thought needed to be done, after promising everything would be alright. Why can I trust total strangers to care for me when I can't trust God to do the same? The doctors and nurses didn't control my thoughts and actions, my will and my life. They did carry out the actions necessary to repair the shoulder I had decided to have fixed because it hurt so badly.

Step Three is simply a decision to move on with the rest of the Steps to bring about a relationship with the God of my understanding; a God that will bring about the promise of Step Two, a return to sanity.

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

When I was first working step six, I remember being totally shocked that some aspects of my personality were actually character defects. *People pleasing* and *approval seeking* were both second nature to me. In my mind I was simply carrying the "good little girl" expectations from my childhood into my life as an adult. The difference was that as an adult it was men that I strove to please. If men approved of me and found me attractive, I had a basis for my self-worth.

In the home and the church where I'd grown up, *caretaking* was a highly regarded characteristic. Many around me lost themselves in caring for others....and that was viewed as honorable, especially for a woman who was expected to be nurturing. I could see when I worked step six that I lost myself as I cared for and tried to please men in my life.

Dishonesty was a defect that I couldn't ignore. I had spent years in my marriage where my husband and I had led double lives, full of secrets and deceit. After getting into the SLAA program, my pendulum swung the other direction. In an attempt to live a life of rigorous honesty, I would practically tell my life story to the stranger in the elevator. In working step six, I realized that my degree of honesty needed tempering. I did have to be 100% honest with my sponsor, myself, and my Higher Power (not necessarily in that order.) I understood that I didn't need to bring all the details of my addiction to meetings. As someone suggested, I take my mess to my sponsor and the message to my meetings.

I really think that true recovery started happening for me as a result of working steps six and later step seven. I may have stopped acting out back in step one, but the core of the problem was still there. I continue to work on these and several other character defects on a daily basis, and with my Higher Power's help, I am having more and more days when I feel freed from the bonds of these defects.

Today as I write this, I feel a deep gratitude for this step, my recovery and even in some counter intuitive way for my addiction. Step 10 is huge in helping me to maintain my recovery one day at a time.

Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

I had a hard time with the whole notion of this Step when I came into recovery. I did not (and still do not) believe in God in any conventional sense of the term. Yet I was told from the beginning that the power of prayer was key to a sustainably sober life. I had to come to believe in the power of a thing that defied rational explanation.

In my initial resistance to call what I do prayer, I discovered ways to accomplish the same effect as prayer using other terms. For instance, if my sponsor told me to pray for an attractive woman I saw on the street, I could instead express a silent intention toward her: "May she know serenity, fulfillment, love and joy, all the days of her life. Let's this be my only wish, hope or desire." But I still did not understand how I could believe in the power of prayer, when I did not believe in a God that I could understand.

After speaking with my sponsor, my therapist, friends, and fellow addicts about this dilemma, I started looking around in my life for other things which I knew had power to affect my life and the lives of those around me, yet defied explanation. People suggested that I consider such things as nature--powerful, real, beautiful, and capable of deeply affecting my life positively, like rain watering crops that will feed and sustain me, or negatively, like snowstorm that prevents me from going where I want to go when I want to go. I don't really understand the forces of nature. Yet how can I doubt that nature is real and regularly affects me?

A better example that came to mind is humor. Humor is real. I am affect by it. Studies have shown that regularly experiencing laughter has a measurable positive effect on one's physical health as well as one's mental health. It can be very powerful. Some of the most memorable and striking experiences I have experienced in meetings were from things both funny and profound that recovering addicts have shared. Humor can convey truth, humility, courage, and wisdom. And yet, when you try to analyze humor, to "put it under the microscope," it disappears. It resists being broken down into formulas. One can't ultimately explain why one thing is funny, and something else is not, or why one thing is hysterical, but something else barely raises a smile.

I have come to experience the power of prayer and meditation in the same way. I don't know why praying has a powerful affect on my spirit, but I can't deny that it does. And it is really not important for me to understand why it has such a powerful effect on me--anymore that it is important for me to understand why something is funny. It is, and I can acknowledge that it is, without fully understanding why it is.

Whether I characterize it as prayer, intention, "putting it out to the Universe," or any other description, the idea is the same. I express with humility my wish to live in accordance with higher spiritual values. I recommit to opening myself to guidance from beyond or outside of myself. And my life improves as a result.