

LAA Step Guide

Love Addicts Anonymous



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Preface

Dear members of the LAA Fellowship, this *Twelve Steps Guide* is the result of the long-term work of our group consciousness and our experience in working the Steps.

In the process of creating the Twelve Steps Guide, we have walked the path of recovery with the help of our sponsors, steps, traditions and other tools of recovery.

These Twelve Steps of LAA are intended for people whose lives have already been or are currently being influenced by addiction to love, fantasies and daydreaming. These twelve statements are the cornerstone of our program. They serve us remarkably well in attaining our goal—to find serenity, peace, and freedom from love addiction, regardless of other methods developed by psychiatrists, treatment programs and other social organizations.

The Twelve Steps of LAA are the heart of the program, where people, addicted to love relationships find a new way of life by attending Step Study Meetings and drawing on the experiences of their fellow travelers. The unity of our community serves us as a support on the path to gaining freedom and faith in a bright future, a future without the shackles of addiction. It is impossible to help people who are still suffering, without this unity of our community.

These Twelve Steps are spiritually oriented, but they are not based on any religious tradition. The Twelve Step concept of God does not refer to a specific human being, divine being, power or entity. Here we mean the concept of God, as each of us individuals chooses to understand it.

Therefore, those who do not belong to any particular faith, who are perhaps agnostic, will find, in this program, a calm, satisfying path for their life, if they have the willingness and courage to believe in a certain Higher Power that is more capable than anything that they themselves might do on their own.

These 12 Steps have been studied and practiced by members of our LAA community for some years, and many of us have found this guide to be much more helpful than just coping with the addiction, the unreasonable thinking, the confused thoughts and feelings, and the insanity of wrong decisions fed by fantasies.

These 12 Steps become our way of life, always helping us in all situations. How we absorb and use these Steps depends on how well we follow them. In this book we share our experiences, with reflections and stories from our lives added to each Step. These are just examples from our lives, but there are so many more such stories. These experiences of other people help us to believe that recovery is possible.

Introduction

This Step Guide was started by the first members of the LAA, who understood the need to change their own lives, their own thinking, and gain the wisdom of sanity, rather than seeking to change the behavior of others. We all got together, talked about our love experiences, trying to help each other to find the right solution. This is the story of how the LAA community was born out of a natural need to share with each other the experience of overcoming our individual love fantasies and illusions.

While this guide was being compiled, while working the Steps in the small groups step by step, it became more and more clear that all 12 Steps of the program reveal its main directions.

Tracing the signs of addiction in ourselves, understanding the uncontrollability of our life and the presence of this addiction in us is OUR EXPERIENCE,

Using various tools of the program (steps, principles and traditions) is OUR STRENGTH and COURAGE TO CHANGE,

OUR HOPE and FAITH in healing results from using the tools of the program on the path to healing.

By working through this guide, you can see the addiction as a disease, or irrational thinking, or poor mental health.

The awareness and acceptance of the fact of this addiction as a disease, has become very useful for many of us, and even necessary for understanding its insane and unreasonable manifestations. It becomes easier to recognize and track symptoms of the disease. The self-study of the Steps, together with using all the Fellowship's tools, provide us with a program for recovery. In addition, such an approach, for many of us, ensures the continuous recognition of our powerlessness in the face of this serious illness and its resulting consequences. It

helps us to get on the path to recovery (healing). This approach helps us to move forward. We begin to learn how to live and recover by relying on our LAA program.

By admitting that we are addicted to love, we acknowledge that we will not gain control of our lives and relationships without the help of our fellow travelers, sponsors, Steps, Traditions, etc. We are working hard to find a happy and addiction-free life through our shared decision: to complete the LAA program and the 12 Steps.

We do not need to understand how and why these Steps work, it is enough for us just to believe that it worked for those who walked the steps before us, and therefore will help us too. And those are not empty hopes. We can see many of us who have found Solutions and for whom the Promises of the Program have become reality. Their pain from addiction is gone. We are filled with faith and hope that the spiritual principles of the steps work, that they bring us recovery from addiction, and help us ultimately find sanity, serenity, and fill our lives with acceptance, joy and love.

Step 1

Powerlessness

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over love, romance, fantasies, relationships and our lives had become unmanageable.

Step One is the beginning of the recovery process. The healing starts here; we can go no further until we have worked Step One.

The spiritual principle of Step One is HONESTY.

Welcome to the first step; it is one of the longest steps. It is based on the principle of honesty or the acceptance of reality and oneself. Try to answer each question in order. Try to let everything flow through you by answering the questions. The more you work on yourself and the deeper you go, the more you learn about yourself.

Step One is where we identify the root causes of the behaviors over which we have no control and we seem unable to stop. When we surrender to the idea that we need help, we see our behavior as it really is and become willing to be honest with ourselves.

Step One has two distinctive parts. First, the admission that we have an obsessive desire to control and are experiencing the effects of an addictive process that renders us powerless over our feelings, thoughts and behaviors. Second, our lives are unmanageable by ourselves and we need help.

Unmanageability refers to compulsively doing the same thing over and over again to solve a problem or meet a need, even though it does not work.

In this step, we repress our pride and admit honestly that our love addiction has captured us. Humility is the first step to change. Please note we are only powerless at this stage of recovery because we still remain isolated from God and other people.

The power to recover will return to us when we open up for help and continue to work on the remaining steps. Right now, focus on being honest with yourself; don't worry too much about your connection with your Higher Power. Many of us have a difficult time contacting our Higher Power for help at this stage.

Admitting our powerlessness over love, romance, fantasies and relationships brings us to the LAA Program. Here, we begin a process of recovery that will transform our lives. Since dysfunctional behavior is a major characteristic of our disease, we must realize that our mind, with its acquired traits, habits and character defects, has caused us to become powerless over our behavior. By honestly looking at what we have become in our love addiction, we recognize the powerlessness and unmanageability of our lives and relationships.

This guide aims to help the love addict, through guided self-reflection, identify addictive behaviors and patterns, examine types of love addiction and set bottom line behaviors, all while embarking on the personal journey of emotional sobriety and recovery.

Working on Step One creates the basis for recovery. Gradually realizing your own powerlessness and how your life became uncontrollable when you tried to control your dependence, you begin to understand the power it had over your life. Confirming your powerlessness and awareness of your inability to control your life will help you prepare to take the remaining eleven steps.

We may be afraid to accept powerlessness and that our life has become unmanageable. If we accept powerlessness, will we completely abandon the struggle against our addiction? It does not seem to make sense to accept powerlessness and still find strength to continue. This paradox will be considered if we get to the second and third steps.

1. To begin, list stories that show how powerless you were to stop your behavior. Remember "impotence" means the inability to stop behavior, in

spite of the obvious consequences. Be very specific in determining the types of behavior and their frequency. Start with the earliest example of when you remember being powerless and write all examples, including the most recent. Collect as many examples as you can within reason.

2. Remembering as many examples as possible, you may feel ashamed or depressed when you realize your own powerlessness. Be gentle with yourself. You are not required to make the whole list at one time. When you finish this part of Step One, do not continue until you discuss this with one of your mentors. The soft path means you deserve to get support in every part of this important work.

3. How did your addiction play out in the following areas? The characteristics of your particular kind of dependence.

Obsessive thoughts or fantasies.

Goes to great lengths to avoid abandonment or rejection.

A pattern of serial dating or serial relationships.

Uses relationships to avoid underlying emotional pain.

Is consumed or obsessed with finding love when not in a relationship.

Becomes emotionally involved or attached to people too quickly.

Stays in, and returns to, painful, destructive relationships.

Assigns magical qualities to others. Idealizes and pursues them.

Uses relationships or emotional dependency as a way of coping.

Uses emotional dependency as substitutes for nurturing care and support.



Find a quiet place to think about your disease of love addiction. Do you feel powerless over your addiction? If so, admit this. Feelings of shame or guilt (or the other extreme bold or prideful feelings) may come up.

Step 2

Faith

Step Two: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

LAA is a spiritual program. We believe we cannot restore ourselves but must be restored by divine intervention. In other words, we cannot recover by ourselves, we need help. This help comes in the form of some Higher Power, whether that be a deity or the energy of the group. This step is about hope. It follows the very painful admission that we [by ourselves] are powerless. Be hopeful. Whether you pray to God or reach out to others, don't try to get better in isolation. Reach out and have faith that your distorted thinking and behavior will be transformed into a healthy way of thinking and behaving.

In Step Two, we focus on open-mindedness, willingness, faith, trust and humility. The spiritual principle of open-mindedness we find in this step arises from the understanding that we cannot recover alone and need some kind of help.

It continues with opening our minds and believing help is possible for us. It doesn't matter whether we have an idea of how the power greater than ourselves is going to help, just that we believe it is possible.

In the second step, there can be no right or wrong answers. All your answers reflect your personal qualities and are true for you. We just ask you to be honest with yourself in order to achieve a better result and awareness.

Our insanity was thoroughly discussed in Step One. Now let's look toward restoration.

1. Is your love addiction or codependency a substitution for a Higher Power? If yes, analyze and reflect on how you use the substitution instead of accepting the presence of a Higher Power.

2. Can I believe that, thanks to a Higher Power and the support of the group, I can love myself and increase my self-esteem, as well as learn to ask for help? Do I believe I should not do it alone?

3. Have you come to have faith? If so, how? Can I believe that trust in the Higher Power can bring me clarity and sanity?

4. How does spirituality differ from the religion of your childhood?

5. What does it feel like to finally have God in your life? Are you hopeful?
Nervous? Grateful?

Second Step Prayer

Heavenly Father, I know in my heart that only You can restore me to sanity. I humbly ask that You remove all my twisted thoughts and addictive behavior from me this day. Heal my spirit and restore a clear mind in me.

Step 3

Surrender

Step Three: Turned our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

Love addiction causes pain, despair and an emotional hunger that eats at the core of our being. It is a longing for unconditional love, respect, nurturing, acceptance and joy. Many of us turn to other people, fantasies, drugs, alcohol, sex, etc., thus avoiding connections with God, to fill our inner void and to gain some sense of safety, self-worth and well-being.

But if we don't translate our hope into action right now, it will fade away and we'll end up right back where we started. The action we need to take is working Step Three. It is an opportunity to let a Higher Power greater than ourselves take charge of the rest of our lives. Fundamentally, this also means we must stop feeling responsible for everything and everybody. The path to experiencing peace and serenity is to surrender.

God can mean some benevolent force in the universe or the God within which knows what is best for us.

Note that we turn ourselves over to the "care" of God. Our only guide is the belief that God wants us to be healthy and happy. If we do not, then we are going in the wrong direction. God will lead you to people and books which will help you. God will lead you forward.

The idea of surrendering our will and lives to a power greater than ourselves may be terrifying. By working the Third Step, we are allowing a Higher Power to care for us, not control or conduct our lives for us. We stop wearing ourselves out trying to make everything happen as if we were in charge of the world. We are accepting that a power greater than ourselves will do a better job of caring for our will

(thoughts) and lives (actions, behavior) than we have.

1. How have I acted on self-will so far? Did my attempts to control others or control my own emotions interfere with Higher Power taking care of me?

Examples of self-will:

Controlling

Avoiding and isolating

Negative caretaking

Using and abusing others

Aggression

Selfishly acting on impulse

Obsessing and acting out [calling, texting, emails, drive-by]

2. How has acting on self-will affected my life?

3. What fears and reservations do I have making this decision?

4. Can I make the decision to surrender myself to the care of a Higher Power with a willingness to give up self-hatred and behavior that harms me, harms my health and prevents me from taking care of myself and my own needs?

Bow your head with a friend or mentor and recite the third step prayer. Memorize it first. Reflect on how you feel right now and about how far you have come.

Third Step Prayer

God, I offer myself to You to build with me and to do with me as You wish. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help, of Your Power, Your love, and Your way of life. May I do Your will always!

Step 4

Inventory

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

The point of the Fourth Step inventory is to take a "fearless moral inventory of ourselves." Put another way, it is an opportunity to take an honest look at yourself and decide what you want to keep (attributes and virtues) and what you want to get rid of (addiction). In AA they use the term "character defects," but this is old fashioned. Addiction is a disorder not a defect.

This step is necessary if you want to change. Change is the most important element in recovery. You cannot change what you cannot accept responsibility for. To do this you must (1) identify your shortcomings, (2) acknowledge them and (3) understand them. Therefore, the more details you put on your inventory the better.

Part I

What You Want to Discard or Change

1. What are your resentments? Start with your childhood.

2. How do your resentments affect you today?

3. Do you carry around stress-related emotions like anger or depression?

4. Do you transfer these to those around you? If so, how?

5. Is your self-esteem affected by your resentments?

6. Is your outlook on life affected by your resentments? Are you a cynic?

7. Write about each of the following shortcomings that apply to you. Discuss how each has affected your life.

You are very needy when it comes to relationships.

You fall in love very easily and too quickly.

When you fall in love, you can't stop fantasizing—even to do important things. You can't help yourself.

Sometimes, when you are lonely and looking for companionship, you lower your standards and settle for less than you want or deserve.

When you are in a relationship, you tend to smother your partner.

More than once, you have gotten involved with someone who is unable to commit—hoping he or she will change.

Once you have bonded with someone, you can't let go.

When you are attracted to someone, you ignore all the warning signs that this person is not good for you.

Initial attraction is more important to you than anything else when it comes to falling in love and choosing a partner. Falling in love over time does not appeal to you and is not an option.

When you are in love, you trust people who are not trustworthy. The rest of the time you have a hard time trusting people.

When a relationship ends, you feel your life is over and more than once you have thought about suicide because of a failed relationship.

You take on more than your share of responsibility for the survival of a relationship.

Love and relationships are the only things that interest you.

In some of your relationships you were the only one in love.

You are overwhelmed with loneliness when you are not in love or in a relationship.

You cannot stand being alone. You do not enjoy your own company.

More than once, you have gotten involved with the wrong person to avoid being lonely.

You are terrified of never finding someone to love.

You feel inadequate if you are not in a relationship.

You cannot say no when you are in love or if your partner threatens to leave you.

You try very hard to be who your partner wants you to be. You will do anything to please him or her—even abandon yourself (sacrifice what you want, need and value).

When you are in love, you only see what you want to see. You distort reality to quell anxiety and feed your fantasies.

You have a high tolerance for suffering in relationships. You are willing to suffer neglect, depression, loneliness, dishonesty—even abuse—to avoid the pain of separation anxiety (what you feel when you are not with someone you have bonded with).

More than once, you have carried a torch for someone and it was agonizing.

You love romance. You have had more than one romantic interest at a time even when it involved dishonesty.

You have stayed with an abusive person.

Fantasies about someone you love, even if he or she is unavailable, are more important to you than meeting someone who is available.

You are terrified of being abandoned. Even the slightest rejection feels like abandonment and it makes you feel horrible.

You chase after people who have rejected you and try desperately to change their minds.

When you are in love, you are overly possessive and jealous.

More than once, you have neglected family or friends because of your relationship.

You have no impulse control when you are in love.

You feel an overwhelming need to check up on someone you are in love with.

More than once, you have spied on someone you are in love with.

You pursue someone you are in love with even if he or she is with another person.

If you are part of a love triangle (three people), you believe all is fair in love and war. You do not walk away.

Love is the most important thing in the world to you.

Even if you are not in a relationship, you still fantasize about love all the time—either someone you once loved or the perfect person who is going to come into your life someday.

As far back as you can remember, you have been preoccupied with love and romantic fantasies.

You feel powerless when you fall in love—as if you are in some kind of trance or under a spell.

You lose your ability to make wise choices.

You like to create drama and excitement.

You have weak personal boundaries. You let people abuse you or take advantage of you. You do not know where you leave off and someone else begins. You do not know who you are or what you want.

You have low self-esteem.

You feel the compelling need to control using one or more of the following:

Image Management

Projecting Guilt

The Silent Treatment

Sex

Negative Caretaking

Hysteria or rage

Excessive phone calls or emails

Driving by someone's home

You fear intimacy or commitment in healthy relationships.

Name other general shortcomings you might consider writing about.

SELF-PITY: You feel sorry for yourself all the time. You wallow in your sorrows. You magnify your troubles. You think that you are different. You blame your problems on others. You withdraw from the world. You feel that no one understands or loves you. You feel things are hopeless and that you are a victim of circumstances.

SELF-WILL: You are in collision with something or somebody (even with good motives). You are totally into yourself regardless of the consequences.

DISHONESTY: You are not being honest with yourself or other people. You are lying. You are cheating and depriving others of not only their worldly goods but their emotional security and peace of mind. You are justifying your behavior—using alibis and stealing trust.

SELF-DESTRUCTION: You are harming and sabotaging yourself or anything good that comes into your life.

SLOTH: You procrastinate and are lazy. You continually put off things that need to be done now. You are complacent.

PERFECTIONISM: You are unwilling to accept human mistakes—yours and those of others. You set unrealistic standards for yourself and others then become frustrated and resentful if they are not met. You believe your standards are the only right ones.

IMPATIENCE: You want what you want, and you want it now. You are not living in the here and now. You have the inability to delay gratification.

Feel free to add shortcomings you can think of that will complete your Fourth Step inventory.

Discuss the people you have harmed. When you do the Eighth Step you will need this information.

Part II
Assets

Now let's move on to your assets. What do you want to want to keep? What do you like about yourself?

Examples: Personality traits—I am patient, kind, intelligent, insightful, creative, compassionate, optimistic, etc.

Strength and Perseverance: Are you a survivor?

Please add to this list as things come to you.

Fourth Step Prayer

Dear God,
It is I who has made my life a mess.
I have done it, but I cannot undo it.
My mistakes are mine and
I will begin a searching and fearless moral inventory.
I will write down my wrongs
But I will also include that which is good.
I pray for the strength to complete the task.

Step 5

Faith

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Once you complete your Fourth Step inventory it is time to give it away. Naturally, we invite God. Our relationship with God comes first. We take time in prayer and meditation to open up and communicate with the God of our understanding about the exact nature of our wrongs.

Then, we invite another human being who will actively listen to our inventory without judging; a person who feels safe to us. This person will be someone we respect, someone we trust and someone who will be empathetic. Set aside as much time as you need to complete the process. Step Five instructs us to admit the exact nature of our wrongs to ourselves at the heart level.

Looking at the harm we have caused ourselves and others may put us in touch with the exact nature of our wrongs as never before. As we do this, we can see the pain caused by our denial. An honest Fifth Step supports us in our recovery and helps us understand why our lives were unmanageable.

Admitting our wrongs to ourselves helps us break through to greater honesty, self-awareness and acceptance. Open your heart, your mind and your soul to this process. Admit everything. Be courageous. Don't take anything to the grave. After the Fifth Step, take some time to be alone and introspective. Step Five opens the door to truth and freedom. Step Five teaches us to be vulnerable and to trust. Step Five is about letting go.

What matters is not our intentions to change. If we sincerely wish to change, all God requires of us is we ask for his help when we fall. Ultimately, the

implementation of this step is more likely not a result but an experience of the reality of Divine Love.

In the book of Alcoholics Anonymous it encourages us to also list the personality characteristics that are good. These will be the things that you keep and develop until they make up most of your personality. Please talk about this part of your inventory in your Fifth Step.

Fifth Step Prayer

My inventory has shown me who I am and I ask for God's help in admitting my wrongs to another person and to You. Please be with me in this step, for without this step I cannot progress in my recovery. With Your help, I can do this and I will do it.

Step 6

Readiness

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

The spiritual principle of Step Six is Willingness.

The key words in this step are "ready" and "God." Sometimes we are not ready, even though we want to be and other times we want to do it ourselves without God. Love addiction is insidious. It does not let go of us and we cannot let go of it without help.

Our character defects (bad habits) are also difficult to let go of. We may like some of them and hold on despite the fact they are undermining our self-esteem. For example, lying and stealing may be lucrative habits that we aren't ready to let go of. If we have thoroughly worked the steps up to now, there should be some willingness to become a better person. This is enough. We do not have to work this step perfectly despite the word "entirely." This step is a bridge to the next, if you are willing at all, you can proceed.

While fear and habit hold us back, we may also still believe we can become better people by sheer willpower. If you still believe this, then you must go back and work the previous steps again. Members of LAA are people who believe we need the power of God to lift our obsessions. Not everyone needs divine intervention, but we do. We are "powerless" without help and without our Higher Power.

Admit to yourself and another human being you are ready to have God remove your shortcomings and move on to Step Seven. If you can't do this, then stay with this step until you are ready. The day will come when you see your character defects are standing between you and your happiness and you will be happy to ask God to help you surrender them.

1. What does "being entirely ready" mean?

2. Why is it so hard to be entirely ready to part with my defects?

5. What does willingness mean to you?

Sixth Step Prayer

Dear God,
I am ready for Your help
In removing from me the defects of character
Which I now realize are an obstacle to my recovery.
Help me to continue being honest with myself and
Guide me toward spiritual and mental health.

Step 7

Humility

Step Seven: Humbly asked Him [God] to remove our shortcomings.

In the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, written by the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, it says, "The whole emphasis of Step Seven is on humility." This is because it is through a recognition that we need help that we are healed. We cannot do this alone; we cannot change ourselves through will power alone. Willingness has its place, but it must be in conjunction with divine grace. For those who have tried again and again to get well on their own, this step will be the answer to their prayers. There is hope.

When I came to recovery, I was an agnostic. Then I came to believe in God. Then I surrendered to God. Then I waited. Nothing happened. Why? Because God likes to be asked. So, through prayer, I asked for his/her help. Since then, so much has happened for the better. If I had known asking was so important, I would have done it sooner.

There is a catch to this prayer. Your shortcomings will not disappear like magic. More likely, you will be given opportunities to learn. I prayed for patience and soon I was thrust into a situation that called for it. I prayed and was given some willingness to act patiently, even though I was frustrated. Eventually, "acting as if" paid off and I became a patient person. My prayers had been answered.

The other thing about this step is that God will only remove the shortcomings that he feels stand in the way of your development. Many of the things you don't like about yourself will remain untouched. This keeps us humble. One thing for sure, however, is recovery is God's will for us. Any shortcomings that get in the way of that will be removed. So ask God for help and then work with him. Be patient. Have faith!

1. Do you know what humility is? Look it up. You cannot recover without it. God is a Higher Power. You are a lesser power. The LP depends upon the HP.

2. Are you humble? Name the ways you show your humility. How does humility help your recovery from love addiction?

Repeat the Seventh Step prayer from AA. Humbly ask God to deliver you from your disadvantages. What does this feeling look like?

Seventh Step Prayer

My Higher Power, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here to do Your bidding

Step 8

Willingness

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

The spiritual principle of the Eighth Step is Self-Discipline.

It is easy to see Love Addicts as victims because we get hurt so much by our disease; but often our addiction takes over and we put ourselves ahead of others. We might neglect our friends and family. We may put a lover ahead of our children. Perhaps under the stress of our addiction, we lashed out or abused someone. Maybe we stole money to take care of someone we were addicted to. The degree to which we hurt others was explored in our Fourth Step inventory. Now we must take that inventory and make a list of the people we have harmed, and become willing to make amends to them.

There will be people on this list who also hurt us, but that is irrelevant. We must only be concerned about our own actions and making amends for them. Many people get stuck on this step because they are holding on to old resentments, but recovery demands that we heal by reaching out to those we have hurt because of our love addiction. Don't get ahead of yourself and worry about Step Nine. Just make your list and ask God for the willingness to continue cleaning house.

1. How have you become willing?

Part 1. Those you are willing to make amends to.

Part 2. Those you need to pray to be ready to make amends to.

At this stage, you can see your own hurt, anger and even jealousy of your mom and dad. Perhaps you were actively and passively doing everything to hurt them. You cannot fully recover if you cannot fully understand the role you played in your own pain. Reparations are the next step in your recovery.

Becoming ready to take responsibility for the actions and consequences of your life is a big step toward your emotional maturity. You are no longer a poor little girl / boy in need of love and attention, who wants someone else to give her / him love, and who does almost anything to get that love and attention.

Instead, you can see (as a mature adult) that your mental health disorder has its consequences (even if it comes from the injured child inside you.) You are ready to accept responsibility for your pain right now.

Making Amends to Yourself

When I thought about making up for the damage done to my inner self, when I spoke to my Inner Child, I heard her / his faint voice: It's all right, you don't need to reimburse me. It was almost as if my Inner Child knew I was struggling with this step and offered to sacrifice herself / himself for my pain and struggle. I didn't expect to hear some voices in my head. I feel like this was another spiritual moment when tears were flowing. My Inner Child is in need of compensation for serious damage and I was fully prepared to do it for her / him.

First Person Experience with Step Eight

I made a list and suddenly added even the people I had always considered my abusers, especially my mom. Especially her! How can I make it up to her when I have always felt she is the one who cuts me to the heart?! But in the end I turned my judgment and all my attention to myself to recover. The responsibility for my recovery lies with me...not my mother. She can decide for herself how to recover. Now it's my responsibility to stop judging her for this illness.

Eighth Step Prayer

Higher Power, I ask Your help in making my list of all those I have harmed. I will take responsibility for my mistakes and be forgiving to others as You are forgiving to me. Grant me the willingness to begin my restitution. This I pray.

Step 9

Amends

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

The spiritual principle of Step Nine is Love.

Once you have finished your list of people you have harmed and are willing to make amends to them (Step Eight), it is time to do so—unless going to them would reveal information that would devastate them. This step takes time and you can continue to work the rest of the steps while keeping this step on your calendar as a long-term project.

You can make amends in writing or in person. But remember that no one is obligated to accept your apology. If you owe people money and cannot afford to pay them, set up a payment plan. Just be sincere and most people will respond in a positive way.

Types of Amends:

1. A direct amend (amend in person)

4. An amend ceremony.

If the person you want to make amends to is unavailable or dead, make a living amends. This means doing for someone else what you would have done with this person, if you had it to do over again. Give money to charity if you cannot repay someone money you owe. If you neglected your children because of your love addiction, then make a fresh start with your grandchildren. If you hurt friends who are no longer in your life, find new friends and be good to them.

Step Nine is hard work. It takes time. But it feels good and clears away the wreckage of the past. After you have completed this step, it is time to forgive yourself and let go of the past.

An important role is the analysis of compensation for damage before you actually do it. Especially for love addicts, we must be sure not to do more harm. At this point, spiritual advice, sponsorship or a trustworthy friend are vital.

Sometimes we lack objectivity to see how our words and actions (made with good intentions) can affect someone else.

First Person Experience with Step 9

Making amends is more than just an apology. What's the difference?

Reparations should be associated with the restoration of justice as much as possible. The idea is to restore directly what we have broken or restore it in a symbolic sense if we cannot act directly.

For example, I borrowed \$20 from you and didn't return it. If I go to you and tell you: "Look, I'm sorry I borrowed 20 dollars from you and spent it on drugs." This would be an apology. To compensate for the damage means to return the money.

Why is it sometimes recommended to avoid direct amends when working on Step Nine? For example, you don't run to your spouse to say, "Honey, I had a wonderful time being addicted; now I know about honesty, and I want to apologize to you for all the affairs that I had for five years." It is clear that this will hurt the other. In this case, indirect compensation is possible. Stop having affairs; bring your heart,

What I don't need is "revenge on your side of the street." My side of the street is my own feelings, needs and behavior; and it's my responsibility to clean it up and not worry about the other side of the street that has other people's feelings, needs and behavior.

"It doesn't mean what other people do doesn't matter or they aren't responsible for their part—they are. This doesn't mean you can't tell the truth about your part correctly and on time. This doesn't mean you can't have feelings about what a person is doing. It just means you take care of your side while keeping your road clean." Carla Downing

You may misunderstand the difference between an apology and compensation. Here are two definitions for *apology*:

1. To regretfully admit your guilt or wrongdoing.
2. To formally defend yourself or justify yourself in a speech or letter.

3. To fix faults or errors.

I can still keep my No Contact and do Step Nine by saying a prayer for the people involved and by changing my ways (living amends). This is especially applicable when I or the other person is not yet ready or healed, and when doing so will simply hurt them or make the situation worse.

Please, let's *not* use Step Nine as a pretext to disrupt our peace and healing process by breaking the "no contact " rule. Sometimes "no contact" can be more effective as our lives improve.

Ninth Step Prayer

Higher Power, I pray for the right attitude to make my amends, being ever mindful not to harm others in the process. I ask for Your guidance in making indirect amends. Most important, I will continue to make amends by staying abstinent, helping others and growing in spiritual progress.

Step 10

Maintenance

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step Ten is a continuation of the Fourth and Ninth Steps. Not only must we be introspective about our current shortcomings and share them with God and another human being; if we have acted out in some way, we must go to the person we have harmed and quickly apologize.

Some people do this step every day after they have turned in for the night. They look over the day that has passed and do a quick inventory. Others only work this step when something noticeable has happened. Some people do this in writing, others don't. It is up to you to integrate this step into your recovery program. How you do this step is less important than doing it.

This step is meant for events that occur in your current life. If you want to do more work about past events and fear-based emotions such as resentments, you can go back and do another Fourth Step inventory.

Step Ten is one of the maintenance steps. It helps us keep the serenity we have already gotten from the other steps. It helps keep our recovery strong. Maintaining recovery is as important as finding it. Regression is always waiting for us without proper vigilance.

1. What do you do to keep a daily inventory?

2. What is the point of continuing introspection?

3. "When we made mistakes, we immediately recognized this." What do these words mean to me personally?

Sample Inventory for Step 10

Have I started a daily prayer and other spiritual practice (for example, meditation and reading) to enter a healthy mood of mind and thinking for the upcoming day?

Do I have resentments or fears that may affect my perception?

Tenth Step Prayer

I pray that I may continue: To grow in understanding and effectiveness; to take daily spot-check inventories of myself; to correct mistakes when I make them; to take responsibility for my actions; to be ever aware of my negative and self-defeating attitudes and behaviors; to keep my willfulness in check; to always remember I need Your help; to keep love and tolerance of others as my guide; and to continue, in daily prayer, to seek how I can best serve You, my Higher Power.

Step 11

Prayer and Meditation

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

All relationships get better when you pay attention to them. The Eleventh Step encourages you to improve your relationship with God using prayer (talking to God) and meditation (listening to God), but you can also use other spiritual disciplines, such as study, solitude, humility, submission, service, confession, worship, celebration, etc. (anything that brings you closer to God).

Not only is it a good thing to get closer to God, you should learn to end each prayer with "Thy will be done." The reason you want to know God's will for you is that God knows what is best for you. You only have an idea of what might make you happy.

God knows you better than you know yourself and you want what he/she wants for you.

Since we are attached to our ideas of what will make us happy, we must also ask for the strength to carry out God's will for us. The journey may have a rocky start. God may want us to do things we don't want to do or are afraid to do.

Praying is an art form and LAA believes the Eleventh Step way of praying will get the best results.

1. How do you pray and meditate? Do you listen to God?

2. How do these things help your recovery?

3. What results do you get from your meditations and prayers?

4. How often do you pray and meditate?

The Eleventh Step Prayers

Morning Prayer

God, direct my thinking today so that it be empty of self-pity, dishonesty, self-will, self-seeking and fear. God, inspire my thinking, decisions and intuitions. Help me to relax and take it easy. Free me from doubt and indecision. Guide me through this day and show me my next step. God, show me what I need to do to take care of any problems. I ask all these things that I may be of maximum service to You and my fellow man. In the spirit of the 12 Steps, I pray. Amen

Nightly Prayer

God, forgive me where I have been resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid today. Help me to not keep anything to myself but to discuss it all openly with another person—show me where I owe an apology and help me make it. Help me to be kind and loving to all people. Use me in the mainstream of life, God. Free me of worry, remorse or morbid (sick) reflections that I may be useful to others. Amen

Original AA Prayer

Lord, make me a channel of Thy peace.
That where there is hatred, I may bring love.
That where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness.
That where there is discord, I may bring harmony.
That where there is error, I may bring truth.
That where there is doubt, I may bring faith.
That where there is despair, I may bring hope
That where there are shadows, I may bring light.
That where there is sadness, I may bring joy.
O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console.
To be understood as to understand.
To be loved, as to love.
For it is in the giving that we receive.
It is in the pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Step 12

New Horizons

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Part 1: Having had a spiritual awakening . . .

Part 2: Practice these principles in all your affairs . . .

Part 3: Pass it on . . .

One of the indications that you have had a genuine spiritual awakening is that you want to share this experience with others. You want them to be as happy as you are. You want to help them have a similar experience. This step suggests we do just that, that we "carry the message." It is also a well-known spiritual principle that to keep our own spirituality strong and fresh, we must "pass it on." So what we call Twelfth Step work is for you, as well as for others.

How you carry the message is up to you. Any kind of service helps. You may donate your time and money to LAA. You may sponsor someone. Every time you answer a post on the message board you are practicing the Twelfth Step.

Recovery is about sharing. Sometimes this exchange is obvious when we support our group. But when you provide support in your group, it is like protecting delicate flowers in a greenhouse. The true measure is when we go out into the world.

Will you be able to practice what you learned in LAA at work or in communication with friends? Will your recovery be able to stand up when faced with another romantic relationship? That's the question.

1. Can you use what you learned in LAA when you are at work or chatting with friends?

2. Can your recovery survive in the event of a new romantic relationship?

12th Step Prayer

My spiritual awakening continues to unfold. The help I have received I will pass on and give to others, both in and out of the Fellowship. For this opportunity I am grateful. I pray most humbly to continue walking day by day on the road of spiritual progress. I pray for the inner strength and wisdom to practice the principles of this way of life in all I do and say. I need You, my friends, and the program every hour of every day. This is a better way to live.

12 Traditions of LAA Explained

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon LAA unity. The common welfare comes first. Each member of LAA is a small aspect of a larger whole. Group welfare and support come first, with individual health and safety coming in a very close second.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority; a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. The loving God does not need to be the Christian God. Rather, this is God as the ultimate authority in whatever form works for each group's collective consciousness.
3. The only requirement for LAA membership is a desire to recover from love addiction. No one is turned away if they wish to overcome love addiction and/or codependency. Membership with the group is based only on progress in your recovery and following the 12 Steps, not on money or conformity. Any two or more individuals using the 12 Steps to overcome love addiction and codependency can use the name LAA if they have no other affiliation.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups, or LAA as a whole. There is no centralized LAA authority that affects individual groups. The group is responsible only to the group's conscience. The one exception involves other 12-Step groups, which should be consulted if one group's decisions affect others. No regional committee or individual member should take an action that affects the LAA group. Nor should regional authorities or individual members take actions that affect LAA as a whole without consulting the General Services Board. The common welfare is paramount.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to others who still suffer from love addiction and codependency. Each LAA group is essentially a spiritual entity whose higher purpose is to save those who still struggle with this problem by bringing them a message of hope.

6. A LAA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the LAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose. LAA does not give money, endorsement, or prestige to organizations outside the group's mission. The problems of money, property, and authority divert group members from their process of recovery, and may add stress that can prevent them from being successful. Facilities used for meetings should not use "Love Addicts Anonymous" in their name. Any property used by the LAA group should be owned and managed separately from the members, maintaining the divide between the spiritual and material. The LAA group should never go into business as an entity, although individual members should have or work toward gainful employment. Cooperating with individuals, businesses, or organizations is encouraged, but not to the point of endorsement, whether implied or actual.
7. Every LAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. Individual members who are able to should contribute financially to any needs the group has. Public solicitation of funds, to support the LAA group, individual members, or the overall LAA movement, is unwise and can pull focus from the group's collective success to material struggles. It is also important that individual LAA group treasuries do not accumulate more money than what is required for specific LAA purposes.
8. LAA should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers. The core of the group meetings is non-professional, peer support. In the context of LAA leadership, "professionalism" is defined as a trained counselor whose occupation is to provide therapy for fee or hire. LAA does not employ these professionals to lead groups, but instead focuses on the mutual support of peers helping each other through. Sometimes, LAA hires members to perform specific services that help the group or regional organization, but these tasks never include leading the group.
9. LAA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. As little organization as possible should be used to maintain the group's identity. Leadership should rotate. There are some elected positions, including a secretary for minutes and a committee, but these positions should frequently cycle. The trustees in the LAA International Committee are custodians of the overall LAA Traditions and Steps,

and maintain contributions and public relations. They have no authority over specific groups, and they do not govern; their focus is on serving LAA as a whole.

10. LAA has no opinion on outside issues, hence the LAA name ought never be drawn into public controversy. LAA remains apolitical, with no opinion on outside issues. LAA members should not use the group identity to express support or opposition to issues outside LAA itself. These include political views, sectarian religion, or public reform. LAA opposes no one and exists to help people struggling with love addiction and codependency.
11. Our public relations policy is based upon attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films [and other media]. Personal anonymity of members is deeply important. Anonymity exists to protect group members from public scrutiny and opinion. LAA should avoid sensational advertising, and the names, faces, or other identities of members should never be used to promote the program, shame members, or otherwise attract attention. Praising groups or individual members is unnecessary; recommendation to LAA should be only for those in need of help.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of the traditions, placing principles above personalities. The principle of anonymity has spiritual significance, allowing members the freedom to express their struggles and their completion of the steps. Anonymity reminds members to focus on principles above personalities, and to practice genuine humility.

Conclusion

This 12 Step Guide is a living, working document produced for the entire LAA global community.

The testimonies, written and oral reports of LAA members from all over the world—different countries and different nationalities, professing different religions, speaking different languages confirm to us that we are all united in LAA by one simple spiritual program that helps us grow and recover.

Our Guide to the Twelve Steps can be the spark of hope and faith that points the way out of the insanity of addiction.

We know that there are many more people like us who cannot find their way to this "beacon of hope." Remembering our pain before joining this program, we try to guide other people, who are still suffering from the consequences of their unhealthy addiction, to the joy and happiness gained through our LAA program and the *Guide to the Steps*.

At the end of this 12 Step path, we find clarity, happiness, relief from our needless suffering, and freedom from this terrible addiction.



The LAA Literature Committee welcomes the desire to supplement this material or to provide feedback regarding existing parts. Please send your messages (along with your data about yourself) to laaquestions@gmail.com

