

LivingIntegrated®

FIFTEEN PRACTICES FOR LIVING THE LIFE YOU WANT

4 UTILIZING THE TWELVE STEPS AND OTHER APPROACHES TO RECOVERY

IN THIS PRACTICE:

- What is Working a Program?
- Some Background on the Twelve Steps
- A Few Considerations
- Working the Steps
- The Twelve Steps
- Other Programs
- Practice Four Assignment

Go to <https://youtu.be/IUqztkAbWow> now and watch the introductory video for this Practice.

WHAT IS WORKING A PROGRAM?

Your life got to where it is now because of the combination of what you inherited, things happened to you and choices you made over a lengthy period of time.

To recover from the combined results of those three things and to live the life you want, you must make changes. That is, you need to become proactive, rather than reactive.

What do I mean by becoming proactive?

- Intentionally access useful information to learn, digest, discuss and apply
- Change the patterns of lifestyle choices, including but not limited to routines, people and behaviors
- Cultivate relationships that are supportive and nurturing
- And as you work on yourself, balance your inward work with being a helpful, nurturing presence to others

That is working a program. That will result in you living a life you can feel good about.

A recovery program then, is a sequence of things to learn, explore, do, and *keep doing* to establish a recovering life. In a real sense, that's what you're doing by working the Fifteen Practices.

There is no one perfect recovery program. We live in a time where there are a number of emerging approaches to recovery and a lot of recovery programs, and that is a very good thing.

The Fifteen Practices is a recovery program for those struggling with compulsive sexual behavior disorder. It's designed to help folks who are either just discovering they need help and don't know where to find it or who want to restart their recovery. And it's pitched to help folks who are Christian or spiritual in their orientation *without being exclusive*.

As stated in "The Four Tasks for Getting Your Life Back" we truly hope that what we offer in our resources from LivingIntegrated will be useful to everyone, whether you share our approach to faith or not. For us, everyone's personhood is sacred.

So an important element of Fifteen Practices is incorporating the work of the Twelve Steps. That's the original program in which I began my recovery and the one with which I'm most familiar. It's been such a useful program for so many people, it deserves your focused consideration.

SOME BACKGROUND ON THE TWELVE STEPS

The Twelve Steps—originally developed in the work that became Alcoholics Anonymous—are so ubiquitously referred to in our day that it's easy to assume or trivialize them.

There is an interesting dynamic that sometimes occurs: when we become overly familiar with something, our regard for it can diminish.

And the Twelve Steps are so commonly referenced in our day that most of us pick up bits and pieces about them and may begin to have the false notion that we really understand how this simple-but-not-easy program actually works.

Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps emerged from a conversation between Bill W. and Dr. Bob S. in Akron, Ohio in 1935.

Some months earlier, Bill had a profound spiritual experience following a meeting with a man who'd been influenced by the Oxford Groups, a Christian reform movement. A focus of the Oxford Groups was the four principles of love, purity, honesty and unselfishness. These four principles would have a significant impact on Bill's recovery and the Twelve Step movement.

From those first days of shared recovery between Bill and Dr. Bob came a movement of helping others who are also suffering from the disease of alcoholism. A significant insight occurred to Bill—and this is essential for all of us to get—that in order to maintain his recovery, he needed to share his experience and message with others.

The two immediately began to tell other alcoholics about the possibility of recovery by employing behavioral inventory, confession of personality defects, restitution to those harmed, necessity of a spiritual life and service to others.

The spiritual principles of the movement were (and are) surrender, trust, honesty, willingness, accountability and service.

Looking back, the movement would realize the birthing of the first AA group was in Akron, in the summer of 1935. The Twelve Steps were spelled out four years later with the publishing of the first edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Since then the Twelve Steps have become a bedrock program for millions of people seeking recovery from the insanity of addiction.

A FEW CONSIDERATIONS

First, working the Twelve Steps is not the only way to recover from addiction. Another approach may work better for you. Whichever approach works, *my primary goal is that you, me and others like us gain our freedom from compulsive living.*

Second, what *won't work* is going it alone, white knuckling your way through life and asking God to change your life for you. I tried this. For too long. It doesn't work.

Third, I don't think there's one precise way to work the Steps. There are guidelines to follow and basic things to admit, do and pursue, but there is some latitude in the specific ways people work them. Use competent resources or guides and ask God to help you.

Whether the Steps form an integral part of your recovery work or not, I think all healing comes from God.

“ You will recover if you increasingly rely on and yield to the Spirit God, pursue the truth about yourself, your behaviors and life, cultivate honest relationships with others on the same path, drop shame and cultivate humility, gratitude and giving to others. ”

Having said all that, I think there is healing and power for most people who genuinely work the Twelve Steps. They're not magic, but they are a pathway to genuine spiritual growth, emotional healing, addiction recovery, and sane and healthy living. Actually, I think the Twelve Steps are a wonderful pathway of Christian discipleship.

WORKING THE STEPS

Reading through the Steps and listening to others talk about their experiences with the Steps is NOT working the Steps. Working the Steps means you do the work. You follow the program. The Steps are a program of action. And they are like a cycle. You work through them and then you keep reviewing them and especially continue living in Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve.

The key is that you actually work through the Steps with someone else. It can be a friend who's in recovery, a sponsor you've found through a recovery group or someone you've met and developed an honest relationship with, i.e., someone safe who is working at facing their own stuff.

Why is it essential to work the Steps with someone else? The very nature of our recovery from this intimacy disorder (sexual compulsivity) requires that we learn how to be honest with ourselves and others. God almost always heals us in connection with others. Healing from this addiction simply cannot happen in isolation.

Here is how I slightly adapt the original Twelve Steps for folks whose struggle is compulsive sexual behavior disorder.

THE TWELVE STEPS

Step One

We admitted that we were powerless over our compulsive sexual behavior and that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step Two

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three

We turned our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood God.

Step Four

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step Five

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

Step Six

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

Step Seven

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step Eight

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

Step Nine

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

Step Ten

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

Step Eleven

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

Step Twelve

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other addicts, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

The first Three Steps are *the foundational Steps*. We face our problem with lust and compulsive sex. We begin to come to terms with our Creator, who is loving and able to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We surrender to our Creator that we might be recovered to a healthy, purposeful life.

Steps Four through Nine are *the working Steps*. We examine our lives and become as honest as we can be. We further surrender the things about us that are hurting us and others to our Creator and

ask His help. And we acknowledge the damage our addictive living has done and offer whatever appropriate amends we can.

And Steps Ten through Twelve are *the maintenance Steps* that help us maintain our new way of being, develop an increasingly robust spirituality and live a life of meaning, purpose and usefulness.

OTHER RECOVERY PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER

It may be helpful, since not everyone finds Twelve Step recovery the best fit for them, to look at some other options. Here I will suggest two programs I'm familiar with, but there are others.

A lot of folks have found recovery and healing in a church-based, Christ-centered program called Celebrate Recovery.

Celebrate Recovery utilizes the Twelve Steps in a different way from traditional Twelve Step groups. You can find more information and search for a local Celebrate Recovery group at celebraterecovery.com.

A very different approach is SMART Recovery, which focuses on utilizing scientifically validated concepts and life-change techniques in small groups. The feel, ethos and teaching of SMART Recovery is distinctly different from traditional Twelve Step groups. For more information go to smartrecovery.org.

Whether you use the Twelve Steps or not, there are elements to recovery we aren't covering in these Practices, so it will be helpful for you to investigate other programs.

The assignments for this Practice are designed to give you a working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and the nature of spiritual transformation.

ASSIGNMENT FOR ENGAGING THE FOURTH PRACTICE – UTILIZING THE TWELVE STEPS AND OTHER APPROACHES TO RECOVERY

1. Read in *Ashamed No More*, pp 101-105, “Genuine Spiritual Transformation and the Recovery Movement” and “What is Spiritual Transformation?”
2. Read in *Ashamed No More*, pp 105-111, “The Twelve Steps and the Church” and “Behaviors Have To Change”
3. Go to aa.org/pages/en_US/read-the-big-book-and-twelve-steps-and-twelve-traditions for a pdf version of the fourth edition of the Big Book of AA (if you have your own copy, even better), click on the tab for the Fourth Edition of Alcoholics Anonymous, scroll down to chapter 5, “How It Works” and read pp 58-63, which cover Steps One through Three*
4. Continuing in the Big Book, read pp 63-71 for Step Four
5. In the Big Book, read pp 72-88 (chapter 6, “Into Action”) which cover Steps Five through Nine
6. In the Big Book, read pp 84-88 for Steps Ten and Eleven

7. Again in the Big Book, read pp 89-103 (chapter 7, “Working With Others”), note that this entire chapter deals with Step Twelve, so a couple of thoughts I want you to keep in mind: one, carrying “this message to other addicts” offers a distinct challenge of applicability for those of us who are sexually compulsive; you must be very careful with whom you share your story; sometimes in your recovery you may very well disclose to someone else so as to help them; for all of us, another way of working this out is supporting the efforts of others who are publically sharing their story and promoting recovery from sex addiction; two, this chapter has much practical wisdom and application for every one, so please read it carefully.

8. Here is a version of the Step Three prayer for you to use daily during this Practice:

God, I offer myself to You—to build with me and to do with me as You will. 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! Amen.

*It will be helpful when reading in the Big Book that when you see the words “alcohol” and “alcoholic” you mentally substitute “lust” and “addict” or other terms that work for you; the principles of addiction and recovery are what we’re looking for.

For additional reading:

Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, pp 21-125

The “White Book” of *Sexaholics Anonymous*, pp 77-157

TWO BIBLE TEXTS FOR MEDITATING ON UTILIZING THE TWELVE STEPS

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

Matthew 5:6

“Therefore, my beloved...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Philippians 2:12-13

PRAYER

God, I offer myself to You—to build with me and to do with me as You will. 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! Amen.

IN THE NEXT PRACTICE,

we will work on developing your community of support.

