

Write Your Own 12 Steps



*The Steps as Structure
for the Work of Transformation*

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Write Your Own 12 Steps:

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for the Work of Transformation

by
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Contents

Write Your Own 12 Steps:.....	2
The Steps as Structure for the Work of Transformation.....	2
The Twelve Steps as a Structure for Transformation	2
The skeleton structure	2
Synopsis	2
How to use this book.....	3
Detailed description of each step as I view it	4
Step 0: What do I want to change?	4
12 steps.....	4
Step 1	4
Step 2	4
Step 3	5
Step 4	6
Step 5	7
Step 6	7
Step 7	8
Step 8	9
Step 9	9
Step 10	9
Step 11	9
Step 12	9
Examples.....	9
Example - Steps 0-3	9
Steps 4-7 — A Success Story	11
Example - Steps 8-9	11
Example - Steps 10-12	11
Example - My Worksheet for writing your own version of the steps.....	12
Write Your Own	14
Worksheet for analyzing past experience with the steps	14
Worksheet for writing your own version of the steps.....	16

The Twelve Steps as a Structure for Transformation

Although the 12 steps are treated as a prescription for addiction, their greater value might be as an organizing tool for the work of transforming one's life. This book explores that use of them and invites you to write your own prescription.

The skeleton structure

There are lots of tools and disciplines for changing one's life, but they generally only address one aspect of the transformation process. A book or tool might trigger insight or a method might help break a habit. The steps can take a person from the first clueless dismay to the fully integrated new life. Tools can be plugged in where they are useful. Instead of making New Year's resolutions that last until January 4th, I keep doing the next step and overcoming the next obstacle.

Synopsis

Here is a synopsis of how I see the steps fitting together as a cohesive process:

The process has three phases: preparation for change, finding the answers, consolidating the changes.

In steps 1, 2 and 3 I recognize that this problem needs a different type of solution from the one I've been trying. I reconcile myself to learning answers I can't yet see and that won't all be in the practical realm; some might require changing my thinking, my relationships, or behaviors that seems unrelated.

Steps 4 and 5 shine the light of attention on motives, ideas and behaviors that have been subconscious and unquestioned. I look for patterns that have been causing me trouble.

Step 6 is where I identify the needs that have been driving my problem behavior, and the unsuccessful strategies I've pursued for meeting those needs. I then lose my emotional investment in old behavior by squarely facing the feelings that have been pushing me around.

Steps 1-6 have prepared me for change.

In step 7 I now find new strategies for meeting the needs that I've done so badly with in the past.

Steps 8-12 consolidate the new strategies by integrating them into my life: my relationships, my habits, my thinking and my philosophy.

In 8 I think about past behavior and what I might have done differently if I'd had then the answers I have now. I am integrating my new strategies with my social thinking.

In 9, I integrate new behavior into existing relationships.

Step 10 weaves the new answers into my day-to-day behavior. The more thorough my nightly inventory, the more finely-woven the fabric.

Step 11 broadens my application of the new strategies: Where else could I use this?

Step 12 incorporates the new life into the future life by making the new strategies the basis for new relationships.

You can see from these bare bones that there are as many implementations of the steps as there are people using them. There is no need to tweak the wording of Bill Wilson's experience, since he's now just one thousands. Instead, we can throw out the words and keep just the function of each step.

There are lots of alternative 12 step versions available as books and on line. If the power of the steps comes from the structure they provide, it doesn't matter very much what method you use, so long as it seems right to

you. I have sponsored people who used a book I didn't relate to and got marvelous results from a process I didn't even understand; the power that made it happen was their desire for change and the wide experience of others in which they drenched themselves, and the guidance came from their own inner wisdom. I just got to watch, like a midwife at an easy birth.

I will say, however, that writing is an aide no matter what concepts or practices you use. I write my step work in a notebook so that I can remember in future what is clear to me at the time. So much of the work is mental—getting out of denial, seeing new choices, remembering to use new habits—that a bridge from the new recovered thinking into the old, often-triggered thinking, is extremely valuable. Writing can be such a bridge.

How to use this book

The next section gives detail on the structure described above, using my own preferred methods to show how each step accomplishes its task and makes the next step possible. If you've never worked the steps, reading this section is like reading any of the many renderings of the steps.*

If you have worked the steps, you can continue reading below or skip to a [worksheet](#) about your own experience with them. If you feel ready to write your own, you can do that [here](#). Or you can continue reading my more detailed account of my own understanding, particularly any parts that didn't go well for you.

* Each Anonymous fellowship has written its own version, plus the many secular versions that can be found through a web search on "alternative 12 steps."

Detailed description of each step as I view it

Here I give details of how I think of, and implement, the steps. As a structure for keeping the change process rolling, the steps can be implemented in an infinite number of ways. I'm giving you mine as a concrete example of ideas that might be too abstract the way I've described them above. This should help clarify, but it's not meant to be yet another prescription!

Step 0: What do I want to change?

I've inserted this step as a catch-all for the work that comes before the step-work. This includes all the living that brings me to a crisis, but it can also include making a list of specific behaviors or substances. A sex addict might decide to stop casual affairs without swearing off sex completely. Some addicts stop prescription drugs as well as illegal ones, but some don't. Ideally, this step produces a list of things I never want to do again. It's not as extreme as it sounds: I personally, am quite sure I don't ever want to take heroin, eat twinkies, or have anonymous sex.

That's the ideal, but often not possible. Even if all I know is that I'm unhappy, that's enough to get started; later steps can help me clarify what's making me unhappy and what I can do about it.

I will use "The Problem" as a generic name for what I want to change.

Even if I think of The Problem as someone else, the question is always what I can do about it. So the answer is in terms of my behavior, including thoughts. The same applies to feelings: The Problem might be depression, but the question is what to do about it.

The steps are valuable for long, complex processes of change. When a problem responds to mechanistic solutions, we don't need a long, complex process. A typical symptom of needing the steps is that my efforts to solve the problem have made it worse. Trying harder with solutions that aren't destined to work can feed fuel into the engine that is driving unhealthy behavior.

If you've heard an addict tell their story, you've heard an example of Step 0: the "what it was like and what happened." You may have heard many of these, so I won't explain further.

12 steps

I need the steps to result in a better life, one without The Problem, that is healthier and happier than the one I currently have. One I don't want to escape from into problem behavior.

Steps 1-3 are the mental groundwork for changing how I live. I probably need new options that I don't currently see. So my thinking needs to change to allow for new possibilities.

Step 1 What do I need step 1 to do for me?

Make me willing to stop trying things that don't work. This begins the process of mental change that culminates in step 6, when I'm entirely ready to adopt new solutions to existing problems.

I might be reluctant to let go of choices that don't work because I don't know of any that will. This is why the conventional wisdom says I need to "hit bottom," that is get to the point where I'll try anyway. This can be the bottom in which nothing could be worse than today's life, but it can also be the intuition that there *must* be a better way to live. Going forward requires a certain faith, which brings me to step 2.

Step 2

Once I've stopped the old, I need something new but don't yet know what it is. I don't actually need a guarantee that a solution exists, I just need to assume that one does. This was a lot tougher for the pioneers than

for we who can sit in a meeting and hear testimonials from people who have found the answer. No wonder Bill and friends wrote things like, "There is One who has all power." Personally, I haven't needed all power; I've only needed the power to stop destructive behavior and face the consequences.

What do *you* need to go forward?

Step 3

Ok, I'm willing to go forward, which way is forward?

The time-honored answer is, the ethically sound one. To ensure that the new life is healthier and happier than the old, I commit to be guided by what I value rather than what I desire or fear.

The first time I did a step 3, I traded the goal of happiness (which just *wasn't* working out) for the goal of integrity. That decision did not come from my intellect; it was a deep, absolute certainty that integrity was more important to me than chasing after what I wanted.

What do you have that certainty about? What matters to you more than your bank balance or the esteem of others? If you can reach beyond the intellect to the valuing that directs the intellect, then you find the power that can turn behavior change into a joy and a liberation instead of a chore and a deprivation.

This valuing will not only power your recovery, it will guide it. This source of meaning will tell you when you're hearing good advice vs. when you're hearing bad. It will cause you to do the next thing even when the intellect is wondering what to do. It will inform the intellect what tasks are worth doing and reward it with profound satisfaction when they are done well.

If you don't already know what qualities you want guiding you, listing them can be a good way to do step 3. Drill down through your daily motivations until you get to some fundamental, immutable value: I stretch my muscles, but flexible muscles aren't a fundamental value. I stretch to help my body avoid injury, but avoiding it is not fundamental. I avoid it so that I can exercise, but exercise is not fundamental. I exercise to help my body live. And yes, life is something I was born valuing and can't stop valuing.

Making a list of the qualities I want to be guided by and then committing myself to serve those qualities can be a good way to see that life has to be better if I do this, even though I may pay a price in lost relationships or pushback from dysfunctional systems.

This approach gives me ethical security (one of the things I suspect draws people to religion). I can't always *get* love, peace and harmony, but I can always *serve* them. When I've served the cause of love, peace and harmony as best I can, I've done my best. No matter how ugly the outcome, there was nothing more or different I could or should have done. Even when I end up saying, "I wish I'd known an hour ago what I know now," there is nothing I could have done differently because I didn't know an hour ago what I know now.

Sometimes my abstract list of qualities is not immediate enough; I need something more concrete or more human. Imaginary friends are a device some of us use to leverage our natural human social skills in the arena of addiction. Be sure yours is dedicated to serving the values on your list. I clothe mine in teddy-bear form and cuddle him when I need comfort. There are other devices that serve, such as dreams or 2-handed writing. It can work to ask what you would do if it were someone else affected by your decision—a loved one or your only child.

Great, I'm committed to this journey; what's my To Do list before I can get on the plane? What obstacles are in the way of living as I want to?

Steps 4, 5 and 6 produce a list of the individual problems I need to solve, something like this:

Find a better response to stress than eating or drinking,

Stop living with someone I'm afraid of,

Decide whether it's loving and helpful to give money to my grown son,

Squarely face my fear of inadequacy.

I don't simply write this list off the top of my head, because it would likely be wrong. Like an engineer who feverishly corrects something in a new design, only to discover that the fix doesn't solve the problem, I have been trying things all along off the top of my head.

Recently an amateur decoded 23,000-year-old messages in European cave paintings. He says he, "amassed as much data as possible and began looking for repeating patterns". This is a viable way of tackling step 4. For example, I can collect examples of not living the life I want and answer some questions about those incidents. This is my raw data, and I have an immediate sense that these things are problems. I then look for patterns in the data and get an outside perspective on it. From all this I distill a shorter list of things I do repeatedly that produce my unsatisfactory life.

I like to think of these as outdated strategies for meeting my needs—strategies that were optimum in the house I grew up in, but need to change for the world I live in now. The resulting list sounds like generalizations to an outsider, but I see clearly how they lead me astray. It is steps 4 and 5 that build a short linkage between The Problem and my outdated strategies. I will need this to stick with the changes I make. When the changes are hard or costly, it's easy to forget why they are important. Generalized resolutions to do better won't be enough to stay the course. I need immediate access to the understanding why the new choice is the better one.

The pioneers of 12 steps made the step-4 inventory a sweeping and ethically-based one. There is a time for such a process; is that time now, for you? For me, my first trip through the steps used this broad approach but subsequent ones have focused more narrowly on the specific issue defined in step 0. The advantage is that my efforts yield the biggest bang for the buck. The disadvantage is that it can lead to swapping one addiction for another.

Step 4

I start writing down the incidents in which I betray the values I've committed to live by or am tempted to betray them. Stopping the problem behavior (defined in step 0) is a good way to bring up the temptations that can fuel this data-collection step.

I also write the things that bother me, that aren't part of my vision for the future. This includes people, situations, relationships, and nagging emotions such as guilt, fear and resentment.

Each item on the list will eventually point up an outdated strategy for meeting my needs. So I ask myself what I needed and what strategy I used to get it. To distinguish needs from strategies, I like to use the list provided here: <https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/needs-inventory>. These are universal human needs, and using them prevents me from fixating on the only strategy I know. Here's a hypothetical example:

I get in the car to go to work and notice that the gas guage is on empty. Oh yeah, I was going to fill up... Now I don't have enough to get to the gas station. And I don't have a way to get there, or a gas can. If I now say, "I need a gallon of gas," there may be only one way to proceed—or maybe no way. But the gas was really just a strategy to get to work, which is a strategy for meeting my financial needs. If I say, "I need to get to work," suddenly there are lots of possibilities: I could walk or ride my bike, hitch-hike or take a bus, call a co-worker for a lift, work from home, call in sick...

In recovery work, the trick is to accurately identify my needs and find better strategies for meeting them. So it's essential that my statement of need is as fundamental as I can make it. This frees my thinking from the conviction that there is, at most, one option available.

I also write down my feelings and thoughts at the time. It is usually those columns that show the patterns of repeated failure, and the feelings can help me identify the need. Much of what we call feelings is actually thought, and I differentiate because that simplifies the feelings column and shows patterns more readily. I learned to separate thought from emotion in Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* and his website has a helpful list of emotions here:

<https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/feelings-inventory>

Here are some columns I often use:*

what happened	what was I feeling?	what was I thinking?	what did I need?	what strategy did I use to get what I need?	what price did I pay for going about it this way?
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In case that's too abstract, here is a hypothetical example:

what happened	what was I feeling?	what was I thinking?	what did I need?	what strategy did I use to get what I need?	what price did I pay for going about it this way?
I yelled at my child.	frustrated	How many times have I told them to put dirty clothes in the laundry basket, not the floor?	cooperation	demanded cooperation	failure to get cooperation, loss of harmony

I keep collecting examples until I feel like I've captured the essential problems and am now mostly repeating myself. Then I fill in any empty boxes. When my table seems complete, even if there are still empty boxes, I am done collecting data.

Step 5

In step 5, I get outside perspective on the list, because my own thinking has failed. It doesn't matter how many times I've done this or how much I want to change; I have blind spots in my thinking. When I drive a car, I have blind spots no matter how good my attitude is, and I need someone in the passenger seat to tell me what's in my blind spot. I present my step 4 table to another person and invite them to point out anything I've missed, particularly any empty boxes.

By this time I might have noticed that the same thoughts occur in many places in the thoughts column or the same strategies in their column. I also invite my listener to point up any patterns they notice. They might also suggest new items for the list.

When I get this feedback, I write it down. Too many times I've understood what someone was trying to tell me, only to forget it as soon as they leave. This is natural: if it's in my blind spot, I'll have trouble seeing it on my own. So I write while I'm with the person, read back what I've written, and correct it until they say I've got it right.

Most of my friends aren't willing to do this for me. I don't like getting the feedback I most need, because the feedback I like getting I take in and no longer need. It's the stuff I don't want to hear that I avoid until the need is overpowering. And my friends don't like telling me what I don't want to hear. A lot of people use their sponsor, because that person has already committed to telling them what they see, whether they like it or not.

This is also why I thank my feedback-giver when we're done.

Step 6

In step 6 I list the strategies that need to change, face the feelings that will arise from changing and make space in my mind for better options. To put that in terms of obstacles to my new life: So far I've tackled the obstacle of not seeing how my actions result in an unsatisfactory life; now I tackle any emotional investment I have in the old way, and any conviction that it's the only way possible.

To get a list of maladaptive strategies, I consolidate the items on my step 4-5 list by picking out strategies that cause problems. A strategy might need to change because it doesn't work, because it's unethical, because it

* If you're wondering whether this table bears any relation to the one on page 65 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the answer is, some. "What happened" corresponds to "The Cause", "what did I need" is roughly equivalent to "Affects my", and the strategy column fills in for the unwritten but popular, "my piece of the action."

costs too much or because it is unloving. I list these on the table below and fill in the "cost" column from the step 4-5 table. The "need" column from that list might go into either the benefit or the need column here; the need I was trying to meet and the one that actually got met might be different. For example, I might think I got a dog for protection but what the dog actually gives me is companionship.

strategy	cost	benefit	need I'm trying to meet	why did I adopt this strategy?	am I entirely ready to find a better way?
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To extend the hypothetical example above:

strategy	cost	benefit	need I'm trying to meet	why did I adopt this strategy?	am I entirely ready to find a better way?
demanding cooperation	I don't want to be demanding and it doesn't work anyway	temporarily relieves frustration	cooperation, social harmony	frustration got the better of me	not until I figure out a more loving response to frustration

The purpose of the 5th column is to clear my mind of subconscious reasons for clinging to a problem strategy. It's like when I leave the house with the nagging feeling that I've forgotten something. I wonder if I left a burner on or the door unlocked. I might stop the car to think about it. Then I remember that I was supposed to call Aunt Minnie in Chicago and that I can do it when I get home. Now I can start the car again and go forward. When I realize that refusing help was the best strategy with overprotective parents, I can stop refusing all help in all circumstances. Otherwise, I might continue to mistrust all offers of help without distinguishing the stifling ones from the ones I really need to accept.

Trading in old strategies for new is liable to be scary. It might bring grief, especially if it involves putting distance between me and someone else. I risk losing the benefits I'm getting from the old strategy. All these feelings must be squarely faced and worked through.

If I suspect no other strategy exists, I won't be able to give up the old. I am not entirely ready until I am free enough of this mental and emotional investment to say, "Yes, I'll take the risk."

Although the AA big book gives this step short shrift, I consider it the workhorse of the steps. Certainly most of the emotional work comes under its auspices and psychotherapy can be a tool here.

Step 7

Finally! This is where I get the answers. Liberation. Choices. Adulthood.

I like to take each line in the step 6 table and focus on it until I have an answer. I remind myself each morning that today I'm looking for a new strategy to get ___ need or for ___ situation. I do this so that I'm primed to recognize answers when I see them. After all, the answers have existed all along, but I wasn't asking the questions. To get answers I need to look for them and then test them. Only when they work do I consider them real answers.

I might seek answers by asking other people what they do, watching how they handle things, reading, bringing it up at meetings. Even google might be part of step 7. When I find something that works, I write it down, because my work is not yet done.

Steps 8-12 are consolidation. Epiphanies are not enough; I need new habits, changed relationships, maybe even significant changes in lifestyle. This phase of transformation gets neglected in many approaches to life-change, resulting in relapse. Some emphasize understanding, some philosophy, some behavior, but the steps combine all those and keep the ball rolling through disparate tasks.

Step 8

The first step in consolidating my gains is the eighth step of the journey. Where might I have used my new answers in past situations? Which of those badly handled situations could still be put right?

This is a mental exercise. I'm expanding my understanding of how my new answers can be used, and how to recognize situations that call for the new behavior. It makes me less likely to miss chances to use the new strategies.

Step 9

In 9, I practice the new strategies in social situations I set up for exactly that purpose. I don't wait for a new temptation to arise because I'm likely to do old behavior before I recognize what's happening. I "do over" what I did in the past, giving myself the best chance of behaving in the new way. Doing this with all my existing relationships changes the people who used to tempt me to old behavior into people who expect the new me and call it forth. Remodeling the social landscape in this way is my best protection against relapse: I pay the price of being guided by my values now, and there is not much reason to slide backward. In fact, the people I make amends to can become allies in my recovery.

Step 10

I've applied my new strategies to the past; now I apply them to the present. The new behaviors need to become habits. So I get out the list I made in step 7 and review it each night to see whether I used the new at each opportunity or forgot and reverted to the old. If I forgot, can I now repair any damage? Reparation is the greatest aid to memory!

If I can't repair, I might be able to plan for the future: what should flag me that the new behavior is called for? How can I keep it forefront in my mind?

Step 11

As new ways of getting what I need become woven into daily life, I am liable to notice other arenas where I can use them. This broadening is the function of step 11. I might generalize from the new strategy to the principle that makes it work. I might use meditation to step back from minutia to see the big picture. I can also use it to practice skills such as pausing between impulse and action, bringing compassion to pain, or keeping attention focused on one task.

Step 12

And lastly, the future. What will I build on the foundation I've laid? How to start new relationships on a sound footing? What inspires me and makes the new life one from which I don't want to escape into The Problem?

Examples

Example - Steps 0-3

Step 0

I kept eating things I shouldn't. This is destructive to me, and my retinas had started to bleed. I had to stop. I tried using the steps, but wasn't able to stop. I applied the Buddha's 8-fold path and gained a lot of insight, but not the power to stop.

Step 1

One day I delivered Stern Lecture #17 to myself: "Gotta get on top of this. Buckle down and do it. Stop screwing around." They reply was unusually vicious and not printable, but it ended with, "...I'm eating it anyway." When I realized that the harder I tried to stop, the worse my eating got, I recognized that as a hallmark of addiction. I went to OA.

Step 2

After two OA meetings I considered the problem of a higher power. I hadn't been able to get any guidance about food from the integrity, harmony, honesty or joy that guide everything else I do. Somehow, they weren't giving me access to the power I needed.

The rebellious eater of the unprintable language reminded me of a 7-year-old I had known, the son of a friend. I was so surprised at how she raised him: no yelling, no tears, just explaining, in age-appropriate language, what behavior was required and why. A far cry from how I was raised! I imagined my friend telling her son why he couldn't have a cookie before dinner. Then I imagined her talking to my hungry rebel, but what she said surprised me.

First she told me, the giver of stern lectures, to take a seat in the audience and keep my mouth closed. (And I was the one who hired her!)

Then she asked the child what he was feeling.

Step 3

That kid needed some loving! It's a good thing I'd been told to keep quiet, or I'd have been trying to talk him out of his sense of deprivation—again! It never worked, because it wasn't loving. My friend would have listened with compassion, and in this fantasy, so did I. The memory of a loving mother gave me access to the compassion inside myself that finally allowed me to stop eating destructively.

Instead of a power struggle between desire and self-discipline, the decision what to eat and when became an exploration of the reasons I had been indulging. The inner rebel lost interest in hijacking the kitchen, and I lost interest in telling him what he could and couldn't do. "Loving Mother," I told my friend's picture in my mind, "I turn my food decisions over to you."

Not all negotiations went like the one above. Some went like this:

LM: So, you want a cookie?

RC: YES!

LM: Well, you can have one if you really want it. But there will be consequences: You'll feel guilty afterward, and afraid for your eyes. You'll feel tired and cranky. Do you want it so much it's worth those consequences?

RC: Um. Uh. I dunno. I just want *something*!

LM: What would be even better than a cookie?

RC: I want this project to go like I planned instead of everything going wrong and it taking five times as long as I expected.

LM: Oh, I see. You're frustrated and need some ease around frustration.

RC: Yeah. Maybe I shouldn't always pick the hardest project I can think of...(giggle).

LM: It *is* a hazard! Maybe if you let it rest a bit, you'll get some new idea.

RC: Ok.

And then, sometimes when Loving Mother asked whether Rebellious Child wanted the cookie enough to endure the consequences, he said "yes." These were hardest for me to stay out of. I wanted to tell LM she was doing it wrong. Occasionally, *I* hijacked the bus. And every time I did, my blood sugar crashed. Oops. I went back to the peanut gallery humbled, and grateful that I finally had access to a higher power.

I was lonely. There were lots of people in my life, but I still felt lonely. I'd had plenty of relationships, but not a lot of satisfaction. It seemed like I continually sailed around and around the island without ever touching.

On my 4th step, I wrote that I was too stand-offish; I needed to let people in more.

In step 5, my sponsor said, "Oh, no. You have bad boundaries. You need to learn to say 'no'." She was right, and I never would have seen it on my own.

I decided that I would learn to say 'no' to hugs I didn't want from people I barely knew, at the end of these meetings where mass clenching was the accepted practice. I didn't think of it as step 6—becoming entirely ready to land on the island—but it was.

The first time I said 'no' to a hug, I walked home looking back over my shoulder, expecting the rejected hugger to pursue and beat me up. A bit of emotional investment in the old way!

After much practice and bruising many egos, I was offered a hug by a tall man. An adult. I mean, he towered above me, like the adults who hugged me against my will in childhood. I said, "Let me think."

He dealt with the ego-jarring impact of that while I thought. (Note that he didn't run away.) I said, "I don't want to hug, but I'll shake your hand," and stuck mine out.

He took it, and then, looking surprised, he said, "But this is better! We can maintain eye contact."

"And keep talking," I added.

So we kept talking, our hands still clasped, until both of us understood something we hadn't before.

My revelation was: my old behavior would have been to accept the hug but withdraw my attention from it. I'd have had physical contact without emotional contact—sailing around the island without landing.

The next epiphany was that shaking hands and talking was intimacy. Jumping into bed with him would have been to rush past the door to intimacy, toward a dead end. This time, I had started at the level of rapport we could actually manage, and we progressed together from there. Given that we barely knew each other, shaking hands was a stretch for both of us. The door to intimacy was there.

That was the end of loneliness. From there my relationships with people became rewarding to the extent I was honest with them. Only looking back do I recognize that hand shake as step 7: getting new answers to old problems.

Example - Steps 8-9

Step 8

In the morning, I got a post card from my father. In the afternoon, I did something self-destructive. In the evening, I saw they were cause and effect.

I had identified impressing people as an unethical behavior and was chagrined when I looked at the past. Now I was drawn to someone I wanted to impress.

I had come out to my siblings about family abuse and was surprised by the response: one I had viewed as an ally denied that such things were possible, while one I thought of as an adversary supported my work.

Step 9

I decided to review all my relationships and put distance between me and people who brought out the worst in me. That involved a lot of loss, but the result was feeling more loved than I ever had; facing fears I would not have challenged before; and breaking the family rules I still enforced, that kept me prisoner.

Example - Steps 10-12

Step 10

"Did I rest today when I was tired, or did I distract myself with food or electronic games?"

"Umm, well..."

This was the one item from my 7th step list of solutions that I couldn't seem to make into a habit. I decided to take it all the way through the steps as its own issue. I got to about step 3 and then decided to make it the focus of step 11.

Step 11

"Do everything slower" became a mindfulness practice. I could wash dishes as a meditation. I could pay bills by going slowly, starting with a deep breath and then just getting out the checkbook, just finding a pen...

I sometimes remembered not to try harder when a project started going wrong, but to step back, drink tea, let it evolve. I have made quite a bit of progress. Now I can rest even when I don't want to, but I'm dissatisfied with myself when I do.

Step 12

That dissatisfaction is the focus of my next trip through the steps. See, someone I sponsor suggested I write a book about the steps, so I did. Then she said it needed some examples. So I filled out the worksheet on the very last page, using dissatisfaction with non-performance as the focus. Now here I am, typing away, the future flowing from what I thought was service but which is actually a mutually-beneficial alliance of recovering friends.

Example - My Worksheet for writing your own version of the steps

Question	Author's generic answer	Your answer	How might I accomplish that?
Step 0: What do I want to change?	Whatever is most depriving me of the life I want.	Dissatisfaction with how much I can get done nowadays.	_____
12 steps: What do I need this trip through the steps to do for me?	Take me from "something's gotta change" all the way to living a healthier and happier life. This includes finding the power to stop problem behavior and making a life I don't want to escape from.	Make me satisfied with what I can realistically do and maintain over the long term.	_____
Step 1: What do I need step 1 to do for me?	Make me willing to stop trying things that don't work.	Stop trying to feel different.	Write about my fear that if I stop trying to feel different I will lose the progress that I've made.
Step 2: What do I need step 2 to do for me?	Allow me to go forward on the assumption that there is a real answer. Once I've stopped the old, I need something new but don't yet know what it is. Likely, I've been doing ineffective things because I don't know any effective ones. But I can't let that stop me. What will allow me to go forward?	Trust that if I stop trying to feel different, I will find a happier resolution.	Does my past experience convince me? What does my inner wisdom say?

Step 3: What do I need step 3 to do for me?	Commit myself to changing whatever needs to change, despite the pain and disruption. Making a list of the qualities I want to be guided by and then committing myself to serve those qualities can be a good way to see that life has to be better if I do this, even though I may pay a price in lost relationships or pushback from dysfunctional systems I am part of.	Commit myself to stop using will-power and find something better.	
Step 4: What do I need step 4 to do for me?	Produce a list of obstacles to my having the new life I want. One way to generate the list is to try giving up the problem behavior and see what happens. If I get bored, that goes on the list, if I start other compulsive behavior I can examine the feelings and needs that are driving me. I am collecting data on how I currently act and where things go wrong.	Examine instead of avoid.	Write about each instance. Try giving up the dissatisfaction and write what comes up. Try giving up self-will and see what comes up.
Step 5: What do I need step 5 to do for me?	In step 5, I get outside perspective on the list, because my own thinking has failed.	Get outside perspective	Probably could share with J. and maybe some with B.
Step 6: What do I need step 6 to do for me?	List the strategies that take me astray and the needs behind them. Lose any emotional investment I have in the old behaviors.	Make a list of the needs behind the self-criticism.	Distill these from step 4-5 list.
Step 7: What do I need step 7 to do for me?	Give me better strategies for meeting my needs.	Find the better way.	Ask my inner wisdom for a better resolution. Try out ideas.
Step 8: What do I need step 8 to do for me?	Where might I have used my new answers in past situations? This question integrates them into my social thinking.	Make a list of things I would have done differently if I'd had the new answer.	What might I have done differently if I had had the new answer?
Step 9: What do I need step 9 to do for me?	Which of those badly handled situations can I put right now? By using past events to change my relationships with people, I protect myself from temptation before it arises.	Integrate new stuff in my current social circle.	If no amends, I'll tell some friends what I've learned and talk about it at meetings. That should bridge the gap between intellect and my social world.
Step 10: What do I need step 10 to do for me?	Turn my step-7 answers into habits. Each night I review the day to see whether I used all the new behavior that was called for.	Make the new a habit.	Review each night.

Step 11: What do I need step 11 to do for me?	Perhaps more than any other, step 11 differs from person to person and from time to time. It opens the door wide on whatever keeps us growing and fulfilled, integrating our new ways into areas other than the original problem. Where 8 and 10 deepen our perception, 11 broadens it.	Broaden the application.	Remember all day long.
Step 12: What do I need step 12 to do for me?	Help me launch a new life.	Integrate with the future.	Not sure yet.

Write Your Own

These worksheets are available as separate downloads at <https://rivenwoodbooks.com/>

Worksheet for analyzing past experience with the steps

Whether your past experience was something you never want to repeat or a great life-changer, it is full of information about what does and doesn't work for you. There is no need to answer all the questions, just any that interest you.

Question	Your answer
<p>Step 0: What were the powers that brought you to seeking help? What made you receptive to the 12-step approach?</p>	
<p>12 steps: If your experience was positive, what elements do you want to bring into your own version of the steps? At what point did you find the power to stop problem behavior? If there were parts of your experience you want to avoid in your own version, what are they? What made them a problem for you?</p>	
<p>Step 1: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 2: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 3: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 4: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 5: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 6: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 7: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 8: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 9: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 10: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 11: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	
<p>Step 12: What did this step do for you? What worked for you when you did this step? Is there anything to guard against next time around?</p>	

Worksheet for writing your own version of the steps

I've added a Step 0 for what happens before you get to your first meeting. This is actually the hard part, the part I have to do in order to know which 12-step meeting I need to go to! Fortunately, I can change it as I go along. All I need to get started is a statement of my desire for change, even if it's, "I'm not happy with my life as it is."

As a generic name for what I want to change, I will call this The Problem.

Question	Author's generic answer	Your answer	How might I accomplish that?
Step 0: What do I want to change?	Whatever is most depriving me of the life I want.		_____
12 steps: What do I need this trip through the steps to do for me?	Take me from "something's gotta change" all the way to living a healthier and happier life. This includes finding the power to stop problem behavior and making a life I don't want to escape from.		_____
Step 1: What do I need step 1 to do for me?	Make me willing to stop trying things that don't work.		
Step 2: What do I need step 2 to do for me?	Allow me to go forward on the assumption that there is a real answer. Once I've stopped the old, I need something new but don't yet know what it is. Likely, I've been doing ineffective things because I don't know any effective ones. But I can't let that stop me. What will allow me to go forward?		
Step 3: What do I need step 3 to do for me?	Commit myself to changing whatever needs to change, despite the pain and disruption. Making a list of the qualities I want to be guided by and then committing myself to serve those qualities can be a good way to see that life has to be better if I do this, even though I may pay a price in lost relationships or pushback from dysfunctional systems I am part of.		
Step 4: What do I need step 4 to do for me?	Produce a list of obstacles to my having the new life I want. One way to generate the list is to try giving up the problem behavior and see what happens. If I get bored, that goes on the list, if I start other		

	<p>compulsive behavior I can examine the feelings and needs that are driving me.</p> <p>I am collecting data on how I currently act and where things go wrong.</p>		
Step 5: What do I need step 5 to do for me?	In step 5, I get outside perspective on the list, because my own thinking has failed.		
Step 6: What do I need step 6 to do for me?	<p>List the strategies that take me astray and the needs behind them.</p> <p>Lose any emotional investment I have in the old behaviors.</p>		
Step 7: What do I need step 7 to do for me?	Give me better strategies for meeting my needs.		
Step 8: What do I need step 8 to do for me?	Where might I have used my new answers in past situations? This question integrates them into my social thinking.		
Step 9: What do I need step 9 to do for me?	Which of those badly handled situations can I put right now? By using past events to change my relationships with people, I protect myself from temptation before it arises.		
Step 10: What do I need step 10 to do for me?	Turn my step-7 answers into habits. Each night I review the day to see whether I used all the new behavior that was called for.		
Step 11: What do I need step 11 to do for me?	Perhaps more than any other, step 11 differs from person to person and from time to time. It opens the door wide on whatever keeps us growing and fulfilled, integrating our new ways into areas other than the original problem. Where 8 and 10 deepen our perception, 11 broadens it.		
Step 12: What do I need step 12 to do for me?	Help me launch a new life.		